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**RASANAH**  
المعهد الدولي للدراسات الإيرانية  
International Institute for Iranian Studies

# The ambition of minorities and the future of the regime in Iran

**Rania Makram**

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Researcher at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies

The elite, which assumed the role of building the Iranian state following the success of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, wanted the identity of the state to be religious, giving an upper hand to the Persian ethnicity. The state shall be Islamic, Shiite, Persian despite the complicated structure of the Iranian society, where there are a lot of religions, languages, ethnicities, which took part in the revolution and before the religious current dominated it. This constituted an evident exclusion of the rest of the factions in society who are not Shiite Persian Muslims.

This selectiveness turned the diversity of society into a challenge facing the regime and the state, instead of being a bonus to enrich society and strengthen the state. The demographic diversity of the state does not necessarily represent a threat to it. The policies adopted by the state towards minorities are the basis on which the relationship between the state and those minorities is shaped.

We can say the constitutional framework that regulates the status of some minorities, the political rhetoric addressed to them and the practices on the ground did not guarantee equal rights on the same footing with the Persian ethnicity. This was due to the suspension of the constitutional provisions related to minorities or the nonexistence of constitutional provisions that enable ethnic minorities to gain rights in administering their own affairs.

The enormity of the challenge posed by minorities for the regime increases due to its repressive and unjust practices against some of them. This repression engendered separatist ambitions and hostile inclinations as these minorities settle in the border and remote parts of the state. They have relations beyond borders, with neighboring nations. This feeds its ambitions for separation from the central government, demanding more rights and to be dealt with on the same footing with the Persian ethnicity.

Tensions that broke out in the regions and provinces where minorities settle contributed to bringing the issues related to the status of these minorities to focus, highlighting the ambitions they hold and the challenges they pose to the regime and the state, especially considering the recent protests that hit the country in late 2017. The protests first broke out in Mashhad, the second-biggest city in Iran, where a considerable Turkmen population lives, before they spilt over into more than 20 Iranian cities.

In this context, the study attempts to answer some important questions, including: what is the status of minorities in Iran? What do they aspire to? How far do they pose a threat to the regime and state in Iran? And what are the guidelines of the regime's strategy to tackle the minority issue?

### **Map of Iranian minorities and ethnicities**

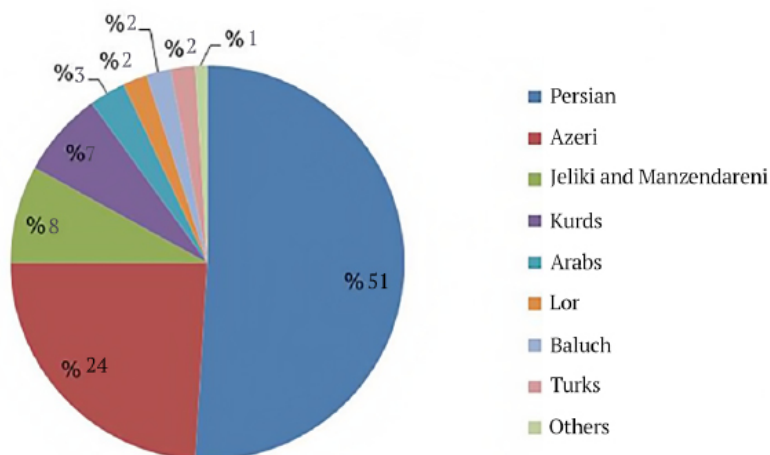
The geographic location of Iran has historically enabled it to interact with its neighboring countries, representing a magnet for diverse human migration. It has served as a "route" for the East Asian and Western European trade movement, while its mountainous nature helped preserve these cultural and linguistic specificities, which largely explains the different lifestyles of different Iranian minorities, depending on the nature of the territory in which they live. Minorities in Iran are diverse divided into ethnic, religious and linguistic groupings as follows:

#### **» Ethnic minorities**

Iranian society consists of several ethnicities. Population statistics differ on the

actual size of each, particularly statistics issued by the concerned institutions of the state. However, there is a close agreement between the different statistics on the percentage of each ethnic minority in Iran as illustrated by Figure (1).

