

Political Prisoners

Overview

The Kurdish community remains one 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. The share of Kurdish political prisoners remains dramatically high in today's Iran.

Year in Review (2020)

Similar to previous years, the share of Kurdish political imprisonment remained dramatically high in 2020.

Despite the secrecy arounds the arrests and the authorities refusal to provide data on the arrests, the KMMK-G's has been able to identify detailed data about 507 Kurdish citizens who were arrested in 2020. At least 145 of the detainees were sentenced to long years of imprisonment and were charged with crimes related to civic activism and membership of Kurdish political parties. Among these prisoners, there are individuals like workers, teachers, Kolbars (border couriers), artists, human rights and environmental activists, journalists, lawyer, students, photographer, cultural activists, and others alike.¹

Seventy-two (72) of them were charged with the crime of cooperation and membership of Kurdish political parties, 23 charged with actions against public order by participating in protests, 27 charged for the crime for propaganda against the regime, 3 for gathering and another for disseminating lies, 4 were charged for their religious belief and activities, 1 membership of opposition groups, 11 for "acting against national security", 1 for "moharebeh" or waging war against God, 3 for putting into fire the posters of Qassem Sulaimani, 10 for participation in gathering and protests against the blind killing of kolbaran, 1 for insulting the government officials, 3 for spying for hostile foreign countries and 1 for illegal exit from the country. Eight (8) women are among the sentenced prisoners. At least 37 Kurdish prisoners were

¹ Please note that KMMK-G has a list of these detainees/prisoners in Persian. Since turning the list into English is beyond the bandwidth of KMMK-G at this time, it can be disclosed in Persian upon request

executed: 31 for murder, 2 for drug-related offenses and four (4) for political opinion et belief.

During this period, the Iranian's Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for eleven (11) Kurdish political prisoners including Haidar GHORBANI, Moheddin IBRAHIMI, Shakir BEHROOZI, Arsalan KHUDKAM, Farhad SALIMI, Qasem ABASTEH, Dawoud ABDOLLAHI, Ayoub KARIMI, Anvar KHEZRI, Khosrew BESHARAT and Kamran SHEIKHEH.

Furthermore, despite the UN Special Rapporteur's calls on Iranian authorities, against Ms. Zara MOHAMMADI, a Kurdish language volunteer teacher was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment by the Sanandij (sine) Revolutionary Court for the sole crime of teaching the Kurdish language. She has already been arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned for six months in 2019.² While the repression against Kurdish language and Kurdish cultural rights defenders, is increasing, the Iranian government in its 2021 State budget, devoted 46 billion Tomans to the Persian Language Promotion Foundation. Knowing that the Persian language is the official, administrative and teaching language of the country.

According to United for Iran, an NGO collecting data on Iran's political prisoners, among 162 prisoners detained and sentenced to long-term imprisonment for supporting dissidents' groups in Iran, 105 are Kurds.³ The UN Special Rapporteur has also shed light on the disproportional arrest of Kurdish citizens in Iran "*Kurdish political prisoners are said to represent almost half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.* » This is While the Kurdish people in Iran amount only to 13% of Iran's 80 million population.

Evidently, the Kurdish community remains one of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death penalty due to their alleged activism. Similar to previous years, the Kurdish political prisoners represent half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.

² Interview of Ms. Zara with Rudaw tv in Kurdish on 14th of February 2021 regarding her trial, link in Kurdish: <https://youtu.be/w2w-rHIZJL0>

³ See also https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4X8BRCPARIsABmcnOqgvVQohLx5tZ49FD0SwdjFI1wWwrTMOejQh08T60P96hGC_un5xg0aAq2bEALw_wcB