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Country Fact Sheet IRAN December 2007

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name

Islamic Republic of Iran (*Jomhori-e Islami-e Irân*).

Geography

Iran is in western Asia, in the Middle East. It is bordered by Turkey and Iraq to the west and Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east; it is bordered by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to the south and Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan to the north. The country's total

area is 1.65 million km². Iran's climate is mostly arid and semi-arid, with a humid rainforest zone along the Caspian coast. Iran has rugged mountain chains surrounding the Central Plateau. There are two large desert regions to the east of the Central Plateau. There are lowland areas along the Caspian, Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman coasts.

Population and density

Population: 65,397,521 people (mid-2007 estimate).

Density: 41.8 people per km² (mid-2005 estimate).

Principal cities and populations (mid-2005 estimates including suburbs)

Tehran (also spelled Teheran) (capital) 7,314,000; Mashad (also spelled Meshad) 2,134,000; Esfahan 1,535,000; Tabriz 1,387,000; Karaj 1,223,000; Shiraz 1,222,000; Qom 1,035,000.

Languages

Persian (Farsi) is the official language. It is spoken as a mother tongue by 60% of the population and as a second language by an additional 15%. Other languages spoken include Azeri Turkish and Turkic dialects (24%), Kurdish (7%), Luri (3%), Arabic (2%), and Balochi (2%).

Religions

Shia Islam (state religion) 89%, Sunni Islam 9 %, other religions including Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i 2%.

Ethnic groups

Persian 60%, Azeri 20%, Kurdish 7%, Lur 3%, Arab 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkmen 2%, Turkish tribal groups 2%, and non-Persian, non-Turkic groups such as Armenians, Assyrians, and Georgians 2%.

Demographics (2007 estimate unless otherwise indicated)

Population growth rate: 0.663%.

Infant mortality rate: 38.12 deaths/1,000 live births.

Life expectancy at birth: 70.56 years.

Fertility rate: 1.71 children born/woman.

Literacy: 83.5% of men and 70.4% of women over the age of 15 can read and write (2004 estimate).

Currency

Iranian Rial (IRR).

9,578.44 Iranian Rials = 1 Canadian dollar¹.

10 Rials = 1 Tomanⁱ.

National holidaysⁱⁱ

The Iranian calendar is a solar calendar which begins each year on the vernal equinox as determined by

astronomical observations from Tehran. The Iranian year 1386 runs from 21 March 2007 to 19 March 2008 of the Gregorian calendar. The year 1387 runs from 20 March 2008 to 20 March 2009.

2007: 8 January (Eid-e Ghadir Khom), 29 January (Tassoua), 30 January (Ashoura), 11 February (Victory of the Islamic Revolution), 10 March (Arbaeen, also Arbain), 18 March (Demise of Prophet Mohammad), 20 March (Martyrdom of Imam Reza and Day of Oil Industry Nationalization), 21-24 March (Noruz, also Norouz – Iranian New Year), 1 April (Islamic Republic Day), 2 April (Thirteenth Day of New Year, Sizdah-bedar), 4 June (Death of Imam Khomeini), 5 June (1963 Uprising), 18 June (Martyrdom of Hazrat Fatemeh), 28 July (Birth of Imam Ali), 11 August (Prophet Mohammad receives his calling), 29 August (Birth of Imam Mahdi), 3 October (Martyrdom of Imam Ali), 13 October (Eid-e Fitr, end of Ramadan), 6 November (Martyrdom of Imam Jafar Sadegh, also Sadeq), 20 December (Eid-e Ghorban, also Qorban, Feast of the Sacrifice), 29 December (Eid-e Ghadir Khom).

