



Home Office

# **Country Policy and Information Note**

## **Iran: Women fearing domestic violence**

**Version 1.0**

**July 2017**

# Preface

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and policy guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the policy guidance contained with this note; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

## Country information

COI in this note has been researched in accordance with principles set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#) and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), namely taking into account its relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability.

All information is carefully selected from generally reliable, publicly accessible sources or is information that can be made publicly available. Full publication details of supporting documentation are provided in footnotes. Multiple sourcing is normally used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, and that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided. Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source is not an endorsement of it or any views expressed.

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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# Policy guidance

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of domestic violence from non-state actors and lack of effective protection from the Iranian authorities.

### 1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 In addition to this guidance decision makers should also refer to the Asylum Instruction on [Gender issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 2. Consideration of issues

### 2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 2.2 Particular social group

2.2.1 Women fearing domestic violence in Iran form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because they share an immutable (or innate) characteristic, their gender, which cannot be changed; and have a distinct identity in Iran which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

2.2.2 Although women in Iran form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed is whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.

2.2.3 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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### 2.3 Assessment of risk

2.3.1 There are no available statistics on the prevalence of domestic violence in Iran but it is reportedly a serious and widespread problem. Several sources note high rates of domestic and sexual violence against women (see [Prevalence of Domestic Violence](#)).

2.3.2 The onus is on the person to substantiate a claim that they would face a real risk of domestic violence on return to Iran.

2.3.3 For further information and guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 2.4 Protection

2.4.1 There is no specific law in Iran which criminalises domestic violence. Victims who wish to report domestic violence are required to file a complaint under the criminal provisions relating to bodily assault. This includes meeting the evidentiary requirements of providing two male witnesses to the assault. Police and judges are sometimes reluctant to take action in domestic violence cases, viewing them as family problems. Instead of filing charges, police typically responded by encouraging the parties to reconcile and to return the victims to their abuser(s) (see [Protection](#)).

2.4.2 Where claims of domestic violence are proven they are often not adequately punished. The sentence tends to be a fine unless the offence committed is found to have disrupted public order (see [Protection](#) and [Avenues of redress](#)).

2.4.3 Obtaining a divorce to escape an abusive marriage may also be difficult for a woman. They must prove a threat to their life and safety. This will be made more difficult by the new proposed family bill which provides judges with bonuses for the number of divorce cases before them which result in reconciliation. The courts often therefore send women who are in danger of domestic violence back to their violent husbands (see [Protection](#)).

2.4.4 Effective state protection is in general unlikely to be available. However decision makers must assess whether effective protection is available in relation to the particular circumstances and profile of the person. Any past persecution and past lack of effective protection may indicate that effective protection would not be available in the future. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would be unable to access effective protection.

2.4.5 For further information on the effectiveness of the security forces in Iran see the country policy and information note, [Iran: Background Information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#)).

2.4.6 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 2.5 Internal relocation

2.5.1 Women can face difficulties in Iran travelling alone and can face official and societal discrimination when doing so in rural areas. Men are able to restrict their wives movements outside of the home and women are required to seek permission from their spouse before applying for a passport or travelling abroad. Reports also suggest that men are able to stop their wives from travelling even if they have previously given their consent (see the country policy and information note, [Iran: Background Information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#)).

- 2.5.2 Internal relocation is likely to be unreasonable for many women but may be reasonable depending on the individual facts on the case. The onus is on the person to show that they are unable to internally relocate.
- 2.5.3 For further information and guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)

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## 2.6 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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## 3. Policy summary

- 3.1.1 Domestic violence is reportedly a serious and widespread problem although there are no available statistics on its prevalence.
- 3.1.2 There are no laws which criminalise domestic violence. Victims who wish to report domestic violence are required to file a complaint and meet the evidentiary requirements of providing two male witnesses to the assault.
- 3.1.3 Police and judges are sometimes reluctant to take action in domestic violence cases, viewing them as family problems. Even when claims of domestic violence are proven they are often not adequately punished. Women may be able to obtain a divorce to escape an abusive marriage although they must prove a threat to their life and safety.
- 3.1.4 Effective state protection may be available for women fearing domestic violence in some cases. However, each case needs to be carefully considered on its facts.
- 3.1.5 Internal relocation is likely to be unreasonable for many women in Iran. However, each case needs to be carefully considered on its facts with regard to the availability of state support, employment and family members or friends in other parts of the country.
- 3.1.6 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'.

