

Kurds in the Islamic Republic: A Survey

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More than 15 million Kurds live in Turkey and about 5.5 million in Iraq. During the last two decades, events in these countries, which are notorious for their human, social and economic difficulties, have brought their fate to public attention. But the situation of more than 10 million Kurds in Iran remains more or less unknown.

The Kurds live in the north-west and west of Iran, principally in four provinces: Western Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Ilam. There are also Kurds in the provinces of Khorasan, especially in Qootchan and in Shirwan, in Hamadan, in Tehran, in Qazvin and in other towns throughout the country.

According to the 1996 census, the Kurds are estimated to represent about 10 per cent of the country's population. Kurdish political organizations put the figure at between 11 per cent and 12 per cent. About 50 per cent of the 2,500,000 inhabitants of Western Azerbaijan are Kurds, while the province of Kurdistan, which is officially entirely inhabited by Kurds, counts 1,346,000 people.¹ In Kermanshah, there are 1,778,596, and 488,886 in Ilam. Finally, 600,000 Kurds live in other Iranian towns. Just behind the Azeri minority, which is estimated to be 16–20 per cent of the Iranian population, the Kurds constitute the second most important minority in Iran.

The principal debate about Kurds is the following: are they an ethnic minority or are they a people/nation? For some ideologues, the Kurds are a nation divided between the four states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Because of this division, some consider the Kurds to be an ethnic minority in each of the states mentioned above. For others, the Kurds who do not have a state of their own cannot be considered as a nation. This approach makes an amalgam between the notions of people, nation and state. In Iran, the word *qowm*, which means an ethnic group, is used to describe the Kurds, and the Kurdish language is considered to be a dialect of Persian (Farsi).

However, the Iranian Kurds are not satisfied with their situation and they try to demonstrate this dissatisfaction in different ways. In June 2005, very few of them voted in the legislative election and in July, the murder in

Mahabad of seyyed Kemal Afsaram, known as Shwana seyyed Qadir, who was cruelly tortured by the security forces, sparked some big demonstrations in different towns in the whole Kurdish region. Many people were injured and others arrested. Among them was Dr Roya Tooloïi, human rights activist and the editor of *Razan*, paper of the Kurdish Women's Association for Peace.²

In November 2005, three Kurdish activists³ were accused of being members of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK) and were tried by the Islamic Court of Mababad, which sentenced them to between 15 and 20 years' imprisonment. In February 2006, the peaceful demonstration of Kurds in Makoo, Bazargan and Sardasht was violently dispersed by security forces of the Islamic Republic. Eight people were killed, 25 others injured and more than four hundred were arrested.

Why did the Iranian Kurds decide again to boycott the elections?⁴ What is their political, social and economic situation under the Islamic Republic? What are their demands and what is the government's answer to their claims?

Iran has a centralized political regime. This centralization process began at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Iranian society's feudal organization was replaced by a modern political regime. Reza Khan (1926–41), founder of Pahlavi dynasty, adopted the principle of the nation-state. Persian (Farsi) was chosen as the official language, and the Fars were the favoured ethnic group, which determined the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the country.

His son, Mohammad Reza (1941–79), continued the same policy. Under his reign the Kurds were denied all ethnical specificities and their language was considered a dialect of Persian. Kurds were also deprived of political rights and their rebellions were violently dispersed by the army forces. Many Kurdish leaders were killed and their bodies displayed in public. A very great number of Kurdish activists were sentenced to prison and many of them were exiled abroad. Every political activity was forbidden and the SAVAK (the Organization for Security and Information) was extremely powerful in the Kurdish area.

In this context of persecution, the Kurds very actively participated in the revolutionary events of 1978–79. Mahabad was certainly one of the most agitated towns in Iran.