2008: 19 January (Ashoura), 11 February (Victory of the Islamic Revolution), 28 February (Arbaeen also Arbain), 8 March (Martyrdom of Imam Reza), 18 March (Demise of Prophet Mohammad), 19 March (Day of Oil Industry Nationalization), 20 to 23 March (Noruz also Norouz – Iranian New Year), 1 April (Islamic Republic Day), 2 April (Thirteenth Day of New Year, Sizdah-bedar), 4 June (Death of Imam Khomeini), 5 June (1963 Uprising), 8 June (Martyrdom of Hazrat Fatemeh), 18 July (Birth of Imam Ali), 30 July (Prophet Mohammad receives his calling), 19 August (Birth of Imam Mahdi), 23 September (Martyrdom of Imam Ali), 1 October (Eid-e Fitr, end of Ramadan), 27 October (Martyrdom Imam Jafar Sadegh also Sadeq), 8 December (Eid-e Ghorban, also Qorban, Feast of the Sacrifice).

Head of state and government

The Supreme Leader (*Velayat-e Faqih* also written *Wali Faqih*), Ali Hoseini-Khamenei (since 4 June 1989) is head of state, Iran's religious leader and military leader. President Mahmud Ahmadinejad (also written Ahmadi-Nejad) is the head of government (since 3 August 2005). The first vice president is Parviz Davudi (since 11 September 2005).

Form of government

Iran is a theocratic republic guided by Islamic principles. The supreme leader holds most executive functions and is appointed for life by the Assembly of Experts (*Majli-e Khobregan*), an elected body of 86 religious scholars.

Legislative structure

Legislative powers are shared between the 290-member elected Islamic Consultative Assembly (*Majlis-e Shura-e Islami*, generally known as the "Majlis" or "Majles") and the 12-member Council of Guardians (also called Council for the Protection of the Constitution). The supreme leader appoints six clerics to the Council of Guardians and the Majlis appoints six non-clerical lawyers from a list of nominees selected by the High Council of the Judiciary. The Council of Guardians vets candidates for the presidency, Majlis, and Assembly of Experts and also supervises national elections.

The Majlis (or National Assembly) is composed of 290 deputies elected by popular vote. Five seats are reserved for special representatives of officially recognized religious minorities: two for Armenian Christians and one each for Assyrian Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. All legislation passed by the Majlis is sent to the 12-member Council of Guardians to ensure that it is in accordance with the constitution and Islamic law.

The Expediency Council (*Shura-ye Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam* also referred to as Council to Determine the Expediency of the Islamic Order) resolves legislative impasses between the Council of Guardians and the Majlis and acts as advisory body on national policy and constitutional issues for the supreme leader.

Administrative divisions

Iran's provinces are administered by governors appointed by the minister of the Interior. Provinces are divided into counties (*shahrestan*), districts and villages. City and village councils have been directly elected since 1999. Iran has 30 provinces (*ostan* – singular; *ostanha* – plural): Ardabil, Azarbayjan-e Gharbi, Azarbayjan-e Sharqi, Bushehr, Chahar Mahall va Bakhtiari, Esfahan, Fars, Gilan, Golestan, Hamadan, Hormozgan, Ilam, Kerman, Kermanshah, Khorasan-e Janubi, Khorasan-e Razavi, Khorasan-e Shemali, Khuzestan, Kohgiluyeh va Buyer Ahmad, Kordestan, Lorestan, Markazi, Mazandaran, Qazvin, Qom, Semnan, Sistan va Baluchestan, Tehran, Yazd, Zanjan.

Judicial system

Judges in Islamic Revolutionary Courts must use Islamic law to reach their verdicts. The constitution requires that the head of the judiciary be a cleric chosen by the supreme leader. In 2007, the head of the judiciary was Ayatollah Sayed Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi. The Supreme Court has 33 branches, each of which is presided over by two judges. The two most active court systems are the traditional courts, which adjudicate civil and criminal offences, and the Islamic Revolutionary courts, which deal with suspected crimes against national security such as "anti-state activity" or "warring with God," as well as crimes involving narcotics, economic crimes and official corruption. The Special Clerical Court is outside the court system and overseen directly by the supreme leader. It deals with crimes committed by members of the clergy, such as "ideological offences." A military court investigates crimes connected with military or security duties. A press court hears complaints against publishers, editors, and writers.

Elections

Iran has universal suffrage and persons 18 years of age or over are eligible to vote. The 86 members of the Assembly of Experts are elected by popular vote for an eight-year term. The last elections were held on 15 December 2006 concurrently with municipal elections.

