



<http://www.kmmk-ge.org/>
info@kmmk-ge.org

Human Rights Violations in Kurdistan of Iran



**Periodic Summary Report for the Attention of the OHCHR Desk and the
UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Kurdistan of
Iran**

Kurdistan Human Rights-Geneva (KMMK-G)

October 2020



Table of Contents

I. Introduction	3
II. Methodology.....	4
III. Executions	4
IV. Political Prisoners	8
V. Extra-Judicial Executions of Kurdish Kolbaran (border couriers) in 2020....	13
VI. Landmines Incidents	14
VII. About KMMK-G	16



I. Introduction

This report provides up-to-date data and analysis on the situation of human rights in Kurdistan of Iran from January 1, 2020 until September 28, 2020, prepared for the attention of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, UN agencies, media, governments and public attention.

Similar to previous years, the persecution, execution, imprisonment and extra-judicial executions of Kolbaran (border couriers or tradesmen) remain alarmingly high, with the Islamic Republic justifying much of its atrocities under the pretexts of guarding the country's security.¹

This report specifically addresses executions, political prisoners, extra-judicial executions of Kolbaran (Border Couriers) and landmine incidents affecting Kurdish civilians from January 1, 2020 until September 28, 2020.

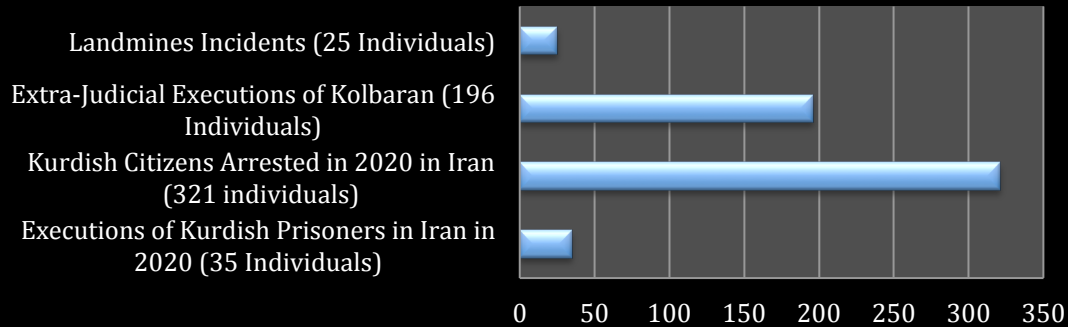
Kurdish people in Iranian Kurdistan have yet again endured the highest number of executions of political prisoners in Iran in 2020. Four (4) of the seven (7) prisoners executed for belief and opinion are Kurds. Forty-four (44) *kolbar* (border couriers or tradesmen) were killed and 152 injured; and 8 landmine explosion fatalities and 17 landmine injuries were reported in Kurdistan of Iran. In addition, 321 Kurdish citizens were arrested and 142 of them were sentenced to long years of imprisonment.²

¹ Rouhani Meter: < http://rouhani.ir/event.php?event_id=63> and IRNA: < <https://goo.gl/YLsvPU>>

² Every year KMMK-G provides the details of data collected in each aforementioned category in Persian and Kurdish and happy to share with stakeholders upon requests.



The Situations of Human Rights in Iranian Kurdistan in 2020 at a Glance



II. Methodology

The Iranian authorities refuse to provide accurate data on executions, landmines, Kulbaran (border couriers) and other issues. In order to get the most credible data, KMMK-G collects and verifies up-to-date information in the following ways: (a) conducting interviews with the family of the victims, (b) conducting interviews with the lawyers of the victims, (c) contacting and receiving information from various institution, on-the-ground local networks, as well as informants within authorities and governmental entities, (d) monitoring the Islamic Republic's official statements, state media and publications, (e) receiving information from informal news agencies, and (f) partnering with the Human Rights Section of Kurdpa News Agency in obtaining on-the-ground information.

Iran: Kurdish Share of Executions in 2020

III. Executions

The state-sponsored violence and the application of death sentences against Iranian ethnic groups and in particular the Kurdish people is increasing dramatically and disproportionately. While the Kurdish population constitutes only 13% of the total 80 million population, the number of Kurdish executions for political and security related charges is over 55%.



