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3.1. Political dissent and opposition

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: January 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2024, 1.1.3, 3.8, 3.9, 4.1, 4.2; COI Human Rights, 2.2. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

Political dissent refers to the expression of disagreement or opposition to the policies, actions, or authority of a governing body or political system. It encompasses a wide range of activities, such as: political activism including protests and online and social media activities, advocating for human rights, publishing in media and publications, and artistic expression.

The Iranian authorities are reported to view the activities of wide categories of individuals as political dissent. Intimidation and harassment of political activists, journalists, and opposition figures are prevalent, with threats and violence often extending to the families of dissidents. Political dissent in Iran encounters substantial governmental repression.

The Islamic Republic employs a range of strategies to suppress dissent. A primary method is extensive surveillance, both domestically and internationally, utilising advanced technology to monitor communications and social media interactions. This enables the State to identify and target potential threats. A ‘cyber army’ monitors online opinions, leading to threats, physical attacks, kidnapping and killing of some of those who express dissent, even outside Iran. Arbitrary arrests and imprisonment are routine, with detainees frequently subjected to torture and denial of medical care. Trials are often conducted in secret and lack fundamental fairness including forced and public confessions, resulting in long sentences and, in some cases, executions. The death penalty is wielded by Iranian authorities as a tool of political repression against dissidents.

Censorship is another tool, with the government exercising strict control over the media, banning independent outlets, and silencing journalists who report on abuses or opposition activities. Despite these oppressive measures at times leading to self-censorship, political dissent persists, driven by widespread dissatisfaction with economic conditions, corruption, and the lack of political freedom.

High-profile activists, journalists, and human rights defenders may be monitored outside the country and arrested upon their return. Ordinary Iranians are generally not under systematic surveillance unless they share sensitive content on social media, which could draw State

attention. Some Iranian activists have managed to enter the country without being identified or detained at the airport. However, posting on social media from within the country could attract State scrutiny.

For practical information on the different ways of **expressing one's political opinion**, please refer to the EUAA Practical Guide on Political Opinion, 1.3. Manifestations of political opinion. For assessing international protection needs related to activities on **social media**, please refer to EUAA Practical Guide on Political Opinion, 3.7. Political opinion expressed via social media.

For assessing international protection needs related to ***sur place*** activities, please refer to EUAA Practical Guide on Political Opinion, 3.6. Political opinion expressed sur place.

See also CJEU, Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl v JF, C-222/22, Third Chamber, judgment of 29 February 20247.

The contents of this section include:

- 3.1.1. Members and sympathisers of opposition parties and movements (perceived as) critical of the Iranian authorities
- 3.1.2. Protesters
- 3.1.3. Human rights defenders, activists, and lawyers
- 3.1.4. Journalists and other media workers (perceived as) critical of the Iranian authorities

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  CJEU, *Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl* v *JF*, C-222/22, Third Chamber, judgment of 29 February 2024, https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=283282&pageIndex=0&doclan

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