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Religious Minorities in Post-Revolutionary Iran: A Statistical Analysis with Key Examples Focusing on the Yarsani Minority

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Abstract

This paper presents an in-depth analysis of the status and experiences of religious minorities in Iran following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, with a particular focus on the Yarsan community. It examines the socio-political dynamics that have influenced the lives of these minorities, who, despite their official recognition in the Iranian constitution, face severe restrictions on their rights and freedoms. Using a mixed-method approach, including interviews with migrants, consultations with experts, literature review, and statistical analysis, the study highlights the systemic challenges these communities endure. It explores the impact of government policies, societal attitudes, and legal frameworks on their integration within Iran and in the diaspora. The research reveals a significant gap between the constitutional recognition of minority rights and their actual implementation, leading to widespread discrimination and social exclusion, driving many to emigrate for greater freedom. The case of the Yarsan underscores the profound difficulties faced by religious minorities in preserving their cultural identity and practicing their faith. The paper calls for policy reforms and international advocacy to address these issues, contributing to the broader discourse on religious freedom and human rights in the Middle East.

Keywords: Religious minorities; Iran; Yarsan community; Islamic Revolution; constitutional rights; social integration; discrimination; migration; human rights; Middle East; ethnic identity; religious persecution; diaspora; cultural assimilation; government policies.

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1. Introduction

Religious freedom in Iran has always fluctuated depending on the government in power, shaped by the intersection of Iranian culture, religion, and politics. In recent centuries, significant transformations have affected certain religions and their followers. According to Iran's current constitution, Islam, specifically Twelver Shi'ism, is the official state religion. The law recognizes and permits other Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Mandaeism—to perform religious ceremonies. Despite this recognition, the actions of the Iranian government create a threatening environment for some religious minorities [28].Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, numerous religious groups have faced harassment and suppression, including not only Baha'is, Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, but also Sunni Muslims and other Islamic sects such as the Yarsan, Gonabadi Dervishes, and even Shiite groups like the National-Religious or Religious Intellectuals. Many individuals from these groups, especially Jews, Christians, and Baha'is, have sought refuge abroad, either through emigration or asylum. Interestingly, some Islamic sects in Iran have experienced even more pressure than other Abrahamic and Iranian religions [52].Various cults and sects have shaped Iran's religious landscape throughout its history. Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion during the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanian Empires. However, after the conquest of Iran by the Rashidun Caliphate in 651 CE, Islam became the dominant religion. Sunni Islam prevailed until the Mongol invasion, after which Shia Islam gained prominence, eventually becoming the official sect during the Safavid era [9].According to the 2011 census, 99.98% of Iranians adhered to Islam, with only 0.02% belonging to recognized minorities such as Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. According to the World Values Survey, 96.5% of Iranians identified as Muslims, but there is debate about the actual religious representation in Iran due to the lack of official recognition of atheism and other religions. Data from the CIA World Fact book indicates that 90-95% of Iranian Muslims are Shia, with 5-10% identifying as Sunni or Sufi. Although the Iranian constitution recognizes Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism, and these groups have parliamentary representatives, a 2020 Gamaan Institute online survey showed that only 40% of respondents identified as Muslim, while 22% claimed no religious affiliation [24].The following text outlines my research activities. This is not an article or part of a larger project, but rather a focused examination of the situation of minorities in Iran, with particular emphasis on the Yarsan community's experiences. These experiences show that the pressures and repression they faced have followed them even in migration, affecting their social and personal integration. This research aims to understand the challenges and experiences of religious minorities, particularly the Yarsan community, in Iran. We adopted a multifaceted approach due to the subject's sensitivity and the restrictions imposed by the Iranian government. This methodology includes interviews with migrants, consultations with experts, literature reviews, and statistical analysis from various sources to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation [49].

2. Approach

This study employs a comprehensive mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative data gathering to investigate the lives of the Yarsan and other religious minorities in Iran and the diaspora. The methodology encompasses several essential research techniques: semi-structured interviews, expert consultations, literature review, statistical analysis, discourse analysis, historical discourse analysis, virtual ethnography, framing analysis, qualitative content analysis, and critical discourse analysis.

2.1. Data collection methods

2.1.1. Interviews with Immigrants

Semi-structured interviews with Yarsan refugees and other religious minorities who fled Iran due to religious persecution provided the primary data for this study. The participants lived in European nations, Turkey, and Iraq, where significant Yarsan populations exist. We incorporated migrants from other religious minorities, such as Baha'is, Christians, and Sunnis, for comparison analysis.We used snowball sampling, where initial participants referred additional individuals from their areas. This strategy demonstrated efficacy due to the subject's sensitive nature, enabling researchers to reach a wider network while preserving confidence.We conducted interviews in person, over the phone, or through video conferencing, paying meticulous attention to participant anonymity and safety. Inquiries centered on religious persecution, motivations for migration, and obstacles encountered in host nations. We placed particular emphasis on how their religious and ethnic identities shaped their experiences in Iran and their new surroundings.

2.2. Expert Consultations

The study engaged experts, including academics, human rights advocates, and legal experts, to contextualize findings and authenticate the data gathered through interviews. We selected these specialists based on their extensive research on the Iranian religious minority.We conducted expert consultations via email, formal interviews, and attendance at relevant conferences and symposia. These meetings yielded essential insights into the socio-political aspects of religious persecution in Iran.

2.3. Review of Literature

We conducted a comprehensive examination of academic and non-academic materials, focusing on the Yarsan minority and other religious minorities in Iran. This review encompassed journal papers, books, reports from human rights organizations, and historical materials, providing insights into the socio-political obstacles encountered by these groups.The absence of focused academic research on the Yarsan community was a considerable challenge. To address this, the research employed extensive studies on religious minorities in Iran and migratory trends, augmented by information from non-governmental groups.

2.4. Statistical Data Analysis Sources

We sourced data from international organizations, independent surveys (including those conducted by the Goman Institute), and Iranian government publications, scrutinizing them for potential bias. Independent surveys were essential in delivering a more precise representation of the circumstances for religious minorities.The Iranian government's unwillingness to furnish precise data regarding religious minorities posed a considerable problem. Data frequently underreported or distorted the portrayal of these groups, necessitating cross-verification with independent polls.

3. Supplementary Analytical Techniques

3.1. Discourse analysis of religious dogma

Objective: Conduct a discourse analysis centered on the religious language employed by the Iranian government, encompassing speeches, sermons, and media representations of religious minorities, including the Yarsan, Baha'is, Christians, and Sunnis. The objective was to comprehend how language and religious doctrine legitimize state persecution. The analysis involved official statements, state-controlled media, and religious sermons to discern patterns of disparaging language and dehumanization. The investigation demonstrated a persistent application of the term "deviant sects" to marginalize religious minorities, hence legitimizing official repression and influencing societal opinions.

3.2. Historical Discourse Analysis

The objective of this method was to analyze the progression of religious and political discourse over time, emphasizing the representation of religious minorities under various regimes, from the Pahlavi dynasty to the Islamic Republic. It evaluated the evolution of the state's relationship with religious minorities across various historical circumstances. We examined historical texts, governmental policies, and religious sources to delineate the evolution of religious speech. The investigation revealed changes in the rhetoric adopted to rationalize the inclusion or exclusion of minority groups, illustrating how religious doctrine has been utilized by the state to sustain political dominance.

3.3. Virtual Ethnography Objective

Given the growing significance of online platforms in influencing discourse, this method examined the representation and interactions of religious minorities, particularly the Yarsan, in virtual environments. It analyzed how the online community navigates identity, persecution, and experiences of diaspora.We conducted observation on social media platforms, internet forums, and digital communities where Yarsanis and other minority groups interact. We employed ethnographic methods to examine chats, posts, and user-generated content to understand how these groups articulate their challenges, identity, and opposition to state narratives.

3.4. Framing Analysis

The objective was to utilize framing analysis to examine the portrayal of religious minorities in Iranian state discourse and media. The objective was to investigate the construction of various narratives around religious organizations, especially concerning national security, identity, and divergence from Shia Islam.The investigation revealed persistent narratives in media, political discourse, and religious sermons that portray minority groups as risks to national cohesion or as instruments of foreign influence. This approach assessed the influence of framing on public opinion and governmental policies.

3.5. Qualitative Content Analysis

Objective: This methodology concentrated on examining the content of religious, political, and media texts to discern prevalent themes and messages pertaining to religious minorities. The objective was to comprehend how state-sponsored narratives facilitate the marginalization of minority communities. We performed thematic analysis on media stories, official documents, and public speeches to identify the principal messages regarding religious minorities. The study indicated that the content frequently focused on themes of deviance, national security, and religious purity, reinforcing discriminatory practices.

