Please cite as: EUAA, '3.6.1. Christians' in *Country Guidance: Iran*, Enero 2025.

3.6.1. Christians

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: January 2025

This sub-profile covers the situation of individuals belonging to the Christian community that was existing before the establishment of the Islamic Republic (referred to in this section as 'Christians by birth'). It includes 'ethnic Christians' (Armenians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians) and 'non-ethnic Christians' (protestants).

For the situation of converts to Christianity, please refer to Individuals perceived to have committed blasphemy and/or apostasy, including converts and atheists.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports: Country Focus 2024, 4.8.2. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

According to Article 13 of the Iranian Constitution of 1979, Christians by birth are a recognised religious minority, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education.

Proselytising in Iran is considered as a crime against the internal and external security of the State and is 'punishable by death'.

In Iran, Christians by birth who wish to worship in the national language (Persian) meet in private places, which are known as house-churches.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Christians by birth could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, Christian beliefs perceived as insulting Islam and some practices (such as practising in Persian, possessing religious material in Persian, preaching to other Iranians, inviting them to their churches, and inviting converts) are considered as crimes by the Iranian authorities and are punishable by death under *ta'zir*. Christians who proselytise or visit house churches are subjected to arrest, imprisonment and prosecution.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that Christians could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should also be considered. Depending on the Christian group and the expression of their religious belief, Christians by birth have been subjected to confiscation of property, monitoring and discrimination.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

For Christians by birth frequenting house churches and Christian proselytisers, a well-founded fear of persecution would in general be substantiated.

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for other Christians by birth to face persecution should take into account risk-impacting circumstances, such as:

- **Visibility of the applicant:** applicants with a specific profile in a Christian community such as being a leader of the community in Iran or abroad, or appearing in the media, in Iran or abroad, as a representative of the community would impact the risk since those elements substantiate the public expression of the faith.
- **Being known to the authorities:** applicants already known to the authorities such as those who were already arrested, whether in relation to their faith or other reasons, face a higher risk.
- **Link to foreign actors:** in the context of Iran, an individual with links to a Western actor (such as a Western country, a non-governmental organisation or an international organisation settled in a Western country) faces a higher risk.
- **Gender:** in regard of the general situation of women in Iran, Christian women by birth are at higher risk. Please refer to Women and girls.

It should be highlighted that no applicant under this profile can reasonably be expected to abstain from their religious practice in order to avoid persecution16.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant falling under this sub-profile, this persecution is highly likely to be for reasons of religion, as Christians would be seen as insulting Islam and/or promoting atheism. As Christianity is categorised under ‘political-security crimes’ and is seen by the Islamic Republic ‘as a Western religion’, where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, this persecution may also be for reasons of (imputed) political opinion.

See other contents related to Religious minorities:

- *3.6.1. Christians*
- 3.6.2. Baha'is

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  CJEU, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* v *Y and Z*, joined cases C-71/11 and C-99/11, judgment of 5 September 2012, para. 80, https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=126364&doclang=en

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