Once the monarchy was overthrown, the Shiite clergy took power and established an Islamic Republic. This new form of political regime was completely unknown. Despite the anarchy within this new authority, which had at least three centres of decision making,⁵ the 'problem of Kurdistan' was the 'problem' of the Republic.⁶

The political situation in Kurdistan was also very confused. Kurdish political

groups and organizations were very divided and had no common political programme. The principal and most ancient organization was the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK), founded in 1946. The DPIK's main slogan was 'Democracy for Iran and Autonomy for Kurdistan'. The second political group was Komala (The Kurdish Organization of the Communist Party in Iran), which wanted to fight the capitalist system and to create a socialist state. Komala was basically an extremist and Maoist organization. At that time, Komala had no clear project for the future of Kurdistan. Another political organization was the Fedai of Iranian People, a Marxist-Leninist organisation. The Kurdish branch of the Fedai supported a local autonomy statute for the Kurds. There were also two religious personalities: Ahmad Muftizadeh in Sanandaj and Sheikh Ezzedine Husseini in Mahabad.⁷

After thirty years of exile, the DPIK, which wanted to become a political force in Kurdistan, showed a real interest in dialogue with the new regime. But other organizations, especially Komala, had an extremist attitude. They criticized everything and did not propose any other programme or alternative for the future of Kurdistan. Their relationships with the DPIK were strained and sometimes stormy. They accused the DPIK of being a middle-class political organization and criticized its origins in Tudeh, the Communist Party of Iran.

In this confused political context, did Kurdish claims have any chance of being accepted by the new regime? Did the Islamic Republic want to find a political solution to the Kurdish problem?

The new regime made contact with the Kurds at the beginning of the Revolution. The first government delegation was sent to Mahabad on 14 February 1979, in order to ascertain officially what were the Kurdish demands.⁸

By the time the delegation arrived in Mahabad, the population had occupied the military base in the town. Even if, a few weeks previously, in Tehran and other areas of the country, the political and 'revolutionary' organizations had already taken control of the military bases, the new authorities were very disturbed by this development in Mahabad. They asked the Kurdish representatives to end their occupation. But the population did not want to preserve one of the political symbols of repression in the centre of their town any more. The Kurdish representatives proposed to the government delegation that the military base be transformed into a university, and that another military base be built in the suburbs.⁹ The government delegation did not make any concessions on this point but it did promise to make the Kurds' demands known in Tehran. The main outcome of this visit was to legitimize the activities of the DPIK.

On 22 March 1979, another delegation came to Kurdistan.¹⁰ This second delegation, headed by Ayatollah Taleghani, recognized the Kurdish people's right to manage their own affairs. However, he insisted that the armed forces,

including the Pasdaran (the Revolutionary Guard), maintain a presence in Kurdish areas.¹¹ That was too much to ask and the Kurdish organizations did not accept it.

However, the Kurds sent three delegations to meet the head of the Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini. He refused to recognize any political rights for the Kurds and asked them to meet with Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, who refused to make a political decision until the Constitution was ratified. As a consequence, all the Kurdish parties and organizations decided to boycott the referendum of 31st March 1979, which established the Islamic Republic.¹²

Gradually the relationship between the Kurds and Tehran deteriorated. The situation was strange: while there was no war, there was no peace either. Some tragic events occurred, as in Naghada between 20 and 22 April 1979, where the Azeri militia killed more than 350 Kurds.¹³ This event damaged the relationship between Kurds and Azeri, who had lived closely together for a long time.

Despite this conflict, the Kurds decided to take part in the election of the Council of Experts (3 August 1979). The Kurdish candidate in Western Azerbaijan, the secular Dr Abdurrahman Ghassemlou, was elected but he did not attend the Council.¹⁴

After the events at Paweh,¹⁵ Ayatollah Khomeini decried the Kurds as disloyal and the DPIK as 'a nest of sabotage and corruption' and he appealed for jihad against the Kurds. To solve the Kurdish problem, the Islamic government chose a military solution. This war, as others, had its share of tragedy.¹⁶ Many people were killed in several Kurdish towns such as Sannadaj, Meriwan, Sakkiz and Baneh. The Islamic judge, Ayatollah Khalkhali, sentenced to death a large number of Kurdish activists labelled as 'counter-revolutionary'. The Kurds were accused of being pawns of the Americans and the Israelis. The Islamic government reinforced its diplomatic relations with Turkey, which was opposed to any project of autonomy for the Kurds. They decided to devote more attention to the security of their common borders. Tehran assured Ankara that the Iranian government shared its point of views about the Kurds.¹⁷