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# Country information

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## 4. Legislation and Government initiatives

### 4.1 Legislation

- 4.1.1 The US State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016- Iran published in March 2017 noted that: 'Rape is illegal and subject to strict penalties, including death, but it remained a problem. The law considers sex within marriage consensual by definition and, therefore, does not address spousal rape, including in cases of forced marriage.' The report also notes that 'The law does not prohibit domestic violence.'<sup>1</sup>
- 4.1.2 Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre (IHRDC) report 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women' dated 8 March 2013 stated that: 'Article 1108 stresses that, if the wife refuses to tamkin (obey her husband) without a reasonable excuse, she loses her right to the nafaqa (maintenance). A wife's disobedience can also create legal grounds for polygamy, divorce, or domestic violence (wife battery).'<sup>2</sup>
- 4.1.3 Amnesty International noted in their report 'You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran' dated March 2015 that:
- 'Discriminatory provisions exposing women to violence extend beyond the Islamic Penal Code. According to the Civil Code, the husband is the head of the family (Article 1105) and consequently a woman is obliged to obey her husband. If a woman refuses to comply with the "duties of marriage" without a legitimate reason, she is not entitled to spousal maintenance (Article 1108). Refusal to "submit" (tamkin) can include a wide range of conduct such as "refusal to have sex" and "going out of the house without permission". Moreover, under the Civil Code, men have the exclusive right to determine their wives' place of residence (Article 1114). A wife will be considered "disobedient" (nashezeh) and not entitled to alimony if she leaves her husband's place of residence (Articles 1005 and 1108). A woman can be given permission to leave the marital house only if she can prove to a court of law a risk to her body or "honour". A woman denied such permission risks finding herself with no choice but to endure domestic violence or lose her right to alimony.'<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> US State Department, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016- Iran', 3 March 2017 <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265496>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, 'Gender Inequality and Discrimination: The Case of Iranian Women', 8 March 2013, <http://iranhrdc.org/english/publications/legal-commentary/1000000261-gender-inequality-and-discrimination-the-case-of-iranian-women.html#9>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, 'You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran', March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE131112015ENGLISH.pdf>. Date accessed 15 May 2017.



## 4.2 Government initiatives

### 4.2.1 The UN General Assembly's report on the 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran' dated 30 September 2016 stated that:

'Recommendations urging the Government to consider ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to reconsider provisions of the Islamic Penal Code that discriminate against women and to criminalize domestic violence, including marital rape, were rejected. In its response, the Government notes that the law allows women to place conditions on marriages that are not contrary to marriage contract requirements, and referred to the establishment of 24 "rehabilitation centres" and 31 "health centres" throughout the country for women and girls who have been subjected to domestic violence. The Government also maintains that "the issue of marital rape was not considered by many countries and cultures and mostly raised by extreme feminists".'<sup>4</sup>

### 4.2.2 Amnesty International noted in their annual report for 2016/17 that:

'In September [2016], Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei issued national family policies promoting early marriage, repeated childbearing, fewer divorces and greater compliance to "traditional" roles of women as housewives and men as breadwinners. The policies raised concern that women victims of domestic violence may face further marginalization and increased pressure to "reconcile" with abusers and remain in abusive marital relationships.'<sup>5</sup>

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## 5. Prevalence of domestic violence

### 5.1.1 Amnesty International's report 'You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran' dated March 2015 stated that:

'Iran's authorities not only fail to systematically collect, analyze and disseminate data on violence against women, but also appear to suppress the production and dissemination of such data, in violation of their international obligation to collect data on all forms of violence against women.

