

# Iran - Human Rights Scorecard <sup>1</sup>

Iran is an Islamic republic on the Persian (Arabian) Gulf with historical sites dating to the Persian Empire. It is one of the largest countries in the region, and the only country with both a Caspian Sea and Indian Ocean coastline. As such, Iran has a long-time regional rivalry with Saudi Arabia, based on both geography, and the Sunni-Shia divide in the Middle East. Iran is a Shia Muslim country, with Tehran a its capital and leading economic center.<sup>2</sup>

**Official language:** Persian

**Ethnic groups:** 61% Persian; 16% Azeri; 10% Kurd; 6% Lor; 2% Baluch; 2% Arab, 2% Turkoman, Turkish tribes; 1% Other

**Government:** Islamic Theocracy: theocratic-republican hybrid; unitary presidential republic subject to a Supreme Leader

- Supreme Leader: Ali Khamenei

- President: Hassan Rouhani

**Death penalty:** Retentionist

**Population:** 77.45 million

**Life expectancy:** 73.76 years

**Under-5 mortality:** 16 per 1000

**Adult literacy:** 85 percent



## Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

### Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



#### Largely disrespected <sup>3</sup>

There has been reporting of arbitrary and unlawful killings committed by the government and its agents, often for crimes that are not considered serious. Members of ethnic minority groups disproportionately face such abuses. Almost 1000 people were unlawfully killed this year.

### Freedom from disappearance



#### Largely disrespected <sup>4</sup>

There are many reports of politically motivated abductions that the government refuses to investigate.

### Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



#### Largely disrespected <sup>5</sup>

While the constitution outlaws torture, there are multiple reports of torture in detention centers. Solitary confinement, rape threats, forced virginity tests, sexual humiliation, execution threats, sleep deprivation, electro shock and beatings are only a few of the torture methods used.

### Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



#### Largely disrespected <sup>6</sup>

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention. Nevertheless, such acts occur on a widespread basis throughout the country.

### Freedom from denial of fair public trial



#### Largely disrespected <sup>7</sup>

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. However, members of the judiciary are appointed based on religious criteria and are frequently subject to political interference. In addition, the Supreme Leader exerts influence through appointment of the head of the judiciary.

### Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



#### Largely disrespected <sup>8</sup>

The government routinely violates the constitution's provision of freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and home. Security forces monitor citizens and enter dwellings without authorization.

## Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

*Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.*

### Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)<sup>9</sup>



**Score: 66.52, Rank: 169/ 179 – Highly controlled, limited or intimidated**<sup>10</sup>

Iran is one of the most oppressive countries in the world as far as freedom of information is concerned.

### Freedom from academic censorship



**Largely disrespected**<sup>11</sup>

Academic freedom is restricted. The government has outlawed student organizations and systematically targets universities to suppress activism. The government discourages teaching music, and anything else considered “un-Islamic” in schools.

### Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



**Largely disrespected**<sup>12</sup>

Freedom of assembly and association are restricted. The government has suppresses peaceful protests and blocks social media access.

### Freedom of religion



**Largely disrespected**<sup>13</sup>

Iran is an Islamic theocracy. Ja’afari Shia Islam is the official religion and all laws must be based on this form of Islam. Although proselytizing is prohibited and members of religious minorities are supposed to be free to practice, they are nevertheless often arrested or executed.

### Protection of refugees and stateless persons



**Largely disrespected**<sup>14</sup>

Iran provides services for refugees from Iraq and Afghanistan. However, there are allegations that Afghan refugees are frequently arrested and only certain refugees are permitted to work. Women may not transmit citizenship to their children, thus there are many stateless person cases.

### Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)<sup>15 16</sup>



**6 / 7 – Not free**<sup>17</sup>

The government censors the media, and freedom of information is limited online and offline. Many journalists have been arrested and authorities continue to target online activists. There are various forms of art restrictions as well in Iran.

## Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

*Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..*

### Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)<sup>18</sup>



**6 / 7 – Not free**<sup>19</sup>

In addition to having no fixed term, the Supreme Leader is commander in chief of the army, and appoints the heads of the judiciary; media; and government councils. Elections in Iran are not free and fair. Only political parties loyal state ideology can exist.

## Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

*The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.*

### Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)<sup>20</sup>



**Score: 27%, Rank: 130/ 175 – Highly corrupt**<sup>21</sup>

Corruption is a serious and ubiquitous problem in Iran, and all branches of government suffer from rampant corruption.

## Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

*This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.*

### Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



#### **Largely disrespected**<sup>22</sup>

The government not only restricts human rights groups from investigating allegations of violations, but actually harasses, monitors and arrests members of these groups for holding the government accountable. NGO affiliates are often punished and prohibited from travelling abroad, etc.

## Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

*Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.*

### Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)<sup>23</sup>



#### **Score: 58%, Rank: 141 / 145 – Very unequal rights**<sup>24</sup>

Iran is one of the top five countries in the world for lowest gender equality. Women are discriminated against in every legal realm. Sexual violence is prevalent and conservative veiling of women is compulsory.

### Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)<sup>25</sup>



#### **Score: 76.5%, Rank: 84 / 165 – Protected**<sup>26</sup>

Citizenship in Iran is derived only through the father. Individuals who have reached puberty can be sentenced to execution. Currently there are 160 juveniles facing this punishment. Juveniles may also be married at young ages.

### Rights of persons with disabilities



#### **Largely disrespected**<sup>27</sup>

While the government prohibits discrimination, there is little information regarding the enforcement of this law. The law prohibits blind and deaf people from running for seats in parliament.

### Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



#### **Largely disrespected**<sup>28</sup>

The government has engaged in anti-Semitic activities such as holding a Holocaust cartoon contest. Ethnic and religious minorities do not enjoy equal rights, and are often targeted by the government. Women face discrimination in all aspects of day-to-day life.

### Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



#### **Largely disrespected**<sup>29 30</sup>

The law criminalizes same-sex sexual activity. Discrimination based on sexual orientation/gender identity is legal. LGBTQ information is censored by the government and these communities face life-threatening harassment. The law defines transgendered individuals as mentally ill.

## Section 7: Workers' Rights

*Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.*

### Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



#### **Partially respected**<sup>31</sup>

The law allows for freedom of association, with severe restrictions. Despite these laws, authorities frequently obstruct such freedoms.

### Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



#### **Largely disrespected**<sup>32</sup>

While the law prohibits forced labour, the government does not effectively enforce the law. Conditions of forced labour still occur in construction, domestic labour and agricultural sectors – especially among Afghan men.

## Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



### Partially respected<sup>33</sup>

Despite minimum age laws, child labour still remains a major problem. The government has not adequately enforced its laws and as a result, there are a significant number of children, particularly Afghan children, working as street vendors in urban areas.

## Right to acceptable conditions of work



### Largely disrespected<sup>34</sup>

While there is a minimum wage, it has not kept up with levels of inflation. Many workers are on temporary contracts and lack protections. Afghan workers are sometimes subjected to abusive conditions, non-payment of wages, compulsory overtime, etc.

## Right to employment



### 13.2% - Extreme unemployment<sup>35</sup>

While the unemployment rate in Iran is slowly dropping, it still remains significantly higher than it should be.

<sup>1</sup> A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

<sup>2</sup> Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. March 24, 2014. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>9</sup> The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

<sup>10</sup> "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/iran>.

<sup>11</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> "Iran 2015/2016" Amnesty International. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>.

<sup>13</sup> "Iran." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238666.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

<sup>16</sup> Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed July 19, 2016

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>17</sup> "Iran." Freedom in the World 2016: Iran. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/iran>.

<sup>18</sup> See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>19</sup> "Iran." Freedom in the World 2016: Iran. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/iran>.

<sup>20</sup> Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial

secret. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

<sup>21</sup> "Iran." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2014. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://www.transparency.org/country#BHR>.

<sup>22</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

<sup>24</sup> "Iran." World Economic Forum. Accessed July 20, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=IRN>. See also "Iran 2015/2016." Amnesty International. Accessed July 20, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>.

<sup>25</sup> This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

<sup>26</sup> "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

<sup>27</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>29</sup> "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>30</sup> ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

<sup>31</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Iran." U.S Department of State. Accessed July 19, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253135.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_minimum\\_wages\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country)

<sup>35</sup> "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. Accessed July 19, 2016. [http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS\\_233936/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang-en/index.htm).