But a lot of Pasdars were killed in Kurdistan, and Iranian public opinion was extremely angry. In Tehran, despite the division between pros and cons, the government decided finally to negotiate with the Kurds. Nearly three months after the beginning of the conflict, on 23 October, a 'special delegation for the solution of the Kurdish problem' was created. On 17 November, Ayatollah Khomeini declared that the war was one that had been imposed by Iran's enemies and promised a solution to the economic and social problem of the Kurds. Three days later, at a very large demonstration in Mahabad, the principal Kurdish leader Abdurrahman Ghassemlou declared that the Kurds would be defending the unity of Iran and that they would accept negotiations.

The Kurds also formed their own delegation, which contained one representative of each political party, with Sheikh Ezzedinn Hussein as an independent personality and a spokesman on behalf of the DPIK.

But the government delegation refused to meet with some political parties it considered 'extremist', especially Komala and Fedai. That was obviously a pretext to avoid negotiation. The government would not accept the Kurdish project of autonomy.¹⁸ The Kurdish delegation never received an official proposal for discussing the future of Kurdistan. On 10 December, in the evening daily paper *Etelaat*, the government published a proposal for 'self-government' of the Kurdish area, which was in fact, a decentralized administrative project.

The Kurds did not accept the government's proposal. They emphasized the fact that there was no mention of political rights, nor of any special measure to prevent discrimination against the Kurds. On the other hand, they did not receive any official document on which the negotiation could be based.

The Kurds were not to have any other occasion to meet with the authorities, which were greatly preoccupied with other problems.¹⁹ They boycotted the referendum for the Constitution (2–3 December 1979) and the presidential election (25 January 1980), but took part in the legislative election (14 February 1980). The Ministry of the Interior cancelled this election in the Kurdish area, officially because of the presence of 'armed groups'.

At the beginning of the spring of 1980, war began in earnest between the Kurds and the government forces,²⁰ who took control of all the major Kurdish towns. The Kurds were left with some 'liberated zones' in the mountains and villages of Kurdistan in Iran.

At the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq War (22 September 1980), the DPIK declared itself ready to join the Iranian army against Iraq, if the government would accept the autonomy project for Kurdistan and if it would agree to remove the Pasdaran from the whole Kurdish area. But the government made the opposite choice. Several army corps, including Pasdaran units, had bedded down in Kurdistan, which became an interior front, where a low-intensity war was running against the Kurds.

The Kurdish resistance, which had to leave for Iraqi Kurdistan by 1984, received some logistical help from the Iraqi regime. In June 1981, the DPIK joined the National Council of Iranian Resistance (NCIR) created by the People's Mojahideen (of Iran) and the former Republic President, A.H. Bani Sadr.²¹

Between 1981 and 1989, the political situation in Iran was horrifying. In addition to the negative consequences of the war with Iraq, more than 30,000 Iranian activists were sentenced to death in the prisons by the theocratic regime. The Kurds were not spared this repression. The DPIK's general secretary, Dr Ghassemlou, was assassinated in Vienna on 13 July 1989, while he was

meeting with the emissary of the Islamic Republic. Three years later, on 17 September 1992, his successor, M. Sadegh Sharafkandi, was also assassinated in Berlin, where he was attending the International Socialist Congress.²²

In 1993, under pressure from Tehran, the two main Kurdish political parties of Iraqi Kurdistan, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) asked the DPIK to leave the Kandil Mountains (located on the Iran-Iraq border) for Koy Sindjak, a small town located between Arbil and Sulaymanieh in Iraqi Kurdistan. Since then, more than three hundred members and sympathizers of the DPIK and Komala have been killed in Iraqi Kurdistan by the Iranian forces with total impunity.

In 1996, under the escort of PUK peshmergas, two thousand Pasdars crossed the border in order to bomb the DPIK's camps. Fortunately, no one was killed because the DPIK had been previously informed of the Pasdaran's plan. Since then, the Iranian Kurdish resistance has continued to go through a period of retreat.²³

What has happened to the Kurdish population in Iran? How have they dealt with the regime? What is their political, social and economic situation?

