

§A1. Introduction to a Theocratic Empire.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is an authoritarian theocratic republic with a Shia Islamic political system based on velayat-e faqih (guardianship of the jurist). Iran has been a closed society since its last revolution in 1979 which brought a Shi'a based Islamic Theocracy to power. Despite its large Iranian American population, the USA has no diplomatic relations with Iran.¹ The United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union have sanctioned Iran's missile and arms industries, its nuclear research and development industry, its energy and petroleum industry, its banking system to include the Central Bank of Iran and access to the SWIFT system, its shipping, international trade, and insurance industries.² The US has also sanctioned foreign firms dealing with Iran and In July 2023, British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly announced that his government had decided to create a new sanctions regime for Iran, which will expand the United Kingdom's powers to sanction decision-makers in Tehran to include those allegedly involved in weapons proliferation.³

*"FCDO advises against all travel to Iran. British and British-Iranian dual nationals are at significant risk of arbitrary arrest, questioning or detention in Iran. Holding a British passport can be reason enough for the Iranian authorities to question you. If you are detained in Iran, you could face months or years in prison. If you are detained, your case will be in the hands of the Iranian authorities, who have shown a pattern of hostility towards the UK and British citizens."*⁴

Most recently, the UK, US, France, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE intervened militarily against Iran's *Operation True Promise* that launched 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles at the State of Israel. UK Admiral Sir Antony David Radakin and USA General Michael Erik Kurilla commanded the international intervention against Iran's attack in an allied operations called *Iron Dome*. The following sections briefly describe Iran's governance, its controls over the population and resources, its population's organisation and their internal relationships with the Iranian government. These sections will assist the tribunal with understanding the context of asylum claims, the likelihood of their veracity, and plausibility of internal relocation. Other than this introductory paragraph, this research report will not deal with Iran's regional conflicts involving the Al Houthi rebellion in Yemen, the Shi'a Militias in Iraq and Syria, its Al Fatemiyoun Brigade in Afghanistan and Syria, Its Hezbollah Organisation in Lebanon, its Hamas organisation in Gaza, and its new operations in Niger, Mali, and Chad in collaboration with the Russian Federation. Iran denies having anything to do with Hezbollah, Al Fatemiyoun, Hamas, and its Shi'a militias in the Levant and Arabian Peninsula despite all available evidence to the contrary.⁵ What is not as apparent however, are the mechanisms and dynamics of how the regime has so successfully turned the populations of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and now, Niger, Mali, and Chad, against themselves to make them ungovernable by democratic institutions, and yet readily governable by authoritarian institutions. My research over the past 10-years into Iran depicts a regime (Islamic clergy and its protective IRGC and Quds Force) that operates with a psychological pathology of victimization against metaphysical enemies that plays out against fantasies of end-of-the-world ideas of its role in the

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¹ (United States Bureau of Democracy, 2023)

² (BBC News Staff, 2015)

³ (UK.Gov, 2024)

⁴ (BBC News Staff, 2015; UK.Gov, 2024)

⁵ (Alonso-Trabanco, 2022)

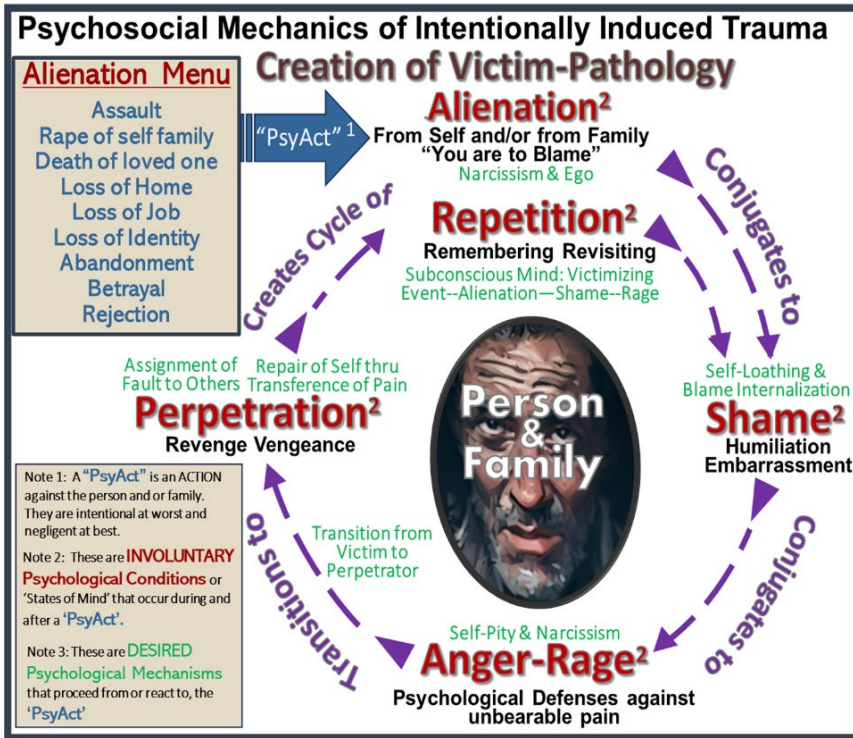


Figure 1 Psychosocial Mechanics of Intentional Weaponisation of Iranians

world. This makes the Regime and its defenders extraordinarily dangerous because they are operating in a half reality – half fantasy decision making process.⁶ My research for UK, US, and NATO governments suggests that this irrationality of pathological thought and decision making create behavioural patterns by the IRGC and Islamic theocracy that appear rational only in the context of a pathology of victimization.⁷ Victim pathology is a form of psychosocial trauma that is intentionally inflicted to create specific psychological ideas that result in predictable and useful behaviours. Such pathology constantly seeks recognition of the individual and collective victimhood, and in the case of the IRGC and Theocracy, that victimhood establishes a psychological righteousness of suffering that allows for the most aggressive of responses to

even the slightest provocations.⁸ I created the graphic aid in figure 1 to assist NATO allies in understanding how the Iranian regime is able to sustain itself in the face of extreme sanctions and the unrelenting resistance of their own population segments. The model depicted here is derived from data collected from the Iranian population segments over the past several years.

§A1.1 Islamic Republic of Iran's national governing structure.

Iran is universally acknowledged to be an authoritarian state, despite its holding of elections for parliament and the executive administration of the state. The snapshot of Iranian government in figure 2 is provided here to help make sense of the complex political landscape that the Iranian people are protesting and fleeing into exile from. In terms of the elected part of the Iranian government that the population has input into, there are three available ideologies available to choose from and only these three ideologies are permitted.⁹ They are Reformist versus Principalist with a middle space for Independent, commonly a balance of power between the two poles. The struggle between reformist and 'principalist' ideas dominates legal political discourse and Iranians must use those concepts to articulate their grievances. Reformist and principalist ideologies are described differently by the target audiences and even within target audience segments, these concepts mean different things. The principalist ideology is that of the Shi'a clerics supported by the IRGC: *Human beings are inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded and controlled by Islamic jurisprudence*. The Reformist ideology is based on the modern realities of keeping the population from outright rejection of the Shi'a Theocracy and open revolt: *Human beings may be inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded by Islamic Jurisprudence, but much of the work of*

