

Timeline

550-330 BC - Persian Empire ruled by Achaemenid dynasty.
224-651 AD - Zoroastrianism is the dominant religion under the Sassanid dynasty.

636 - Sassanid Dynasty falls after an Arab invasion.
9th century - The modern Persian language (Farsi) emerges.

1501 - Shia Islam becomes the state religion after the Islamic Safavid dynasty ruled by Shah Ismail I takes over.

1828 - Control of the Caucasus is ceded to Russia.

1907 - Absolute power is limited by the new constitution.

1935 - Iran becomes the official name of Persia.

1950 - Mohammad Mossadeq comes to power after the prime minister is assassinated.

1951 - Iran nationalizes the oil industry, resulting in a British embargo and blockade. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and Mossadeq vie for power, resulting in the Shah fleeing Iran.

1953 - A British- and US- engineered coup results in the overthrow of Mossadeq leading to the return of the Shah.

1963 - The Shah implements the "White Revolution" in an attempt to modernize. As opposition movements grow, the Shah's regime becomes reliant upon the secret police.

1978 - Martial law is imposed after the Shah's strict rule and reform policies alienate the clerics and lead to riots.

1979 - The Shah flees Iran, goes into exile, and receives medical treatment in the US, opening the door for the return of the exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The Islamic Republic of Iran is the official name of the county. 52 Americans are held hostage after Islamic militants storm the US embassy to gain the extradition of the Shah to Iran.

1980 - Iran begins nationalizing after the election of Abolhasan Bani-Sadr. The eight year Iran-Iraq war begins.

1981 - After 444 days, American hostages are released. President Bani-Sadr flees to France after he is dismissed.

1988 - UN-sponsored ceasefire ends the Iran-Iraq war.

1989 - Ayatollah Khomeini dies, President Khamenei becomes the new supreme leader, and Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani becomes president. USD \$567 million worth of Iranian assets are released by the US.

1997 - Mohammad Khatami defeats the conservative elite to win the presidential election.

1998 - After the Taliban admit killing eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist, Iran sends troops to the Afghanistan border.

1999 - Over 1,000 students are arrested after rioting in response to the closing of *Salam*, a reformist newspaper.

2002 - Iranians are outraged by US President George Bush's speech describing Iran as part of an "axis of evil".

2003 - Student-run protests against clerics draw thousands. The first Iranian Nobel Peace Prize is awarded to Shirin Ebadi, a lawyer, human rights advocate, and the first female judge in Iran.

2004 - Conservatives regain parliamentary control after the disqualification of thousands of reformist candidates.

2005 - The ultra-conservative mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, becomes president after defeating former President Rafsanjani.

2007 - Government-imposed rationing on petrol leads to protests. New US sanctions are imposed.

2008 - Two-thirds of parliamentary seats are won by conservatives in an election in which pro-reform candidates were disbarred. Nobel prize winner Shirin Ebadi's offices are raided by police claiming that the center is illegal.

2009 - 30 are killed and over 1,000 arrested after protests in response to the reelection of President Ahmadinejad in which rival candidates and their supporters allege voter fraud. Authorities claim unrest is due to foreign interference. For the first time since 1979, the president's cabinet includes women.

2010 - Two men, arrested amidst the election protests, are executed. Opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi vows to continue a peaceful struggle. The international community is shocked by the sentence of stoning for a woman accused of adultery. US sanctions target eight high-level Iranian officials accused of human rights violations.

2011 - Opposition demonstrations begin anew. Ahmed Shaheed is appointed as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran.

2012 - Iran's currency, the rial, falls to a new low due to international pressure and sanctions. 100 currency traders are attacked by riot police. 11 journalists are arrested and accused of working with foreign media organizations.

Blogger Sattar Beheshti is arrested by Iran's cyber police and dies in custody under suspicious circumstances. The Ayatollah warns journalists about reporting anything that would suggest that Iran's upcoming elections are not free and fair. Iran confirms 314 executions, though Amnesty International reports 544 and suspects even more.

2013 - The UN Special Rapporteur reports an "apparent increase in the degree of seriousness of human rights violations". 680 registered presidential candidates, of whom almost 30 are women, are disqualified. Many opposition party members remain imprisoned or under house arrest and thus prevented from participating in the presidential election won by Cleric Hassan Rouhani with reformist backing. 80 political prisoners are freed under Rouhani's leadership. Professor and students who had been suspended for political activities from 2005 - 2012 are told they can be reinstated, yet many remain unable to teach or study. After publishing a controversial article questioning the role of Imam Ali, the reformist daily *Bahar* is shut down. Authorities continue to block websites and foreign satellite broadcasts despite promises to release restrictions. An Iranian newspaper reprints a fatwa by the Ayatollah urging Iranians to avoid Baha'is because it is a "deviant and misleading sect".

2014 - UN Human Rights Council votes to extend the UN Special Rapporteur Shaheed another year, angering Iranian officials who question the legitimacy of his reports because they do not contain first-hand knowledge. However, Iranian officials continue to deny Shaheed access to the country.

2015 - Nuclear deal brokered between world powers and Iran in July 2015 may improve relations if implemented.



Torture Methods

BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA, including beatings with fists or other instruments, falaka or beating the soles of the feet, being kicked or stamped on, whipped, being dropped from stairs or after suspension, and being dragged, pushed or thrown into walls or the floor has been reported.