3.6. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The objective was to utilize critical discourse analysis to investigate the interplay between language, power, and ideology within Iranian religious discourse. The aim was to showcase the use of language in maintaining governmental authority, suppressing opposition, and excluding minority groups. The study examined essential texts from political leaders, religious figures, and official media to reveal the power dynamics inherent in the language. The emphasis was on discerning the construction of religious minorities as "the other" and the manner in which this discourse bolsters governmental authority and religious hegemony. Findings: CDA demonstrated that the Iranian official narrative consistently used religious doctrine to justify the marginalization and oppression of minority groups. This method served to validate the state's actions and influence public opinion, thus perpetuating the ongoing marginalization of minority populations.

4. Constraints and Boundaries

4.1. Restricted Access to Iran

The study was unable to perform direct fieldwork in Iran due to the political and security hazards involved in researching there. This constraint hindered the capacity to gather primary data from religious minorities now living in Iran.

4.2. Security and confidentiality

Prioritizing the safety and anonymity of participants was essential throughout the research process. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue and the potential ramifications for participants, we conducted interviews under stringent confidentiality agreements.

4.3. Prejudice in Government Data

We approached the data supplied by the Iranian government with skepticism due to potential tampering and bias. Official statistics frequently minimized the population of religious minorities and distorted their circumstances.

4.4. Dispersed Diaspora

The extensive geographical distribution of the Yarsan diaspora hindered the collection of a complete dataset.

Although snowball sampling enabled participant access, the diversity of individual experiences rendered comprehensive representation difficult.

4.5. Restricted Literature

The absence of concentrated scholarly research on the Yarsan group necessitated reliance on more extensive studies of religious minorities in Iran. This constraint was alleviated by utilizing NGO reports, independent polls, and diaspora testimony. This revised method now includes extra techniques like historical discourse analysis, virtual ethnography, framing analysis, qualitative content analysis, and critical discourse analysis. These add to the original framework and make it easier to look at religious dogma, state repression, and minority experiences in Iran.

5. Supplementary research objectives

Future research will also examine the interaction, solidarity, organization, and integration processes of minority groups, specifically the Yarsan (Ahl-e Haqq) community, in foreign nations. This includes the examination of their places of worship, community interactions, and assimilation into host societies. The study will examine the impact of diverse ethnic identities within Yarsani communities on their political and social integration.

Prior research on the Yarsan has examined their religious doctrines, rituals, and societal perceptions in Iran. Researchers such as **Philip G. Kreyenbroek** and **Mattita Moosa** have made significant contributions, including foundational research on the historical, cultural, and religious dimensions of the Yarsan community. Kreyenbroek (1992) specifically examined the Yarsan's unique theological identity within the wider context of Iranian religions, as well as the group's sociopolitical difficulties under the Islamic Republic. Moosa (1988), conversely, examined the marginalization of the Yarsan in comparison to other religious minorities in Iran, addressing the community's persecution and cultural resistance.

Mansour Shaki and **Amir Hassanpour** have conducted research that has significantly improved our understanding of the ethnolinguistic composition of the Yarsan, highlighting the Kurdish-speaking Yarsanis and their complex connection to the Kurdish independence struggle. The interaction between religion and ethnicity within the Yarsan community is particularly significant, comprising a considerable proportion of Kurds, Lurs, and other ethnic groups. These researchers have emphasized how this ethnic diversity affects both the internal dynamics of the Yarsan community and its external interactions with the wider Iranian and Kurdish sociopolitical landscape [22,45].

Subsequent research will investigate how the Yarsan diaspora navigates its identity and cultural practices in host nations, building upon existing findings. Observations indicate that Yarsanis residing abroad frequently encounter political assimilation within various parties, resulting in internal cultural assimilation. The pressures encountered in Iran are predominantly religious, whereas those experienced elsewhere are primarily ethnically motivated. This research seeks to comprehend how Yarsanis preserve their religious identity among the intricacies of political and ethnic integration within the diaspora.

Given these challenges, it is essential to investigate how the Yarsan build and sustain their houses of worship, referred to as Jamkhanehs, inside their new communities, and how these spaces function as hubs for religious observance and social cohesion. Research conducted by Soleiman [3] and Farangis Ghaderi has demonstrated the pivotal function of Jamkhanehs in cultivating a collective identity among Yarsanis, both within Iran and internationally [17]. Their research emphasizes the importance of these spaces, not only as religious venues but also as centers for cultural preservation and community development.

This research will enhance the understanding of religious and ethnic minorities in Iran, particularly the Yarsan, by integrating insights from prior studies and examining their diasporic experiences, as well as their challenges regarding identity, recognition, and integration both domestically and internationally.

Adding to this body of work, **Behnaz Hosseini's** research has been instrumental in understanding the Yarsan community's specific challenges, particularly in the context of displacement and trauma. Hosseini (2020) has focused on the psychological and social impacts of persecution on Yarsanis, especially women, both in Iran and within the diaspora. Her work highlights the ongoing struggles for identity, resilience in the face of discrimination, and the ways in which Yarsanis navigate their complex religious and ethnic identities across borders. Hosseini's studies also shed light on the intersection of gender and religious identity within marginalized communities, providing a nuanced perspective on the Yarsan experience.

6. Statistical data sources

The most suitable statistical sources for analyzing the country's population by religion is the data derived from the general population and housing censuses. The analysis of Iran's censuses from 1956 to 2011 reveals consistent gathering of religious data, despite fluctuations in data tabulation methodology and the number of tables categorized by religion [9]. Notwithstanding the modifications in the formulation of the religion question in Iran's censuses, over 97 percent of the population identifies as Muslim[52].Table 2 illustrates the religious demographics of the country from 1956 to 2011. The proportion of religious minorities in the nation's population has consistently experienced negative growth from 1956 to the present. We can attribute the relative decline in the number of religious minorities to their lower population growth rates compared to Muslims and a higher departure rate within this demographic [24].Investigators noted an anomalous increase in the Zoroastrian population in 1986 compared to 1956 and 1996, attributing this to systemic errors in certain instances. The decline in the Jewish population's proportion relative to other minorities was more pronounced, with the Jewish share decreasing from 0.34 percent in 1335 to 0.01 percent in 1390[28]. The reduction in the Jewish population, similar to that of the Christians, was notably more pronounced in the years after the revolution, with the loss in 1390 relative to 1385 being particularly striking[٥٤]. Religious minorities are predominantly located in urban regions and infrequently inhabit rural areas. The distribution of religious minorities across all provinces of the country is significant. Yazd is home to the majority of Zoroastrians, with Tehran and Kerman following closely behind, while they make up approximately one percent of the overall population in other regions. All 31 provinces of the country are home to Christians, making up 0.26 percent of Tehran's population, while Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province have the lowest concentration of Christians at 0.001 percent. Fars province has the largest Jewish population, accounting for 0.06 percent (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The lowest

proportion is in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiyari provinces. The undeclared and other groups are also notable, comprising 0.42 percent, or 315,000 individuals [49]. In Bushehr province, 30,473 people have not disclosed their religion, resulting in a significant increase in the proportion of undeclared individuals in this region. This situation may arise from the execution of numerous development initiatives, including gas and oil, as well as the presence of expatriates in this region[49].

The Gamaan Institute conducted an online survey in August 2019 and found that just 40% of respondents identify as Muslims, while approximately 22% do not associate with any religious category[14]. Moreover, a significant concern is that, despite the governmental pressure, Sharia laws, and the oppression of religious minorities, Iranian society is evolving towards secularism. However, in the case of minorities, the discourse reverts to the theme of religious oppression in Iran [52].

Contrarily, for a minority of the population, affiliation with a religious group has transformed into a matter of identity and resistance. For religious minorities, the situation has completely reversed; in contrast to the majority of Iranians, affiliation with a religious organization has become a source of identity and conflict (Survey Report, 2020). The National Survey of Iranian Values, completed last year and confidentially provided by the government, indicates that as Iranian society becomes more secular, religious minorities are increasingly adopting more fervent religious practices due to their isolation[9]. Sharia does not underpin this form of religiosity, which primarily emerges as a response to the government's indifference towards minority groups[٢٧] Reference [24]. .Given the understandable hesitance of many Iranians to trust governmental interrogators on sensitive matters, it is plausible to infer that the responses to the recent survey are more conservative than Iranian society's actual perspectives [24]. As a result, in such surveys, many opponents of the government's or mainstream perspectives are inherently hesitant to articulate their genuine beliefs. Some individuals may initially decline interviews to avoid unnecessary risks. The in-person interviews took place in the context of Iran's harsh repression of statewide rallies, referred to as the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement [24]. Furthermore، there is significant uncertainty about the level of impartiality in government poll administration. Indeed, it's unclear if the pollsters have made an effort to increase the percentage of positive responses towards the government. This ambiguity is inherent in Iran's current circumstances [52]. Accessing information and statistics regarding the status of religious minorities presents numerous challenges. The government's instillation of fear and its evasion of religious thought and vocation lead to inaccuracies in studies of the condition of religious minorities and beliefs within society [9].

7. An Overview of the Status of Religious Minorities in Iran

Subsequent to the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the percentage of religious minorities within Iran's total population has markedly diminished. Between 1977 and 2016, the Muslim population in Iran doubled, although the population of religious minorities and individuals opting not to disclose their faith has stayed relatively stable. This pattern suggests that a significant number of non-Muslims have departed from Iran during this timeframe, presumably due to heightened pressures and constraints on religious liberties under the Islamic Republic [2].