The 290 members of the Majlis are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. The last election was held 20 February 2004 with a runoff held 7 May 2004. The results by type of party were: conservatives/Islamists 190, reformers 50, independents 43, and religious minorities 5. Sources did not identify the type of party holding the remaining 2 seats. The next election is expected to be held in February 2008.

The president is elected by popular vote for a four-year term. The last election was held on 17 June 2005 with a two-candidate runoff on 24 June 2005. Mahmud Ahmadinejad was elected president with 62% of the vote. The next presidential election is expected in 2009. The constitution permits presidents to serve no more than two consecutive terms and one additional non-consecutive term.

Defence

In November 2006, the regular armed forces totalled an estimated 420,000 personnel:

Army: 350,000 (including 220,000 conscripts).

Navy: 18,000.

Air force: approximately 52,000.

There are 350,000 army reserves.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami*) are thought to total at least 125,000 men, and can draw upon volunteers of the *Basij* Resistance Force. The *Basij* is a volunteer paramilitary group, which officials claim has 11-20 million recruits. It is considered to be a unit of the Revolutionary Guard. The minimum age for recruitment to the *Basij* is 15 years.

There were also some 40,000 paramilitary forces under the command of the Ministry of the Interior.

Military service is compulsory for males at approximately 18 years of age and can be performed in the Iranian Armed Forces or the Revolutionary Guard corps. Compulsory military service is at least 18 months.

Defence expenditure for the Iranian year ending 20 March 2007 was budgeted at 61,200,000 million Iranian Rials.

Media

The constitution provides for freedom of expression and the press, but limits these rights. The penal code provides penalties for anyone who undertakes any form of "propaganda" against the state but does not define propaganda. The press law forbids censorship, but also forbids disseminating information that may damage the Islamic Republic or offend its leaders and religious authorities. It also subjects writers to prosecution for instigating crimes against the state or "insulting Islam."

The chief news agency is the state-controlled Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). Other domestic news agencies are the Fars News Agency (English and Persian), Iranian Quran News Agency (IQNA) and the Mehr News Agency (Persian and English). Several foreign news agencies are represented in Iran, including Agence France-Presse (AFP), Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata (ANSA) from Italy, Reuters, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the New China News Agency (Xinhua), ITAR-TASS from Russia, Anadolu Ajansi from Turkey and Kyodo Tsushin from Japan.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), which answers directly to the office of the Supreme Leader operates a comprehensive monopoly on television and radio over two networks and home-service radio broadcasting in a variety of languages. Although satellite dishes that receive foreign television broadcasts are forbidden, many citizens own them despite the risk of confiscation and in spite of government attempts to block foreign satellite transmissions.

There were approximately 10.7 million television receivers in 2005. There were approximately 18 million Internet users in 2006.

Daily newspapers under direct supervision of the supreme leader include: *Ettela'at* and *Kayhan*. Daily newspapers otherwise connected to government include: *Hamshari* (owned by Tehran city council), *Iran* (connected to IRNA), *Iran Daily* (English, published by IRNA), and *Jam-e Jam* (English, Persian, French, linked to the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting).

Other daily newspapers include *Jomhuri Islami*, *Ressallat* (also spelled *Resalat*), *Siasat-e-Ruz*, *Sharqh*, *Hambastegi Daily*, *Etemaad*, *Aftab-e Yazd*. Other English-language dailies include the *Tehran Times*.

United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱⁱ

Value: 0.746/1 (2004).

Rank: 96 out of 177 countries (2004).

United Nations Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rank^{iv}

Value: 0.736/1 (2004).

Rank: 74 out of 136 countries (2004).

Population below the national poverty line

Information not available.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2007 (CPI)^v

Score: 2.5/10 (2007).

Rank: 131 out of 180 countries surveyed (2007).

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)^{vi}

This information was not included in Transparency International's 2007 report.

