



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	IRAN
Title	Freedom of movement and right of employment for converts from Islam to Christianity, including for returnees
Reference period	July 2022 to 7 August 2024
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Background information2. Right of employment3. Freedom of movement
Date of completion	9 August 2024
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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Iran

Freedom of movement and right of employment for converts from Islam to Christianity, including for returnees

Detailed information on freedom of religion, conversion, on the situation of religious minorities, including Christians and converts to Christianity can be found in the EUAA Country of Origin Information Report: [Iran – Country Focus](#), published in June 2024.

Additional information on freedom of religion, including on conversion and converts, can be found in the EUAA Query response [Situation of atheists and non-religious individuals, including legislation, treatment by state actors and society, availability of state protection](#), published on 17 November 2023, and in the EUAA Query response [People convicted with religious offences](#), published on 8 February 2023.

1. Background information

Article 12 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran enshrines ‘Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school’ as the official state religion.¹ Article 12 of the Constitution stipulates that ‘Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities’.² Specifically, as noted by the United States Department of State (USDOS) annual report on religious freedom in Iran, the state recognizes Christian ‘citizens who are Armenian or Assyrian Christians, because the presence of these groups in the country predates Islam, or of citizens who can prove they or their families were Christian prior to the 1979 revolution’.³ According to sources, since renouncing Islam and converting to another religion is prohibited in Iran,⁴ Christian converts are not an officially recognized group.⁵

Sources reported that the government prohibited existing churches of the recognized Christian community that accepted the admission of Christian converts, and churches that refused to comply were closed.⁶ Christian converts consequently either practiced ‘in secret’,⁷

¹ Iran, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

² Iran, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

⁴ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#); RFE/RL, No Place For Converts: Iran's Persecuted Christians Struggle To Keep The Faith, 2 May 2022, [url](#)

⁵ IranWire, Conscience Held Captive: The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 July 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#); Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 5; RFE/RL, No Place For Converts: Iran's Persecuted Christians Struggle To Keep The Faith, 2 May 2022, [url](#)

⁶ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#); Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 15; Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 17, 20

⁷ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#); BBC News, Iran: The Christians celebrating Easter in secret, 1 April 2024, [url](#)



‘in isolation’,⁸ or gathered in informal meetings in private homes, referred to as ‘house-churches’.⁹

2. Right of employment

Sources reported that Christian converts in Iran faced ‘repression’¹⁰ and were targeted mainly by the state authorities,¹¹ while in some cases by their families, communities, and society.¹² Christian converts were also reported to face restrictions, including ‘risk of [...] unemployment’¹³ and lack of work opportunities, due to obstacles created by the authorities.¹⁴

According to a 2021 report by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC), Christian converts faced ‘systematic employment discrimination in the public and private sectors.’¹⁵ The same source further added that ‘Iranian citizens are usually required to declare their religion in employment documents and to attend congregational prayers’, in which Christian converts were prevented to be employed or lost their work.¹⁶

Open Doors, an organisation working on supporting Christians who are subjected to religious discrimination,¹⁷ noted in a 2023 report on Iran, that in the case ‘a convert’s new faith becomes known, they are very likely to lose their employment’, and particularly if they were arrested.¹⁸

Sources also noted that Christians, including Christian converts, reported their employment was terminated following their arrest by the authorities,¹⁹ while Article 18 indicated that the converts’ employers frequently ‘faced pressure from Ministry of Intelligence agents’ to dismiss them from work.²⁰

According to USDOS annual report on religious freedom in Iran, covering 2023, non-Muslims could not ‘[b]y law’ serve in the judiciary, the security services or as public school principals.²¹ The same source also noted that ‘[o]fficials screen candidates for elected offices and

⁸ Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), p. 17

⁹ Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 15; Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 17, 20

¹⁰ IranWire, Religious Minorities Overlooked in Iran’s Presidential Campaigns, 28 June 2024, [url](#); UN General Assembly, Note by the Secretary-General: Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 24 August 2023, [url](#), para. 36

¹¹ Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), pp. 3, 5; Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information on Iran, September 2023, [url](#), pp. 75 – 76

¹² Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 5; Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 24, 35, 45

¹³ IranWire, Conscience Held Captive: The State of Religious Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 31 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁴ Iran International, Iranian Christian Protest Violation Of Their Rights To Work, 5 January 2022, [url](#)

¹⁵ IHRDC, Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran, 12 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁶ IHRDC, Living in the Shadows of Oppression: The Situation of Christian Converts in Iran, 12 August 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷ Open Doors, About, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸ Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 19, 54

¹⁹ Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 31; Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), p. 7

²⁰ Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 31

²¹ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#)



applicants for public sector employment based on their adherence to and knowledge of Islam and loyalty to the Islamic Republic (*gozinesh* review requirements), although members of recognized religious minorities may serve in the lower ranks of government if they meet these loyalty requirements.²² However, government employees who did not comply with these principles and rules ‘are subject to penalties and may be fired or barred from work in a particular sector’.²³

3. Freedom of movement

Information on the freedom of movement for converts from Islam to Christianity, including for returnees, was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

Sources reported on cases of Christian converts convicted with religion-related offences, who were sentenced to imprisonment as well as faced travel restrictions and bans on exiting the country.²⁴ Christian converts were also reported to face pressure by the authorities to leave Iran following their arrest or release from detention.²⁵

²² USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

²³ USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

²⁴ HRANA, Christian Convert Laleh Sa’ati Receives Prison Sentence and Travel Restriction, 26 March 2024, [url](#); Article 18, 10-year sentence for Iranian-Armenian for ‘disturbing’ Christian teaching, 5 May 2022, [url](#)

²⁵ Article18, ‘Faceless Victims: Rights Violations Against Christians in Iran’, February 2024, [url](#), p. 21; Open Doors, Iran: Full Country Dossier, December 2023, [url](#), pp. 7, 38



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