



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Iran</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	July 2022 to 9 August 2024
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">1. Background information</a></li><li><a href="#">2. Treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad</a></li></ol>
<b>Date of completion</b>	12 August 2024
<b>Query Code</b>	Q55-2024
<b>Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)</b>	N/A



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Cite as: EUAA, Country of Origin Information Query, Iran, Treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad, 12 August 2024, [url](#)



## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Iran

### Treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad

#### 1. Background information

Since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, several different intelligence agencies have been created to conduct domestic and foreign surveillance.<sup>1</sup> According to Article 176 of the Constitution of Iran, ‘a Supreme Council for National Security presided over by the President shall be constituted to fulfil [...] coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics, intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defense and security policies’.<sup>2</sup>

Iran has two main intelligence agencies: the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), which is under the executive branch, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Intelligence Organisation (IRGC-IO), which is under the armed forces.<sup>3</sup> The IRGC-IO reports to the supreme leader, and ‘as an ideological counterweight’, operates alongside the Ministry of Intelligence, which reports to the president.<sup>4</sup> Due to the broad scope of their agendas, the two organs’ missions overlap significantly.<sup>5</sup>

Iranian Intelligence agencies reportedly collect information online, intercept electronic communications, and remove content critical of the Islamic Republic from social media. They also employ classic collection strategies, including interrogation, wiretapping, and tracking people.<sup>6</sup> Intelligence officers commonly interview suspects’ family members, friends, and coworkers.<sup>7</sup>

Specific information on the presence and practices of the Iranian intelligence agencies in Lorestan province could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

Detailed information on Iranian intelligence services and their practices, and on the situation of Christian converts in Iran can be found in the EUAA Country of Origin Information Report: [Iran – Country Focus](#), published in June 2024

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<sup>1</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran’s Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> Iran, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>3</sup> USIP, Profiles: Iran’s Intelligence Agencies, 5 April 2023, [url](#)

<sup>4</sup> CEP, IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps), 6 June 2023, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>5</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> USIP, Explainer: tactics of Iranian intelligence, 17 February 2023, [url](#)



Information on the treatment of Christian converts in Iran can be found in the EUAA Query response [Freedom of movement and right of employment for converts from Islam to Christianity, including for returnees](#), published on 9 August 2024, and in the EUAA Query response [Situation of returnees from Western countries who converted from Islam to Christianity, including those who have a family with a Christian spouse and children; treatment by the state](#), published on 9 August 2024.

## **2. Treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad**

Information on the treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by intelligence agents in Lorestan province, including the city of Khorramabad, could not be found among the sources consulted by the EUAA within the time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

Article 12 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran enshrines ‘Islam and the Twelver Ja’fari school’ as the official state religion.<sup>8</sup> Article 12 of the Constitution stipulates that ‘Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities’.<sup>9</sup> 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’.<sup>10</sup> According to sources, since renouncing Islam and converting to another religion is prohibited in Iran,<sup>11</sup> Christian converts are not an officially recognized group.<sup>12</sup>

According to a 2024 joint report by Article18, ‘Christians who actively express their faith – and especially converts from Islam – are subject to arrest and prosecution by the State’.<sup>13</sup> According to an Iranian Christian who fled the country, ‘[a] prohibition on preaching in Persian in the churches was announced by the intelligence organizations.’<sup>14</sup> Some of the converts to Christianity went to the church secretly as the Islamic Republic was monitoring them.<sup>15</sup> Iranian intelligence officers also monitored activities of converts online and used the information ‘against them as evidence of ‘acting against national security’ or ‘espionage for Zionist regimes’.’<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Iran, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> Iran, Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> USDOS, 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 30 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> 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](#)

<sup>12</sup> 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](#)

<sup>13</sup> Article18, ‘Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 3

<sup>14</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>15</sup> Fox News, Iran violently clamps down on Christians amid reports of torture, fines and floggings, 3 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> OpenDoors, World watch list 2024, situation of religious freedom for Christians, 13 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2



In 2023, 166 Christians were reportedly arrested in Iran.<sup>17</sup> Most of the arrested Christians (including converts) ‘were not informed of the reason for their arrest, neither did they receive any charges’<sup>18</sup>

Sources reported that the government prohibited existing churches of the recognized Christian community to accept the admission of Christian converts, and churches that refused to comply were closed.<sup>19</sup> The General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran published in January 2023 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands provided relevant information on treatment of converts from Islam to Christianity by state authorities, including intelligence officers.<sup>20</sup> Confidential sources consulted by the same source indicated that ‘evangelising or allowing converts to attend their religious services is forbidden.’<sup>21</sup> To ensure strict compliance with this rule, authorities monitor church activities through surveillance, summon church leaders for questioning, and require churches to submit member lists.<sup>22</sup>

In 2022, the US Department of State (USDOS) reported that intelligence officers monitored religious activities and that the Ministry of Intelligence and Security arrested and detained members of religious minority groups, ‘subjecting detainees to torture’.<sup>23</sup>

Cases of arrests of Christian converts by intelligence officers, as reported by sources, include:

- In May 2024, a Christian convert was detained for 19 days without any charges or information from Iranian authorities following his arrest by intelligence forces at his home in Karaj, Alborz Province, where his personal belongings were confiscated.<sup>24</sup>
- In February 2024, a Christian convert who had returned to Iran in 2017, was arrested by the intelligence officers in Tehran, and taken to Evin Prison after being summoned several times before her arrest.<sup>25</sup> In March 2024, she was sentenced to two years in prison, with an additional two-year travel ban upon release.<sup>26</sup> A local news source in May 2024 added that she was denied access to medical facilities and specialized examinations in prison.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 18

<sup>18</sup> Article18, “Faceless Victims, rights violations against Christians in Iran, 19 February 2024, [url](#), p. 8

<sup>19</sup> 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

<sup>20</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran, September 2023, [url](#), pp. 10 – 11, 74

<sup>21</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran, September 2023, [url](#), p. 74

<sup>22</sup> Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report on Iran, September 2023, [url](#), p. 74

<sup>23</sup> USDOS, 2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Iran, 15 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> Iranwire, Christian Convert in Iran Detained for 19 Days, Charges Unclear, 14 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> Article18, Christian convert baptised in Malaysia given prison sentence on return to Iran, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> Asia News, Easter in Iran: convert asylum seeker sentenced to two years after returning home, 30 March 2024, [url](#); Article18, Christian convert baptised in Malaysia given prison sentence on return to Iran, 26 March 2024, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> Iran International, Jailed Iranian Christian Denied Medical Care, 11 May 2024, [url](#)



- In December 2023, three Christian converts were arrested by Iranian intelligence officers in Karaj, the capital of Alborz Province.<sup>28</sup> One of them was released the same day, while the other two were released in January 2024 after each paying approximately 3 000 USD [about EUR 2 747].<sup>29</sup>
- In May 2023, intelligence officers arrested three Christian converts and held them 'incommunicado' at Tehran's Evin Prison for 40 days.<sup>30</sup> Claiming to have search warrants, intelligent officers seized personal effects, 'including mobile phones, laptops, books and pamphlets "without giving any explanation"'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> MEC, Iran: Convert brothers detained by Iranian intelligence, 9 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> Article 18, Brothers face 'propaganda' charges under amended Article 500, 30 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> Article 18, Three Christian women held incommunicado for 40 days face court hearing on unknown charges, 30 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> Article 18, Three Christian women held incommunicado for 40 days face court hearing on unknown charges, 30 June 2023, [url](#)



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Women; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United States —  
Department of Justice;