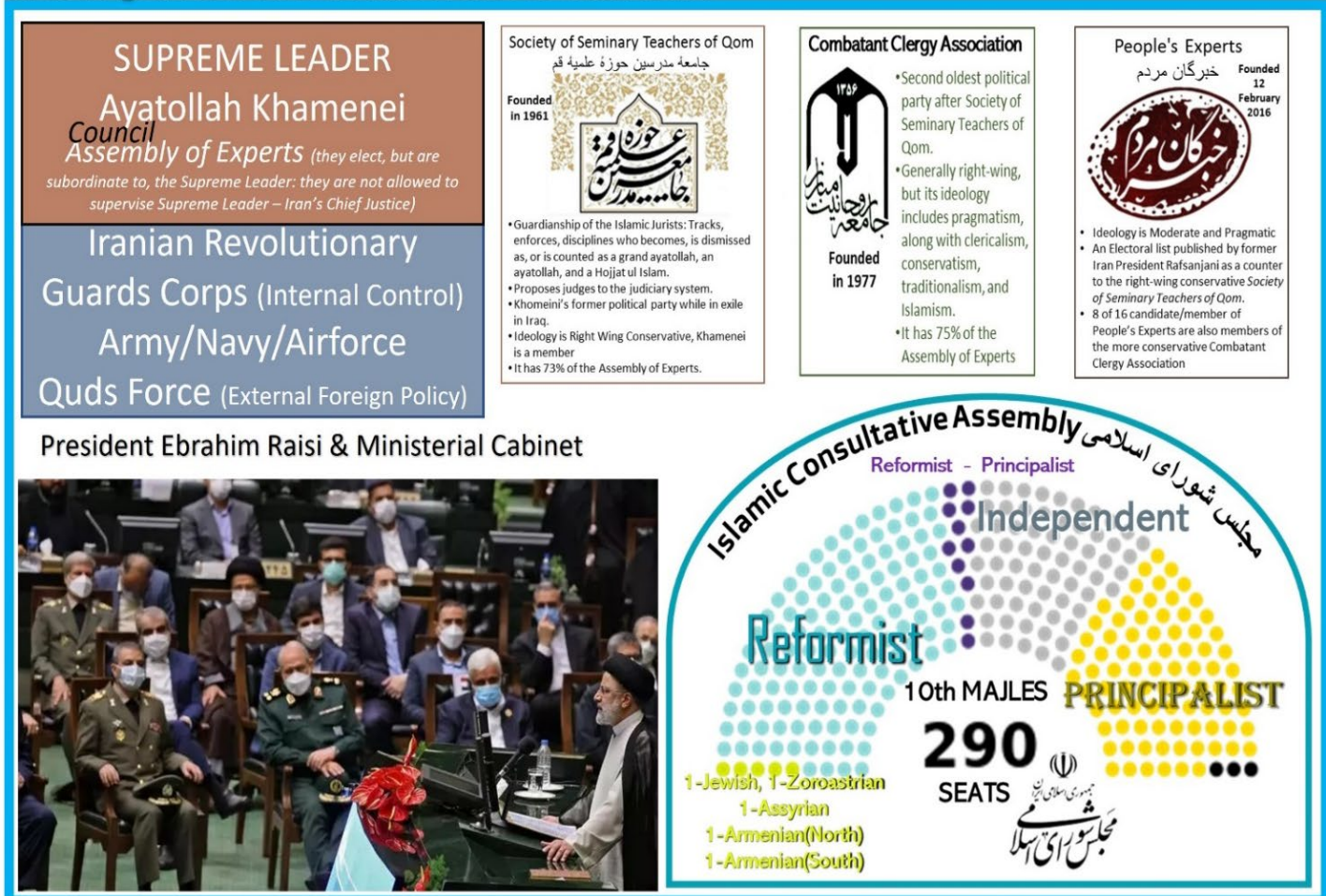
⁶ (Ghatta, 2009; Ghattas, 2015; Homayounpour, 2012)

⁷ (Kaufmaan, 2020; Tomlin, 2021)

⁸ Generally, this pathology would be a normal psychological response to trauma. Experiencing trauma tends to "shatter our assumptions" about the world as a just and moral place. Recognition of one's victimhood is a normal response to trauma and can help re-establish a person's confidence in their perception of the world as a fair and just place to live. In the case of Iran's theocracy and its IRGC/Quds Force, the pathology has morphed into ideas that the world is not and will never be, a just and moral place, and everyone in it who is against 'them' (theocracy) is an enemy and should be punished until they repent. Again, a very dangerous psychological group construction.

⁹ (Koutlaki, 2010; Martin, 2003; Milani, 2011)

A snapshot of Iranian Government Figure 2 Iran's National Governing Structure



commerce, business, science, trade, require a psychosocial space for market forces and creativity. These two legal political ideologies are a sort of relief valve for populace anger that gives them some avenue of discourse that does not lead to arrest and punishment.¹⁰ The seats reserved for Jewish, Zoroastrian, Assyrian, and Armenian, are rewards for compliance with the regime and not real signs of multipartisan approaches to law making.¹¹ The methodology of authoritarian control under the guise of democracy lies in the Islamic constitution that derives its authority from one interpretation of Shi'a Islamic thought specific to the current line of Ayatollahs and their structures of propagation. These structures of propagation of this line of thought include an "Assembly of Experts," the "Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom," the "Combatant Clergy Association," and the "People's Experts" organisation, all of which are controlled directly by the Supreme Leader, the current Ayatollah.¹²

§A2 Psychopathology of Control.

My research into the Iranian regime illustrated that it is obsessed with the psychosocial control over its own population and over the populations of its surrounding Arab neighbours. Regardless of the directions of Iranian elections in any given electoral cycle, the deciding issue is always the dogma that "Human beings are inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded and/or controlled by [Shi'a] Islamic jurisprudence." After a decade of studying the Shi'a pedagogy of victimisation-

¹⁰ (Rezaei, 2015; Zabih, 1988)

¹¹ My careful restatement of the core ideas of the principalist versus the reformist ideologies are drawn from qualitative interviews with 300 Iranian men and women in the following segments: University Students, Bazaar Merchants, Industrial Workers, and Pink-Collar Service Workers.

¹² (Golkar, 2015)

control-guardianship-oppression, its logic does not follow normal political rationale of human governance. The Judaeo-Christian-Muslim intellectual concept of human-kind's struggle between good and evil has been malformed to create a structural argument for absolute repression of human agency. To say this differently, the regime works to coopt one segment of the population to actively work against and suppress all other segments of the population, providing them with intellectual and emotional reasoning (however weak) for their success at the expense of others. Over the past 40 years, the regime's efforts have deformed and malformed the Iranian society into a monstrous version of human life that is filled with dread, hopelessness, helplessness, and a willingness to self-sacrifice in the faint hope of a better life for the next generations. The next several sections describe the phenomenological lived realities of the Iranian population under this malformed reality of Iranian Shi'a theocracy. All real power is held by the Supreme Leader (Ayatollah) who is nominally appointed by the 86-member Assembly of (Shi'a) Experts, who themselves are drawn from three overlapping but closed political parties. The oldest, founded in 1961 by the first Ayatollah Khomeini, controls the other two. As the graphic aid in **Figure 2** illustrates, the three authorized political organizations in Iran are mirror images of each other, with slight variations in governing practices. While slight, these ideological variations were thought to create differences in the number of lives lost to torture, execution, imprisonment, and overall oppression. Ultimately, however, the most progressive or regressive tendencies or decisions are acquiesced to or overturned by the Ayatollah who reigns with absolute authority. The Ayatollah controls all major policy

Absolute Power is based on the effective control over the population & resources. Both are required for the Ayatollah and his Quds Force to achieve its Foreign Policy goals of building the Shi'a Crescent

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decisions either directly or through a network of groups appointed by him. He oversees the military and has the power to remove the president. He appoints six of the twelve members of the Guardian Council who determine eligibility for running for any elected office. Iranian law makes it a crime to disagree with, attempt to supervise, or refuse directions of, the Ayatollah. This authoritarian national governing structure is protected, and its decisions are enforced by, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp or IRGC.¹³ While the country has a police force and regular military, in practice they are under that tight control of the IRGC and do not play an independent role in internal security for the regime. The Commander of the IRGC (Internal defence and control) and the IRGC Quds Force (external expansion) both reports directly to the Ayatollah and are subject only to their own internal supervision.¹⁴ The IRGC's

principal purpose is the control of the Iranian resources and population groups as part of their protection of the theocracy.¹⁵ The IRGC and its Quds Force are not accountable to the Iranian president or Majles (parliament). They and the Ministry of Intelligence (Ettala'at) report only to the Supreme Leader.¹⁶ The offices of the Ayatollah, the IRGC, and Ettala'at, constitute a 'government-within-government' and a 'closed economy' that hides in plain sight under cover of Bonyads (non-profit foundations). This closed economy self-funds the operations of the Ayatollah, the IRGC and Ettala'at. The single most expensive portion of the IRGC's budget is its Quds Force, once led by Major General Qasim Soleimani, killed by a missile strike ordered by US President Trump. The IRGC's Quds Force, in their role as the external arm of the Ayatollah, accounts

¹³ The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps ;iŸ Fadsî; Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e Eslami-e İdaŸŸ Iran's elite military force responsible for protecting the Islamic regime from internal and external threats. The IRGC's role is enshrined in the constitution, and it answers only to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, thus also endowing it with an enormous range of legal, political and religious powers. The IRGC itself is a somewhat decentralized system, with ten regional headquarters, defending the regime against both high-intensity warfare and low-intensity internal challenges such as insurgency.