Execution of Kurdish Political prisoners:

Since January 2020, among the seven (7) prisoners who were executed for membership of a political party or security related charges in Iran, four (4) of them are Kurds (Mr. Hedayat ABDOLLAHPOUR, Mr. Mustafa SALIMI, Mr. Diako RASULZADEH and Mr. Saber SHEKH ABDULLAH), one (1) is Baluchi (Mr. Abdulbaset DEHANI) and the other two (2) Persians (Mr. Mustafa SALEHI and Mr. Navid AFKARI). According to ImpactIran, half of those executed for affiliation with a political party or a banned group between 2010 and 2018, were Kurds, while a quarter were Baluchis and over one-tenth Arabs.³

The majority of these executions take place after grossly unfair and summary trials and for crimes that do not constitute the “most serious crimes” under international law. In this context, the execution of Kurdish citizens on vaguely worded offenses such as moharebeh or “enmity against God” and fabricated security charges are examples of insufficient and unfair forms of crime formulation. The Kurdish prisoners face unfair trial and are often convicted in proceedings marked by a pattern of alleged abuses including the use of confessions driven under torture and denial of access to a lawyer.

In 2020, we observed a new pattern of the executions of Kurdish political prisoners in Iran by squad firing, group executions and disappearances of the prisoners and their bodies and denial of the last visitation of the family before execution. This pattern was common in the eighties.

The secret execution and enforced disappearances of Mr. Hedayat ABDOLLAHPOUR, a Kurdish political prisoner, on 11 May 2020, in a military base in Oshnavieh, West Azerbaijan Province by squad firing, despite the UN human rights experts’ multiple calls and concerns raised with the Iranian authorities, as well as the group execution of Mr. Saber SHEKH ABDULLAH, Diako RASULZADEH, exemplifies this

³ Impact Iran fact sheet to UPR: <http://impactiran.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Death-Penalty-UPR-submission-2.pdf>



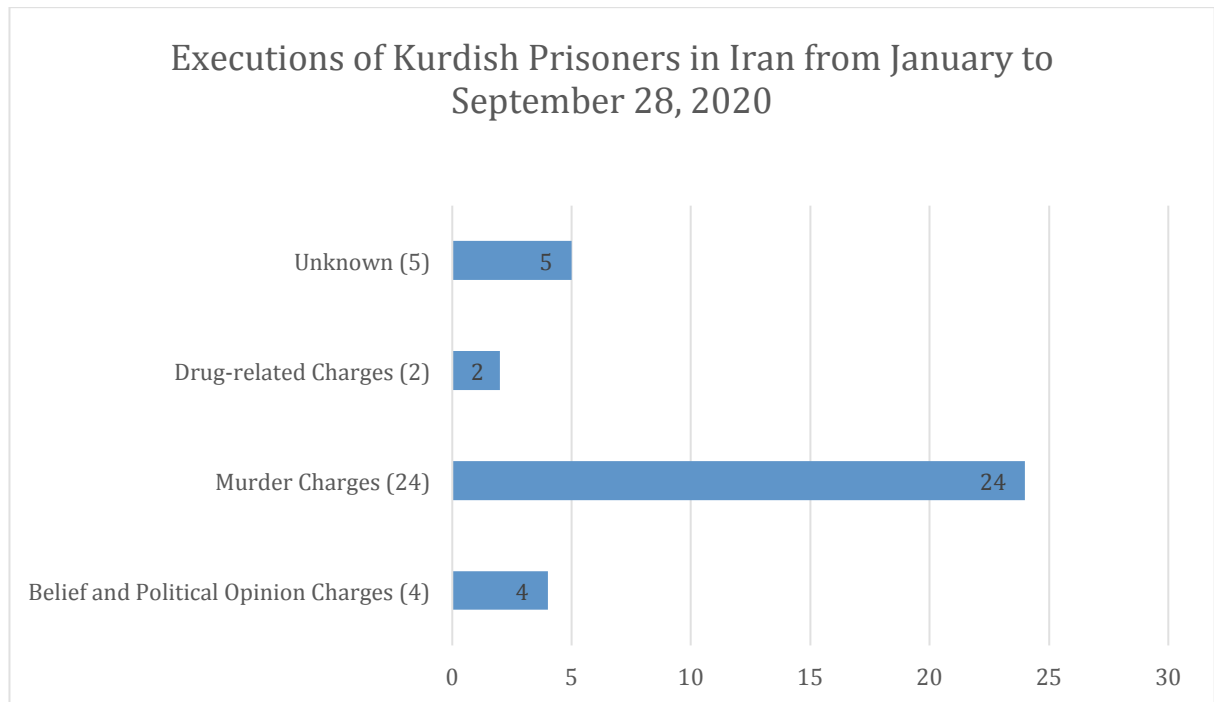
new pattern of executions of prisoners belonging to ethnic groups and others in Iran.⁴