Table 1: Minorities, Source: Iran Statistics Center

Religion	Decreased share of the population
Zoroastrian	50%
Jewish	95%
Christian	53%
Other minorities	61%

The table above indicates that, due to population expansion in Iran from 1956 to 2016, the percentage of minorities in society has significantly decreased. The graph indicates that the majority of the decrease in the proportion of minorities among the overall population occurred after the revolution and during the decade spanning the 1976 and 1986 censuses. Between 1956 and 2016, over a 60-year span, the Jewish population in Iran has diminished in size compared to the adherents of Zoroastrianism and Christianity, which are also recognized as the country's "major minorities" in official statistics.Iranian censuses from 1956 to 2016 indicate that Christians constituted the predominant group of religious minorities in Iran. In 1956, this group's population was around 113,000 individuals, representing six-tenths of the nation's entire population.

Following the revolution, the percentage of Christians in Iranian society, which was undergoing a demographic surge, diminished, while the Muslim population increased more than fourfold during this time (from 18 million to 79 million); conversely, the Christian population remained relatively stable at approximately 130,000 [44].

The 1956 census indicated that approximately 65,000 Jews resided in Iran that year. The current Jewish population is fewer than 10,000 individuals. Statistics indicate that in 1986, the population of Iranian Jews was around 60% lower than it had been a decade prior, which was the last census conducted before the revolution. They departed from Iran.

Following the Iranian Revolution, the murder of Habibollah Elghaniyan, the leader of Tehran's Kalimian Association and a prominent financier, by the decree of Sadegh Khalkhali significantly influenced the emigration of Jews from Iran[12].

Elghaniyan was apprehended on February 27, 1979, upon his return from America. He faced court charges without legal representation for "committing crimes" including "espionage for Israel" and "aiding in the egregious murder of the Palestinian people," resulting in his execution. Mr. Elghaniyan owned the Plasco building and various other enterprises in Iran. Allegations of espionage for Israel and the United States led to the apprehending of thirteen Jews in Shiraz in the late 1990s. The group comprised five merchants, a rabbi, two university professors, three educators from a Jewish school, a butcher, and a 16-year-old adolescent. Iran charged these individuals with espionage for Israel and alleged connections to the Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency. Despite receiving prison sentences, worldwide pressure led to their subsequent release.

Statistics indicate that following the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Zoroastrians are the sole minority group that has experienced a population gain. In subsequent years, this group has diminished to the point that the current population of Zoroastrians in Iran is approximately equivalent to the number of adherents to this religion six decades ago. The Bahá'ís constitute another religious minority in Iran. Nevertheless, precise information regarding the number of adherents of this faith in Iran is unavailable. Dian Alaei, the Baha'i community's spokesperson, told BBC Farsi that there are approximately 300,000 Baha'is in Iran. Human rights organizations have criticized the Iranian government for not acknowledging the Baha'i faith and for the persecution and mistreatment of its adherents in recent years [2].

In 2019, the World Baha'i Community reported a resurgence of hostilities between the Iranian government and Baha'is, which included the detention of 90 Baha'is and the shutdown of Baha'i enterprises. At the onset of the revolution, the apprehension and execution of several Baha'i adherents precipitated a surge in their exodus from Iran. Some minorities have no precise numbers; for example, there are no official and reliable figures for the population of the Yarsan group in Iran. However, internal sources from the Yarsan minority estimate their population to be 3 million individuals. Their primary habitation is in the Kurdish areas of western Iran, particularly Kermanshah, while they also maintain a substantial presence in various places across the country, including Tehran, Kalardasht, Shahryar, Karaj, Hamedan, Qazvin, and Azerbaijan. The challenge of this estimate arises from the exclusion of the Ahl al-Haqq religion as a religious category in any official census. Furthermore, numerous adherents of Ahl al-Haqq have self-identified as Muslims, complicating the distinction between this group and Muslims. The follower counts of Ahl al-Haqq varies between a few tens of thousands and two million, according to different sources [9].

7.1. Jews of Iran

The Iranian Jewish community is the second-largest Jewish population in the Middle East. The Baha'is and Christians constitute the two most significant non-Muslim communities in Iran. The Baha'is, historically the predominant minority in Iran, have endured considerable persecution during their presence in the country. The inaugural official census of Iran in 1335 (1956) recorded the Jewish population was recorded at fewer than 65,000 individuals. The final census in Iran prior to the 1979 revolution documented a Jewish population of approximately 60,000, reflecting a minor decline from the census conducted two decades previously. The inaugural census in Iran following the revolution occurred in 1365 (1986). The census indicated a significant decline of 60 percent in Iran's Jewish population, reducing it to about 25,000 people. This data indicates a reduction of 40,000 Jews over a decade. According to official figures, the Jewish population in the country has dropped from 0.34 percent in 1335 (1964) to 0.01 percent in 1390 (2011). The primary catalyst for these migrations and the reduction in the Jewish population is believed to be the Islamic Republic's policies towards religious minorities, particularly Jews, in the years following the 1979 revolution. The execution of Habib Elghanian, the leader of the Jewish community in Iran, exemplified this new stance.

According to official government data from post-revolutionary Iran in 1385 (2006), the Jewish population was estimated at 9,252. Iran estimated its Jewish population to be 8,756 in 1390 (2011). Statistics for 1395 (2016) indicate that the Jewish population was 9,826. Estimates from the Iranian Jewish community indicate a

population ranging from 10,000 to 12,000 individuals [7] .The Jewish population in Iran is primarily concentrated in Tehran, Shiraz (about 0.06% of the city's population), Isfahan, Kermanshah, Yazd, and Kerman. Approximately 50% of Iran's Jewish community, totaling over 5,000 individuals, resides in Tehran. Official figures from 1390 (2011) indicate that the largest concentrations of Jews are in the provinces of Fars, Tehran, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and Yazd. However, internal data from the Jewish community allows for a general estimation of the Jewish population in other cities in Iran, as follows: [4].

Table 2: Jewish Population

City	**Jewish Population-Persons**
Shiraz	2800
Isfahan	1000
Kermanshah	100
Kerman	60
Sanandaj	40
Hamadan	30
Yazd	30
Miandoab	20

We predict Kohkiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provinces to have the lowest Jewish population density in Iran. Numerous Iranian Jews assert that various critical challenges, including migration, have impacted their communal existence. Migration has presented difficulties for Iranians both domestically and internationally. In the years preceding and following the revolution, when Israel was the primary religious destination for Jewish migrants, Iranian Jews showed less eagerness to reside there compared to other Jewish populations.

Numerous factors contribute to this:

Nationalist sentiments among Iranian Jews.

The Israeli government discriminates against Jews from Eastern Europe.

The United States has established improved living conditions.

A significant number of Iranian Jews reside in numerous places across America today [37].Some Iranian Jews who immigrated to Israel in the years before and after the revolution hold a largely negative view of the Islamic Republic and, occasionally, of Iranian Jews in general [1].The presence of discrimination has prompted several Jewish families who relocated to Israel from Iran to choose to go to the United States or Canada after residing there for a few years [37]. Over the past two decades, the circumstances of the Iranian Jewish community, akin to those of the predominantly Muslim country, have evolved [24]. The government's sensitivity towards Jews appears to have waned, while popular culture has ostensibly elevated, thus resulting in enhanced 'individual encounters' between Muslims and Jews inside Iranian society[1].

An Iranian Jew, who wishes to remain anonymous, comments on the present living conditions of Jews in Iran: The Jewish community in Iran currently has a more favorable position than during the initial two decades following the revolution, both in terms of political authority and societal standing. The current conditions stem from the collective efforts of the Iranian Jewish community to cultivate public trust and foster respectful social relations with both the Muslim community and governmental authorities, resulting in a significant number of ordinary Iranians expressing a strong inclination to engage in professional and commercial interactions with Jews due to their heightened trust in the Jewish community [1].Another significant aspect to consider while assessing the overall circumstances of Iranian Jews is their solicitation of Iranian intellectuals to enhance the cultural landscape[37]. Addresses have been delivered on state-controlled television and inside political arenas such as the Islamic Council, which many perceive as an affront to the Jewish faith in the years after the revolution [24].

7.2. In this context, one of the Jewish individual's states

Iran produces a significant quantity of cultural artifacts that consistently present a distorted representation of Judaism to the public, a result of political struggle and animosity towards Israel. Currently, a primary priority of the Iranian Jewish community is to elucidate the distinction between extremist Zionism and authentic Judaism, as well as the divergence between radical fundamentalist Islam, such as al-Qaeda, and Iranian Shia Islam. Muslims ought to recognize this distinction, which is why numerous Jewish-Iranian academics have dedicated part of their efforts to advocating for Judaism.

