



Human Rights Violations in Kurdistan of Iran

**KMMK-G Quarterly Report on the Situation of
Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran for the period:**

1st January to 20 March, 2024

**Kurdistan Human Rights Association-Geneva
(KMMK-G)**



Introduction

This report provides up-to-date data and analysis on the situations of human rights in the Iranian Kurdistan-majority provinces of Iran from January 1 until March 20, 2024 and prepared in particular for the attention of the OHCHR, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, FFMI, UN agencies, media, governments and public attention.

Similar to previous Islamic Republic administrations, the current presidency of Raisi continues its security approach toward Iranian Kurdistan and other ethnic and religious groups. The persecution, execution, imprisonment, arbitrary detention, and arbitrary disappearances of Kurdish civil, cultural, environmental, and political rights activists and protestors as well as the extra-judicial executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons) remain alarmingly high. This report specifically addresses the executions, political prisoners, indiscriminate killings of *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and landmine incidents affecting Kurdish civilians from January 1 until March 20, 2024.

Every year, KMMK-G provides the details of data collected in each aforementioned category in Persian attached to its annual report of human rights violations in Kurdistan.

Methodology

The Iranian authorities refuse to provide accurate data on executions, landmines, *Kolbaran* (border couriers) and other issues affecting the members of Iran's national, ethnic and religious minorities, in particular. For instance, 86% of the recent executions are undeclared by the state. To get the most credible data, KMMK-G collects and verifies up-to-date information in the following ways: (a) conducts interviews with the families of the victims, (b) conducts interviews with the lawyers of the victims, (c) contacts and receives information from various institutions, on-the-ground local networks, as well as informants within authorities and governmental entities, (d) monitors the Islamic Republic's official statements, state media and publications, (e) receives information from informal news agencies and obtains on the ground information. The KMMK-G obtained consents from the families of the victims mentioned in this report.



The KMMK-G provides the list of the victims upon demand. It is worth noting that most Kurdish cities have double names, a Persian-official name and a Kurdish one. The names put in the parenthesis are the official Persian imposed names.

Executions in 2024

According to the data collected by KMMK-G, from January 1 until March 20, 2024, at least one hundred twenty-eight (128) prisoners including 2 women were executed in Iran. At least, forty-one (41) were Kurds and thirteen (13) were Baluchis. KMMK-G believes that whenever the regime is facing a power crisis internally or internationally, the number of executions increases in particular against ethnic minorities. Iran's policy of execution is not about the administration of justice, it's a policy of the control of populations, dissents and in particular against the Iranian national, ethnic & religious minorities. Over 60% of Iran's political executions are Kurds, 25% Baluchis and 10% Ahwazi-Arabs. Despite the international urgent calls, Iranian authorities executed Farhad Salimi, a Kurdish opinion prisoner on 23rd January and four Kurdish political prisoners on 29th January 2024. Twelve (12) other Kurdish political prisoners are at risk of imminent executions.

Crimes and charges against Kurdish prisoners

Five (5) prisoners were executed in relationship to the Kurdish political parties (4 accused of the fabricated crimes of spying for Israel and the other one for participation in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement). Two others were executed for the crime of moharebeh (enmity against God). Six (6)

prisoners were executed for murder and another twenty-two (22) for drug-related offences. Five (5) others were executed for robbery. Two (2) prisoners died or killed in suspicious manner in prison.

Crimes and charges against Baluchi prisoners

The following Baluchi prisoners were executed: Seven (7) for drug-related offenses. Four (4) for murder. A protestor lost his life under torture in jail, for participation in the protests, and Sephar Shirani a young Balochi social media activist was arbitrarily detained and inhumanely killed under torture.



Close to 50% of the total executions of the Iranian prisoners are Kurdish and Baluchi citizens while the Kurds and the Baluchis make up only 20% of Iran's 82 million population.

The state-sponsored violence and the application of death sentences against Iranian ethnic groups, in particular the Kurds and Baluchis are increasing dramatically and disproportionately. While the Kurdish population constitutes only 15% of the total 82 million population, the number of Kurdish executions for political and security-related charges is over 60%.

Iran has one of the highest execution rates globally. Kurdish prisoners face unfair trials and are often convicted in proceedings marked by a pattern of abuses including the use of confessions made under torture and the denial of access to a lawyer. The authorities use the death penalty to control the minorities and the population.

Political Prisoners/Detentions

Similar to previous years, the share of Kurdish political imprisonment remains dramatically high in the beginning of 2024 (from 1st January 2023 until March 20, 2024).

According to KMMK-G's collected data, from January 1 until 20 March 2024, at least one hundred fifty-six Kurdish citizens including four (4) women were arbitrarily detained. The absolute majority of Kurdish citizens were detained for membership of Kurdish political parties mainly Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), Kurdish rights related activities and the Newroz, the Kurdish 2724 New Year celebrations.

The Kurdish community along with Baluchis remain two of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death due to their alleged activism.

Extra-Judicial Executions of *Kolbaran* (border couriers or tradespersons)

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KMMK-G has received reports of extra-judicial executions of twenty-two (22) border couriers known as *kolbaran* from January 1 until March 20, 2024, with another one hundred fifty-eight (158) individuals working as *kolbar* injured at the border due to incidents such as direct shootings of border officials and landmine explosions, snow falls and colds among other things. This brings



the total number of incidents reported regarding shootings and discriminatory killings of *Kolbaran* to one hundred-eighty (180) during the period under consideration.