According to the data collected by the Kurdistan Human Rights-Geneva (KMMK-G) from January 1 to September 28, 2020 at least 35 Kurdish prisoners have been executed⁵.

In this regard, despite secrecy surrounding executions, and the government's refusal to publish the names and the ethnicity or whereabouts of the executed prisoners, KMMK-G has been able to identify the names of at least 30 of those executed. Twenty-four (24) of them were executed for murder, four (4) for political belief, two (2) for drug related offenses and five (5) unidentified. Over 185 prisoners are reported executed in Iran since January 1st, 2020.

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26036&LangID=E>

⁵ The data collected on-the-ground on Kurdish executions varies. This can be partially due to the fact that some executions are carried out secretly or that some families may have been intimidated not to report. KMMK-G has come across data as high as 45 executions since January 2020, often with accompanying metadata. However, KMMK-G has decided to state the least verifiable number of executions that its on-the-ground sources have compiled. The metadata used to calculate approximate desegregation of executions reported in 2020 is from a dataset of 45 executions, applied to a minimum of 30 executions.



Imminent Risk of Executions of Kurdish Political Prisoners

Since January 2020, the Iran's Supreme Court upheld the death sentences for four (4) Kurdish political prisoners: Mr. Haidar GHORBANI, Moheddin IBRAHIMI, Shakir BEHROOZI and Mr. Arsalan KHUDKAM.

Furthermore, on 10th of September 2020, the Iranian's Supreme Court upheld the death sentences for the third time for seven Kurdish Sunni faith political prisoners after 11 years of detention. These prisoners are Farhad SALIMI, Qasem ABASTEH, Dawoud ABDOLLAHI, Ayoub KARIMI, Anvar KHEZRI, Khosrew BESHARAT and Kamran SHEIKHEH all detained in Rajaee Shahr prison.

They have been imprisoned and sentenced to death on bogus charges such as "acting against national security", "spreading propaganda against the state", "membership in Salafi groups", "corruption on earth" and "moharebeh" or waging war against God. Before the 38th Branch of the Supreme Court confirmed their death sentences on September 10, the 28th Branch of the "Revolutionary Courts," presided by Mohammad Moqiseh had condemned these political prisoners to



execution in 2014. Moqiseh, also known as Naserian, was reportedly a key member of the “Death Commissions,” responsible for massacring political prisoners in the summer of 1988.

Political Prisoners

Overview

The Kurdish community remains one of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death, due to their alleged activism. The share of Kurdish political prisoners remains dramatically high in today’s Iran

IV. Political Prisoners

Similar to previous years, the share of Kurdish political imprisonment remained dramatically high in 2020. According to on-the-ground findings of KMMK-G, Kurdish political prisoners represent almost half of the total number of political prisoners in the country.⁶ The UN Special Rapporteur has also shed light on the disproportional arrest of Kurdish citizens in Iran “Kurdish political prisoners are said to represent almost half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran. » According to United For Iran, an NGO collecting data on Iran’s political prisoners, among 162 prisoners detained and sentenced to longterm imprisonment for supporting dissidents groups in Iran, 105 are Kurds.⁷

Given the secrecy arounds the arrests and the authorities refusal to provide data on the arrests, data collection for this section has proven

⁶ See United for Iran’s Prisoners’ Atlas: < <https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/> > (English)

⁷ See also

https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4X8BRCPARIsABmcnOqgvVQohLx5tZ49FD0SWDjFI1wWwrTMOejQh08T60P96hGC_un5xg0aAq2bEALw_wcB



particularly difficult. KMMK-G's on-the-ground contacts have collected what they could, information about which is provided in this section.