The Iranian Kurds had to wait until 1997, when Mohammad Khatami, a 'reformist' was elected president of the Islamic Republic. Several Kurdish intellectuals were elected members of the Parliament. They formed the first Kurdish faction of MPs in the Islamic Assembly and asked for the application of Articles 15 and 19 of the Constitution,²⁴ but the Ministry of Information opposed this demand. Some NGOs were formed, but in reality they are governmental organizations: on the one hand, they depend on public subsidy; on the other, they are under control of the security services. Nevertheless, they have some attraction for young people and women. The Islamic Republic presents these structures as representative of civil society, but in fact all political activities are forbidden and there is no Kurdish political party in Iran. Islamic courts sentenced to death several Kurdish activists, and there are still numerous Kurdish political prisoners in Iran. In 2004, Louis Joinet, a UN expert on torture, who had at least been allowed by the Iranian authorities to visit the prisons and who could speak to some of the prisoners and their family, said that Iran was one huge prison. The election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad²⁵ as the president of the Islamic Republic on June 2005 put an end to the reformist 'spring' in Iran. Power is now in the hands of the most fanatical elements of the Republic.

Several Kurdish intellectuals, led by a former member of Parliament, B. Adab, a native of Sanandaj, created the 'Unified Front of Kurds' in January 2006. Their project is based on the Iranian Constitution. They have asked for

some reforms in order to improve the cultural, economic and social situation of the Kurdish area, and the application of the Articles 15 and 12 of the Constitution.²⁶ They emphasize the religious aspect of the Kurdish population and there is no mention of political rights.

The Kurdish population in Iran feels excluded for both national and religious reasons. Like the majority of the Iranian population, the Kurds must endure political repression, but they are also qualified as separatists and accused of being a potential danger to the unity of Iran. Since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, Iran has reinforced its relationships with Syria and Turkey. Several meetings have been held between these countries to prevent the creation of a Kurdish state in the north of Iraq. Tehran, Ankara and Damascus continue with their anti-Kurdish politics. According to BBC Persian section, on 4 April 2006, Firouz Dolatabadi, the Iranian Ambassador in Ankara declared that 'to face the danger of an independent Kurdish state supported by the USA, and which threatens the integrity of our two countries, we must take joint measures.'

Since then, Turkey, which had already gathered more than 250,000 soldiers on the border with Iran and Iraq, added 50,000 others to prevent any incursions by the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) from Iraqi Kurdistan. On 21 April, the Iranian Army bombed some positions of the PJAK (Party of Free Life in Kurdistan, close to the PKK) in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Even intellectuals very often consider the Kurdish question in Iran a potential danger for the integrity of the country. There is, in fact, a real amalgam between the recognition of the basic rights of the Kurds and the danger of a probable partition of Iran. Some Iranian reviews have published articles about the Kurds. They admit that Kurdistan is one of the most underdeveloped regions in Iran and call for economical measures and some form of freedom. But, actually their main effort is to prevent Iraqi Kurdistan's situation from rubbing off on other Iranians.

But the situation is changing in Iranian Kurdistan. A new generation of Kurdish students is trying to make a scientific and critical analysis of the Kurds' situation in general. They are asking for the recognition of the basic rights of the Iranian Kurds. They follow closely and enthusiastically the situation of the Federal Region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The two main Kurdish political parties, the DPIK and the two branches of Komala,²⁷ are heavily penalized by their forced exile in Iraqi Kurdistan.²⁸ They think that the Islamic nature of the Iranian regime does not permit any pacific and democratic solution for the Kurdish problem in Iran. They want the end of the Islamic Republic and the creation of a democratic and federal Republic. They continue to be part of the Iranian opposition because the Iraqi Kurdish political parties adopted the state logic regarding their relations with Tehran. But the situation is developing positively. Massoud Barzani, the president of

the federal Kurdish Region in Iraq, has declared that, from now on, no Kurd will find it acceptable to shoot another Kurd.²⁹

As for the Iranian opposition, the fact is that they carefully trying to avoid a discussion of the Kurdish problem in general. They clearly situate it in an Iranian context. Some of them accept that Iranian Kurds have suffered discrimination but the Kurdish problem is very often considered as an economic problem.