Regrettably, the Islamic government of Iran has distorted and insulted Judaism, and their lack of understanding of its foundational tenets has led many individuals to misconstrue Sharia and our principles under the guise of opposing Jewish propaganda. This impression and viewpoint regarding the Jews of Iran and Israel does not represent the prevailing opinion of all Iranian Jews.

7.3. A critic of the Islamic Republic's attitude against Israel states

Israel's recent diplomatic relations with certain Arab governments in the region have delighted a segment of the Iranian Jewish community. These interactions yield economic advantages for Jewish Iranians residing in Israel, enhancing their quality of life. Additionally, Israel's presence in the UAE and strategic locations in the Persian Gulf enables proximity to Iran, thereby mitigating potential threats and attacks from its rulers against Israel, which is considered a sacred site.

7.4. Assyrians and Chaldeans

The global Assyrian population is under one and a half million. Due to a lengthy historical context, the Assyrian population is predominantly located in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, as well as in the United States due to current migration trends[53]. Christians in Iran, encompassing Assyrians and Armenians, inhabit all provinces; nevertheless, the greatest population concentrations of these groups, attributable to their historical significance and locations, are predominantly located in the cities of Tehran, Isfahan, Alborz, and East and West Azerbaijan. The majority of Assyrians in Iran are concentrated in the cities of Urmia and Salmas. This concentration has resulted in numerous Armenian churches situated in these cities and their adjacent villages. According to official

Iranian government data, the Christian population in Iran, comprising Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, and Protestants, was approximately 113,000 in 1335 (1956), [50].representing roughly 0.6 percent of the country's total population at that time. The population was nearly identical to Iran's Christian population in 1390 (2011), estimated at approximately 117,000. In 1395 (2016), the population reached nearly 130,000. The Assyrian and Chaldean community in Iran is currently believed to be approximately 15,000, largely due to significant emigration to Western countries in recent decades, both prior to and following the 1979 revolution. According to the findings from several years of participation in the elections for the Islamic Consultative Assembly, the Assyrian and Chaldean population is estimated to be over 22,000, with around 10,000 residing in Urmia. The Assyrian demographic in Iran is estimated to range between 10,000 and 20,000 individuals. The Chaldean population is believed to be approximately 4,000 [6]. Despite the initial arrival of Catholic priests eight centuries ago, the pathway for Catholic and Protestant missionaries to Iran did not significantly establish itself until the 1830s [5].These missionaries established numerous schools and hospitals in both large and small cities of Iran and trained a significant number of medical and educational professionals [6].

In her work French Cultural Record in Iran, 1837-1921, Homa [6], a historian and professor at Tehran and Sorbonne universities, has extensively documented the influence of missionaries on the establishment of modern schools and the promotion of knowledge in Iran [6]. Following the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, the pressure on Iran's Christian community escalated significantly, encompassing the expulsion of missionaries, the appropriation of property, including church-operated hospitals, and the murder of converts. [5] The nation removed William Burden, the archbishop of Catholics in Iran, in 1982. Ignazio [5] from Italy took 9 years to occupy William Burden's position. Reverend Jack Yusuf has assumed this role in an acting capacity for the past six years, until Dominic Mathieu was elected Archbishop [5].

7.5. The Zoroastrians

The percentage of religious minorities among Iran's population has consistently diminished over recent decades. Various sources present contradictory data regarding the population of Iranian Zoroastrians, resulting in a lack of consensus on the issue. Iran's official statistics present inconsistent estimates for this minority community, failing to elucidate the abrupt fluctuations in their population. The census indicates that the Zoroastrian population was around 20,000 in 1956, exceeded 20,000 in 1966, fell below 20,000 in 1976, and approached 40,000 in 1986. This contrasts with the substantial decrease in the numbers of the majority of religious minorities in the years subsequent to the revolution. Iran's official figures placed the Zoroastrian population at fewer than 30,000 in 1996, perhaps 20,000 in 2006, and roughly 25,000 in 2011. The 2016 national census recorded the Zoroastrian population at 23,109. The numbers demonstrate that the population of Iranian Zoroastrians has stayed constant during the 60 years since the inaugural official census, despite the country's overall population expansion, implying a significant exodus of Zoroastrians from Iran [7].

The Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America indicated that the Iranian Zoroastrian population was approximately 15,000 in 2012. Recent emigration has contributed to the decreasing population of Zoroastrians in Iran. Nonetheless, their population is diminishing globally, primarily due to low birth rates and the exclusion of offspring from Zoroastrian-non-Zoroastrian unions from Zoroastrian status.

The predominant concentration of Zoroastrians is presently in Tehran. Following Tehran, the most populous cities are Yazd, Kerman, and Shiraz (about 100 individuals), Isfahan (40-50), and Ahvaz. A small number of Zoroastrians reside in Bandar Abbas, Gilan, and Rasht. In the initial years following the revolution, Zoroastrian households resided in cities such as Zahedan and Ahvaz. During that period, the population of Zoroastrian families in Ahvaz was significant, primarily due to unions between newly converted Zoroastrians (born Muslims) and traditional Zoroastrians, as well as the conversion of additional individuals to Zoroastrianism. Currently, only a small number of Zoroastrians reside in Ahvaz.

Zoroastrian settlements have perpetually existed in Yazd. Currently, these settlements are predominantly vacant, but, during specific festivals or religious events, Zoroastrians typically return to them. Mazraeh Kalantar, a Zoroastrian settlement in Yazd, features a Faravahar emblem at its entrance. In the past, the village of Sharifabad in Yazd was home to Zoroastrian settlers, but now only a few permanent Zoroastrian inhabitants frequent it for ceremonial purposes. The village possesses several Muslim inhabitants.

Other locations for Zoroastrian rites include the villages of Hassanabad and Zainabad. In Kerman, there exist settlements with analogous circumstances. Only during festivities do regular inhabitants frequent the villages of Jupar and Kan Goshan.

Influential Shia clerics periodically compelled Zoroastrians to remit taxes, known as 'jizya', to the government in exchange for the privilege of 'living safely in Islamic land'. Throughout these years, before the Qajar era, the government imposed stringent regulations on Zoroastrians, prohibiting them from engaging in commerce, traveling, or even leaving their residences on rainy days.

In his memoirs, Ardeshir Khazeh, an Iranian Zoroastrian who died in Bombay, India, in 1987, narrates his childhood experiences in Iran, a country where Muslims considered them impure: "They forbade us from crossing agricultural land because they believed we would contaminate their crops." When I was six years old, I secretly crossed Muslim territory one day to speed up my return from the shop, but they apprehended me. They bound my feet to a pole, and no amount of weeping availed me." [31].

This section provides a concise summary of the studies conducted by the Zoroastrians during their migration. In his article "Chronic Motives of Migration," Payam Pourjamasp (2019) classifies migration motives into two categories: internal and external. Utilizing genetic science data, he concludes that "migration behavior can be considered a genetically dependent behavior." Our parents' migration from Yazd and Kerman to Tehran may influence our current migration decisions. He asserts that to enhance the situation, it is essential to cultivate an appealing societal environment that encourages individual participation and involvement in the process (International Organization for Migration, [41].in her research "Migration," Mojdeh [9] (2018) explores the perspectives of 10 migrants using a unique methodology. She delineates the motivations for migration as follows: apprehension regarding future employment and educational prospects, superior amenities in the West, absence of civil liberties and human rights in Iran, gender discrimination, university entrance examination and military conscription, and religious intolerance. Subsequently, she addresses the challenges associated with migration, specifically the erosion of familial and emotional connections, along with considerable linguistic and cultural

disparities. She advises young Iranians, drawing from her subjects' experiences: returning to Iran poses significant difficulties, so making informed choices is imperative. Those enjoying a satisfactory quality of life in Iran should refrain from leaving it behind[2].

Farshad Jamshidi Kalantari and Mehrdad Bastani Elahabadi (2019) presented their research, "The Migration Fever in the Zoroastrian Community," at the Mantra Conference, surveying the perspectives of 384 individuals from Yazd and Shiraz. The researchers identified the following factors influencing migration: the lack of scientific facilities in the country, the lack of jobs and strict employment conditions, low income and wages, uncertainty about the future, the influence of coordinated migration trends (keeping up with the Joneses), the availability of opportunities for advancement, and the pursuit of higher education. Additionally, the researchers examined the challenges and attributes of Zoroastrian migrants' lives based on online interactions with some migrants. These issues and characteristics include the fact that the process and law governing the return of migrants are not specifically tailored. For those with children residing in the West, the decision to migrate is contingent upon their perspective on childrearing and their children's views. It is important to note that migration research is not comprehensive or all-encompassing[25].

Additionally, the Iranian Zoroastrian parliamentary representative Esfandiar Ekhtiyari (2024) administered a survey on the Barsad website. He raised concerns about Zoroastrians emigrating from Iran and emphasized the need for strategies to mitigate this trend. In his article, *Let's not be indifferent to the migration of Iranians abroad*, Ekhtiyari (2024) highlighted that a significant number of Zoroastrians are leaving the country due to economic and social factors[11].