¹⁴ Also named IRGC Intelligence Organisation (IRGC-İO) ;iŸ Fadsî; SazŸaŸ-e Ettelâat-e Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enghelab-e EslaŸŸ The IRGC Intelligence Service was established by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 1997 after the election of reformist president Mohammad Khatami as an alternative organisation with functions that parallel the Ministry of Intelligence. The IRGC Intelligence Service has largely taken over domestic security, though Ministry of Intelligence shares responsibilities for actively preventing internal unrest.⁹

¹⁵ Iran's regular military forces are mostly conscripts who are not trusted by the regime to turn against them, confining them to bases and only arming them for parades and ceremonies.

¹⁶ (Hanna & Nada, 2020; KDPI, 2014; Milburn, 2017)

for potentially as much as 35% of IRGC revenues spent building, training, organising, and directing five separate organised military-political organisations across the Levant, Arabian Peninsula, and southwest Asia.¹⁷ The Ettala'at spends the majority of its classified budget hunting down threats to the regime and assassinates them, including current or former citizens domestically and abroad.¹⁸ ¹⁹ Iran has assassinated dozens of its enemies across four continents — in Asia, Europe, North America and South America — over the four decades since the 1979 revolution.²⁰ As of September 2020, the IRGC and Ettala'at have targeted 20 Iranian citizens in exile for assassination, and US Intelligence agencies have reported that “Terrorism is an important instrument of Iranian foreign policy, used both to promote national interests and to



export the regime's revolutionary ideals..."²¹ The import of this reality is that regardless of the amount of lives it costs the Iranian government, there is no possibility of change from within, absent a collapse of the Theocratic Regime. This absolute power is achieved only by the effective control over the population & resources to include wealth creation and distribution. Both are required for the Ayatollah and his Quds Force to build the Shi'a Crescent that surrounds Shi'a Iran's ultimate competitor – Sunni Arab's influence over the Muslim world.²² Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the regime in Tehran has been forging a psychosocial-political "land bridge" that surrounds the Arab centre of Islam – Saudi Arabia.²³ This encirclement connects Iran through Shi'a minorities & majorities in Oman, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen.²⁴ This is what MENA scholars refer to as the “**Shia Crescent**” illustrated in **figure 3**.²⁵ Iran leads the global Shi'a Islamic community, but that ummah only comprises just 10 percent of the world's Muslim

Figure 3 the Shi'a Crescent as Iranian Foreign Policy. Where does the funding for five proxy armies come from?

¹⁷ (Monier, 2015; National Council of Resistance Iran (US Office), 2016; O'hern, 2012)

¹⁸ IRANIAN TERROR OPERATIONS ON AMERICAN SOIL, JOINT HEARING before the SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT and the SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM AND INTELLIGENCE of the COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION OCTOBER 26, 2011, Serial No. 112-54,

¹⁹ On July 13, 2021, four Iranian agents were indicted in New York City over a plot to kidnap Masih Alinejad, a prominent Iranian journalist and activist-in-exile, and bring her back to Iran via Venezuela. Earlier, Alinejad had reported that Islamic Republic security agents had tried to co-opt her siblings into a plot to kidnap her from Istanbul.

²⁰ (Segall, 2016)

²¹ Declassified CIA Report.

²² The Shi'a Crescent consists of the Houthi Army in Yemen, the Arab Shi'a militias in Iraq and Syria, the Al Fatemiyoun Brigades of Afghanistan and Syria, the Hezbollah Army in Lebanon, and the Hamas Army in Gaza. The latest additions are Shi'a proxies in the Uranium rich regions of the Central Sahel in North Africa.

²³ In 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan warned about the emergence of an ideological Shiite crescent from Beirut to the Persian Gulf. (Barzegar, 2008)

²⁴ (Shirley, 1999; Uskowi, 2019)

²⁵ Data is from Pew Research Center.

REAL IRANIAN GOVERNMENT

SURVIVAL of the Islamic Republic as the sociopolitical order and its resilience in fighting anti-regime forces at home and abroad
REVOLUTION against the “Great Satan” defined as modern civilization, culture, and politics.

RESISTANCE to any transformative ideological or political reform from within, and to any deviation from the “revolutionary” path characterized by the forces of modernity and gender equality.



Figure 4 The real Iranian Government: Wealth extracted is used to fund regional destabilisation as part of empire creation. Any threat to the resource extraction is a threat to the Islamic revolution.

population, against the remaining 90 percent Sunni led by Saudi Arabia.²⁶ The centre of the universe for the 100 billion or so Muslims is Arab controlled Mecca and Medina, which the Saudi Arab Kingdom holds in safekeeping. Because society, politics, law, and religion are so closely fused in Islam, the political state that controls Islam, wields outsized influence over all Islam. The import of this is to establish the clear focus and purpose of the Ayatollah and IRGC's regime and the lengths to which this structure will go to maintain its control over its population and resources.²⁷ The graphics in **figures 4 & 5** strips away the sheer amount of precious financial and national resources the regime spends and allows us to more accurately estimate the regime's current and future trajectory.²⁸ The clerical structures, the resource extraction, and the Revolutionary Guards operations are all protected by a man from the Iranian shadows, Esmail Khatib, Ayatollah Khamenei's former office security chief. For the past 43 years, Khatib has been linked to the deaths of clerics, intelligence agents, and guards who posed threats to the reign of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and his heir. Khatib has worked closely with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence unit.²⁹ At the end of the day, these are the men in Iran who matter.

§A2.1 Controlling Resources to Fund the Regime.

Qualitative and quantitative surveys of Iranian industrial workers suggest that they are astute observers of the economic landscape around them. While they may not understand many of the intricate details of how their economy functions (rather than seemingly), they are strongly suspicious “that the country's most successful industries are owned by a handful of political/wealthy elites...” “The companies are owned by influential figures like Parliament members or relatives of high-ranking government officials, or people who have strong connections within the government.”³⁰ The open-source information about Iran's economic structure suggests the presence of two types of economic para-states.³¹ The first type consists of the large private sector corporations that have current and former key elected or appointed government officials as owners, investors, board members, or executives who ensure that the economic entity is protected from adverse

²⁶ (Corwin, 2016; Eickelman, 1997; Friedl, 2014)

²⁷ (Council of the EU, 2024)

²⁸ (Clawson et al., 2018)

²⁹ (Alonso-Trabanco, 2022)

³⁰ Industrial worker from Tehran, female, 27 years old.

³¹ (Batmanghelidj, 2022; Gerech & Takeyh, 2022)

government regulation and privileged by government legislation. The respondents demonstrated an intricate knowledge of the extra-governmental commercial activities of the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (since 2008), Ali Larijani, and his brother, Sadeq Larijani, the head of Iran's Judiciary since 2009, as an example. Other examples mentioned by the respondents include the former mayor of Tehran, Mohammad Baqer Qalifab, the former head of the Supreme Leaders' Inspection Office, Ali Akbar Nategh Nouri, and the Rafsanjani family, now one of the wealthiest in Iran. The respondents noted that former President Rouhani himself is closely tied in with the chairman and owner of Tabriz based Shirin Asal Company, Younes Jaele, one of the wealthiest people in Iran: *"In their last trip to the African countries and to South America, an airplane full of (Mr. Jaele's) products was sent as a gift to the people of those countries, and this shows that he enjoys the direct support of the government of Iran."*³² The second type of parastate consists of a tax-free holding entity that Iran calls a *Bonyad*.³³ This is a Persian term for "Foundation" which are charitable trusts in Iran that play a powerful role in Iran's economy. There are more than one hundred Bonyads operating in Iran that are tax-exempt, government subsidized, consortiums that receive religious donations and are answerable only to the Supreme Leader of Iran. They are involved in everything from soybean and cotton production to hotels, automobile, soft drinks, construction, engineering, real estate, and shipping lines, to name just some of their activities. Certain *Bonyads* are operated to partially fund IRGC & Quds Foreign Activities.