[Information compiled from: BBC 18 July 2007; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004; Europa 2007 2007, 2281-2313; Iran N.d.a; Iran N.d.b; Iran Chamber Society N.d.; PHW 2007 2007, 559- 570; TI 26 Sept. 2007; TI 7 Dec. 2006; UK 24 July 2006; UN 2006; US 20 Sept. 2007; US June 2007; US 6 Mar. 2007; US Mar. 2006; Xe.com 16 Nov. 2007]

ⁱ Although the *toman* or *tuman* no longer exists as a unit of currency, in daily life Iranians use this terminology to describe transactions. [\[back\]](#)

ⁱⁱ Some dates may vary by several days due to the different calendars used. [\[back\]](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are as follows: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low human development). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value. [\[back\]](#)

^{iv} The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women. [\[back\]](#)

^v The Transparency International CPI 2007 is calculated using data from 14 surveys of business people and 12 assessments from independent institutions. The data reflect the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts regarding the overall extent of corruption (frequency and/or size of bribes) in the public and political sectors. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (180). [\[back\]](#)

^{vi} The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state. Scores range from 1 (not at all corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt). [\[back\]](#)

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND^{vii}

From 1921 until they were overthrown in 1979 by a widespread revolutionary movement, Iran was

ruled by the Shahs of the Pahlavi dynasty.² Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a Shia cleric and anti-government leader who had been exiled in 1964, returned and became a key figure in the revolution.³ An Islamic republic was proclaimed on 1 April 1979⁴. Khomeini became the supreme leader of the new theocratic state.⁵ Following Khomeini's death in June 1989, the Assembly of Experts chose Ali Khamenei to be the new supreme leader.⁶ After Khomeini's death, divisions between Iran's two main political factions became more apparent.⁷ These groups are described as either "reformers" or "conservatives" in the Western press, depending on their stance towards the interpretation of the constitution and Islamic law - reformers espouse a "liberal" interpretation and conservatives prefer a "strict and literal" one.⁸ Reformers appeared to be gaining ground between 1997 and 2003.⁹ However, conservatives have gradually re-established control over political power centres including in the nation-wide municipal elections in 2003.¹⁰ Prior to the 2004 elections for seats in the Majlis, the Council of Guardians disqualified more than 2,300 of the 8,200 potential candidates who had put their names forward.¹¹ Those disqualified included 80 sitting members of the Majlis¹² and many reformers.¹³ Approximately six hundred other candidates refused to take part in the election as a protest.¹⁴ Consequently, there were no reformist candidates in approximately half the seats, and conservatives achieved a majority in the Majlis.¹⁵ Prior to the 2005 presidential election, the Council of Guardians approved only 6 of 1,014 potential candidates who registered, thereby disqualifying all women and those critical of the leadership.¹⁶ There were complaints from candidates and the Ministry of the Interior regarding irregularities during polling, including the involvement of paramilitaries in the counting of votes and of members of the Revolutionary Guard giving speeches in favour of the conservative mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.¹⁷ Ahmadinejad was elected president.¹⁸ The conflict between reformists and conservatives continued through elections for the Assembly of Experts and municipal councils, as well as by-elections for the Majlis, all of which occurred in December 2006.¹⁹

There have been bombings and sabotage of oil installations²⁰ as well as riots in those regions of Iran that are populated by minority ethnic groups.²¹ There has also been an increase in the number of executions in Iran since the beginning of 2007²² including at least one execution by stoning.²³

In 2002, US President George W. Bush declared Iran part of an "axis of evil."²⁴ US officials have accused Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons and of trying to undermine US efforts in Iraq.²⁵ Iran's nuclear program has been a topic of international concern since 2002 when the Mujaheddin-e Khalq released satellite photographs that showed uranium enrichment facilities.²⁶ Iran participated in diplomatic talks with Britain, France, and Germany in October 2003.²⁷ The UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Iran in December 2006 and widened the sanctions in March 2007.²⁸ In April 2007, the US renewed its opinion of Iran as "the most active state sponsor of terrorism."²⁹

^{vii}As English is not official in Iran, names of parties are translations and may not be consistent among sources. [\[back\]](#)

3. POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties are permitted under the constitution,³⁰ but they are required to accept the principle of rule of the supreme leader.³¹ The main political formations are loose groupings which present candidate lists for legislative elections with or without formal party registration.³² The same person may be a member of more than one party.³³ Most parties do not have detailed platforms, and some exist for only a short time such as around an election for various bodies or for the presidency.³⁴

Builders of an Islamic Iran Council, also known as Developers of an Islamic Iran Council (Etelaf-e Abadgaran-e Iran-e Eslami,³⁵ Abadgaran³⁶):

This group is not registered as a political party³⁷ but it is believed to be the most influential conservative grouping currently in Iran and has "overshadowed" other conservative groups.³⁸ It sometimes uses other names outside of Tehran.³⁹ It won 14 out of 15 council seats in Tehran in 2003 and a majority in the February 2004 Majlis election,⁴⁰ including all 30 Tehran seats.⁴¹ This group includes former officers in the Revolutionary Guards, and members of the Society of Islamic Engineers.⁴² One leader of this group is Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel who is the speaker of the Majlis and the son-in-law of the Supreme Leader.⁴³ Other leaders are Mehdi Kouchakzadeh and Hossein Fadaei, both of whom are members of the Majlis.⁴⁴ Both President Ahmadinejad and deputy speaker in the Majlis, Reza Bahonar, are affiliated with this party.⁴⁵

Islamic Coalition Party⁴⁶ (ICP⁴⁷, Hezb-e Motalefeh-ye Eslami⁴⁸) also known as the Islamic Coalition Society (Jameyat-e Motalefe-ye Eslami,⁴⁹ Motalefeh⁵⁰):

This conservative group was founded in 1963⁵¹ as a coalition of members of Islamic clubs, conservative clerics and merchants.⁵² Many of its members joined the Islamic Republic party (IRP) after the 1979 revolution.⁵³ ICP resumed activities after the dissolution of the IRP.⁵⁴ Members control much of the non-oil economic sector and they are against political reforms, but divided regarding economic reforms.⁵⁵ Leaders are Mohammad Nabi Habibi⁵⁶ (Secretary General of the party)⁵⁷ and Habibollah Asgarowladi (Former Commerce Minister in the government).⁵⁸

Society of Combatant Clergy, JRM (Jam'e Rohaniat Mobarez⁵⁹) also known as Tehran Militant Clergy Association⁶⁰ (Jameh-ye Ruhaniyat-e Mobarez-e Tehran),⁶¹ or Ruhaniyat⁶²:

This "hard-line conservative"⁶³ group was formed in the late 1970's in support of the then-exiled Ayatollah Khomeini and was the main voice of political clergy after the revolution.⁶⁴ Members are conservative on political and cultural issues but liberal on economic matters.⁶⁵ Although the party supported economic reforms in the 1990's, it believed that political control should stay with Iran's religious leaders.⁶⁶ Leaders include Ali Akbar Nateqnuri (former speaker of Majlis),⁶⁷ Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-kani (founder),⁶⁸ Assadollah Badamchian.⁶⁹ Ayatollahs Ali-Akbar Hashemirafsanjani and Ahmad Jannati are also members, as is Hojatolislam Hassan Rohani.⁷⁰

May 23 Movement⁷¹ also known as 2nd Khordad Front⁷²

This is a coalition of approximately 20 groups espousing political reform that was formed in 2000 to support then-president Khatami.⁷³ Groups in the coalition include: Islamic Iran Participation Front (IIPF) (Jebbeh-ye Masharekat-e Iran-e Islami⁷⁴), Executives of Construction Party (Kargozaran), Solidarity Party, Islamic Labour Party, Mardom Salari, Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (MIRO), and Militant Clerics Society (MCS/Ruhaniyun).⁷⁵ However, once reformists had a majority in the Majlis, divisions arose on major issues such as whether to boycott the 2004 Majlis election.⁷⁶ They could not agree on a unified candidate list for the Tehran municipal elections or on a single candidate for the presidential election of 2005.⁷⁷