The predominant reason for Zoroastrian migration abroad was the pursuit of enhanced freedom (29.3%), followed by the desire for improved prospects for children (17.6%) and the availability of superior opportunities (15.1%). Additionally, 15.1% of respondents cited the lack of employment opportunities and adequate income. Furthermore, 12.7% indicated that the erosion of traditions and rituals significantly influenced their migration decision. Lastly, 11.2% mentioned the necessity for strategic planning and effort to achieve success in Iran[۳۵] .

Mojdeh [9]'s recent study, Zoroastrians' California Congress (2024), further highlights the role of social and religious dynamics in encouraging Zoroastrian migration, particularly to the U.S. where community structures are more supportive[20].

In contrast, [11] (2019) in his work Perspectives on Migration: The Beginning of a Journey, notes the long-term psychological impact of migration on Zoroastrian communities and how many second-generation immigrants struggle with dual identities.

7.6. Adherents of Sunni Islam

While precise statistics are unavailable, Muslims constitute nearly one-fourth of the global population, with over 90 percent identifying as Sunni. Approximately 1.7 billion individuals worldwide practice Sunni Islam (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The predominant Muslim populations are found in Asian and African nations, where Sunni adherents are the majority. Although exact figures for the Sunni population in Iran

are lacking, unofficial estimates indicate their proportion may range from five to twenty percent (*Shia and Sunni demographics are incorrect*, 2018; *Increase in Sunni Population in Iran, Molavi Abdulhamid's Response*, 2013).

Statistics from the Islamic Republic suggest that over 90% of Iran's populace practices Shia Islam, while the remaining 10% adheres to diverse religions and sects. Conversely, Molavi Abdulhamid, the Sunni Friday prayer leader of Zahedan, contends that "our statistical data reveals that the Sunni demographic comprises 20 percent of Iran's total population" [3]. Sunni people are primarily located in the country's peripheries and border areas, but they can also be found in central urban centers. For example, in Tehran, the Sunni population surpasses one million [11].

7.6.1. Liberty to Conduct Religious Rituals and Practices

The Sunni community in Iran, particularly in provinces where they are the majority, possesses a degree of autonomy to engage in religious practices. However, this autonomy is not uniformly applied. According to Article 12 of the Iranian Constitution, Sunnis have the right to perform their religious ceremonies and educate their children in alignment with their beliefs. Nonetheless, this principle is inadequately enforced in practice. A recurring complaint from the Sunni community is the lack of the right to freely conduct religious activities in Tehran, the capital [8,20]. Despite Mr. Molavi Abdulhamid's claim that the Sunni population in Tehran is approximately one million, they do not have a single mosque for worship and religious activities [10].

The International Quran News Agency has reported that Tehran has 3,439 mosques, and the number of Sunni mosques in Tehran is zero. [10] In contrast, the Fars News Agency reported that Sunnis own nine mosques in Tehran, providing specific locations, though Abdulhamid regards these as prayer rooms rather than actual mosques [48].Sunnis have been forced to use their living rooms for prayer or rent premises for this purpose. However, after a period of one to two years, they may face eviction or demolition of these prayer spaces[11].

One restriction imposed on Sunnis in Iran is their prohibition from conducting Eid al-Fitr prayers in Tehran. Each year, as Eid al-Fitr approaches, the media questions the permissibility of Sunnis holding prayers in the capital. However, on Eid day, police forces obstruct Sunnis from accessing the prayer venue [50].Reports indicate that police prevented the morning prayer from taking place.

Mr. Farmanian asserts that "Sunnis today have 15,000 mosques, 500 religious schools, and 100 religious institutions" [1]. However, an examination of the budget for Shia religious institutions in comparison to Sunni religious institutions reveals that the Iranian government allocates significantly fewer resources to Sunni institutions. For instance, the 2024 budget law allocated 54,000 billion tomans to religious institutions, but Sunni religious schools received only 88 billion tomans [12, 8].In Tehran, a city with almost one million Sunni inhabitants, around 40 billion tomans from the annual municipal budget are designated for Shia mosques, while the Sunni community receives no financial support (Ekhtiyari, 2024). Sunnis face restrictions on religious rites and lack government assistance, which has caused considerable disruption to their religious activities [11]. The government has also exerted control over Sunni religious institutions through the "Planning Council of Sunni Religious Schools," primarily led by Shia clerics (Hmavand, 2024).

7.6.2. Baha'is

The most recent report from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran, before its dissolution in 1983, indicated that the Baha'i population in Iran was roughly 300,000. For the past forty years, acquiring new statistics about this community has been impossible due to the absence of administrative entities. Despite the inclusion of questions about individuals' religions in census questionnaires across all Iranian census periods, the inclusion of Baha'i as a religion has remained consistent, both before and after the revolution. As Iran's population and Baha'i community have grown, some people have publicly or subtly identified as Baha'is and integrated. Consequently, numerous Baha'is in Iran, facing escalating pressures similar to those of other religious minorities, have emigrated to various countries.

The Islamic Republic has carried out a systematic campaign to confiscate the properties and assets of Baha'i-owned enterprises, terminate Baha'i employees, students, and professors, deny pensions to retired Baha'i staff, and dismantle local and national Baha'i assemblies. The Islamic Republic has classified Baha'i marriage ceremonies as illegitimate and illegal, resulting in allegations that the offices registering these ceremonies were endorsing immorality. The Islamic Consultative Assembly has forbidden Baha'i parents from transmitting their religious beliefs to their offspring. Educational institutions have persistently declined to admit Baha'i children; Baha'is have been denied ration cards; and currently, Baha'i adolescents are prohibited from accessing higher education.

Numerous documents released by foreign media and human rights organizations indicate that the systematic discrimination and persecution of Baha'is in Iran has been orchestrated and sanctioned by the highest governmental authorities, including the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, since the establishment of the Islamic Republic [4].

7.7. The Armenian Demographic in Iran

The percentage of religious minorities among Iran's population has steadily diminished during recent decades. In 1956, the Christian population in Iran, encompassing Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, and Protestants, was roughly 113,000, constituting 0.6% of the nation's population at that time ([13], 1968). In 2011, the Christian population was roughly identical, estimated at approximately 117,000, representing 0.1% of Iran's total population. By 2016, this figure had risen to roughly 130,000 [13].

In Iran, Christians, comprising Assyrians and Armenians, are dispersed across the nation, with the greatest number found in Tehran, Isfahan, Alborz, and East and West Azerbaijan [2]. Historical circumstances and physical location primarily shape this distribution. The Christian demographic in Tehran represents 0.26% of the city's overall population, while the minimum concentration of Christians is found in Kohkiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad provinces, estimated at around 0.001%. The Iranian Armenian population constitutes the predominant Christian community in Iran. According to official Islamic Republic data, the Armenian population in Iran is estimated to be around 70,000. Before the 1979 Revolution, the estimated Armenian population in Iran was around 90,000 [12].Certain Armenians in Iran estimate that the current Armenian population in the country

ranges from 20,000 to 25,000. The government's emphasis on showcasing a larger Armenian population may correlate with the inclusion of two Armenian minority lawmakers in Parliament and signify an acknowledgment of diversity in Iran. Nonetheless, a significant number of Armenians have moved to Armenia and the United States after the revolution, and the remaining population in Iran is predominantly elderly [2].

7.7.1. Illustrations of the General Armenian Populace's Understanding of the Migration Problem

Robert Safarian, a cinema critic and editor of the Armenian-Persian Biweekly Hoys, provides the following analysis regarding this migration: For an extended period, the disappearance of one of Iran's oldest ethnic-religious minorities has been a topic of discourse in the media and among the Armenian community in Iran Reference[12].Nevertheless, the inquiry persists over how such a significant incident transpired without any reference in the official media. The broader community is reluctant to recognize the difficulties encountered by smaller communities; hence, the accolades at official events concerning the substantial contributions of Armenians in the country are only superficial statements of praise. Significant centralization and disinterest in peripheral regions characterize Iranian society. After extensive deliberation and discussion, the Center for the Development of Documentary and Experimental Cinema denied my proposal for a documentary film on this topic due to concerns about portraying a negative image [2].

Karen Khanlari, the Armenian representative in Tehran and the northern areas, has indicated that the Armenian population in the country is declining, with the existing community estimated at approximately 60,000 to 70,000 individuals. This represents a notable decrease from the 180,000 Armenians who lived in Iran during the 1980s. Khanlari attributes this emigration to economic circumstances and penalties rather than political ones. Conversely, alternative estimates indicate a significantly lower range, between 30,000 and 40,000 [2]. Although accurate figures are absent, some signs suggest a significant amount of migration. This includes the sale advertisements for household products in Majidieh, Narmak, and Behjatabad, the reduction in the Armenian school student population from 10,000 to 3,000, and the closure or amalgamation of certain institutions.