§A2.2. Parastate Kleptocracy.

The Supreme Leader Appoints and Controls Board Chairs and Chief Executives. Bonyads operate as giant private monopolies that guarantee cash flows into the office of the Supreme Leader and funds his priorities. The *Bonyad-e Mostazafen va Janbazan* (Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled) for example, employs 200,000 Iranian employees and shares management with the IRGC. This tax-free entity "controls 20% of the country's production of textiles, 40% of soft drinks, two-thirds of all glass products and a dominant share also in tiles, chemicals, tires, foodstuffs." Yet another significant bonyad, the Martyr's Foundation (*Bonyad-e Shahid*), continues to be subject to U.S. sanctions under Executive Order 13224 for alleged funding of groups that conduct acts of international terrorism. According to Dr Kenneth Katzman, Iran's Bonyads may employ as many as 5,000,000 Iranians and control as much as 20% of Iran's GDP. One prominent *bonyad* is EIKO or Setad, (Headquarters for Executing Imam Khomeini's Order) and is run by the office of the Supreme Leader. Formed with assets taken over after the Shah fell, EIKO controls or holds stakes in at least 70 Iranian companies across the spectrum of Iranian industry, with assets of nearly \$100 billion. In October 2016, Iran's Oil Ministry awarded \$2.2 billion in contracts to an EIKO subsidiary under Iran's new model of energy sector development called the Iran Petroleum Contract.³⁴ Iran's recently deceased president is Ebrahim Raisi, who was the former Chief Justice of Iran's Supreme Court.³⁵ Before his appointment as Chief Justice by Khamenei, Raisi served as the Supreme Leader's chief executive



Figure 5 Bonyad Shadow Economy of IRGC and Clerical System Funding

³² Industrial worker from Tabriz, male, 30 years old.

³³ The concept of a Bonyad (Charitable Trust) foundation in Iran originated with the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who developed them into secretive and powerful conglomerates that were linked to national and cultural religious sites and shrines. Under the Shah, these Bonyads invested heavily in property development oriented towards tourism and middle-upper class use, rather than the poor and needy that a charitable institution would normally serve. After the 1979 Revolution, the Bonyads' were nationalized, renamed, and reoriented towards rewarding the families of the martyrs of the Islamic state.

³⁴ Dr. Kenneth Katzman (2016) Iran's State-Linked Conglomerates, CRS Insights.

³⁵ (Agrawal, 2024; Kholdi, 2024)

officer of the multi-billion USD valued Astan Quds Razavi Foundation, whose primary purpose is the manage the Imam Reza Shrine. Since the revolution the *Astan-e-Qods* bonyad has grown from a "modest concern" into a conglomerate employing 19,000 people and running auto plants, agricultural businesses, and many other enterprises.³⁶ These Bonyad foundations are intimately associated with; often familial-connected with; and/or even part of, the Majles Legislature, the religious assembly of experts (or the religious parties they are drawn from), the president's cabinet, and the IRGC. These parastates appear to be familial in ownership and closely tied into government members and the political parties and interest groups that they are part of. The organizations are both commercial ventures and powerful charitable foundations that seem to control the bulk of the available capital flows and surviving industry in economically sanctioned Iran. The visible Iranian beneficiaries of these economic parastates have become something of a nemesis-fascination for the target audiences in my research as they illustrate the outlines of a modern kleptocracy. The respondents I interviewed, watched the elites' purchases of wristwatches, choice of cars, clothes, vacation destinations, and even the fresh fruit available to them that is otherwise unavailable to the public. Implicit in the government and Bonyad messaging is that equal socioeconomic opportunity does in fact exist but that failure to achieve is based on good or poor bloodlines (remember, these foundations are mostly family entanglements which help the regime maintain discipline over them. For the rest of the Iranian population, the resulting psychological dynamic of alienated frustration was/is expressed in both the conscious and subconscious and is the result of the mind's inability to attain a goal or objective that the individual has or is putting significant effort into accomplishing.³⁷ The more that the subconscious and conscious mind is presented with the implied and expressed messaging from both government and elites of the possibility or likelihood that the failure to achieve their



Figure 6 Malformation of Iran's Society

³⁶ (Batmanghelidj, 2022)

³⁷ Respondent expressions of frustrated alienation and rage occurred across all population segments including university students/faculty, pink collar workers, blue collar workers, and the Bazari merchants.



Figure 7

goals is the fault of its own inadequacy (as demonstrated by the public behaviour of the elite segment of peers who are blessed with “good genes”), the greater the feelings of alienation, shame, and left unintegrated, rage. Victim fantasies of aggression are a useful defence mechanism at first, because they allow the subconscious mind to repair its ego-self-esteem and continue to function, albeit more aggressively focused than before. Fantasies of aggression release creative energy to construct and then play out scenarios of passive revenge against the objects of their alienation: the “aghazadeh” (noble born) ‘elite’ who have succeeded where the ‘ordinary’ have failed, justified by the spectre of enhanced DNA.

"I'm proud that [my] capabilities come from good genes, from two good bloodlines -- my mother's side and also from my father's ... I think the reason is that many are trying to escape from reality; we're used to putting the blame on others." Hamid Reza Aref, son of former Vice President and Communications Minister, Mohammad Reza Aref.
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"The Little Prince: do you have good genes? The fox: no, that belongs to aghazadehs.

I have intelligence." Iranian Twitter user in response³⁹

"Bringing up the issue of good genes means that we're entering the issue of racism and tribalism, that's the view of kings and sultans." Iranian sociologist Gholamreza Alizadeh⁴⁰

The ongoing nepotism of Iran’s military, political, and religious elites has been a well-known fact for many years in Iranian society. When the son of a former vice president tried to attribute his success to innate capacities that were inherited, a firestorm erupted that is ongoing. The latest casualty is President Rouhani’s son (Kambiz Mehdizadeh) and his appointment to become the head of Iran’s Geological Survey, while still a PhD student in petroleum engineering. Several social media campaigns with the cultural symbolic objects of #goodgenes and #WhereisyourKid eventually resulted in Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to recall his children from their overseas study locations.⁴¹

§A2.3 The Political Means of Population Control

The physical means of the regime’s control of the population is most directly asserted by Ettala’at, IRGC, Basij, Faraja, & Morality Police through the intrusion into every aspect of human life in Iran – physical and psychological. The Ettala’at is the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence & Security (MOIS) and its minister reports directly to the Supreme Leader. The regime goes to great lengths to insert the power of the Ettala’at into all parts of social, political, economic, religious, and social life of the family and of the individual. Their goal is to create a mental object of terror at the thought of coming to their attention. The authority of the Ettala’at is absolute and only the Ayatollah Khamenei can overrule the MOIS, Esmail Khatib. Minister Khatib’s Ettala’at employs terror, torture, & extra-judicial killings to enforce the regime’s social order in Iran. The UK Home Office’s Independent Advisory Group on Country-of-Origin Information (IAGCI), under the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration at Globe House in London, publishes relevant and timely information on many of the countries where serious threats to the health and survival of



Figure 8 Logos for the Ettala’at, the Morality Police and the Faraja

³⁸ (Esfandiari, 2917)

³⁹ (Esfandiari, 2917)

⁴⁰ (Jafari, 2017)

⁴¹ The Straits Times, Middle East section, “Son-in-law of Iran President Rouhani faces nepotism claims” Dec 16, 2018

vulnerable minorities. The most recent published report was version 4, released in May of 2022. This IAGCI report describes an ongoing pattern of extra-judicial killings, torture, executions, and generalized terrorizing of Iranian families that is far outside of acceptable United Nations treatments of any citizens.⁴² This UK IAGCI report is laden with number and statistics regarding the brutality that Iranians face daily, however there is little about the plight of women. Even amongst families who are unconnected in any way to anti regime activities, there is anxiety and dread. In part, this is because Iranian societies (Kurdish, Persian, Azeri, Balochi, and Arab) are tightly knit with family and clan/tribal relationships remaining close through multiple generations removed; nearly everyone in these population segments has a sibling, cousin, uncle, or aunt, however distantly removed, that they know are in one of the many resistance movements. Regime security forces hold families of socio-political and militant activists' hostage, threatening them with arrest and imprisonment or forcing them to trick their family members into returning to arrest and execute them.