The Iranian Kurds, who live close to the Azeris, also have some local problems of their own. Azeri nationalists are not ready to accept that a part of Kurdish territory should be included in the province of Western Azerbaijan.³⁰ They consider this province Azeri, and this is already a problem as regards the Kurdish population.

On the whole, the political situation is very critical. The people are unsatisfied. A minor local problem can generate a huge consequence. Political life is empty. The traditional Kurdish political parties are prohibited. This situation pushes some people to join the most radical branch of Islam, the Salafis. Drugs and prostitution are spreading into Kurdistan, where social structures have previously been extremely traditional.

As regards the economic situation, one can say that Iranian Kurdistan is one of the less developed areas in Iran. This is the consequence of a deliberate political choice, which was made by the monarchy.³¹

Under the Islamic Republic, the economic situation of Kurdistan has not changed. The rate of public investment is extremely low in the Kurdish region. As a result, few people work in industrial and mining sectors whereas the tertiary sector is flourishing. This is an indication of the imbalance of the economic situation.³² For example, in 1995, the amount of money spent on 77 projects in the province of Kurdistan corresponded to the amount spent on only 17 projects in the province of Isfahan. Unemployment is one of the highest of Iran. In 1999, when the average rate of unemployment in Iran was about 12.5 per cent, it was 21.5 per cent in Kurdistan province, 18.9 per cent in Western Azerbaijan, 16.5 per cent in Kermanshah and 15 per cent in Ilam.³³

As a consequence, Kurdistan is also one of the poorest regions in Iran. The province of Kurdistan occupies the rank of 24 in the index of human poverty (IHP), just before the provinces of Sistan and Baluchistan and Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad. One of the negative consequences of this situation is the high rate of suicide, especially among women, in the Kurdish region. In 2004, Tehran had 404 cases of suicide. The Kurdish province of Ilam was in second place with 381, 212 of whom were women. Ilam retained the first place in relation to the number of its inhabitants.³⁴

Few Kurdish executives are employed in Kurdistan. The government has a security approach to the Kurdish area and the Kurdish people. The Kurds are officially considered to be the defenders of their borders, but in reality they

are accused of being separatists. Fifty-three per cent of the inhabitants of Sanandaj estimate that the government does not respect the principle of equality between the ethnic groups in Iran.³⁵ From 1980 to 1997, no Sunni Kurdish executives participated in the administration of affairs in the Kurdish area. In 1997, one Shia Kurdish governor was nominated and a few other Kurdish executives were employed in the province of Kurdistan. There are two possible explanations for this: either there is a lack of Kurdish executives, which would denote a lack of public investment to train them, or there are enough Kurdish executives, but they are not being employed on any large scale in their own area.

President Ahmadinejad's government does not seem to want to change anything in Kurdistan. Some members of Parliament accuse the government of not meeting the real needs of the most underdeveloped regions.³⁶ It would be interesting to find out what percentage of the 2006 budget has been dedicated to the Kurdish region.

In spite of the lack of public investment, the Kurdish cultural situation is excellent. Faced with the suppression of political activities, Kurdish society is concentrating its efforts in the cultural sector. The Kurdish language is not taught as a regional language at school despite Article 15 of the Constitution, which decides that Persian is the official language but provides also the teaching of regional languages in public schools.

However, books, reviews, magazines and papers are published in Kurdish³⁷ although in Iran all publication is censored. The editors must present published books to the Ministry of Information. To avoid problems, they practise self-censorship. If publishers fail to pass the censor, they will lose their investment, and very often, they must destroy their books. As a result, some Kurdish writers therefore publish their books in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Publications in the Kurdish language have incontestably helped journalists and writers to publish very complicated texts, and Kurdish students have their own publication.³⁸ However, there is a lack of public investment, of training centres for journalists, syndicates or committees of writers. Thus, for an evaluation of the quality of these publications, only comparative studies in the next fifty years will permit a scientific and critical approach.