The expedited migration is attributed to the improved conditions for migration facilitated by organizations like HIAS, which support minority migrations. HIAS facilitates the relocation at a cost of $3,000 per individual, with a one-year delay [2]. After registration and an approximate one-year period, migrants advance to Vienna, where they may stay for an additional two to six months. The first $3,000 covers living expenses in Vienna, and the approval of the application is highly probable. The circumstances for migration are so advantageous that anyone opting not to migrate must justify their choice.

7.8. Gonabadi Dervishes

The exact population of Gonabadi Dervishes remains ambiguous, with no authoritative sources offering a definitive count. Certain Dervishes have claimed that their community's population surpasses several million. The same sources estimate the Dervish population to be around one million before the Iranian Revolution. The most significant populations of Gonabadi Dervishes are presently situated in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Mashhad. Nonetheless, the Gonabadi Dervishes also sustain Hosseiniehs (gathering places) or assemblies in

smaller municipalities. The Gonabadi Dervishes shut down these Hosseiniehs, which existed before the revolution, in the years that followed. Currently, all these Hosseiniehs remain closed, with the Dervishes congregating in the homes of trusted individuals. Dervish Hosseiniehs' locations include Bandar Abbas, Mahan Kerman (the shrine of Shah Nematollah), and Bidokht (the burial site of Hazrat Majzoob Ali Shah and other leaders). Additional cities where Dervishes are present include Tonekabon, Qazvin, Semnan, Kerman, Quchan, Zahedan, Zabol, Lar, Shesh Deh (Fasa), Ardabil, Ahvaz, Kermanshah, Aligudarz, and Kish.

The Gonabadi (Nematollahi) Dervishes identify as Shia Muslims, aligning them with the majority of Muslims with similar beliefs. They advocate the belief in the presence of one God and acknowledge Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as prophets. Furthermore, they consider the Quran to be a sacred scripture, although they interpret Islam in a unique way. They regard themselves as adherents of both Sharia (Islamic law) and Tariqa (the Sufi path). Nonetheless, the Gonabadi Dervishes differ from other Sufi sects in their own rites and doctrines[47].

The Gonabadi Dervishes possess a unique interpretation of religious authority in the Islamic tradition. They only consult recognized religious authorities, specifically those who meet the qualifications for religious leadership. During the Imam of the Age's "Occultation," the "Qutb" (spiritual leader) and the Sheikhs are considered the guides for the Dervish community. The Gonabadi Dervishes prioritize the notion of love over the examination of laws and jurisprudence. The Dervishes' conviction that an individual's spiritual journey should be based on love for creation and service to it reflects this emphasis. Consequently, their preferred behavioral paradigms dissuade the Gonabadi Dervishes, like certain other Sufi groups, from isolation and encourage them to engage in constructive labor and service to others.

7.9. Yarsan, Ahl-e Haqq

Despite the Yarsan religion's separation from the Ali-Illahi and Hurufi sects, people mistakenly categorize Yarsanis as devil worshippers. Henry Rawlinson, (Hosseini, 2019). on his expedition to Poshtkooh, identified the Yarsanis as Ali-Illahi. In his visits to Kermanshah province, Henry Binder commended the adherents of the Yari faith as tranquil, amicable, and forgiving individuals, and he regarded the Ahl-e Haqq as linked to the Ali-Illahi spectrum. Despite widespread perception of the Yarsanis as a sect of Twelver Jafari Shi'a Islam, the Islamic Republic fails to extend the constitutional privileges afforded to Shi'a to the Yarsanis. (Binder, 1991). The Islamic Republic does not recognize the Yarsanis as Shi'a, leading to the loss of their political and social privileges, including those granted to Shi'a people [14].

The precise number of Ahl-e Haqq adherents in Iran remains undetermined. The challenge in estimating stems from the absence of the Ahl-e Haqq religion as an option in any official censuses. Furthermore, many Ahl-e Haqq adherents consider themselves Muslims, complicating the differentiation from the Muslim demographic. The estimated number of Ahl-e Haqq adherents varies from tens of thousands to two million.

Followers of Ahl-e Haqq are predominantly located throughout Iran, particularly in the western areas. They predominantly reside in urban areas such as Kermanshah, Qazvin, Lorestan, East Azerbaijan, Zanjan, and Hamedan, while also being found in other places such as Tehran, Rudehen, Karaj, Shahriar, and Khorasan. They

also reside in other countries within the region, including Turkey, Iraq, Albania, Afghanistan, and Syria, predominantly among the Kurdish communities of these nations.

Like other Iranian citizens, followers of Ahl-e Haqq have contributed to Iran's growth and fulfilled their civic obligations. During the Iran-Iraq conflict in the Kermanshah province, there were 788 Ahl-e Haqq deaths, 1,598 injuries, and 134 captures[36].

Followers of Ahl-e Haqq predominantly receive their beliefs through familial lineage, having been born into long-established practicing families. As a result, they most likely belong to a family that has been practicing the Ahl-e Haqq faith for many years. Among these families are the Shah Ebrahimi, Seyed Mostafa, Zanouri, Baba Yadgari, Ali Qalandari, Haji Baveysi, Khamoushi, Mirsouri, Shah Hiyasi, Atashbegi, and Babaheidari families. Nonetheless, new individuals may also become 'followers' of the faith and identify as Ahl-e Haqq[7].

Followers of Ahl-e Haqq primarily communicate in their regional languages, predominantly Kurdish, Luri, and Turkish. The texts deemed'sacred' by adherents of Ahl-e Haqq, referred to as 'Kalâm' or 'Sermugo', are predominantly in Kurdish or Turkish. These works have compelled adherents of this faith, regardless of their location, to learn the language of these books in order to engage with their sacred scriptures. Many Ahl-e Haqq texts are not publicly available. The Kurdish "Gorani" dialect is predominant in Ahl-e Haqq literature[34].

Islamic teachings and beliefs deem the Ahl-e Haqq faith as heretical and deny it formal recognition. This deprives the Ahl-e Haqq faith of the autonomy to participate in their religious and doctrinal practices, or to promote their beliefs and doctrines. It also denies them numerous rights and benefits that other legally recognized religions enjoy. For instance, their doctrines prohibit them from operating marriage and divorce offices, enforcing inheritance requirements that deviate from official national laws, or founding educational institutions. Moreover, Article 14 of the Civil Service Employment Law prohibits adherents of this faith and analogous beliefs from holding government jobs. On the other hand, legally recognized religions have autonomy in areas such as personal status and theological doctrines. Adherents of this faith conduct their rituals and ceremonies clandestinely. Historically, they have refrained from engaging in political activity. However, throughout the years, they have faced several instances of coercion and persecution, primarily from Muslims or governmental authorities. They assert that following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the Yarsan community has experienced heightened pressure, resulting in numerous deprivations and instances of discrimination against its adherents Reference[21].

7.9.1. Discrimination and coercion

Followers of Ahl-e Haqq face numerous limitations due to their lack of official recognition as a minority under the Islamic Republic's constitution. Consequently, they remain deprived of civil rights, including employment in government positions, parliamentary representation, access to crucial roles, and opportunities for higher education. Since the revolution, state media has propagated hate speech against this community, suppressing their religious and spiritual identity.

The Islamic Republic's legislation does not restrict education or employment for religious minorities, and

adhering to Islam is not a prerequisite for these opportunities. Article 28 of the constitution stipulates: "Every individual has the right to select any profession, as long as it does not contravene Islam, the public interest, or the rights of others." It is the government's mandate to establish equitable work opportunities and requisite conditions for all individuals, in line with societal demands for various professions.

Article 30 of the constitution mandates that "the government must provide free education and training for the entire population until the completion of secondary education and extend free higher education as necessary for the nation to attain self-sufficiency." [28].

Similar to the Yarsanis, Mandaeans in Iran must conceal their religious identification. Sahi Khamisi, a Mandaean author and researcher, states: "Our co-religionists exist in a condition of fear and anxiety." Many individuals have changed their surnames to seek employment, but their efforts have been unsuccessful, forcing them to travel to different locations and eventually other countries.

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi's fatwa prohibiting the acceptance of food offerings by Ahl-e Haqq adherents exemplifies organized discrimination against this group. Makarem Shirazi released this religious edict on his official website in response to an inquiry about the "religious ruling on the food offerings of Ahl-e Haqq (Yarsan religion)." The fatwa declares that Yarsan followers' food is considered impermissible if they reject the fundamentals of Islam [15].

They lack the authority to conduct marriage ceremonies in accordance with their customs and cannot impose inheritance laws based on their beliefs. In Jamkhanas, they conduct their religious ceremonies informally and clandestinely. Failure to select the "Islam" option on official documents for university admission and government employment results in numerous educational and professional disadvantages.

In 2004, armed confrontations between the police and adherents of the "Atashbeygi" faction of the Ahl-e Haqq sect from Uch Tapeh hamlet in Miandoab resulted in many members being apprehended. The court adjudicated and condemned them to capital punishment. The Court of Appeal subsequently reduced Sahand Alimohammadi and Bakhshali Mohammadi's execution convictions to 13 years of imprisonment and exile in Yazd jail, while affirming Ghasemzadeh and Younes Aghayan's death sentences. Consequently, in 2008, the execution of Ebadollah Ghasemzadeh, the uncle of Younes Aghayan's spouse, took place, leaving Younes Aghayan alone on death row [16].