According to KMMK-G's collected data, 321 Kurdish citizens were arrested from January 1st to September 2020, many of whom sentenced to long years of imprisonment and were charged with crimes related to civic activism and membership of Kurdish political parties. Among these prisoners, there are individuals like workers, teachers, Kolbars (border couriers), artists, human rights and environmental activists, journalists, lawyer, students, photographer, cultural activists, and others alike.⁸

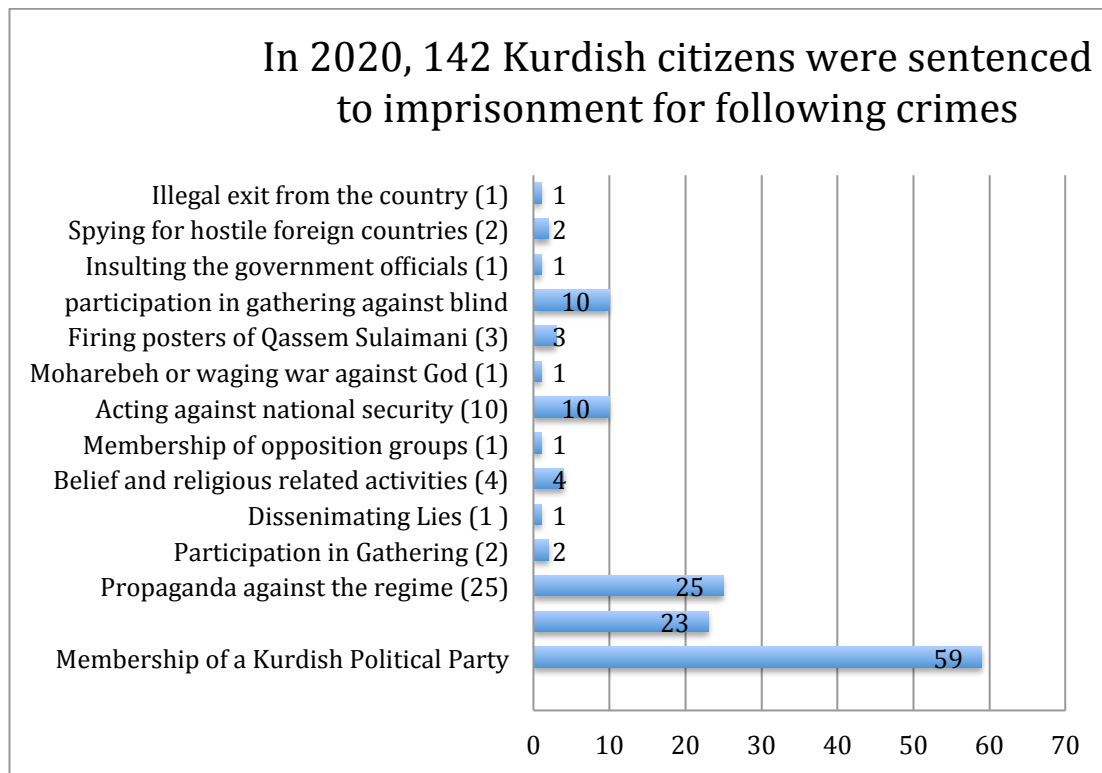
In this context, according to our data (data of KMMK-G), there are 19 civic activists, 2 teachers, 4 cultural activists, 1 Women rights defender, 10 environmental activists, 1 photographer, 5 journalists, 2 singers, 1 actor, 7 labour activists, 9 students, 3 lawyer, 1 member of Kurdish United Front Party, 3 soldiers, 5 media workers, 2 Yarasani faith followers, 1 athlete, 3 members of Coran school association, 19 religious activists, 2 christian priests, 3 researchers and 27 kolbar (border courier) among those detained. There are also 12 women among the detainees.