Recently the DPIK and the two branches of Komala established their own television channel, while Iranian public television also has a Kurdish channel. Each of them tries to inform the Kurdish public with its own vision of things. Iranian Kurds, who already watch other Kurdish television channels,³⁹ ignore the official channel.

Music is an important part of Kurdish life. Kurdish music is rich and

varied.⁴⁰ Several Kurdish music groups exist in Iran, the most well-known being *Kamkar*, *Youssef Zamani* and *Andalibi*. Singers such as Shahram Nazeri and instrumentalists such as Ali Akbar Moradi and Keyhan Kalhor give concerts in Iran, and also in Iraqi and Turkish Kurdistan, as well as in Europe and the US.

Iranian Kurds are also very interested in cinema. One of the most well-known Iranian directors, Bahman Ghobadi, is a Kurd.⁴¹

The Iranian Kurdish Diaspora is also very keen on intellectual and cultural activities, publishing dual-language dictionaries in some European languages (English, German, Swedish, Finnish, Danish, etc.), dubbing films and translating European literature into Kurdish.⁴²

In conclusion, one can say that, like other Kurds, Iranian Kurds have a very clear notion of their identity. They know that they are part of the Kurdish nation. Most of them reject violence and desire a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem. But neither political nor identity problems seem to have a quick resolution. The government tries to impose Islamic rule and refuses to recognize the political rights of either Kurds or other Iranian minorities. This regime considers that the entire Iranian population is part of the *Ummah* (Muslim nation). It estimates that what distinguishes people from each other is virtue. All society actors capable of opening up this society to tolerance and to respect for individual and collective rights must kept under control. Their situation is getting more and more difficult. Between October and November 2006 several Kurdish people, including journalists, teachers, trade unionists and human rights activists, were arrested.⁴³

A portion of the Iranian population actually thinks that only foreign military intervention can change the situation, even if they do not measure the consequences. Others support the Islamic government, which monopolizes almost all the economical, political and military power in Iran.

Whatever the future will be, two questions must be answered. Will Iranian public opinion, including political activists and citizens, accept the existence of the Kurdish problem and the necessity of finding an adequate solution? Will Kurdish representatives be in a political mature mind to be able to have a discussion based on equality, solidarity and freedom with the central authorities?