'The most detailed quantitative study on the prevalence of domestic violence in Iran was conducted by the Presidential Centre for Participation of Women and the Ministry of Science between 2001 and 2003, a summary of which was made available to the public in 2004. Based on a survey of 12,596 women in the capitals of 28 provinces across the country, the study provided solid evidence of the prevalence of domestic violence, if not a complete picture. According to the summary, 37.8 per cent of respondents had suffered acts of physical abuse such as slapping, kicking, hitting, and beating from the beginning of their marital relationship, and 52.7 per cent

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<sup>4</sup> UN General Assembly, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', 30 September 2016, (accessed via refworld) <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5829cf1f4.html>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, 'Amnesty International's Report 2016/17- The State of the World's Human Rights; Iran' 22 February 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.



had suffered psychological abuse such as intimidation, swearing, repeated belittlement and humiliation. More than 27 per cent reported having experienced “restrictions on their social, intellectual and educational growth” which included controlling or limiting contacts with friends and family and preventing them from pursuing employment, education and participation in public affairs. The survey also revealed resistance to discussion of sexual violence, as only 10.2 per cent of women reported having experienced sexual violence. The real figure is believed to be much higher given the laws on “submission” (tamkin), which require women to satisfy the sexual needs of their husbands at all times. In November 2014, Vice-President on Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi announced that the full report was “entirely missing”. No government body appears to be in possession of a paper or electronic copy of any of the report’s 32 volumes and media reports indicate that the report has been “completely destroyed”.<sup>6</sup>

- 5.1.2 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service from a range of sources, ‘Violence against women and honour- related violence in Iran’, dated 26 June 2015, stated that: ‘There are no proper statistics available on domestic violence in Iran. Information provided by the state is very sporadic and limited, but according to figures published in 2005, a total of 8 000 cases from around the country were reported to the authorities in the space of six months, which equates to 44 cases per day.’<sup>7</sup>
- 5.1.3 The UN General Assembly noted in September 2016 that: ‘According to reports, 60 per cent of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran experience domestic violence.’<sup>8</sup>
- 5.1.4 The National Council of Resistance of Iran article dated 25 November 2016 stated that: ‘As for domestic violence, the news of torture and murder of women by their husbands hit a record high between March and June 2016. At least in ten cases, the victims ranging from a six-year-old girl to a 50-year-old woman did not survive the violence.’<sup>9</sup>
- 5.1.5 The US State Department’s report on Human rights practices stated that: ‘The Census Bureau, the government agency responsible for data collection, does not permit international organizations to study domestic violence in the country. Authorities consider abuse in the family a private matter and seldom discussed it publicly.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International, ‘You shall procreate- Attacks on women’s sexual and reproductive rights in Iran’, March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1311112015ENGLISH.pdf>. Date accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, ‘Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran’, 26 June 2015, [http://www.migri.fi/download/61597\\_Suuntaus-raportti\\_Vakivaltalran\\_finalFINAL\\_kaannosversio\\_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288](http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288). Date accessed 16 May 2017.

<sup>8</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran’, 6 September 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57ed02cf4.html>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>9</sup> National Council of Resistance of Iran, ‘Iranian women’s struggle to eliminate violence against women is intertwined with the struggle for regime change in Iran’, 25 November 2016, <http://ncr-iran.org/en/ncr-statements/women/21560-iranian-women-s-struggle-to-eliminate-violence-against-women-is-intertwined-with-the-struggle-for-regime-change-in-iran>. Date accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>10</sup> US State Department, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016- Iran’, 3 March 2017

## 6. State treatment

### 6.1 Attitudes

- 6.1.1 The National Council of Resistance of Iran article dated 25 November 2016 stated that:

‘Violence against women and domestic violence are not considered crimes in Iran. Victims of violence do not enjoy any government support. The Civil Code considers men as heads of the household and the house as their private property. Fathers and brothers are allowed to kill their daughters and sisters since they own the latter's blood under the law. At the same time, in society, in schools and in the streets, the government endorses and promotes violence against women.’<sup>11</sup>

- 6.1.2 The US State Department's report on Human rights practices stated that: ‘Authorities consider abuse in the family a private matter and seldom discussed it publicly.’<sup>12</sup>

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### 6.2 Protection

- 6.2.1 In August 2014 the UN General Assembly stated that: ‘The legislative framework remains insufficient to combat such violence. In addition, inadequate social service provisions challenge the State's ability to provide safety and redress for victims.’<sup>13</sup>