**Figure 1:** Ethnic distribution of population in Iran



**Source:** Mezmah Center for Strategic Studies: *Ethnicities and Minorities in Iran*

» **Azeri:** The Azeri minority is the largest faction of the population in terms of numbers. Most of them are Shi'a. Most Azeri live in the Northern and Northwestern regions of the country. The most important cities are Tabriz, Aromiyah, Arbid and Ziljan.<sup>(1)</sup>

» **Kurds:** The Kurdish minority is the oldest minority in Iran, since their presence in Iran dates back to the empire of Medina, which ruled Persia in 612 BC.<sup>(2)</sup> The Kurds are concentrated in the provinces and Western towns of Khard, Khirramabad, Kermanshah, Ilam and Kurdistan, while some Kurds live in cities outside these locations in Tehran, Khorasan and Mashhad.<sup>(3)</sup>

» **Arabs:** The Arab minority in Iran, is situated in the province of Ahwaz, which is the richest Iranian province in terms of natural resources, most importantly oil, as well as being the largest area in Iran, through which eight rivers pass, in addition to containing most Iranian ports such as the ports of Gron, Bandar Abbas, Bushehr, Bandar, Khomeini, Kharj Island, Kish Island and Qashm.<sup>(4)</sup>

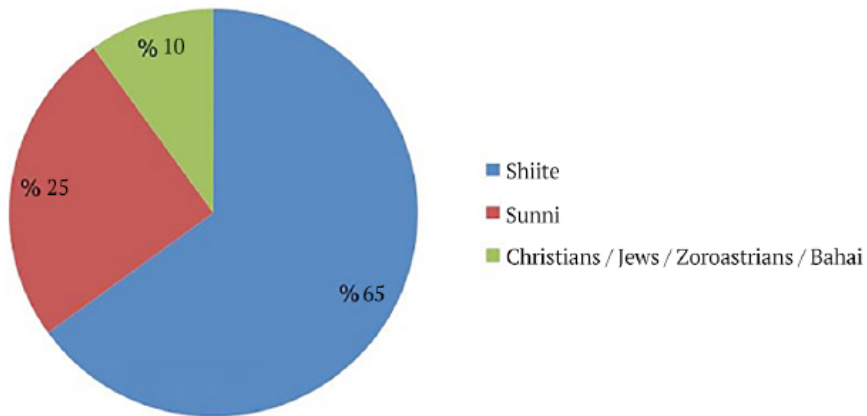
» **Turks:** The life style of the Turks in Iran is nomadic, because most of them work in grazing, and settle in desert areas, such as: Jinbad, Golestan, Bojnord and Qushan. Iranian Turks are divided into three main sects: Jogulan, Yemut and Taka.<sup>(5)</sup>

» **Baluch:** The Baluch is a border minority, living on the Iran-Pakistan-Afghan border, in the Sistan-Baluchistan region. Its most famous cities are Khorasan, Kerman, Zabul, Harlan and Hormozgan. The nature of the rugged mountainous terrain has imposed a complex security reality for the region, which has led to its isolation from the center, which, along with other reasons, has led to the absence of economic development.<sup>(6)</sup>

### » Religious minorities

Religious and sectarian diversity is a major feature of Iranian society, and as diverse as Iran's religious structure is, it is complex and interrelated. Religious minorities in Iran are divided as follows, as shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2: The religious distribution of the population in Iran*



*Source: Mezmah Center for Studies and Researches: Ethnicities and Minorities in Iran*

The most important religious minorities and their geographical distribution can be identified as follows:

» **Sunni Muslims** in Iran are divided into three main ethnic groups: the Kurds, the Baluchs, and the Turkmen. They live in cities and areas close to the borders of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkmenistan, most of them are Sunni-dominated states. Sunnis represent the largest sectarian minority in Iran. They are followed by both the Armenians and the Assyrians, the two sects of Christianity in Iran.<sup>(7)</sup>

» **Christians:** Christians in Iran are divided into two main denominations, Armenians and Assyrians. The Christians practice their faith officially in dozens of Armenian churches and schools.<sup>(8)</sup> Christians have several political rights: Christians in the Iranian parliament have three seats. They participate in compulsory military service, they have their own churches, and they have a direct relationship with the Ministry of Islamic Culture through the Department of Minority Affairs.<sup>(9)</sup>

» **The Jews:** The situation of the Jewish minority in Iran is the most controversial. Despite the hostility between the Iranian regime and Israel, it has not been reflected in the situation of the Jewish minority in Iran. Jews have freedom to practice their religious rites and to build temples. They reside in cities, such as Hamdan, Isfahan, and Tehran, and are represented in parliament by one seat.<sup>(10)</sup>