*"Close family members, such as spouses, children, parents, or siblings are more likely to be subject to arrest. In some cases, the authorities have arrested extended family members, because they were in touch with the politically active individual outside of the country."*⁴³

*"The Iranian government relies on extracting information from family members, in order for the family members to put pressure on the political party member or supporter. One source stated that if the authorities are aware that a person is a family member to a political party member, s/he is at risk of being subjected to torture."*⁴⁴

Even the types of charges that activists and their families are charged with appear designed to incite terrorizing dread. The charge of Efsad-e fel-arz involves the nebulous allegation of 'spreading corruption on Earth.' The charge of Baghy, or rebellion against the State, can be anything that the regime says it is. IranWire reports that there is an increase of pressure tactics on the families of civil and human rights activists in the Iranian border provinces of Kurdistan. In recent weeks, the parents of Iranians whose children are living in Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan have been summoned by the regime's security agencies and told to contact their children and convince or trick them to return home to Iran, where they are arrested.⁴⁵ A New Generation of Basiji. Iran has stepped up its operations to recruit young people to protect the Islamic Republic, many of them children, using some of the country's most powerful resources, including sophisticated propaganda campaigns. Significant work to bring in young fighters is done by the Students' Basij Force, and Iran's leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has praised young students willing to put themselves on the frontline, and the teachers who have encouraged them. He and other senior officials have publicly said that students should be regarded as a vital part of Iran's able fighting force. But statistics reveal that more than half of the student population are of elementary-school-age and are less than 12 years old. Speaking to a group of teachers, Khamenei said, "Over 36,000 of our students were martyred during the sacred defense [the Iran-Iraq war, from 1980 to 1988]. If it wasn't for the warm spirit of the teachers, it would not have been possible for the students to go to the frontline in all circumstances. This honour belongs to teachers." Former minister of education Mohammed Battaiei has stated that the student population should be seen as a reflection of the country's

Article 638 of the Iranian Penal Code: –
Anyone in public places and roads who openly commits a harām (sinful) act, in addition to the punishment provided for the act, shall be sentenced to two months' imprisonment or up to 74 lashes; and if they commit an act that is not punishable but violates public prudence, they shall only be sentenced to ten days to two months' imprisonment or up to 74 lashes.

⁴² (Amanolahi, 205 C.E.; Anan, 2012; Behraves, 2019)

⁴³ (UK Home Office COI, 2022)

⁴⁴ (UK Home Office COI, 2022)

⁴⁵ (YOUSEFI, 2021)

military capacity. Nine months ago, he said: "We now have 14 million students who, despite all the cultural invasions we have had, will be at the ready and, if necessary, will sacrifice their lives, just like the sacred defense."⁴⁶

During the years of 2019 to 2021, I conducted primary field research into the psychosocial conditions of Iran's population segments. One of these, university students, offered good insight into how the population thinks about, or understands the



Figure 9 Ayatollah Khamenei & Son Mujtaba

strange system of faux political participation in Iran and its repressive system of governance. The students interviewed were from the University of Tehran, University of Esfahan, University of Mashhad, University of Shiraz, and the University of Tabriz. As a respondent target audience, the students expressed their pragmatism about the constraints on elected presidential power, by the clerical overseers of Iran and the IRGC enforcers of internal control in Iran. Nearly every interviewee said that the law enforcement structures of police and Basij are seen by the students as predatory organizations that work to extract wealth out of the majority unprotected social groups. Their understanding of the interrelated nature of

the political class of reformist and principalist ideologies that often overlap on many issues, while diverging-by-degrees on far fewer issues than their polar positions would indicate. "Principalists and reformists can't agree on anything; it's like they think their fight is a fight between good and evil."⁴⁷ While the students usually vote overwhelmingly for the Reformist candidate, they understand that they do so only because he will be the lesser of two bad choices. The principalist candidate in the 2018 election was hardliner Ebrahim Raisi, then the Chief Justice of the Iran Supreme Court and Ayatollah Khamenei's choice. He was beaten by the Reformist candidate, Hassan Rouhani, whose ability to open political space for social reform coincided with USA President Trump's hard turn against Iran and reimplementing of sanctions. The following quote from one university student seems to sum up the collective attitude of the target audience to Rouhani's presidency: "To be honest, I don't think Rouhani is the best option, but I'm still glad he won. I dread to think what would have happened if Raisi had become our president."⁴⁸ Ultimately, Rouhani had no liberalising effect during his tenure, with little change in the amount or depravity of the violence. During Hassan Rouhani's tenure as president of the clerical regime, more than 1,800 people were executed and thousands more subjected to torture and inhumane punishments such as amputation, flogging in public and being paraded in streets. In the 2021 election, Rouhani was defeated by Raisi in a closely controlled election that ensured the Ayatollah's preferred candidate won. Iranian President Raisi was recently killed in a helicopter crash and the Ayatollah has directed the Assembly of Experts to move the presidential election from 2025 to 2024, on June 28th. A total of 80 candidates have registered to participate in the election, however, as in 2021, the 12-strong Guardian Council will invalidate most of the reformist and moderate figures in favour of candidates approved by the Ayatollah. ⁴⁹ Sources suggest that Ayatollah Khamenei's son, Mujtaba, may be next in line for first, the presidency, followed by his elevation to Ayatollah. The Ayatollah and his Assembly of Experts (who elects the Ayatollah and will elect a replacement president for the deceased Raisi, are facing a difficult situation. Raisi was a leading candidate for Ayatollah on the death of Khamenei. If the Ayatollah dies before a new president has been elected, the country may potentially plunge into nationwide unrest.⁵⁰ The 2022-2023 nationwide "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising depicted in **Figure 20**, continues in full despite brutal

⁴⁶ (Ostovar, 2013)

⁴⁷ University of Esfahan, female, 22 years old.

⁴⁸ University of Mashhad, female, 30 years old.

⁴⁹ (Agrawal, 2024; Mohammadi, 2024)

⁵⁰ The prime directive of the Assembly of Experts, and the entire ruling echelon of the Islamic Republic is the 'Survival of the Regime'. The only force that truly secures Ali Khamenei's power is the IRGC and the Ettala'at, both of which are fiercely loyal to Mujtaba Khamenei. His elevation would usher in an era of theocratic dynasty in the Islamic Republic following the same model of early medieval Shia imamite dynastic succession.

repression by the IRGC. Unrest is beginning to be observed in some of the more loyal population segments because of Iran's ongoing decrepit economic situation that has pushed over sixty percent of Iranians into poverty. Since the Guardian Council announced the registration for candidates, the reformist coalition has stated that if one of their selected candidates is not permitted to run by the Guardian Council, they will boycott the election as they have previously. The Guardian Council, however, decides who will run as principalist candidates and who will run as reformist candidates.

§A3 Physical Control of the Population & Resources.

The Ayatollah's need to for ideological control over the population requires financial and resource control as described above and the organisational means to physically control unwilling members and segments of the population. The Ayatollah and his organisations employ Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) to maintain control over both populations and

All authoritarian regimes employ a version of this pathology to build and field trustworthy segments of security forces that can be relied on to not join in with their fellow citizens against the authoritarian state, but also actively participate in their own victimisation.

resources in an ever-increasing hold. The IRGC uses several organisations that it controls to affect its control over the population, such as the notorious Basij (people's militia), the Faraja (260,000 strong Disciplinary Police Force), and the equally notorious Guidance (morality) Patrols.⁵¹ The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (*Vezerat-e Ettela'at Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran*) complements the IRGC's efforts and also reports directly to the Ayatollah to maintain control of the population. What is mostly left unrealised by observers both inside and outside of Iran is that the efforts at controlling the population are principally a result of the Ayatollah and IRGCs need for absolute control of the national economy and national resources to fund their ongoing war efforts as illustrated in figures 3, 4, & 5.⁵² Organised protests such as the one depicted in

figure 10, threaten the regime's hold over resources that are daily drained into the Ayatollah and IRGC coffers by the myriad of Bonyads that are deeply embedded within the social and economic fabric of Iran. For these Bonyads to function as effectively as they have, the elite segment of the Iranian population had to be coopted, or the regime would simply not have the expertise, manpower, and knowhow to drain a national economy. These economic parastates called Bonyads can be vast and complex, requiring economic, trade, banking, across multiple states. Ideologically, the regime and the elites refer to these parastates as a 'resistance economy' that implies victimisation and authorises the necessary actions to survive, even at the expense of the general population. The poverty and deprivation of the population segments in Iran is not a byproduct of its diversion of resources to regional conflict. It is an intentional product used to physically control an otherwise unwilling public. At the centre of the regime's resistance economy⁵³ is the transformation of suffering into sacrifice and the transformation of sacrifice into sacredness of purpose and personal/familial memorialisation.⁵⁴ The expression of this intentional pathology is the central ingredient used to recruit and



Figure 10 Top: Basiji beat a protestor during protest. Bottom: Female Basiji Morality Police beat several women protestors in Tehran



⁵¹ The Guidance Patrol or morality police is an Islamic religious police force and vice squad in the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Guidance Patrol enforce Sharia—Islamic law—per laws in Iran; this is most often the enforcement of Islamic dress code, such as wear of the Hijab, and a myriad of other requirements.