Islamic Iran Participation Front (Jebhe-ye Mosharekat-e Iran-e Eslami, IIPF)⁷⁸

This party was established in 1998 to present reformist candidates in the 1999 municipal elections⁷⁹ and has been described as "Iran's main pro-reform party."⁸⁰ It includes former members of the Executives of Construction (also known as Servants of Construction), MIRO and former student activists.⁸¹ Approximately 80 of its members were elected in the 2000 Majlis elections.⁸² Its members advocate political reform including more freedom for the media, women's rights, and engagement with the West but are divided with respect to economic reform.⁸³ Prominent members have been targeted and harassed by the judiciary, paramilitaries, and parallel security services.⁸⁴ For example, one of its members, Abbas Abdi was sentenced to four years in prison in 2002 for publishing a poll.⁸⁵ Between 2001 and 2004, the party adopted the position that reform within the current system was not possible and advocated changing the constitutional framework.⁸⁶ Most IIPF candidates were disqualified from standing in the 2004 Majlis elections.⁸⁷ The secretary general is Mohammed Reza Khatami (brother of former president Khatami).⁸⁸ Other leaders include Mohsen Mirdamadi,⁸⁹ Saeed Hajarian,⁹⁰ Abbas Abdi,⁹¹ and Mustafa Tajzadeh.⁹²

Islamic Revolution Mujaheddin Organization (IRMO)⁹³ also known as Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution Organization (MIRO)⁹⁴ and Organization of the Mujahidin of the Islamic Revolution⁹⁵ (Sazeman-e Mojahedin Enqelab-e Eslami):⁹⁶

This group originally formed after the Islamic revolution and re-emerged in the 1990's.⁹⁷ IRMO/MIRO supported Khatami in the 1997 presidential elections and formed part of the reformist group, "May 23 Movement," in the 2000 Majlis election.⁹⁸ Member Hashem Aghajari was convicted of apostasy (the act or fact of forsaking one's faith, ideology, or principles) and sentenced to death in November 2002 due to a speech viewed as anti-regime.⁹⁹ This penalty was later reduced to five years imprisonment.¹⁰⁰ Leaders of the party are Behzad Nabavitabrizi (former deputy speaker of the Majlis),¹⁰¹ Mohsen Armin and Mohammad Salamati.¹⁰²

Other Parties¹⁰³

Association of Technocrats; Daftar-e Takhim-e Vahdat, DTV (Office for Consolidation of Unity or Office for Strengthening Unity); Fedayin-e-Khalq (Organization of the Iranian People's Fedayeen Majority); Hezb-e Etemad-e Melli (National Confidence Party); Hezb-e-Komunist Irân (Communist Party of Iran); Hezb-e Eslami-ye Kar (Islamic Labour Party, ILP); Hezb-e Etedal va Toseh (Party of Moderation and Development); Hezb-e Irân-e Sarfaraz (Proud Iran Party); Hezb-e Hambastegi-ye Irân-e Eslami (Islamic Iran Solidarity Party); Iranian Nation Party (INP); Jame'eye- Eslaami-e Mohandesin (Islamic Engineers Society); Jebhe-e Melli (National Front); Kargozaran-e Sazandegi (Servants of Construction or Executives of Construction, SC); Khaneh-ye Kargar (Workers' House); Komala; Majma'-e Niruha-ye Khat-e Imam (Assembly of the Followers of the Imam's Line; Majma' Ruhaniun Mobarez (Assembly of Combatant Clergy or Militant Clerics Association, MRM); Marze Por-Gohar (Glorious Frontiers Party); Nehzat-e Azadi-e Irân (Liberation Movement of Iran); Pan-Iranist Party; Sazmane Peykar dar Rahe Azadieh Tabaqe Kargar (Organization Struggling for the Freedom of the Working Class); Tudeh Party (Party of the Masses).