» **Zoroastrians:** Zoroastrians have freedom of belief and practice, as they are recognized by the constitution as a religious minority. Zoroastrians reside in the cities of Tehran, Kerman, Yazd and Zahedan. Most of them work in commerce and crafts and are represented by an elected deputy in parliament.<sup>(11)</sup>

### **The Iranian regime's dealing with minorities (a dual strategy)**

Iranian minorities participated in the Iranian revolution and contributed to its success, hoping to improve their living conditions and legalize their rights, especially when the 1979 new constitution was written, which in theory included at least several articles regulating their status. Due to the size of minorities which make up about 49% of the total population, it was difficult to omit their presence in the political discourse of officials, especially in the various entitlements. However, the constitutional articles and the political discourse on minorities are part of a dual strategy in dealing with them. Their essence is one of marginalization and repressive containment wrapped in a political and human rights discourse that is wishful to say the least.

#### » **Suspended constitutional framework**

» The 1979 Iranian Constitution included eleven articles dealing with the status of minorities in general, of which 6 articles were specifically for minorities, namely articles 12, 13, 15, 16, 19 and 64.<sup>(12)</sup> The most important of these articles can be noted as follows:

» Article 19 of the Iranian Constitution stipulates that the Iranian people of all denominations enjoy equal rights and duties, regardless of ethnic, religious, sectarian or linguistic differences.

» Article 8 also states that it is not permissible to discriminate between the different governorates and regions in the distribution of natural resources and domestic development, affirming the need to provide the necessary capital for each region or governorate which is commensurate with its requirements and possibilities of growth.

» According to Article 12, the Iranian Constitution affirms that the official religion of Iran is Islam, and recognizes three other religions: Judaism, Christianity (its two sects in Iran, Assyrian and Armenian), and Zoroastrianism. Article 13 also makes it possible for these minorities to practice religious and doctrinal rituals and to act in accordance with their personal and religious principles.

» Article 12 of the Constitution affirms the eternity of this provision and that it will

not be changed in the future. This article indicates that the Twelver Ja'fari doctrine is the official doctrine of the state.

» Article 15 states that the language of dealing with governmental interests and the official writing among the Iranian people is the "Persian" language while allowing the use of other domestic and national languages in the field of journalism and public media, as well as the teaching of these languages in schools located in areas inhabited by every minority alongside the Persian language. The government also permitted the study of the Arabic language as the language of the Holy Quran after the primary stage until the secondary stage, according to Article 16.

» Article 46: Parliamentary representation of the Iranian minorities was limited to Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian minorities.

» Article 26 sets out a condition for the freedom of recognized religious minorities. They are free on condition that this freedom does not defy the foundations of the independence of the State, its national unity and the basis of the Islamic Republic.<sup>(13)</sup>

On the other hand, it can be said that the implementation of these articles is limited considering the size of the rights contained, as only three religious minorities have a right to representation in the existing parliament, namely, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. The Sunnis have not been paid attention to, while ethnic minorities are equally marginalized in the social and political aspects.

The constitution did not meet the demands of ethnic minorities to acquire some freedom to manage their own affairs. The constitution denied Sunni Muslims and Shi'a ethnic minorities the right to head the state in Article 115, which requires the head of state to be bound by the principles of the Iranian revolution and adhere to the country's official doctrine. At the same time the constitution draws a link between Shiism, the nationality of the president and his Iranian descent.

Although this condition is not stipulated for other leadership positions, most notably the Supreme Leader. The current Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is of Azeri origin. At the same time, it is not possible to explain why Sunni Muslims are excluded from the allocation of seats in the Shura Council, as opposed to non-Muslims.<sup>(14)</sup>

In this context, there is a fact that ethnic minorities, along with the Sunni minority, do not have the power to decide their own situation because of their weak influence within state institutions. They are deprived of leadership positions in the judiciary, and the ministries, as well as being denied the chance of becoming governors in the regions and governorates of which they are a majority. There is not a member of an ethnic minority who is not Shiite in the Expediency Council, the Council of Guardians and the Supreme Council of National Security. The regime does not permit nor recognize independent parties associated with ethnic minorities that defend their rights and express their demands.<sup>(15)</sup>

