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3.5.1. Kurds, including Faili Kurds and Yarsan Kurds

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: January 2025

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI report: Country Focus 2024, 2.2, 4. Country Guidance should not be referred to as source of COI.

As of 2016, Kurds constituted more or less 10% of the total Iranian population of 83.5 million individuals. Iranian Kurds live mostly in the mountainous regions on the border with Türkiye and Iraq. Kurds are predominantly Sunni and partly Shia. Faili Kurds are a cross-border ethnic group residing mainly at the Iran and Iraq border and are Shia Muslims. Yarsan Kurds primarily inhabit the Kurdish provinces in the western part of Iran, comprising a community of approximately three million individuals.

Kurds constitute a specific ethnic group. They speak a different language, have political claims, and have armed groups in Iraq. Kurds continued to be perceived by the Islamic Republic ‘as a threat to the foundation of the country’15 .The suppression of the Republic of Mahabad in 1946 and the denial of Kurdish autonomy following the 1979 Islamic Revolution reflect a long history of denying Kurdish autonomy and at times independence. The conflict post-1979 led to the destruction of Kurdish villages and the death of approximately 10 000 Kurds.

For activities seen as political dissent by the Iranian authorities, please refer to Political dissent and opposition.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which Kurds could be exposed to could, by their severity and/or repetitiveness or because they occur as an accumulation of various measures, amount to persecution. Notably, Kurds face significant political and cultural restrictions. They have limited access to high political positions, and Kurdish language education is prohibited, such as in the city of Saqqez in 2010. In addition, Kurdish regions are economically deprived, forcing Kurds to seek work in other cities where they face ethnic screening and discrimination. Kurdish defendants have been subjected to harsher sentences when they were detained in cities such as Tehran, Urmia, or Isfahan.

Some acts to which Faili Kurds and Yarsan Kurds could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, Faili Kurds faced forced displacement from Iraq to Iran. They have neither gained Iranian nor regained Iraqi citizenship. Due to their statelessness, they have been subjected to discrimination. Yarsan Kurds have experienced difficulties such as systematic discrimination, restrictions on religious practices, arbitrary arrests, and legal harassment aimed at suppressing the Yarsan community's religious identity and activities.

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

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

- **Political profile:** Kurds with a political profile face a higher risk. Kurds undergo security screenings (*gozinesh*) that probe their political affiliations and views on Kurdish independence, creating an atmosphere of constant surveillance and harassment. Kurdish political prisoners face executions on charges such as 'taking up arms against the State'. The specific targeting and execution of Kurds during protests and regular legal actions against them (e.g., executions for 'deliberate murder' and 'narcotic drugs') further exemplify persecution. The crackdown on Kurdish protestors has led to many fleeing to Iraq. Members or sympathisers of opposition groups such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) are automatically targeted and detained.

- **Ethnic and/or religious background:** Yarsan Kurds are particularly at risk since the Iranian authorities aim at suppressing their religious identity and activities. Being Sunni or Sufi also exposes Kurds to a higher risk since the regime is Shia-dominated. Being Faili also enhances the risk since Faili Kurds have been subjected to discrimination.

- **Occupation:** Kurds working as *kolbars* face severe and targeted violence including shootings from Iranian border forces who consider them as smugglers. Also, Kurds having served in the IRGC or Basij face a backlash from their community, including being labelled as traitors, which can lead to targeted violence from Kurdish armed groups.

- **Gender:** Kurdish women face several layers of oppression, including ethnic, religious, and gender discrimination, increasing their vulnerability. Also, in regard of the general situation of women in Iran, Kurdish women are at higher risk. Please refer to Women and girls.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated for an applicant under this profile, this may be for reasons of race, religion (Kurds, including Faili Kurds and Yarsan belong to a distinct ethno-religious group) and/or nationality.

See other contents related to Ethnic minorities:

- *3.5.1. Kurds, including Faili Kurds and Yarsan Kurds*
- 3.5.2. Baluches

- 15

  Expert on Kurdish population and regions in Iran, interview 20 March 2024, and email communication, 27 March 2024.

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