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- 1 Actually 10 per cent of the population of this province are not Kurds. This is the result of a deliberated political decision, which tends to mix the population in the Kurdish area, which was the case in Iraqi Kurdistan under Saddam Hussein's regime.
- 2 She was arrested on 2 August at his home in Sanandaj and was accused of 'undermining the national security' and 'disturbing the public order'. When she was released in October, she revealed that she was been tortured and raped in prison. She left Iran and became a political refugee in the United States.
- 3 Reza Amini, Halmet Azadpour and Abdoloh Mohammadi.
- 4 In 1979, the Kurds boycotted the referendum for the establishment of the Islamic Republic and the first presidential elections.
- 5 These were Ayatollah Khomeini in Qom, the temporary government of Mehdi Bazargan in Tehran and the Council of the Revolution.
- 6 Hashem Sahabian, '*Hey'at-é vijéy-é bal-é masa'l-é kordostan*' ('The special delegation for the problems of Kurdistan'), in *Tchesbmandaz-é Iran*, special edition 'Kurdistan', April 2003, p. 51.
- 7 Ahmad Muftizadeh didn't have any religious function, but Sheikh Ezzedine Hussein was the imam of Mahabad's mosque.
- 8 The Kurdish political organization submitted a proposal, which contained eight items. Seven of them were related to the Kurdish problem in Iran, and the last one asked the government to expel the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq from Iran. This organization was founded by Mustafa Barzani, and after the defeat of 1975, it was located in Iran. The relationship between this organization and the Iranian Kurdish political parties, especially, the DPIK, suffered for many years. Since its creation, Komala was supported by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, led by Jalal Talabani.
- 9 One of the Kurdish leaders, Dr Abdurrahman Ghassemlou, proposed to call it the University of Imam Khomeini.
- 10 From 18–22 March, the Peshmergas (the Kurdish militia) opposed the security forces in the military base of Sanandaj. Iranian Army helicopters and artillery fire killed 450 people.
- 11 The Pasdaran (the Guardians of the Republic) are the Islamic militia. This army corps, which later became an important economic force in Iran, contains the most fanatical partisans of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 12 The Kurds considered that the wording of the referendum question ('Do you support the Islamic Republic, yes or no?') prevented a truly democratic choice. They also noted the absence of any information about the nature of the Islamic Republic and wondered about democratic rights.
- 13 The Azeri militia headed by Mullah Hassani used the pretext of the presence of the Peshmergas in the first DPIK's meeting in Naghada.
- 14 The Central Committee of the DPIK, which was informed about the hostility of the new authorities, decided to not allow their General Secretary to go to Tehran. Ayatollah Khomeini was very disappointed because he wanted 'to retain' him there.
- 15 Paweh is a small town located in the north of Kermanshah province. Lethal conflict broke out between the Pasdaran, headed by Mustafa Tchamran, and the Peshmerga of the DPIK between 11–18 August. Twenty people, including the DPIK's representative for Paweh, were killed.
- 16 At the beginning of the conflict, the Pasdaran killed 56 inhabitants of the village of Qalatan and the whole of the inhabitants of Qarna. These two villages are located close to Naghadeh. The Kurdish opposition described this massacre as the Sabra and Chatila of the Kurdistan.
- 17 Dr Ahmad Sadr Hadj Seyyed Djawadi, Minister of Justice in the Bazargan government, in *Tchesbmandaz-é Iran*, April 2003, p. 43.
- 18 The Kurdish eminent jurist and lawyer, S.S. Vaziri, prepared this project, which called the proposal on 26 items. It contained very large and detailed proposals regarding the economic, social and political issues for autonomy status for Kurdistan.
- 19 The US embassy was occupied by the 'revolutionary students' on 4 December and the government

