

# KURDS OF IRAN

## Party Portrait

The Kurds of Iran reside in Northwestern Iran. They are the second largest minority in Iran and are estimated to make up 7 percent of the Iranian population. Although they have not endured the same horrors as the Kurds of Syria or Iraq, they have still suffered systematic and cultural oppression. For a brief period, with Soviet support, the Kurds of Iran established an independent republic, Mahabad. This republic was short-lived and quickly crushed by Teheran. After the Iranian revolution, Kurds were severely politically constricted and in turn revolted with Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê, or the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), leading the fight. The rebellion was quickly crushed. These events give the Kurds of Iran a strong sense of nationalism and victimhood, but also of pragmatism. Teheran is swift to dismantle Kurdish separatists with executions. The Kurds note these repercussions and are seeming less likely to promote pro-Kurdish autonomy political parties than their counterparts in greater Kurdistan. The Kurds of Iran also have a unique aspect to them in that the largest percent of Shia Muslim Kurds live in Iran. This creates an internal dynamic between the Kurds, as the Shiite Kurds to some degree identify with, and some even prefer to live under, the Shia Iranian regime.

## Key Interests

- Protect themselves from brutal military incursions by Tehran or other actors. This desired security can come in the form of civil rights guarantees from the state.
- Become adequately represented in the national government. Underrepresentation contributes to Iran issuing legislation that is oppressive of the Iranian Kurdish population.
- Seek the opportunity to host assemblies featuring Kurdish Nationalism to reduce cultural suppression

## Sources of Leverage

**Military** - The PJAK and KDPI are armed and formidable forces for the Iranian government due to their guerilla warfare. They launch terror attacks that in turn kill and disrupt the lives of Iranian citizens.  
**Political** - After an attack from the PJAK or KDPI, Turkish citizens are likely to place pressure on politicians to reform their policies to prevent further attacks.  
**Soft Power** - Utilize the media and human rights watch organizations to further deter Teheran from abusing them. The Kurds across greater Kurdistan can exploit the enmity between their host states to manipulate and mobilize them accordingly, as they have in the past.

## Regional Strategy

As for external actors, the Kurds of Iran do not possess a strong regional strategy policy. Their situational vision in Iran keeps them preoccupied with their local reality and Teheran. Internally speaking, the Kurds of Iran's most prominent political parties, the PJAK and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI), are largely exiled and reside in Iraqi Kurdistan. PJAK has ties to the PKK and in certain instances is activated.

## Powerful Individuals

Abdul Rahman Haji Ahmadi and Evindar Renas (leaders of PJAK)  
 Mustafa Hijri (leader of KDPI)

## Potential Negotiation Moves

**Use the PJAK and KDPI** as leverage by way of deterrent agents through the threat of terroristic activity.  
**Utilize Iranian politics** as a platform to spread awareness- it is speculated that as Iran opens its international relations, it will crack down on internal dissonance.  
**Partner with Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi Kurds** and their diasporas to pressure their respective governments for greater autonomy.

## Internal Conflicts

Shiite VS Sunni Kurds within Iran and their disproportionate political oppression from Teheran.

### Memberships

N/A

### Allies

N/A

### Partners

KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

### Rivals

TURKEY

### Adversaries

IRAN

### Active Armed Opponents

IRAN (against PJAK and KDPI)

### Proxy

KURDS of Turkey

### External Sponsor

N/A

### Aid Recipient

N/A

### Aid Donor

N/A