- 6.2.2 Amnesty International's report ‘You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran’ dated March 2015 stated that:

‘Iran has yet to adopt specific legislation on domestic violence. Currently, women must file a complaint of domestic violence under the provisions of the Penal Code relating to bodily assault, and meet a range of evidentiary requirements. These include the presence of two adult male witnesses to the assault, which makes domestic violence difficult if not impossible to prove (Articles 160-200). Even if such claims are proven, the sentence will typically be the payment of diyah [financial compensation], which will be granted only upon the request of the victim (Article 401). In some cases, an additional punishment of two to five years in prison may be imposed if the

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<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265496>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>11</sup> National Council of Resistance of Iran, ‘Iranian women's struggle to eliminate violence against women is intertwined with the struggle for regime change in Iran’, 25 November 2016, <http://ncr-iran.org/en/ncr-statemnts/women/21560-iranian-women-s-struggle-to-eliminate-violence-against-women-is-intertwined-with-the-struggle-for-regime-change-in-iran>. Date accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>12</sup> US State Department, ‘Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016- Iran’, 3 March 2017 <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2016&dliid=265496>. Date accessed 10 May 2017.

<sup>13</sup> UN General Assembly, ‘Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic Iran’, 27 August 2014, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/518/83/PDF/N1451883.pdf?OpenElement>. Date accessed 16 May 2017.

offence is found to have disrupted public order or the security of society and raised fears that the offender or others may again commit assault (Article 614).<sup>14</sup>

6.2.3 The UN General Assembly's report on the 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic Iran' dated 31 August 2015 stated that:

'The Islamic Republic of Iran has no specific law criminalizing domestic violence. Women who experience violence must file a complaint under the provisions of the Islamic Penal Code governing bodily assault and satisfy the evidentiary requirements, which include producing two adult male witnesses. [...] Women face numerous obstacles when seeking a divorce. Women wishing to leave their husband must prove a significant risk of bodily harm or a threat to their life and safety. Similarly, to obtain a divorce under the Civil Code as a result of domestic violence, women must prove that the abuse was intolerable. In commenting on the present report, the authorities argued that women could file for divorce if they faced violence [...].

'The Islamic Penal Code gives husbands significant control over the lives of their wives and children. Article 630 allows a husband to kill his wife if she is caught committing adultery. The Secretary-General finds it regrettable that the proposed comprehensive population and exaltation of family bill (No. 315), currently under discussion by the parliamentary cultural affairs committee, could potentially expose women to increased risks of domestic violence. In the bill, bonuses are proposed for judges on the basis of the number of divorce cases before them that result in reconciliation rather than divorce. In addition, police intervention in family disputes is discouraged.'<sup>15</sup>

6.2.4 Amnesty International noted in its annual report covering 2016 that: 'Women and girls remained inadequately protected against sexual and other gender based violence, including early and forced marriage. The authorities failed to adopt laws criminalizing these and other abuses, including marital rape and domestic violence, although the Vice-President on Women and Family Affairs pushed a draft bill that had been pending since 2012.'<sup>16</sup>

6.2.5 The March 2017 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran found that: the Iranian legal framework fails to adequately protect women from violence and to criminalize marital rape. She notes that certain provisions might even condone sexual abuse, such as article 1108 which obliges wives to fulfill the sexual needs of their husbands at all times.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Amnesty International, 'You shall procreate- Attacks on women's sexual and reproductive rights in Iran', March 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/1111/2015/en/>. Date accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>15</sup> UN General Assembly, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic Iran', 31 August 2015, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/352](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/352). Date accessed 16 May 2017.

<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, 'Amnesty International report 2016/17', 22 February 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/iran/report-iran/>. Date accessed 20 March 2017.

<sup>17</sup> UN Human Rights Council (formerly UN Commission on Human Rights), 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran', 6 March 2017, [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1930\\_1489059332\\_a-hrc-34-65-auv.doc](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1489059332_a-hrc-34-65-auv.doc). Date accessed 22 June 2017.