In June 2013, Kiumars Nakat, an Ahl-e Haqq inmate, had his beard forcefully removed in Hamedan jail. In opposition to this action, Hasan Razavi, a follower of the Ahl-e Haqq faith, self-immolated in front of the Hamedan Governorate on 4 June 2013 and succumbed to his injuries a few days later. On June 5, 2013, Nikmard Taheri, a devotee of Ahl-e Haqq, self-immolated and perished in protest against the oppression faced by Ahl-e Haqq. The city of Sahneh interred Nikmard Taheri[13].

On August 5, 2013, following Hasan Razavi and Nikmard Taheri's self-immolations, another Ahl-e Haqq adherent, Mohammad Ghanbari, a resident of Qara Dash Takestan Hamlet, self-immolated in front of the Islamic Consultative Assembly and succumbed to his injuries the same day.

On 7 April 2014, an Ahl-e Haqq soldier, Hekmat Safari, committed himself in a military barracks in Qorveh, purportedly for "insulting the Yari faith and exerting pressure on its adherents." In recent years, Ahl-e Haqq adherents have committed additional self-immolations in protest against the restrictions, tyranny, and constraints placed on their society. This encompasses the self-immolations of two siblings, Mehdi Fazoony and Ehsan Fazoony. Following these protests, the "Advisory Council of Yarsani Civil Activists" swiftly emerged to champion the civil rights of this religious minority. Multiple individuals assaulted and defaced the sole Jamkhana of Ahl-e Haqq adherents in Eslamabad-e Gharb in 2015, resulting in shattered windows and impaired amenities. The assailants shouted slogans targeting Ahl-e Haqq adherents and physically assaulted several of their followers. Amir Rajabi, an Ahl-e Haqq inmate at Zahedan Central Prison, faced isolation and coercion in December 2014 for refusing to cut his beard [17].The Islamic Penal Code mandates vengeance (Qisas) as punishment for a Muslim who commits murder if the victim is also a Muslim. Nevertheless, if the victim is part of an officially acknowledged non-Muslim religious minority, such as Zoroastrians or Christians, the punishment for the perpetrator is diya (blood money). The circumstances are considerably more intricate for non-Muslim minorities, such as the Yarsanis, Mandaeans, and Baha'is, who lack official legal recognition. For instance, the legal repercussions of a Yarsani murder are ambiguous, allowing Iranian judges to exonerate the perpetrators by designating certain minorities as mahdur ad-dam (those whose blood may shed without consequence). In recent years, human rights violations against the Yarsani minority and affronts to their beliefs and practices have consistently incited protests among their adherents, who have occasionally resorted to self-immolation to express their discontent. Examples include the self-immolations of several Yarsanis in front of the Islamic Consultative Assembly six years ago as part of their struggle for rights, as well as the protest self-immolations in front of the Hamedan Governorate approximately seven years ago, following the shaving of a Yarsani prisoner's moustache Reference [٢٣].Although they have continuously refrained from political engagement, the legal and societal pressures, together with discrimination in Iran, have rendered their lives progressively more challenging. Siavash Hayati argues that the exclusion of Yarsanis from the constitution deprives them of social, administrative, or political recognition, leading to the denial of their identity: "Our children must resort to hypocrisy and pretense in order to access education or basic necessities." The motivations for migration encompass identity, social, cultural, and economic factors. Historically, our children, lacking opportunities in governmental and administrative sectors, pursued careers in engineering and manufacturing to earn a livelihood. However, economic crises have also constrained this alternative. The Yarsan group culturally differs from Islamic conventions and doctrine, and the enforcement of non-traditional attire, along with the evasion of social constraints, results in migration.Reza [18], a Yarsani civil activist, asserts, "It is impossible to locate a document in Iran indicating that an individual identifies as Yarsani." We don't document it, even in the context of marriage or property transactions. Notwithstanding the pervasive secrecy, we remain deprived of educational and employment prospects. I completed the entrance examination and gained admission to teacher training. Despite identifying 'Islam' as my religion, the selection procedure locally rejected me for being Yarsani. Iran exhibits a dual identity, and these constraints and rejections of our identity result in significant migration and a decrease in the Yarsani population Reference [18].

7.9.2. Engaging with Sunni Muslims

In mid-November, 'Mullah Hamid [19]', a radical jihadi preacher, denounced the adherents of the Yari (Yarsan)

faith during a congregational prayer speech at a mosque near Sarpol-e Zahab, a district in Kermanshah. He characterized Yari (Yarsan) adherents as infidels, devil worshippers, and foreigners, stating: "Yarsanis are not our brethren, and only Islam can foster brotherhood." Mullah Hamid rescinded his statements in a social media video as the protests intensified. In the video, he asserted that adversaries of the Islamic Republic of Iran had misrepresented his statements to incite division and conflict between us [Muslims] and them [Yarsanis], and that his initial goal was to reference 'Jews, Christians, and Zionists' [19].

A civil rights activist asserts: "By promoting and permitting the unrestricted actions of such individuals, even from mosque pulpits, the Islamic Republic suggests that without its oversight and security, the historical plight of the Yazidi Kurds in Shingal would become the future of the Yarsanis." This represents systematic brainwashing, positing that if persons with such perilous ideologies attain power amidst political upheaval, they will subject the Yarsanis to treatment like that which ISIS inflicted upon the Yazidi Kurds in Shingal.

A source acquainted with Mullah Hamid [19], who verified his collaboration with the security apparatus in Kermanshah, informed IranWire: "He previously served as the prayer leader in a village near Paveh in Kermanshah and was financially impoverished." In a short time, he amassed significant riches and currently possesses a substantial greenhouse situated between Sarpol-e Zahab and Qasr-e Shirin.

According to this source, Mullah Hamid maintains strong ties with the intelligence and security agencies of the Islamic Republic, along with 'Mullah Krekar', and the local populace regards him as one of his closest colleagues. Mullah Krekar, referred to as the "Bin Laden of the Kurds," is the leader of the militant organization Ansar al-Islam, established in 2001 following a schism from the Islamic Movement. Mullah Hamid has long been a prominent organizer of the al-Qa'ida network in these regions, directly responsible for recruiting, agitating, and facilitating the enlistment of youth from the "Javayeti" area of Oraman to join al-Qa'ida and ISIS jihadist factions. This source indicates that one of Mullah Hamid's offspring was affiliated with ISIS and allegedly detonated himself in Syria.

As the principal center and bastion of the Yari (Yarsan-Ahl-e-Haqq) population, Mohammad Reza Dehlagi asserts that Kermanshah and its environs, referred to as the city of seventy-two countries, are essentially unfamiliar with such aspects and elements. He acknowledges the transient effects of these provocations but asserts that "even after the 1979 revolution, the equilibrium of social life among Yarsanis, Shiites, Sunnis, Jews, and Baha'is remained intact, and no one endeavored to undermine the others." The acceptance of diversity and heterogeneity is integral to the cultural identity of the Kermanshah populace and their historical social life.

He asserts: "In a particular timeline, the Islamic Republic eradicated astute and influential Sunni scholars, including 'Mullah Mohammad Rabiei,' who possessed political acumen, in order to supplant the sagacious with despised and notorious figures." The presence of individuals such as Mullah Mohammad Rabiei, who exhibited exceptional prudence and wisdom while opposing prevailing government policies, constituted an impediment that required elimination. His presence fortified the essence of solidarity and social cohesion. In 1979, Kermanshah designated Mullah Mohammad Rabiei, a distinguished Kurdish theologian and author of The Shopkeepers of the Path, as the Sunni Imam. On 3 December 1996, following his vehement condemnation of the

"Imam Ali series" at the Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran, he met his demise. The 1990s saw a series of murders, including his assassination. Mohammad Reza Dehlaghi, in his commentary on the intense oppression of the Yarsanis and their coerced integration into the prevailing religion, asserts that the Yarsanic faith has perpetually been at risk of distortion. He sees the phrase "Ahl-e Haqq," which the Islamic Republic has attempted to universalize as the designation for the Yarsan faith, as a prime example of this misrepresentation.

Why should we be Ahl-e Haqq while others aren't? The Islamic Republic's cultural machinery created and popularized this phrase, aiming to distort and obfuscate the genuine nature of the Yarsan faith by changing its name. Additionally, via intermediaries like Mullah Hamid, they ascribe labels such as Ali-Illahi, Nusayri, Satan worshippers, and Shiite fanatics to the Yarsanis.

Mohammad Reza Dehlaghi, a resident in Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan area of Iraq for fourteen years due to his civic engagement, asserts that the condition of Yarsanis was significantly more favorable during the Pahlavi regime compared to the Islamic Republic.