» **Fake political discourse**

From the outset, Iranian revolutionaries and their leader Khomeini sought to win the support of non-Persian nationalists by raising the slogan “Iran is a multi-national state.” Khomeini, however, always warned against the separatist tendencies of Iranian minorities and other minorities in Muslim countries in general. He believed these tendencies weakened the unity of the Islamic world.<sup>(16)</sup>

The conservative movement has long advocated the slogan of “Islamic unity” in the face Iranian minority demands, while this has not prevented them from addressing their role in Iranian society. The late and former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani described Iranian minorities as a “Strengthening factor for the Iranian state.”<sup>(17)</sup>

As for the reformist movement, the party of the Participation Front, which is considered the reformist trend that cares about minority issues, has called on more than one occasion to implement the constitutional articles in relation to minorities. While the Rouhanyoun Mobarez Association confirms that the government’s implementation of the relevant constitutional articles could control and reduce separatist tendencies in non-Persian territories.<sup>(18)</sup>

It can be said that minority issues in political discourse are often raised before the elections, and in the electoral programs of presidential candidates who, in their different alignments and political affiliations, make big promises that are pragmatic and theoretical than being real. This was noticed during the election campaign of the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and the former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

For example, the election program of Ahmadinejad, included many points that were related to the status of minorities, such as his announcement of a development plan for the border provinces. He was keen to keep the Sunni advisor to the President in Iran by issuing a decision on January 3, 2006 to keep the Sunni cleric Mohammad Izhak Madani in his position as adviser to the President for the Sunni Muslims.<sup>(19)</sup>

During his last presidential race, President Hassan Rouhani continued with his promises to Iranian minorities, especially during his visit to the border provinces. For example, during his election rally in Bandar Abbas, Rouhani indicated his desire to develop the city and modernize the port. The candidate Ibrahim Raisi stressed during his election rally in the city of Birjand in the Southern province of Khorasan on the unity of Iranian society, saying that “the Sunni, Shiite and national divisions in Iran are not real, and the real criterion for us is the enemies of the Islamic regime”.<sup>(20)</sup>

After winning the presidency during his first presidential term, Rouhani established a special office for ethnic and religious minorities to implement



his electoral promises. He appointed Ibrahim Younisi as his aide in charge of minority affairs. Samia Baluchzahi, a Sunni woman from the Baluchi minority, was appointed as governor of an Iranian city.<sup>(21)</sup> Also, the Iranian Ambassador to Sweden, Saleh Adibi, a Sunni, was appointed to Vietnam and Cambodia. Despite the previous breakthroughs by Rouhani, he was unable to implement all his electoral promises because of the pressure he faced from the hardline movement.<sup>(22)</sup>

### » **Systematic marginalization and repression**

The Iranian regime relies on a policy for survival that marginalizes and weakens others. It recognizes that the movement of non-Persian ethnicities represents a real threat to the regime, especially with the persistent attempts by non-Persian people to provoke protests. Several Kurdish-majority cities witnessed massive protests after the suicide of a Kurdish girl on May 9, 2015, and a senior security official was implicated in the attempt to attack her. This protest spilled over into other protests.<sup>(23)</sup>

In addition to the deliberate marginalization of minorities, it is necessary to confront the protests to this marginalization with a great deal of violence and deterrence by the regime, with the use of other means besides the use of excessive force. The most important of **which are the following:**

» Pitting the Iranian street against the demands of minorities, that is provoked by the Iranian regime through mosques and Friday sermons. Also, the Iranian regime plays a major role in shaping the awareness of the Iranian street.

» Branding them as stooges and traitors

The regime often seeks to blame the outside world, especially the United States and Britain for providing financial support to minorities and helping them in forming parties and movements to destabilize Iran. In addition to supporting the Iranian opposition abroad. This comes as part of a strategy aimed at creating an internal enemy. This was clearly visible during the recent protests in the Iranian cities at the end of 2017. The regime promoted the idea that the West fermented the unrest. It also promoted the notion that the protesters were stooges of the West until it was able to completely control the Iranian street. This happened after a decline in protests considering the use of excessive violence by the security services, as a result the Iranian street declined to respond to the calls for more protests.<sup>(24)</sup>

» Extending security control by using security institutions with full loyalty to the regime, especially the IRGC. The Iranian regime is classified as a repressive regime that tries to silence the voice of its opponents. It does this through a central religious authority that adopts religion as a starting point for legitimacy. It seeks to deepen and consolidate its power through conferring religion on all its practices, and reverting to violence when needed.

