



Iran Country Report August 2024 By Sabrina Nelson

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's Islamic Republic has had a theocratic form of governance, in which religious and political authority have been blended. Shia Islam forms the basis of the state's ideology. The Supreme Leader of both religion and state is the Ayatollah Khamenei. The [Supreme Leader](#) governs with an appointed, unelected [Guardian Council](#), half of which is made up of [Islamic jurists](#). Candidates for president and parliament must be approved by the Guardian Council, which often rejects them.

Iran's Islamic Republic has severely restricted social and political freedoms, especially for women. Religious minorities, including Baha'is, Sunni Muslims, Mandeans, Yaresanis (Kaka'i), Christians, Gonabadi Dervishes and Jews, have been severely persecuted and discriminated against.

Baha'is have been particularly targeted, including [closure](#) of Baha'i holy sites and institutions, property [confiscation](#), and the denial of their right to [higher education](#). The treatment of the Baha'is indicates a genocidal intent to destroy them in part as a religious group, including destruction of their cultural identity, heritage, and existence in Iranian society.

Women face systematic [discrimination](#) relating to inheritance, marriage, divorce and family. The Islamic Republic has imposed strict dress codes since the [early 1980s](#). Women are required to wear the hijab and to cover their bodies in loose-fitting clothing in public. Law enforcement agencies, known as the "[morality police](#)," patrol the streets and arrest women who do not follow the dress code.

In 2022, [Jina \(Mahsa\) Amini](#) was detained and beaten to death by Iran's 'morality' police for not properly wearing her [hijab](#). Her death resulted in a massive protests in Iran and around the world. Iranian police and Revolutionary Guards violently suppressed the protests. The beatings, imprisonment, and torture they inflicted were [crimes against humanity](#).

Ethnic minorities are [disproportionately targeted](#) by the security forces. Azerbaijani Turks, Kurds, Ahwazi Arabs, Turkmen, and Baluchis face [widespread](#) discrimination. They are denied education, health care, and other government services. They may not attend school in their minority languages. They face [obstacles](#) in obtaining employment and in exercising their rights to vote and publicly assemble.

LGBTQIA+ people are victims of discrimination and abuse, including flogging, arbitrary imprisonment, and execution. Many are forced to undergo "conversion therapy." Under Iran's penal code, homosexuality is [punishable](#) by death.

President Ebrahim Raisi, who signed the death warrants for 38,000 people during the Islamic Revolution, recently died in a helicopter crash. A new election resulted in [victory](#) for reformist Masoud Pezeshkian who defeated hardliner Saeed Jalili. Pezeshkian [promised](#) to make Iran more prosperous, open, and engaged with the West. Many experts doubt that Pezeshkian will be able to accomplish reforms in a country still ruled by an ultraconservative theocratic establishment.

Genocide Watch considers Iran to be at **Stage 3: Discrimination, Stage 4: Dehumanization, Stage 5: Organization, Stage 8: Persecution, Stage 9: Extermination, and Stage 10: Denial.**

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The UN, EU and the US should pressure President Pezeshkian to abolish policies that discriminate against religious and ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQIA+ people.
- The US, Canada, EU, and UN should sanction Iran for promoting terrorism by Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthis.
- The UN Human Rights Council should authorize an independent fact-finding mission to investigate violations of human rights against religious and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ people, women and girls.
- The UN, EU and the US should engage with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries to pressure Iran to respect and protect religious and ethnic minorities.