"Even then, if you visited a government office, no one would inquire about your Yarsani affiliation." They frequently provided superior treatment to the Yarsanis. However, the period of the Islamic Republic was a bleak, deeply distressing, and humiliating age for the Yarsanis. Following the consolidation of the Islamic Republic postrevolution, a considerable number of Yarsanis were compelled to abandon their residences and seek refuge Reference[10].

He persisted:

Kermanshah represents the forefront of the Yarsanis' battle against the adversaries of liberty and the harmonious existence of religious minorities. The Yarsanian faith, characterized by principles of goodwill instead of hate, anger, and vengeance, is the foundation of our belief. We extend an invitation to all to embrace Yarsanism[10].

8. Several instances and testimony

Ali (Alireza) Moradi, at 55 years of age, recalls the early days of the Islamic Revolution: "We were residents of the border." We obtained intelligence indicating that the new Islamic government would not permit the Yarsanis and would prohibit religious ceremonies. They said they would remove our moustaches. Fear intensified, prompting individuals to gradually depart from Iran.

The presence of a long moustache holds significant importance for those men adhering to the Yarsan religion, which is intricately connected to their beliefs. This may astonish readers in 2020, who might question the government's interest in individuals' moustaches. In 2013, prison officials in Hamedan shaved a Yarsan prisoner's moustache as an act of humiliation. A number of people demonstrated against this offensive behavior by self-immolation. The absence of the internet and information technology significantly facilitated actions against minorities in the late 1970s.

Hekmat Safari, a Yarsani soldier, took his own life using his service weapon. Employers have terminated

numerous Yarsani adherents due to their views. The Yarsanis conduct their rituals and customs clandestinely and refrain from political engagement.

Mehrabi, the spokesperson for the Yarsan Democratic Organization, stated that in recent years, the Yarsanis have suffered numerous indignities, including the coerced shaving of their moustaches. Mr. Younesi recently convened a meeting with Yarsani elders, urging them to either align with Shia Islam or seek a means to convert to Shia beliefs. Approximately three to four years' prior, the Yarsanis formally petitioned for the recognition of the Yarsan faith in the Islamic Republic's constitution.

A Yarsani adherent asserts that certain Yarsani elders maintain communication with government authorities. To alleviate their difficulties, the administrators of the Islamic Republic are employing a variety of strategies to integrate them into Shia Islam. Financial incentives and coercion have been used by the government to bribe certain Yarsani Seyeds and religious leaders. In response to these pressures and threats, several thousand Yarsanis chose to cross borders with their families at the onset of the revolution to ascertain the future of the Islamic regime. Ali Moradi states: "In 1980, I was approximately 15 years of age." Three months prior to the start of the Iran-Iraq war, several hundred people left Iran in two caravans from the Azgaleh border. Several had departed prior to our arrival. Approximately four to five thousand Yarsanis migrated to Iraq at the onset of the war.

Ali Moradi, a member of the Yarsani community, states: "In Iran, we possess dual identities: our authentic identity and the one we are compelled to adopt under the constraints of the nation's official religion, necessitating our identification as Muslims."

Ali Moradi has previously served on the Jyväskylä school board and is presently a member of the city's local court council. Iran prohibits a Yarsani from attending university if they disclose their religion. He and other Yarsani adherents, who are able to reside freely in Europe and engage in their religious practices, aspire to achieve similar freedoms in Kermanshah and the picturesque "Dalahou."

Shahab made this decision because the Islamic Republic's laws did not recognize his faith and beliefs. According to Article 13 of the 'Constitution of the Islamic Republic', Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians are the only religious minorities in Iran, while other religious minorities remain unrecognized.

Adherents of the Yarsan faith are considered one of Iran's most significant religious minorities at the same time. They attribute their religion's origins to several millennia ago, believing it originated on the Iranian plateau. They conduct their religious ceremonies and rituals at places of worship known as 'jamkhaneh'.

A Yarsani individual who recently converted to Islam attributed his conversion to insufficient information and awareness regarding the Yarsani faith, as well as the lack of a comprehensive theological text to address his spiritual inquiries. He states: "Such inquiries arise from the limitations placed by the Islamic Republic on Yarsani adherents." The Islamic Republic places constraints on obtaining authorization to publish religious texts and ensuring proper access or accurate information regarding religious obligations. Specific bookstores carry some Yarsani religious texts, but no publisher has the permission to produce them. The compilers or authors, primarily

from the Yarsani group, produce or publish these holy texts at their own expense and in restricted quantities.

The Islamic Republic's inflicted unemployment and poverty significantly contribute to the Yarsanis' status as one of the most marginalized social groups in Iran. Employment discrimination against this religious minority has compelled the majority to choose self-employment and agriculture. Nonetheless, the severe economic circumstances and previous droughts have resulted in many individuals residing in dire poverty.

A Yarsani residing in Sahneh states: "We have been protesting through various means to attain justice, eradicate discrimination, and prevent media disrespect, despite lacking the resources and tools for self-defense." In 2013, three of our youth self-immolated in front of government offices and parliament, demanding justice while engulfed in flames, dedicating their lives for their rights.

He stated: "Following these tragic events, decentralized and fragmented efforts to attain civil rights for the Yarsani people have persisted in a more unified manner."

A significant number of Yarsanis (Yari) reside in Kermanshah Province, where they encounter heightened sensitivity and restrictions. They also live in the provinces of Azerbaijan (West and East), Zanjan, Hamadan, Lorestan, and the northern areas of Iran, including Kordkuy. Adherents of this faith are also present in urban areas such as Tehran, Shiraz, and other Iranian cities. Numerous young Yarsanis, facing such pressures, opt to leave from Iran—a migration frequently laden with various hardships and perils. The lack of information and human rights organizations' unfamiliarity with this subject complicate the residency procedure for Yarsani migrants. Many people who are unable to relocate must hide their beliefs and personal convictions, identifying as Muslims, in order to protect their fundamental civic rights.

Because there are no government statistics on this issue in Iran, only time series data can be used for assessment at large geographical scales.

9. Conclusion

This paper emphasizes the systemic oppression of religious minorities in Iran, while also noting the contradictory emphasis on Islamic minorities, despite the nation's designation as an Islamic Republic. The selective use of Islamic radicalism in Iranian religious policy is particularly noteworthy, as it specifically targets groups that diverge from the state-sanctioned view of Shia Islam. This radicalism, frequently linked to external religious disputes, is fundamentally entrenched in Iran, where it disproportionately affects Islamic minorities, including Sunnis, Gonabadi Dervishes, and the Yarsan minority.

Despite being part of the wider Islamic community, these groups face more severe repression than non-Islamic minorities such as Christians and Zoroastrians, underscoring a notable inconsistency in Iran's religious policies. This persecution manifests in multiple forms, including constraints on worship, denial of political and social acknowledgment, and official propaganda that characterizes them as "deviant sects." These policies seek to not only suppress these groups but also to validate the government's power by portraying itself as the protector of "true" Islam.

The Iranian government's extreme religious stance is based on a policy to prevent the emergence of alternative Islamic sects or interpretations within the nation. The regime aims to eradicate any potential for religious and political opposition by targeting groups such as the Sunnis, who constitute a substantial segment of the population in Iran's border regions, and the Sufi-affiliated Gonabadi Dervishes. This technique corresponds with a larger objective of establishing a uniform religious environment, wherein the state's interpretation of Twelver Shia Islam is the exclusive permissible religious manifestation.

This extremism is frequently more severe towards Islamic minorities than non-Islamic groups, reflecting the state's apprehension regarding internal religious opposition. For example, despite their large population, Sunnis in Iran face limitations in constructing mosques in prominent cities like Tehran, and the government's involvement in Sunni religious matters ensures that their leaders are subject to state oversight. Similarly, the Gonabadi Dervishes, despite belonging to the Shia lineage, face skepticism for their emphasis on mystical activities and spiritual power that transcend the state's authority. These groups' severe repression underscores the state's deep-seated fear of alternative Islamic expressions that could challenge its authority.

Moreover, this religious extremism legitimizes extensive socio-political dominance. By marginalizing the Islamic minority, the government perpetuates the belief that it is safeguarding religious cohesion and national security. This strategy, however, splits the Islamic community, engendering profound divisions and further alienating individuals who might otherwise align with the state's prevailing ideology on religious and cultural grounds.

This extreme method is ultimately counterproductive. Rather than cultivating a unified national religious identity, it exacerbates societal divisions and sustains a cycle of oppression and defiance. The state's practices regarding the Islamic minority indicate a comprehensive plan aimed at sustaining control through the promotion of division. The Iranian government aims to impose a uniform religious identity instead of permitting the harmonious coexistence of many religious practices, employing radicalism as a means to stifle opposition. In conclusion, the Iranian government's implementation of radical religious policies disproportionately affects the Islamic minority, paradoxically resulting in Muslims being the principal victims of religious oppression. This repressive strategy, especially against groups who contest the state's understanding of Islam, sustains division and strife inside the nation. Without substantial reforms that address the rights and recognition of these groups, the cycle of religious discrimination and marginalization is likely to persist, intensifying tensions and eroding national unity.

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