According to KMMK-G's collected data, 321 Kurdish citizens were arrested from January 1st to September 2020, 142 of them were sentenced to long years of imprisonment. Fifty-nine (59) of them were charged with the crime of cooperation and membership of Kurdish political parties, 23 charged with actions against public order by participating in protests, 25 charged for the crime for propaganda against the regime, 2 for gathering and another for disseminating lies, 4 were charged for their religious belief and activities, 1 membership of opposition groups, 10 for "acting against national security", 1 for "moharebeh" or waging war against God, 3 for putting into fire the posters of Qassem Sulaimani, 10 for participation in gathering and protests against the blind killing of kolbaran, 1 for insulting the government officials, 2 for spying for hostile foreign countries and 1 for

⁸ Please note that KMMK-G has a list of these detainees/prisoners in Persian. Since turning the list into English is beyond the bandwidth of KMMK-G at this time, it can be disclosed in Persian upon request



illegal exit from the country. Eight (8) women are among the sentenced prisoners. At least 30 Kurdish prisoners were executed: 24 for murder, 2 for drug-related offenses and four for political opinion et belief.



During this period, the Iranian's Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for eleven (11) Kurdish political prisoners including Haidar GHORBANI, Moheddin IBRAHIMI, Shakir BEHROOZI, Arsalan KHUDKAM, Farhad SALIMI, Qasem ABASTEH, Dawoud ABDOLLAHI, Ayoub KARIMI, Anvar KHEZRI, Khosrew BESHARAT and Kamran SHEIKHEH.

Furthermore, The Mazandaran Supreme Court upheld a 36 months sentences against **Ms. Mujgan Kawusy**, a Yarasani Kurdish author for the alleged crime of "Propaganda Against the Regime", "Disturbing Public Order" and "Encouraging Public to Revolt against the System". On December 19, 2019, she was arrested by the Nushahr security (Etela'at) services and brought to the Revolutionary Court where she was sentenced to jail. Ms. Kawusy was arrested because of her support on social media for the protests in Kurdish cities in Iranian Kurdistan.

Following the November 2019 Fuel Increase related protests, dozen of Kurdish citizens were arrested in the beginning of 2020.



Ms. Fatema DAMAWND from Bukan, a participant of the November's 2019 nationwide protest, was sentenced to 5 years and five months imprisonment and 30 flogs for "Gathering and Acting against State" and "Disturbing Public Order". She is serving currently her prison sentence in Urumiyeh Central Prison.

Mrs. Shehnaz (Beriwan) SADEQIFAR was also sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for "Membership in a Kurdish Political Party" and currently serves her sentence in Urumiyeh Central prison. Her daughter **Ms. Aynaz Zaeree** is also accused of the crime of "Membership in a Kurdish Political Party" and she is serving the detention with her mom Mrs. Shehnaz (Beriwan) SADEQIFAR in Urumiyeh Central prison without any formal conviction.

Ms. Suhaila HEJAB, a Kurdish lawyer from Kermanshah, was sentenced to 18 years of imprisonment for "Acting against Regime" Gathering and provoking Public disorder" and "Creating of a group for defending women rights" on 18th March 2020.



Ms. Sakina Parwane was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment and two years of interdiction of joining any political groups for the crime of “Membership of Groups hostile to regime and aiming to destabilize the national security” on April 2020, by Judge Ayman AFSHARI of Tehran Revolutionary Court, Branch 26. She is currently serving her sentences in Qarchek and Ramin Central Prison. Her lawyer Payam DARAFSHAN was also arrested on June 8, 2020, and she doesn’t any lawyer to defend her.

Mr. Afshin SHEKHISLAMI, a Kurdish civil rights activist and a member of Whadat Milli party, an authorized party in Sanandij, founded in 2018, was arrested by Sanandij Etela’at forces on 27th of June 2020 at home. Afshin was already arrested few times. He was first arrested in 2001 and passed 2 months in jail. In 2003, he passed 3 months in jail. 2004, he passed 9 months in jail for the crime of “Propaganda against the State”. Again, he was arrested on 17th February 2019 and after passing one month in jail, he was released on a 5 million Tomans bail. On 18th March 2020, Afshin was arrested by Etela’at forces and he was sentenced to 3 months jail by Sanandij revolutionary Court for the crime of “Propaganda against the State” and he was pardoned due to COVID 19 health crisis.