Moreover, many *kolbaran* (border couriers) were arrested and their goods were confiscated by the authorities thus far in 2023. In addition, hundreds of horses belonging to Kurdish *Kolbaran* were also shot dead.

Due to high rates of unemployment and contamination caused by landmines and explosive remnants of the Iran-Iraq war that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders, the Kurdish youths from the four Kurdistan provinces of Kermashan (Kermanshah), Sine (Kurdistan), Ilam and Wermê (West Azerbaijan) engage in *kolbari* carrying commodities, such as tea, tobacco and fuel to earn a living.

Landmine Incidents Affecting Kurdish Civilians

Various international bodies and entities such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Iran (2010) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (January 2016) have made observations and recommendations, urging the Islamic Republic to clear its territory of landmines and all the remnants of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Nevertheless, despite international and domestic efforts, the Islamic Republic refuses to cooperate with international NGOs and entities and to ratify the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty.

Based on KMMK-G's data, thus far this year (January 1 till March 20, 2024), a total of seventeen (17) citizens have fallen victims to landmine explosions in the Iranian Kurdistan. One (1) Kurdish civilian were killed and sixteen (16) were wounded due to landmines explosions and unexploded remnants of the Iran-Iraq war, which ended a long time ago in 1988. Eight (8) from Kermashan (Kermanshah) and eight (8) from Ilam.

It is also important to note that according to Iran's official statistics, during to eight years-long Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), more than 20 million landmines were planted in the Iranian Kurdistan and Khuzestan provinces that seriously hamper the daily lives of civilians, particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders. Essentially, an area of about 4 million and 200 thousand hectares is contaminated by mines and explosive materials.

Iranian Kurdistan is the most affected area by landmines and undetonated ammunitions. The reason for this is the armed conflict of 1980-1993 between



state forces and Kurdish combatants. Reportedly, the Iranian Army planted an unknown number of mines around their barracks and compounds in many villages and cities in Kurdistan. Recent reports also indicate that Iran continues to plant landmines in Kurdistan.

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic does not seem to even remotely be willing to stop its outrageous human rights violations. Iran's policy of instilling fear and intimidation among members of ethnic nationalities, in particular Kurds, remains actively and aggressively in place thus far in 2024. Meanwhile, the emergence of the Kurds as an inevitable part of a viable solution to a stable Middle East, increases the Islamic Republic's paranoia of its Kurdish populations at home, despite Kurds' modest request for equality and federalism.

The Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, as well as the Islamic judiciary and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), fear even the slightest signs of empowered national and ethnic minorities, Kurds in particular. Yet, the Supreme Leader remains the ultimate decision-maker of the country. In short, despite repeated calls from the United Nations to the Iranian authorities regarding human rights violations, the Islamic Republic's policy to suppress Kurdish populations remains as forceful as ever in 2023.

The recent crackdowns on the Kurdish civil activists in Kurdistan, which emerged in September 2022 after the death of Jina Amini, attest to the growing frustration of ordinary Iranian citizens with economic and political hardships in the country. Instead of effectively addressing these grievances, the Islamic Republic responds by detaining peaceful protestors and intensifying existing repressive measures. Recently, the state has submitted two bills to reform the laws on assembly and gathering and the 1373 (1994-1995) law on holding arms, which aims to harden the conditions of gathering and offering "carte blanche" to armed forces to eliminate citizens.¹

¹¹¹ Draft of laws reforming holding guns:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010328000180/%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%86-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A8%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%DB%8C%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%86%DB%8C%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%AD-%DA%86%D9%87-%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF>

<https://www.peace-mark.org/135-13>



About KMMK-G

The Kurdistan Human Rights Association - Geneva (KMMK-G) aims to promote democracy, respect for human rights and social development in and beyond Kurdistan of Iran.

To that end, the Association commits itself to fight against any form of discrimination towards ethnic and religious minorities within the region, defend political prisoners, fight for the abolition of the death penalty, and promote women's and children's rights. In addition, the KMMK-G intends to increase public awareness on the situation of human rights in all Kurdish regions and to promote the rights and integration of the Kurds wherever they live.

Established in Geneva in 2006, the KMMK-G constitutes a bridge between the Kurdish civil society, the United Nations Agencies and NGOs and participates actively in all the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the ESCR, the CPR Committee, the UPR and the UN Forum on minority issues and presents them with reports on the situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran (www.kmmk-ge.org), (<http://www.kmmk-ge.org/?p=426&lang=en>). Moreover, the Association frequently gets in touch with various United Nations organs in order to submit reports to them on the situation of human rights in the Kurdistan of Iran.

The KMMK-G is, therefore, a recognized source of information. Its reports are published on the website of the United Nations Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The Association also frequently publishes articles in Kurdish and Iranian media.

The KMMK-G is also active within the Geneva and Swiss communities. Swiss political parties regularly consult with the Association about the Kurdish issue and immigrants' integration. Furthermore, the KMMK-G supports the Kurdish diaspora living in exile by organising conferences, cultural events and language courses.

Law draft to reform gathering laws:

<https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14020219000552/%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%84-%D9%84%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%AD%D9%87-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%88%D9%87-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%BE%DB%8C%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%E2%80%8C%D9%87%D8%A7>