» Adopting a strategy for cultural security: The Iranian regime devised its own

model of “cultural security” through parroting an anti-Western rhetoric to strengthen itself at home and to urge people to rally around it. The regime also demonizes any internal attempts to stand up to and oppose it. It imposes strict control over all that can affect Persian identity. The regime tightens its grip on media outlets, blocks news sites and social media platforms, with the aim of preventing the flow of information and barring potential protesters from communicating with one another.<sup>(25)</sup>

#### » **The threat posed by minorities to the regime**

The most problematic minorities for the regime in Iran are mainly the nationalist minorities. For sectarian minorities, their movements against the regime are confined to the Sunni border minority in the Sistan-Baluchistan region, where many armed groups threaten the stability of the state.

Generally, we can round up the parameters of the minorities’ threat to the regime **as follows:**

#### » **The geographic spread of ethnic minorities**

Most ethnic minorities live in the border areas of the country - as mentioned above - and in turn constitute a threat, as they demand greater freedom and equal rights with the Persian majority. Tensions in most of the minority regions and provinces in Iran have contributed to a renewed interest in the issue and an international dimension.

According to the geographic distribution of minorities in Iran, they are divided into 11 provinces of 31 Iranian provinces. Persians are mostly located in the center of the state, while the national minorities live in border provinces.

These ethnic minorities extend beyond the borders of the state and this has a significant impact on the stability of the border areas, particularly in the geographically difficult and mountainous provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan, whose geographical borders extend to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and anti-state armed groups are active in this difficult geography. These external extensions increase the opportunity to transfer anti-Iranian activity outside the borders of the state, as is the case in Arab nationalism in Ahwaz, which has been active for years in many countries in the region. The Kurdish extension beyond Iranian borders has led to the Kurd’s having the same aspirations as the Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>(26)</sup>

#### » **Forming opposition parties and liberation movements**

Some ethnic and religious minorities have worked to create opposition movements to express their demands and most of which are active abroad, and they mobilize international support against the Iranian regime.

For example, the Azerbaijani minority formed the Azerbaijani National Liberation Movement (ANN), which demands union with Azerbaijan and the separation of

Western Iran. The movement enjoyed great popularity among the Azeri minority due to its clear position in Iranian media. The National Awakening Movement, which has good relations abroad and is active in the Iranian interior, also emerged in the Southern province of Azerbaijan. It should be noted that these movements are active in the Republic of Azerbaijan and have been holding conferences calling for the annexation of the Azeri dominated Iranian province to the Republic of Azerbaijan and to reconsider the demarcation of the border between Iran and Russia.<sup>(27)</sup>

The opposition to the Iranian regime can be divided into two main trends: the first focuses on civil and cultural rights, the use of the Azerbaijani language in education and in the media. The second focuses on Azerbaijani independence from Iran and its accession to Azerbaijan, which was supported by some members of the Azerbaijani parliament in February 2012.<sup>(28)</sup>

The Kurdish minority, in the context criticizing the regime and antagonizing it, and demanding separation of the Kurdistan region of Iran like that of Iraqi Kurdistan, has formed many opposition parties, such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, which demands autonomy for the Kurdistan region.

The party, which is active abroad with other nationalities, such as Arabs, Turks, Baluch and Turkoman, has established the “Conference of the Federal People of Iran”. In 2004, the Kurds founded the Kurdistan Free Life Party, which adopted an armed approach against the Iranian regime through several military units, the most important of which is the Eastern Kurdistan Protection Unit. They targeted police personnel and the IRGC members within the boundaries of the region and sometimes beyond it. It should be noted that several elements of this party are working within the ranks of the Peshmerga in Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>(29)</sup>

The Arab nationalism has led to the establishment of many active opposition movements and parties in the region of Ahwaz and outside of Iran, especially in European countries, such as Holland, Sweden and France. Some of these movements have intensified their activity in the Arab countries during the last ten years through regular visits, with the aim of rallying support for issue of the separation of the province of Ahwaz from Iran. The activities of the Ahwaz movements recently witnessed significant Arab support, especially at their recent meeting in Kuwait, in which several Arab politicians participated.