## 6.3 Avenues of redress

### 6.3.1 International Solidarity Network- Women living under Muslim Laws (WLUML), 'Iran: Gender Discrimination at Its Worst' dated October-November 2014 stated that:

'[...] claims of domestic violence, even when proven, are not often adequately punished. The sentence tends to be a fine unless the offence committed is found to have disrupted public order and caused social insecurity in which case a prison sentence of two to five years may be imposed (article 614 of the Islamic Penal Code). WLUML is concerned that judicial authorities rarely make such factual findings considering that they expect women to reconcile with their husbands and accept violence as an "incidental" fact of family life.'<sup>18</sup>

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## 7. Societal attitudes

### 7.1.1 In a March 2015 Iran Wire article titled 'TV Star sparks national debate on domestic violence', it was stated that:

'[...] women's rights activist Asieh Amini told Iran wire. "There are many cases of domestic violence in Iranian courts," she says. "Iranian culture has always chosen to cover up domestic violence and hide it away. We not only respond to domestic violence with silence — we also promote this silence. For example, families often say that whatever happens between man and wife is their own affair and not the neighbors' business."<sup>19</sup>

'In a survey conducted this week, more than 57 percent of Iran Wire's Persian-language readers — most of whom live in Iran — said that domestic violence was a public matter and must be given media coverage. A quarter of those polled said media coverage and appropriate punishment for such crimes would help prevent repeat offences. Overall, over 83 percent of those polled said publicizing domestic violence stories was crucial, suggesting it is an issue that affects a large number of women in Iran.'<sup>20</sup>

### 7.1.2 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service based on a range of sources, titled 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', dated 26 June 2015, stated that:

'A more recent survey [conducted in 2012] on domestic violence, conducted by Zahra Tizro in Gilan in northern Iran, identified several different reasons behind domestic violence against women, including financial difficulties, cultural and educational differences (including regional differences and

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<sup>18</sup> International Solidarity Network- Women living under Muslim Laws (WLUML), 'IRAN: Gender Discrimination at Its Worst' October- November 2014, [http://impactiran.org/wp-content/uploads/Women-Living-Under-Muslim-Laws\\_Irans-UPR\\_second-cycle.pdf](http://impactiran.org/wp-content/uploads/Women-Living-Under-Muslim-Laws_Irans-UPR_second-cycle.pdf). Date accessed 15 May 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Iran Wire, 'TV Star sparks national debate on domestic violence', 27 March 2015, <https://iranwire.com/en/features/972>. Date accessed 16 May 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Iran Wire, 'TV Star sparks national debate on domestic violence', 27 March 2015, <https://iranwire.com/en/features/972>. Date accessed 16 May 2017.

ethnicity), sex segregation, exercise of psychological control, conflict between religious conceptions, the modern world and social reality, the Iranian culture of manliness and the economy of emotions. Based on Tizro's findings, it appears that Iranian women have a high tolerance for violence. According to Tizro, many women only classify exceptionally severe beatings as violence and consider less forceful hitting or psychological abuse normal behaviour. The respondents felt that hitting a wife could be justified if, for example, dinner was not ready when the husband returned from work. In addition to male family members, violence can also be inflicted or instigated by women: a typical example of this is mothers-in-law using violence against their daughters-in-law in order to reinforce their status in the family and make the newcomer obey their rules.

'During her 2005 fact-finding mission to the Ilam province, which is notorious for its high number of suicides by self-immolation among women, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women found that women feel compelled to tolerate violence inflicted not only by their husbands but also by other family members for fear of shame, being ostracised or divorced, and a lack of alternatives to the abusive environment. In addition to Ilam, violence against women appears especially widespread in Kurdistan and Khuzestan.'<sup>21</sup>

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## 8. State and non state support groups and shelters

### 8.1 State support groups

8.1.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service based on a range of sources, titled 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', dated 26 June 2015 stated that:

'It was also reported in 2015 that 18 new shelters for women escaping abusive relationships would be opened across the country. In addition to the above, there are almost 180 crisis centres that provide advice for couples who are having problems. The locations of shelters are kept secret to protect their customers. According to the Head of the State Welfare Organisation's Department of Social Problems, who oversees the operation of the shelters, the shelters are open 24 hours a day and provide therapy for victims of domestic violence free of charge. Based on the information released by the State Welfare Organisation, temporary shelters in different provinces helped a total of 2 000 victims of domestic violence last year. The victims came to the shelters either on their own initiative or were referred there by social services, police or courts. There is also a special helpline (Seda-ye Yara) for victims of violence against women. Public sector health care services and

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<sup>21</sup> Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, [http://www.migri.fi/download/61597\\_Suuntaus-raportti\\_Vakivaltalran\\_finalFINAL\\_kaannosversio\\_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288](http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288). Date accessed 16 May 2017.



services provided by non-governmental organisations also include rehabilitation programmes for prostitutes.