⁵² (Wehrey et al., 2009; Zabih, 1988)

⁵³ (Gerecht & Takeyh, 2022; Lakshmanan, 2019; Rezaei, 2015; Uskowi, 2019)

⁵⁴ Such psychological manipulation is only possible to accomplish with population segments that can be physically damaged via the use of violence, arrest, abduction, starvation, eviction, or other psychological acts that cannot be used on the elites without them refusing to cooperate with the regime in controlling and extracting the majority of the wealth to support internal control and external hegemony.

employ the notorious Basiji organisations. These part-time volunteer organisations offer members outlets for psychological alienation and emotional shame in the form of mostly unrestrained power over others in a society where few have power. Officially, the Islamic constitution calls for the Basiji forces to number as high as 20,000,000 volunteers, calling them a 'people's militia' charged with defending the Theocracy. The IRGC, which controls the Basiji and Morality Police, only accepts recruitment applicants from the ranks of the Basiji and morality police, which offer the IRGC recruiters a 'past performance' prior to accepting them. The Basiji routinely attack and brutalize fellow Iranian citizens, purportedly to ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic. At times, because of how their psychosocial pathology manifests in different individuals, Basiji members have been filmed committing extreme violence outside of orders, which generally try to prevent extrajudicial wet work from being filmed.⁵⁵ The inner trusted organisations of Basij under the IRGC and offices of the clerical regime are led by talented diehard members of the established order and are usually closely connected to neighbourhood clerical leaders appointed by the Ayatollah's councils. Much of what we know about the Basiji as people is derived from extensive interviews with Iranians who have had contact with the Basiji.

*"I saw everything you can imagine, from the beating of an old man who could barely walk to the beating of a small child who couldn't reach for his mother's hand. It made no difference...even a child who couldn't reach his mother's hand. If there was an issue with killing, it was explained that the killing was for a cause and was a good deed."*⁵⁶

From a rational-agency perspective of governance, the Basiji organisation and its mission makes little sense outside of the clerics' assertion that the Iranian government and its security agencies work to carry out the principalist ideology described above. This assertion, however, fails in that the regime opens and closes the Basiji authority to attack its citizens based not on theology, but rational self-interest of maintaining control. After the 2022 uprisings peaked, President Raisi reined in the Basiji, only to release them months later. An alternative explanation is that the violent enforcement of the universally despised morality laws on the main segments of society (pink collar, blue collar⁵⁷, bazaris⁵⁸, and university students) serves a rational useful purpose for the regime. The graphic in **figure 11** helps to methodologically visualise the make-up of the Basij. While the membership of the Basij is drawn from all segments, we have learned from field research that Basij members in positions in government, university, small business, and pink-collar workers⁵⁹, join for the benefits and access while declining to participate in suppression of dissent or public enforcement of morality laws. Those Basiji that we interviewed who admitted to participating in the violent attacks and public intercession against morality law violations, were usually drawn from psychosocially vulnerable segments of society whose life and family circumstances oriented them for profound indoctrination. Some of the comments from the Basiji members we interviewed were as follows:⁶⁰

- *"From three or four months before the election we had attended classes on ideological and political thought and crowd control."*
- *"I'm in complete turmoil all the time. I spent more than twenty years raised like this, and before me a household of martyrs. I keep thinking, which is right? What I've chosen now, or the path they've taken."*

⁵⁵ There are specialised segments of the volunteer Basiji that are alleged to be highly trained and paid fulltime members of the organisation, used for most of the wet work (shedding of blood) against protestors and non-compliant citizens. Although relatively small compared to the overall Basiji organisation, the group has the complete trust of the state.

⁵⁶ (Hilsum, 2009)

⁵⁷ Labourers, factory workers, cleaning staff, etc where no formal training is required except on-the-job training.

⁵⁸ Small business owners, entrepreneurs, merchants, traders, importers, etc.

⁵⁹ Service work force in hospitality, grooming, and professionals where formal training is required.

⁶⁰ (Hilsum, 2009; Ostovar, 2013)

Figure 11 Complex motivations of the Basiji and Morality Police.

Basij Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed

NOTES:

1. Paramilitary unpaid volunteer militia established in 1979 by order of the Islamic Revolution's leader Ayatollah Khomeini.
2. Basiji are socially compensated with unearned status within, and access to, all sectors of the Iranian government and economy.
3. Basij members are psychologically compensated by grant of legal physical control over non-Basiji Iranians, authorising them to enforce morality and suppress dissent by citizens.
4. Many Basiji are drawn from socioeconomically - educationally disadvantaged families in subsistence survival in the Ayatollah's "Resistance Economy". The Iranian populations whom they find themselves in authority over have often been objects of envy & resentment.
5. Many Basiji join only for these social benefits and avoid exercising their rights to exert control over other Iranians' morality and dissent.
6. New generations of Basiji consist of young adults raised on 'Basiji Farms' from early childhood where they have been exposed only to Basij mission indoctrination.

**POWER FANTASY DEFENSE
AGAINST UNBEARABLE REALITY**

If only I had power, I would



- “We are a prominent religious family – always there on the frontline, always with memories of war, frontline and revolution. Since these events I keep thinking, who is right?”
- “We had received orders a matter of months before that there is Velayat Faqih⁶¹, that there is the jurisprudence of the Imam Zaman, (the 12th Imam, who is expected to return like a Messiah) whose incarnation is Ayatollah Khamenei, and that he had announced that for the advancement and development of Islam and the development of the revolution...[various actions had been ordered in relation to the population].”

The willingness and capacity to act on their orders to employ violence to suppress dissent and enforce the morality laws corresponds to members' weakness in their grasp of individual agency and their participation in sociocentric behaviour outside of the nuclear family. Families that perceive themselves to be oppressed transmit that reality to children in a generational transmission of trauma. Where the child-adult's psychological (damaged) reality is that they are oppressed, organisations for the mobilisation of the oppressed speak to their ongoing need for individual agency and corresponding rise in self-worth. Other members' motivation involved adult expressions to childhood traumas such as those listed under the alienation menu in the graphic in **figure 1**. Psychological and emotional pain of such childhood traumas are defended against by the child-adult through fantasies of power that deny or recreate the haunting events that have become memorialised in family discourse. The regime itself both causes/inflicts these alienation events in



Figure 12 Torture in Iran's malformed society

⁶¹ Islamic Jurisprudence.
 Page | 14

figure 1 - on their own population, and then capitalises on the resulting psychosocial damage to turn one population segment against another. These are some of the underlying dynamics and mechanisms behind authoritarian control of large populations and are the core concepts behind psychological warfare.

§A4 The Psychological Means of Population Control – Torture & Trauma.