Finally, Afshin was arrested by Sanandij Etela’at forces on 27th of June 2020 at home. According to her mother, this force declared that they were part of Ministry of Etela’at and local Etela’at. Since his arrest, the parents were allowed to have a single phone call with him and his lawyer wasn’t allowed to visit him. Mrs. Nigar Nasri Moghddam is extremely worried and calls on the UN Special Rapporteur to intervene and save his son. She is also consenting to any communication by UN Special Rapporteurs and other independent experts and as well as the OHCHR on her son. Afshin was born on 20th of February 1976; he is a civil engineer and holds also an American resident card.

Evidently, the Kurdish community remains one of the most suppressed groups in the country, with individuals being persecuted, arrested and in many cases sentenced to death penalty due to their alleged activism. Similar to previous years, the Kurdish political prisoners represent half of the total number of political prisoners in Iran.

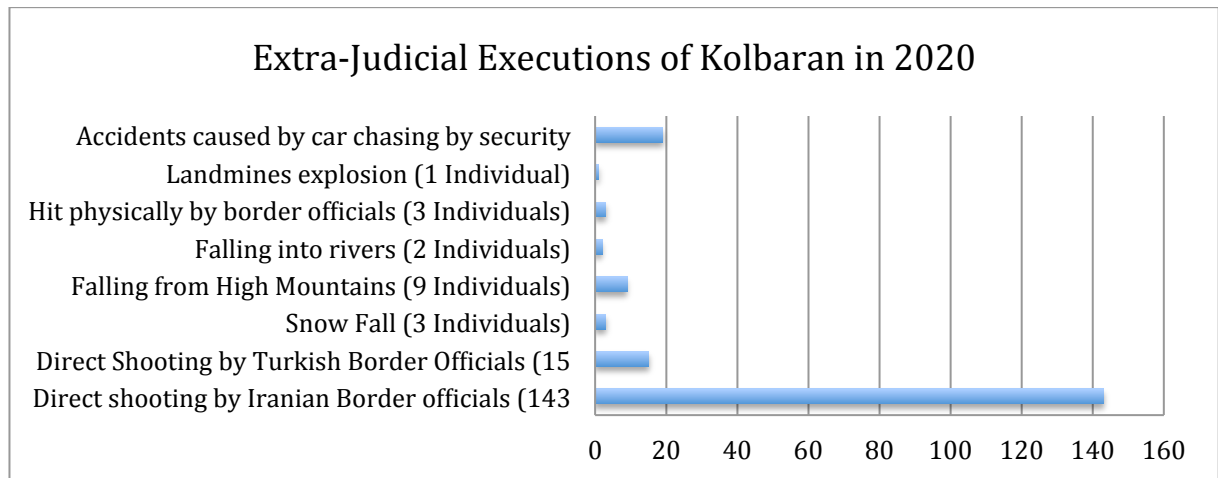


V. Extra-Judicial Executions of Kurdish Kolbaran (border couriers) in 2020

This report provides background on the situation of *Kolbaran* in Iranian Kurdistan. *Kolbaran* are border couriers who transport goods across the Iran-Iraq border, often, but not always, as part of the informal economy. *Kolbaran* is mainly practiced in the Kurdish-region of Iran where poverty and economic disparity are among the highest in the country. Although *Kolbaran* face myriads of challenges and human rights violations on a daily basis, this report will specifically focus on the extrajudicial killings of these individuals by Iranian security and military forces. The report specifically focuses on the period between January 1 and September 2020 during which at least 196 *Kolbaran* (i.e., border couriers) were killed or injured.

KMMK-G has received reports of extra-judicial executions of 44 border couriers known as Kolbar from January 1 till September 28, 2020 with another 152 individuals working as Kolbar injured at the border due to reasons such as shooting and landmine explosions among others. This brings the total incidents reported regarding shootings and discriminate killings of Kolbaran to 196 during the time period of discussion.

Moreover, many kolbaran (tradesmen) were arrested and the authorities confiscated their goods thus far in 2020. In addition, hundreds of horses belonging to Kurdish Kolbaran were also shot dead. Zakaria Moa'atar was only 17 years old when he was injured by direct shooting of Iranian security forces. 98% of the kolbaran are victims of direct shooting of Iranian military forces. Eighteen (18) of the victims were aged under 18 years old. Four (4) of them were aged between 14 and 17 years old.