There are several Ahwazi Arab movements such as the Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahwaz, the Organization of Ahwaz, the Arab Liberation Front, and the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz. It should be noted that some of these fronts and Ahwaz parties contain military wings that seek to target the security forces and the leaders of the Revolutionary Guards. These armed wings usually launch attacks against the Iranian regime on the anniversary of the Ahwazi uprising.<sup>(30)</sup>

The Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahwaz (the Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahwaz) includes many political organizations and parties, the most important of which are the Political Organization of the Arab People of Ahwaz, the Arab Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz, the Arab Vanguard Party of Ahwaz, the Arab Fedayeen Movement Ahwaz, and the Union of the Arab Ahwaz Tribes.<sup>(31)</sup>

These movements and the Sunni armed parties stand out as the sole players among the religious minorities in Iran. The nature of these movements differs from other minority movements and parties because they rely mainly on military action against the Iranian regime. They are the most violent movements towards the regime. They carry out armed operations against its men and its interests, taking advantage of the geography of the Sistan and Baluchistan border region, which is marginalized to a large extent.

One of the most important Sunni movements targeting the Iranian regime is “Jund Allah”, which is linked to the Sunni Baluch. It demands the separation of Baluchistan. The organization has a distinctive tactic in targeting and bombing several IRGC military buses, along with the Justice Army, Ansar Furqan and Ansar-e Iran. All these groups are active in Sistan and in the Baluchistan territory.<sup>(32)</sup>

#### » **The continuation of protests**

The continuation of protests will weaken the regime and impact its image abroad. The continuation of protests will cease the regime’s attempts to brand its leaders as traitors. This comes despite the tightening of the security grip on the Iranian street, and the success of the security forces in suppressing and thwarting the factional and public protests, as was evident during the protests of December 2017. This comes considering the mutual sympathy among the different Iranian minorities. This is evident when minority protests break out, for example, the Azerbaijani Turks showed support for a protest in Ahwaz, which was held in response to hateful rhetoric against Arabs by Iranian state television, following a stampede in 2015. The Baluchistan region witnessed pro-Kurdish protests following the killing of a Kurdish girl in Mahabad City during the same year.<sup>(33)</sup>

#### » **The non-integration into Iranian society**

There is no belonging to the state. The difference in the details of everyday life, such as in attire and food extends to social aspects and its manifestations. The provinces of Ahwaz, Sistan and Baluchistan are the two most prominent examples, particularly with the low levels of development in the two regions and they lag far behind the rest of the country. In spite of the regime’s attempts to change the demographic and ideological structure of the two border regions, this has not yet succeeded in integrating them into Iranian and Persian society. This is not in the interest of the regime, but a pragmatic move to avert the threat from the non-integration of some communities and the absence of loyalty to the state.

## » Conclusion

The situation of minorities at border areas has led to the mismanagement of the minority issue. The regime has contributed to the worsening situation of this file, as it has used excessive force and repression. This has led to minorities revolting from time to time. Therefore, these crises always resurface. This has been admitted by the security reports when it comes to the issue of minorities, expressing concern about the nationalist issues and its impact on the future of the nation. But the possibility that the minority file will impact the survival of the regime soon is still limited, even in light of attempts to internationalize the file, whether these attempts are conducted by political parties and movements desiring to express their demands or through international attention to this controversial file inside Iran.

The idea of employing the minority file to pressure the regime now seems not to carry weight because of **two factors**:

**The first** is the superiority of the regime in the use of excessive force through security apparatuses that display loyalty to the regime and its members.

**The second** is the religious mystery that the regime shrouds itself in. It depends on charitable associations with great influence within society. Through these associations, established following the revolution, the regime guarantees the loyalty of great part of society, especially the elderly, war veterans, and the poor, all representing the traditional sector that resists any change in the country.

The regime cunningly uses tactics to brand opponents as traitors. The protests in December 2017 died down quickly due to the remarks of the US President Donald Trump, which backed the regime's narrative that the protests were financed from outsiders and agents inside the country. It can be said that the regime may resort to some flexibility with the requirements of minorities, especially with regard to social and cultural rights and a share in the political system. This comes as President Rouhani managed to open the door in this respect as we stated before.

About the calls for separation and independence raised by some Iranian nationalities, these demands will not be accepted by the regime at any rate, since this could lead the state to be torn apart. Also, these demands will not be accepted regionally due to the extensions of these minorities.

Perhaps the attempts by Turkey and Iran - for example - to make the Iraqi Kurdistan model less attractive to the Kurdish minority, in both countries and even thwarting the results of the Iraqi Kurdish referendum, is the best case in point.