'Iran has shelters run by both the state and non-governmental organisations. According to the UN, there are nevertheless not enough shelters and they do not provide long-term support through employment and housing for women trapped in abusive situations. The Iranian State Welfare Organisation (Sazman-e Behzisti) has maintained a network of approximately 30 'health houses' for unmarried girls who have run away from home since the beginning of the 21st century. These institutions provide temporary housing, professional counselling and skills development for runaway girls. However, reports indicate that girls have also been sexually abused by the authorities in at least one of these institutions. In any case, the shelters built on the initiative of the Cabinet of the reformist President Khatami have been said to be a failure, as they are not widely used or run properly.'<sup>22</sup>

- 8.1.2 According to the UN General Assembly report on the situation of human rights in Iran dated August 2015: 'There are no support services such as shelters, legal and psychological counselling, specialized assistance or rehabilitation.' In commenting on this report the authorities stated that: '[...] various mechanisms existed to support victims of domestic violence, including intervention and rehabilitation centres, a social emergency telephone line, rehabilitation centres for affected women and girls, 31 health houses and specialized social assistance.'<sup>23</sup>

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## 8.2 Non Government Organisations

- 8.2.1 The Suuntaus project report compiled by the Finnish Immigration Service based on a range of sources, titled 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', dated 26 June 2015, stated that:

'Non-governmental organisations have played a major role in running shelters in Iran. However, these shelters are mostly designed for prostitutes and female drug addicts living on the streets. One example of a non-governmental organisation that promotes the rights of children is Iran's Association of Children's Rights (Anjoman-e Hemayat az Hoquq-e Kudakan), which runs a few shelters for homeless and ill-treated children and teenagers. However, these shelters are not able to accommodate all those in need.'<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, [http://www.migri.fi/download/61597\\_Suuntaus-raportti\\_Vakivaltalran\\_finalFINAL\\_kaannosversio\\_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288](http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288). Date accessed 8 May 2017.

<sup>23</sup> UN General Assembly, 'Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic Iran', 31 August 2015, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/352](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/352). Date accessed 16 May 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Suuntaus Project, Finnish Immigration Service- Country Information Service, 'Violence against women and honour-related violence in Iran', 26 June 2015, [http://www.migri.fi/download/61597\\_Suuntaus-raportti\\_Vakivaltalran\\_finalFINAL\\_kaannosversio\\_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288](http://www.migri.fi/download/61597_Suuntaus-raportti_Vakivaltalran_finalFINAL_kaannosversio_EN.pdf?96fa691925bfd288). Date accessed 8 May 2017.

8.2.2 The OMID Foundation was set up to help young women in Iran who are victims of sexual, physical or mental abuse. The OMID foundation webpage states that they started with:

'[...] a small group of 15 women, OMID now caters to more than 200 women at any one time. OMID centers take the best teachers and psychologists in Tehran to provide therapy and education for over 200 girls at any one time. Close to 200 young women are enrolled in the three-year OMID program during the day time. After classes they return home. For those who have run away from abusive families or been abandoned, home is the OMID shelter, a local authority home or by themselves.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> OMID Foundation, 'About us', undated <http://www.omidfoundation.com/index.php/about-us/>. Date accessed 8 May 2017.



# Version control and contacts

## Contacts

If you have any questions about this note and your line manager, senior caseworker or technical specialist cannot help you, or you think that this note has factual errors then [email the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this note (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability, you can [email the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **25 July 2017**

## Changes from last version of this note

New CPIN on this subject- previously domestic violence was covered by the more general women CPIN.

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