Roya Heshmati was a 34-year-old social activist against the regime's Shi'a social control. She was arrested and received 74 lashes with multi-tailed leather whip. Her epidermis and underlying dermis separated at each strike of the multiple leather tails, opening the underlying flesh. Not every strike broke through into capillaries, but sufficient numbers did so, leaving her back and buttocks a bloody caked black mass. Days after recovering, Roya was back on the street protesting. The regime's physical means of controlling her behaviour did not work. Purely physical coercion does not work when the goal of the authorities is the surrender of the psychological agency of the targeted individual. Regime's such as Iran's employ a combination of physical and psychological assault that we refer to as torture. The use of torture is an attempt by one human being to break or disable the individual agency and ability to resist of another human being who is under the physical, psychological, or social control of the person inflicting the damage. Torture is not a means of physical control. It is a means of psychological deformation through the infliction of overwhelming psychosocial-physical pain. The employment of torture tells us more about the torturer than about the tortured. Professor Peter Elsass is a Danish clinical psychologist specialising in the sequelae of torture, who writes that:



Figure 13 Punishment for Iranian women who do not follow modesty rules or otherwise comply with legal and social behavioural expectations.

*"Torture is among the most gruesome of human manifestations, particularly because it does not have its origin in animals, primitive man, or pre-culture. On the contrary, it is planned, and it stems from social order. It is a display of force, the aim of which is to break an individual's judgement."*⁶²

Torture is an intentional infliction, rather than an accidental infliction. This distinction is what makes the practice so gruesome. It is the controlled intentionality of the inflicted pain and fear that helps to create the conditions of hopelessness, helplessness and overwhelmed psyche that makes it so devastating. The regime's intentional violence, trauma, and social malformation works to weaponize Iranian society and keep it vulnerable to continued manipulation and control. As the graphic in **figure 14** illustrates, the violence, arrest, torture, incarceration, and in a sufficient number of cases (between 250 to 350 per year), execution, need not be large numbers outside of suppression of protests.^{63 64} Rather, these actions need to be ruthless, but without undo malice that localises the monster into the inanimate government. Instead, the violence and torture are applied with calm deliberation, in the manner that a parent might administer corporal punishment.⁶⁵ The regime interrogator/torturer's goal in **figure 14** with Taraneh Mousavi, was to break her family's reality, not reinforce it by giving meaning. What breaks the human mind is not suffering, but suffering without purpose, without meaning This means that

⁶² (Elsass, 1997) page 1

⁶³ This is because the intent of the violence, torture, executions, is to create intended psychological and emotional effects that can be manipulated within and between the population segments that have already been set against each other.

⁶⁴ (Mutahhari, 1979)

⁶⁵ (Homayounpour, 2012)

Figure 14 The Killing of a Protester



pain and torture become love and nurture. The utility of this creates a type of twisted interpersonal relationship between abuser and abused, captive and captor. The surviving victims of deliberate employment of violent coercion, eventually, suffer the effects of malformed personalities as their conceptualization of self and communal 'other' begins to change in order to make sense out of their suffering; to give meaning to the lingering pain, the cutting, the electricity, the near-drowning, or the deformation of their hands, feet, and face. The regime's perpetrators, on the other hand, devolve into self-hatred and corresponding hatred of others as their ego-progresses into enraged self-defence against annihilating guilt, and their self-regresses into shamed hidden silence. Most community members are affected by the 'open secret' that all refrain from talking about in open conversation, even as they tour the torture museums of the former Pahlavi regimes terrifying wax recreations of past torture, terror and death that is still whispered about in hushed voices. Together, the actual, the wax recreations in museums, and the dark imaginings in whispered conversations about the current regimes torture practices, creates an altered reality for the residents caught in the gritty

urban interiors. This part real part imagined alternate reality underlays (and possibly competes with) their daily lives of keeping their jobs, navigating the crumbling infrastructure, and wondering when they will be the next subject of a corrupt Basiji or Ettala'at summons. The Danish Immigration service has found over the past decade that 'In general, a person, who has been accused of political opposition, will not be able to return to an ordinary life in Iran. an individual, who has applied for asylum in a foreign country, will face difficulties upon return to Iran.'⁶⁶ These returnees face 'difficulty' because they are seen to be betrayers of the faith and must be punished as part of cleansing, prior to being returned into society. The lines of interrogation that arrested returnees were subjected to illustrate the types of rational/irrational concerns of the regime:

"The authorities will subject her/him to questioning related to the reason for the asylum claim as well as what actions the individual has taken against the government of Iran."⁶⁷

§A4.1 Intimate violence against the mind.

The regime's interrogators are intimately interested in what the returnees think about the regime, said about the regime, and why they would want to leave the regime. This sort of questioning is driven by ideations of abandonment and betrayal, which suggest the existence of a relationship that is one sided in the minds of the captors, but not in the minds of the captives. The Danish Immigration Service has researched series of cases where Iranian citizens who had applied for asylum in European countries were arrested upon return to Iran. Some returnees were reportedly interrogated and tortured while in the custody of the authorities, including one person who was killed under torture.⁶⁸ The perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence included agents from the Revolutionary Guards, the

Iranian security forces used rape and sexual violence to torture, punish and inflict lasting physical and psychological damage on protesters as young as 12-years-old during the nationwide protests in 2023. - Amnesty International

⁶⁶ (Danish Immigration Service, 2020)

⁶⁷ (Danish Immigration Service, 2020)

⁶⁸ (Amnesty International, 2008; Danish Immigration Service, 2020; KMMK - Geneva, 2021; UK Home Office COI, 2022)

paramilitary Basij force, and the Ministry of Intelligence, as well as different branches of the police force including the Public Security Police (police amniat-e omoumi), the Investigation Unit of Iran's police (Agahi), and the Special Forces of the police (yegan-e vijeh).⁶⁹ State agents raped women and girls vaginally, anally and orally, while men and boys were raped anally. Survivors were raped with wooden and metal batons, glass bottles, hosepipes, and/or agents' sexual organs and fingers. Rape took place in detention facilities and police vans, as well as schools or residential buildings unlawfully repurposed as detention places. Survivors detailed other forms of sexual violence such as state agents grabbing, groping, beating, punching, and kicking survivors' breasts, genitals and buttocks; enforcing nudity, sometimes in front of video cameras; administering electric shocks, inserting needles or applying ice to men's testicles; forcibly cutting women's hair and/or dragging them violently by their hair; and threats to rape survivors and/or their relatives.⁷⁰ Rape and other sexual

violence are frequently accompanied by other forms of torture and ill-treatment, including beatings, floggings, electric shocks, administration of unidentified pills or injections, denial of food and water, and cruel and inhuman detention conditions. Security forces also routinely denied survivors medical care, including for rape-related injuries. Unsurprisingly, there has been no domestic path to justice for any of the victims, males or females. The overwhelming majority of survivors do not file complaints after release, fearing further harm and believing the judiciary to be a tool of repression rather than redress. In all of these types of torture episodes, the end purpose is not about the mere infliction of pain, but the breakage of the person's psychological reality to create a condition called violent trauma. First, break the mind, then insert the message. All of the sequelae of psychosocial trauma as individual and collective expressions are present every day in nearly every one of Iran's cities and



Figure 15 Sexual Violence Power & Control Wheel

towns. My daily research and reporting show high levels of violence without motives, extreme overkill by both state and non-state actors, casual violence, promiscuity to include extensive sexual violence, anesthetization through drugs and alcohol, hyper-vigilance, suspicion, betrayal, and more. The levels of social, political, and military violence in Iran over the past four decades has left both victims and perpetrators changed through the malformation of the ego-self identities that underlay their personalities. The perpetrators and victims of deliberately inflicted violent suffering (subconsciously) become malformed in their interior perceptions of themselves and the larger society that produces them. Eventually, perpetrators and victims alike begin reenacting scenes of violence within the public sphere, exposing that which should not be exposed.

“...they keep finding bodies here and there...these bodies are somebody's siblings or children.”⁷¹ “There is also a lot of murder, like the severed heads they found in Sheykh Bahai Street...”⁷²

The underlying science behind how the Iranian regime operates to break, traumatise, and weaponize its population was discovered and organised by psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists to help build and repair societies, not to damage them for political and financial profit. Unfortunately, malign states and non-states have been employing this science in some version for the past half century as a low cost, deniable methodology of controlling populations

SURVIVAL of the Islamic Republic as the sociopolitical order and its resilience in fighting anti-regime forces at home and abroad
REVOLUTION against the “Great Satan” defined as modern civilization, culture, and politics.
RESISTANCE to any transformative ideological or political reform from within, and to any deviation from the “revolutionary” path characterized by the forces of modernity and gender equality.

Figure 16 Regime's goals & objectives.