The above data shows the sad trend of increasing of killing of Kurdish citizens who choose risky jobs of kolbaran due to discriminative policies of Iranian government and lack of investment in Kurdistan. Every year, hundreds of Kurdish citizens are killed and injured by direct shootings of Iranian border officials without any respect for Iran's internal or international legal obligations.

The Kurdistan Human Rights-Geneva call on the UN Special Rapporteur for situations of human rights in Iran as well on the UN Special Rapporteur for Extra-Judicial executions and Un Special Rapporteur for Minorities to make a joint communication on this issue.

Overview of Landmine Incidents Impacting the Lives of Kurdish Civilians in 2020

VI. Landmines Incidents

Iranian Kurdistan is the most affected area of the country by landmines and undetonated ammunitions. The reason for this were armed conflicts: According to Iranian official statistics, during the eight years-long Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) the Iranian army planted more than 20 million landmines in Iranian Kurdistan and Khuzestan province that hamper seriously the daily life of civilians particularly the farmers, the nomads, the shepherds and traders. Essentially, an area of about 4



million and 200 thousand hectares is contaminated by mines and explosive materials. During the armed conflict of 1980-1993 between government forces and Kurdish combatants the Iranian Army planted also an unknown number of mines around their barracks and compounds in many villages and cities in Kurdistan.

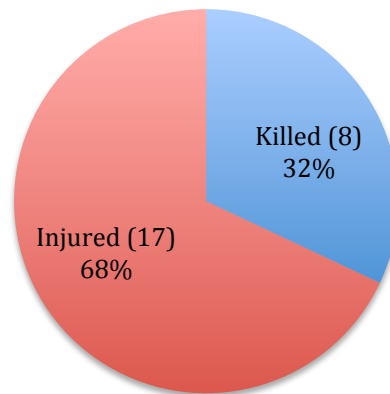
Various international bodies and entities such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on Iran (2010) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (January 2016) have made observations and recommendations, urging the Islamic Republic to clear its territory of landmines and all the remnants of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Nevertheless, despite international and domestic efforts, the Islamic Republic refuses to cooperate with international NGOs and entities, and to ratify the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty.

Year in Review (2020)

According to KMMK-G's data from the beginning of 2020 till September of that same year a total of 25 citizens have been victims of landmine explosions; 8 Kurdish civilians were killed and 17 were wounded due to landmines expositions and unexploded remnants of the Iran-Iraq war, which ended a long time ago in 1988. One of the victim named Payam Rostami from Kermanshah who lost his life was 14 years old. Most of the explosions took place in Ilam and Kermanshah province. Most of the injures are in the foot, hand and eyes.



Overview of Landmine Incidents Impacting the Lives of Civilians in 2020



VII. About KMMK-G

The Association for Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran - Geneva (KMMK-G) was established in 2006 to promote democracy, respect for human rights, and social development in and beyond Iranian Kurdistan. KMMK-G strives to serve as a bridge between the Kurdish and Iranian civil society on the one hand and the United Nations agencies and International institutions on the other. Since its inception, KMMK-G has actively participated in every session of the UN Human Rights Council and other relevant UN human rights mechanisms, including the Forum on Minority Issues. Over the years, the Association has frequently submitted reports on human rights situation in Iran's Kurdistan to various UN treaty bodies and in various UN Committees' meetings. KMMK-G has regular media outreach to Kurdish and Persian media and sponsors cultural events for the Kurdish community in Europe.

As a part of its advocacy efforts, KMMK-G is hosting regularly panels and seminars in Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva and as well as at the Swiss and EU Parliaments to promote the rights of ethnic groups in Iran. Recently, the group partnered with Geneva Graduate University and Impact Iran to organize a workshop on the rights of Iran's ethnic groups and also a panel at Human Rights Council with the participation of the UN Special Rapporteur for Iran and Madam Shirin Ebadi the Peace Nobel Laureate.

KMMK-G prepares annual human rights in Kurdistan of Iran reports, and provides detailed annexes of data collected to the office of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, as well as other relevant entities along with its annual reports. Click here for its www.kmmk-ge.org.