4. ARMED GROUPS

Helpers of the Party of God¹⁰⁴ also known as Devotees of the Party of God: ¹⁰⁵ (Ansar-e Hizballah¹⁰⁶ also written Ansar-e Hezbollah¹⁰⁷ or Ansar-e Hezbollah¹⁰⁸)

This group started as a militant youth movement of the urban poor around the time of the 1979 revolution.¹⁰⁹ Now it is a vigilante paramilitary group, led by Masud Dehnamaki and supported by extreme conservative members of the government,¹¹⁰ including the secretary of the Council of Guardians, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati.¹¹¹ Its members include veterans of the Iran-Iraq War and formers members of the Basij.¹¹² This group seeks to "enforce Islamic standards."¹¹³ They have attacked pro-reform speakers and clashed with student demonstrators.¹¹⁴ Members are also known to attack people seen to be breaking official social restrictions.¹¹⁵

People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran,¹¹⁶ PMOI,¹¹⁷ MKO,¹¹⁸ Holy Warriors of the People,¹¹⁹ (Mujahidin-e Khalq Organization MEK)¹²⁰

This group's goal is to overthrow the current regime in Iran and establish a democratic, socialist Islamic republic.¹²¹ At one time it claimed 100,000 members, but in 2007, it is believed to have much less support.¹²² Its leaders are Massoud Rajavi, who is based in Iraq and Maryam Rajavi, who is based in France.¹²³ It was formed in 1965 in opposition to the Shah and it was part of the revolutionary forces which overthrew the monarchist regime in 1979.¹²⁴ It was excluded from the Islamic regime and its leaders were forced to go underground and then to leave Iran.¹²⁵ It has been based in Paris since 1981 and in Baghdad since 1986.¹²⁶ In Iraq it maintained military camps until the fall of Saddam Hussein's government in 2003.¹²⁷ The armed militant wing is known as the National Liberation Army¹²⁸ (NLA).¹²⁹ It is a member of The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI).¹³⁰ The United States Department of State considers the NCRI to be the "political arm" of the MEK.¹³¹ This organization is on the US government's list of "terrorist organizations"¹³² as well as the Canadian government's list of "entities associated with terrorism."¹³³ A number of assassinations in Iran which occurred between 1979 and 1999 have been attributed to this group.¹³⁴

Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) also known as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK)¹³⁵

This socialist group founded in 1945¹³⁶ strives for Kurdish national rights within a democratic and federal Iran.¹³⁷ It has approximately 95,000 members and its leader is Mustafa Hijri.¹³⁸ It is an armed group targeted by Iranian government forces.¹³⁹ Some of its leaders have been killed in Iraq and in Europe.¹⁴⁰ Despite being officially "outlawed," this organization openly supported some candidates in Kurdish areas of Iran in the 1999 municipal elections.¹⁴¹

5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The next Majlis election is expected to be held February 2008.¹⁴² The next presidential election is expected to be held in 2009. ¹⁴³

ENDNOTES

¹ xe.com 16 Nov. 2007. [\[back\]](#)

² US June 2007. [\[back\]](#)

³ US June 2007. [\[back\]](#)

- ⁴ US Mar. 2006, 2. [\[back\]](#)
- ⁵ US June 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ⁶ US June 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ⁷ US Mar. 2006, 3. [\[back\]](#)
- ⁸ US Mar. 2006, 3; *Europa 2007* 2007 2304. [\[back\]](#)
- ⁹ US 20 Sept. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁰ *PHW 2007* 2007, 565. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹¹ *PHW 2007* 2007, 565. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹² *PHW 2007* 2007, 565. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹³ UK 10 Aug. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁴ UK 10 Aug. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁵ UK 10 Aug. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁶ US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec.3. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁷ US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec.3.; *PHW 2007* 2007, 565; RFE/RL 19 June 2005. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁸ UK 10 Aug. 2007; BBC 18 July 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ¹⁹ US 6 Mar. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ²⁰ AI 18 Oct. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ²¹ *Europa 2007* 2007, 2286-2287. [\[back\]](#)
- ²² AI 18 Oct. 2007; BBC 18 Oct. 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ²³ AI 9 July 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ²⁴ BBC 18 July 2007; *PHW 2007* 2007, 564 [\[back\]](#)
- ²⁵ BBC 18 July 2007. [\[back\]](#)
- ²⁶ *PHW 2007* 2007, 564. [\[back\]](#)
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