- of Mehdi Bazargan resigned on the 6th. Iran had also renounced the treaty of the Friendly Relationships with the USSR of 1921.
- 20 During the fourth Congress (19–24 February 1980), the DPIK was confronted at its first session. Seven members of the Central Committee, supported by Tudeh (ICP), asked to negotiate with the government. In the absence of any concrete official proposition, the majority of the Party was resolutely opposed to this approach.
- 21 The DPIK broke off this alliance on 30 March 1985, due to the lack of any democratic process. The NCIR reproached the DPIK for tempting fate with the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, from September 1982 and for three months, the DPIK and Komala had engaged in a fratricidal war, which considerably reduced the Kurdish movement and seriously damaged its credibility.
- 22 The DPIK has a conservative status in International Socialist Movement.
- 23 On 6 December 2006, the DPIK again split into two factions, due to organizational problems.
- 24 According to Article 15, the official language of Iran is Persian (Farsi) but other regional languages can be used in schools and by the media. According to Article 19, every ethnic group is considered to be equal in rights and there will be no distinction between them.
- 25 Mr Ahmadi Nejad is one of the founders of Al-Quds brigade, which is known for some suicide attacks in Lebanon and the murder abroad of some opposition leaders, especially Kurdish ones. He is supported by the ultra-conservative branch of Iranian Shias, the Hojjatiyya, which refuses the principle of the Supreme Leader, and adheres to belief in the immanent reappearance of Mahdi, the hidden twelfth and last imam in the Shia hierarchy.
- 26 According to Article 12, the Iranian official religion is Shi'a Asna Ashari, but the adepts of the other branches of Islam, primarily the Sunni, must be respected and they are allowed to carry out some civil acts (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.) in keeping with their religious beliefs.
- 27 In July 2000, Komala was divided in two parts: the Communist Party of Iran and its Kurdish branch called Komala, and Komala. Both claim the name of Komala and ask for a democratic and socialist regime in Iran, but only one Komala asks for a federal statute for the Iranian Kurdistan.
- 28 Iranian Kurds respect these parties because despite their difficulties, they maintain the aims of Kurdish national movement.
- 29 *Hurriyet*, 6 April 2006.
- 30 This part of Kurdish territory was once part of the Mokri region. In the territorial reorganization of Iran in the nineteenth century, the Mokri region was divided into two parts: one was included in Western Azerbaijan province and another in the Kurdistan province.
- 31 Under this regime a huge part of the budget was funded to the area located close to Tehran. So the Fourth Plan for Economic Development (1963–75) provided 46 per cent to the Central province, whereas the provinces of Kermanshah and Kurdistan received just 2.4 per cent, Nahid Kouhshekar, '*Jogbrafiyay-é touse-é va jogbrafiya-é ghomi dar barnamebay-é omrani-é dowlat*' ('The geography of development and the ethnical geography in the government projects for development'), in *Gofto-Gou*, No. 43, p. 44.
- 32 Khaled Tawakoli, '*Kurdistan va vagbé-é dowom-é kbordad*' ('Kurdistan and the events of the 2nd Khordad'), in *Gofto-Gou*, No. 43, p. 39.
- 33 Massoud Sofi Majidpour, '*Negabi bé chakbesbay-é touse dar Iran*' ('Regards on development investments in Iran'), in *Gofto-Gou*, No. 43, p. 85.
- 34 *Iran, Statistical yearbook, 2004* (Tehran: Markaz-é Amar-é Iran).
- 35 Majidpour, '*Negabi bé chakbesbay-é touse dar Iran*', p. 86.
- 36 *Le Monde d'économie*, 21 March 2006.
- 37 In Sanandaj there are *Sirwan* (weekly), *Rojhalat* (periodical). *Assa* was also a periodical publication, which is now banned. In Mahabad there are *Payami Kurdistan* (weekly) and *Mahabad* (periodical). In Tehran, *Serveh* (periodical) continues to be published, whereas *Ashti* (weekly) is forbidden.
- 38 In October and November 2006, three Kurdish-Persian student publications of the University of Urmiah (*Manisbt*, *Hanaran* and *Trifa*) were banned. This university had already banned two other Kurdish publications, *Rojano* and *Zilan*.
- 39 Roj TV broadcast from Copenhagen, Kurdistan TV, Kurdsat and Zagro TV from Iraqi Kurdistan.
- 40 There exist four principal genres in this music: the music of song and dance (*Bazm va Tagbazol*),

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the music of fight and epic (*Razm va Hemaseb*), the music of heart and mysticism (*Del va Erfan*) and finally the music of conjecture (*Monasebatba*). Interview with A.A. Moradi about Kurdish music, November 2005.

- 41 Ghobadi's films have been in international festivals and he has won several awards.
- 42 In 2005, the Iranian Kurds translated more than ten bilingual books (English-Kurdish) for children. They also dubbed two films, *Shrek* and *Madagascar*.
- 43 Mohammad Sadiq Kaboudwand, Director of the Kurdistan Human Rights organization, who was arrested on 1 May 2006, was sentenced to jail for one year. Loqman Mehri, who is also a member of this organization was sentenced to jail for five years. He was accused of political activities against the Islamic regime. Shirko Jahani, a journalist and a member of the Kurdistan Human Rights organization, was accused of informing foreign journalists about the murder of Shwaneh seyed Qadir, and again arrested in November. Human rights activists Hemin Weissi and Ibrahim Salehi were also arrested two months ago. Mahmoud Salehi, a Kurdish trade unionist from Sakkez, who was accused of exhorting the workers to attend the 2006 May Day demonstration, was sentenced to jail for four years. Majed Khaledian, Eqbal Jahanmardi, Asaad Khani, Korosh Ranjbar, Sorray Ghassemian (a woman), all teachers in a secondary school in Sanandaj, were accused of political activities against the regime and arrested. Farzad Kamangar, a teacher from Kamyaran and member of Kurdistan Human Rights organisation was arrested in September 2006 and his relatives have had no news of him. In *Rooz*, 30 November 2006.