Although the Iranian regime does not have to make compromises there is a deferred solution which seems to be more appropriate. It is adopted by

some parties in this context. And it is represented in reviving the system of provincial councils, with some alterations to include all the regions, not only the regions where minorities settle. This would mean the regions of Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Turkmenistan, Sistan, Baluchistan and Khuzestan would take over more responsibility and be able to teach their mother language and allow it in administering domestic issues in the respective regions. The advocates of this idea suggest that the government should be responsible for the implementation of foreign policy, regulating economic policy, the affairs of the army, national defense and protecting the state. However the provincial councils should be left to manage provincial culture, upbringing, education, health and the environment through advisory and executive traditional institutions. This is carried out within the principles of the constitution and sovereignty of the state.<sup>(34)</sup>

In the end, we can say that the threat of minorities and its impact on the Iranian regime depends on the continuation of this threat, and its ability to face the practices of the regime and to gain the sympathy of the public towards its legitimate demands. Also, it depends on how they invest the public discontent towards deteriorating economic conditions and engineer this towards their own demands to make them more inclusive of the general population rather than being viewed as being minority centric.

### ***Annex (1)***

Minorities in the Iranian Constitution

#### **Chapter One**

General Assets

#### **Article 3 Paragraph 9**

Ending inequitable discrimination and providing equal opportunities for everyone in all material and moral fields.

#### **Article 12**

The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Jafari doctrine, and this article remains immutable. The other Islamic sects, which include the Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali and Zaidi sects, are fully respected and followers of these sects are free to perform their religious ceremonies according to their jurisprudence. These doctrines have formal consideration in matters of education, religious education and personal status (marriage, divorce, Court proceedings). In each region, the followers of one of the sects have a majority. The local provisions of that region - within the jurisdiction of the Shura Council - are in accordance with that doctrine, while preserving the rights of followers of other sects.

### **Article 13**

The Zoroastrian, Jewish and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities and enjoy the freedom to perform their religious ceremonies within the scope of the law. They may act according to their rules in personal and religious practices.

### **Article 14**

Based on the verse:” Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah love those who are just”, the government of the Republic of Iran and the Muslims must treat non-Muslims with good morals and Islamic equality and justice, and take into account their human rights, as well as the rights of Muslims, This article applies to those who do not conspire or take any action against Islam or against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

## **Chapter Two**

Language, writing, history and the official science of the country

### **Article 15**

The official and common language and writing is Persian for the people of Iran. Documents, correspondence, official texts and textbooks must be in this language and in writing. However, other national languages may be used in the field of journalism, mass media, and the teaching of their literature in schools alongside the Persian language.

### **Article 16**

Since the language of the Qur’an, Islamic sciences and knowledge is Arabic, and Persian literature is fully integrated, it is necessary to teach this language after the primary stage until the end of the secondary stage in all grades and disciplines.

## **Chapter Three**

The rights of the people

### **Article 19**

The Iranian people - of any nationality or tribe - enjoy equal rights, and no color, race, language, or the like is a reason for discrimination.

### **Article 26**

Political parties, NGOs, political bodies, professional associations, Islamic bodies and recognized religious minorities enjoy freedom provided that the principles of independence, freedom, national unity, Islamic values and the basis of the Republic of Iran do not contradict, nor can anyone be prevented from participating in it, or be forced to participate therein.

## **Chapter Four**

Economy and finance

### **Article 48**

It is not permissible to distinguish between the different governorates and regions in the use of sources of natural wealth, general national resources and the organization of economic activity in the country, so that each region has the necessary capital and the necessary resources commensurate with its needs and readiness for growth.

## **Chapter Five**

Legislature

**First:** The Islamic Consultative Assembly

### **Article 64**

After every ten years, noting the humanitarian, political, and geographic and other factors, 20 deputies can be added as a maximum. Zoroastrians and Jews are elected separately, and Armenian Christians are elected in the South and the North separately as one deputy. The range of constituencies and the number of deputies is determined by law.

## **Chapter Six**

Executive Authority

The first research: the presidency and the ministers

### **Article 115**

The President of the Republic shall be elected from among religious men who meet the following conditions:

1. They must be of Iranian origin and possess Iranian citizenship.
2. They should be capable of governing and managing boards.
3. Have a good past.
4. To be honest and pious.
5. To be believing in the principles of the Republic of Iran and the official doctrine of the country.



## Endnotes

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