BURNS with cigarettes, hot metal instruments, boiling liquid, and caustic substances have been reported.

ELECTRIC SHOCK to the genitals, hands, feet, legs, nipples, and buttocks have been reported.

STRESS POSITIONS and POSITIONAL TORTURE, including suspension in various positions, such as the “chicken kebab” or “parrots perch”, which is when the victim is hung from an iron bar inserted between the knees and elbows after being handcuffed under their knees. Detainees have reported confinement in boxes meant to resemble graves where victims are forced to sit in an upright position without moving.

AMPUTATION, FLOGGING AND LASHING causes physical and psychological pain, lifetime impairment, and condemns the victim to lifelong social stigma. The most targeted parts of the body are fingernails, teeth, ears, hands and fingers.

SENSORY AND SLEEP DEPRIVATION where victims suffer prolonged exposure to light, darkness, total silence, incessant loud noise, and/or extreme temperatures is common. **WHITE TORTURE** is sensory-deprivation torture method whereby the victim is kept in complete isolation in a windowless white cell illuminated 24 hours by white fluorescent lights. The detainee’s clothing is white and meals consist of white rice served on white paper plates. There is no communication and guards wear special footwear to muffle their footsteps.

MOCK EXECUTIONS where victims are blindfolded with a noose tied around their neck have been reported.

WITNESSING TORTURE, including rapes and beatings, and the aftermath of beatings, as well as hearing the screams and cries of others has been used to obtain confessions.

SEXUAL TORTURE includes rape, gang rape, violence to the genitals, penetration with an instrument, sexual molestation, and the threat of sexual torture. Forced nakedness and verbal abuse directed at the female members of the victim’s family have occurred. Sexual assaults are often accompanied by threats to post or send pictures to families. Victims have also been forced to watch their love ones being raped.

WATER TORTURE includes waterboarding and submersion of the victim’s head inside a toilet bowl until the victim begins to choke on urine and feces. Cold water has been repeatedly thrown or left to drip onto the floor of the cells to ensure that detainees are constantly on a cold, wet surface. Additionally, during interrogation, victims are commonly given urine in place of what they believe to be water.

PHARMACOLOGICAL TORTURE has included forced medication resulting in altering the mind and mood during interrogation in order to exacerbate fear and anxiety.

THREATS have been used to induce terror and extract false confessions including the threat of sexual torture, long-term detention, execution, and threats family members.

Current Situation

Languages: Persian (official), Azeri Turkic and Turkic dialects, Kurdish, Gilaki and Mazandarani, Luri, Balochi, Arabic

Ethnic Groups: Persian, Azeri, Kurd, Lur, Baloch, Arab, Turkmen and Turkic tribes

Population: 81,824,270 (July 2015 est.)

Religion: Muslim (official) 99% (Shia 90-95%, Sunni 5-10%), other (Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian) 1%

WOMEN in Iran face continual systematic discrimination in marriage, divorce, inheritance, child custody, nationality and international travel. A male guardian must approve of an Iranian woman’s marriage regardless of her age. Though child marriage is rare, girls can be married at the age of 13 and boys at the age of 15. However, with the permission of a judge, marriage can occur at a younger age. In 2013, the unelected Guardianship Council ratified a law allowing adoptive parents to marry their adopted children if a judge believes it is in the best interest of the child. A male guardian must give written permission for a woman to travel out of the country and obtain a passport. A woman’s testimony in court is valued as half of a man’s. In 2014, Iran restricted the ability of women to work in coffee shops and some restaurants, and limited access to family planning resources in an attempt to increase the population.

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION includes denial of employment, education and other rights afforded to the majority of Iranians, particularly people of the Bahai’l religion, the largest non-Muslim minority group. Minority languages are prohibited in government offices and schools.

PRISONS are notorious for abuse and torture in order to gain coerced confessions. Detainees are often forced to hear or watch other people being tortured, forced to perform humiliating acts and/or betray others. Detainees are often told and made to believe that some of their love ones are either dead or being tortured and raped in other prisons. Victims are restrained, force-fed and subsequently denied access to toilets for long periods of time. Medical care has been denied and in some cases has resulted in death.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT for murder, rape, possession and trafficking of drugs, armed robbery, espionage, sodomy, adultery, and apostasy continues unabated. Iran ranks second in the world for executions. Iranian law allows for the execution of anyone who has reached the age of puberty, which is nine for girls and 15 for boys. However, in 2013, Iran amended the law denying the execution of children charged with crimes such as drug offenses, but allowing for juvenile execution for rape, sodomy, and murder if a judge determines the child understood the nature and consequences of the crime. Stoning as a punishment for adultery is still carried out. As of October 2014, Iran allegedly executed 200 prisoners, however some sources suggest it may have been up to 400.

INTERNATIONAL OIL AND FINANCIAL SANCTIONS against Iran for its disputed nuclear program have adversely affected Iran’s economic stability. Iran claims to be pursuing nuclear technology for energy purposes and not for nuclear weapons despite EU, U.S, and UN concerns. The July 2015 nuclear deal brokered between a group of six nations and Iran promises to limit Iran’s nuclear ability for more than 10 years in exchange for lifting the sanctions.