⁶⁹ (Staff, 2023)

⁷⁰ (Amnesty International, 2023)

⁷¹ Industrial worker from Tehran, female, 29 years old.

⁷² Industrial worker from Tehran, male, 51 years old.

and resources. This is why, with some trepidation, we must pull tools out of our treatment and therapy library to help explain what is happening and why. The full-sized graphic in **figure 15** is reproduced at the end of this report and was created by the *American State of Maryland's Coalition Against Sexual Assault* and was adapted from the Power and Control Wheel created by Domestic Abuse Intervention Project at theduluthmodel.org.⁷³ If you compare the major categories of the wheel to the routine abuses reported by those Iranian population segments in Iran and in exile, you can easily see the correlation. While we think in western psychology of individual offenders and individual victims, the type of psychological and sociological structure created by the regime's founders and leaders (**Figure 4**) would naturally reflect their own inner malformed ideas of society, power, and control.⁷⁴ Its authoritarian nature and the specific pathology of its stated national goals and objectives (**Figure 16**) prevent it from ever evolving through learning and experience in a regional collective of communities. The wheel in **figure 15** can be applied to the model in **figure 1** that illustrates the mechanics and dynamics of intentionally created psychosocial trauma.

§A4.2 Trauma & Weaponisation of the Iranian Population.

As depicted in **figure xx**, the intent is to place two population segments into opposition without the regime (Mullahs & IRGC) being demonised. The first population segment are the 'victim-mentality' social enforcers (Basij & Moral Police) who merely work to protect the people from their own sinful tendencies against God.⁷⁵ The second population segment are the 'victim-mentality' populace who are trying to survive the 'resistance-economy', the complex laws of moral behaviour and speech imposed by the regime, and the intrusion of modernity brought in by the elites. Neither group can ever win against the other because the regime ensure that this steady state of aggressive tension continues to focus attention on this malformed intersocial relationship created by the regime. The girl in the graphic in **figure 17** is Sonia Sharifi, a 16-year-old student protestor who was abducted, beaten, and, after the second arrest, sentenced to death for crimes against God and Islam.⁷⁶ As the graphic depicts, the father is placed in a lose-lose situation where his female family members risk arrest, torture, rape, and execution to escape the regime's intentional social malformation. Ultimately, Sonia's sentence threatened to become even larger than another murdered schoolgirl, Mahsa Amini, tortured and killed by the Morality Police and Basij.⁷⁷ Her execution was stayed but the girl remained in captivity for weeks, receiving various sorts of physical punishment that her family is not willing to talk about.⁷⁸ It is important to note the intuitive flexibility that the regime uses to ramp up the



Figure 17 Psychological Dynamics of Population Control in Iran

⁷³ (MCASA, 2024)

⁷⁴ (Modarressi, 1986; Najmabadi, 2005)

⁷⁵ (Ghattas, 2015; Golkar, 2019)

⁷⁶ (Burgess, 2023; Soni, 2023)

⁷⁷ (Soni, 2023)

⁷⁸ (Fahey, 2022)

psychosocial pressure and ease it to deepen their control over the physical, psychological, sociological, and emotional lives of Iranians and their resources.⁷⁹ My field research into the Iranian government's theocratic governance structure and its IRGC internal protective force and external (Quds Force) projection force, strongly suggests that both the former and the latter harbour a pathological identity structure known as 'victimhood complex' that was introduced earlier.⁸⁰ We find that generationally transmitted damaged realities cause some people, and some collectives of people evolve into an identity structure that is rooted in perpetual victimhood, often (but not always) from acute or chronic psychosocial trauma.⁸¹ Dr. Rahav Gabay and her colleagues define this tendency for interpersonal victimhood as "*an ongoing feeling that the [subconscious ego] self is a victim, which is generalized across many kinds of relationships. As a result, victimization becomes a central part of the individual's [and communities] identity.*"⁸² Those who have a perpetual victimhood mindset tend to have an "external locus of control," otherwise known as sociocentric psychological organization or tribal hereditary social construction. They believe that one's life is entirely under the control of forces outside oneself, such as fate, luck or the mercy of other people. Review some of the statements we recorded from our interviews with Basiji:

- *"The foundations of Islam and the foundations of Shi'ism and Velayat are such that we have accepted the Velayat. When the Velayat has an opinion, everyone's opinion must follow, because if it's outside of this there is no place for you. You're an outsider. "He [Khamenei] makes his announcement, and it is translated this in the form of advice and discussion."*
- *"Everything has a hierarchy. It doesn't call for Mr Khamenei to come and directly make an announcement to the soldiers, when I say soldier, I, or we, saw ourselves as soldiers of the Imam Zaman."*
- *"We really saw ourselves as upstanding and separate from others. We really believed that what we did was correct, that we were serving the people, that we were serving God and that our mission was nothing but worshipping God."*

Based on clinical observations and research, the researchers found that the tendency for interpersonal victimhood consists of four main dimensions: (a) constantly seeking recognition for one's victimhood, (b) moral elitism, (c) lack of empathy for the pain and suffering of others, and (d) frequently ruminating about past victimization.⁸³ One need not look too hard to see the depth of the Iranian regime's victimhood identity construction. The takeaway of this realization is the dangerousness and ruthlessness of a collective of people who identify as victimized saviours who are beset by fantasy creations of evil; there is little moral restraint of actions against pure evil for the Iranian regime.⁸⁴ While no one is really sure just how many women, girls, and males have been killed and incarcerated, the graphic in **figure 18** offers some insight from just one organisation attempting to track the violence against girls in Iran.⁸⁵ These mechanisms and dynamics at play are case study examples of psychological warfare, a growing form of violent control that breaks down a community making it easier to control and, in turn, weaponize for both internal and external employment. Iranian citizens in opposition to the regime, are understood by the regime as betrayers of the spiritual and metaphysical goals of the regime.⁸⁶ The purpose behind the torture, imprisonment, and executions is not merely to punish, but to punish as a way of saving those who fail to understand their place in a physical and metaphysical society of would-be believers.⁸⁷ This again illustrates the principalist ideology

⁷⁹ (Rahimieh, 2008, 2016; Samrat, 2019)

⁸⁰ (Amanat & Wilkes, 2009; Golkar, 2019; Hecher, 2019)

⁸¹ (Ottolenghi, n.d.)

⁸² (Kaufmaan, 2020)

⁸³ (Kaufmaan, 2020)

⁸⁴ (Amant & Vejdani, 2012; Arakelova, 2012)

⁸⁵ The lack of accountability is potentially due to the actions of the IRGC and Ettala'at which have been accused of stealing the bodies of victims to keep the body count low. 16-year-old protestor Nika Shakarami was abducted by the IRGC and Ettala'at, tortured and murdered. Her body was buried 40 kilometers away and her family was extorted by the regime to recover her remains. (Dawson, 2022; Karami, 2023; Malekian & Davies, 2022; The New Arab Staff, 2022)

⁸⁶ (Caldera, 2020)

⁸⁷ (Mozaffari, 2014; Mutahhari, 1979; Rahimieh, 2016)

that human beings are inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded and controlled by Islamic jurisprudence. Iranian Islamic jurisprudence, however, deviates significantly from traditional western norms in a manner that creates significant confusion. The age of consent in Iran for boys and girls is a good example to illustrate how extreme these deviations really. Under Velayat Faqih, or Islamic Jurisprudence in Iran, girls mature emotionally and mentally faster than boys. A girl can be held criminally liable for her actions once she turns 9 years of age, while a boy must be 13 years of age to be held liable. This jurisprudence guidance explains how a 9-year-old girl can be executed for *Moharebeh*, the crime of "waging war against God" or *Mofsede-fel-arz*, the crime of 'spreading corruption on earth'. Of course, if a 9-year-old girl can be executed for a crime, then she can also give consent to sexual relations at the same age.⁸⁸ The United Nations has tried for decades to change this in Iran, but without success.⁸⁹ The underlying Islamic eschatology is not the issue, as we have observed many other Islamic governments changing their views on this aspect of Velayat Faqih. At issue for Iran's regime is the fact that the female age of responsibility and consent, are central to its control over the psychosocial-emotional conditions of society that facilitate its mechanisms of control over its population and resources. To remain in control of Iran's population and its resources, the regime of mullahs backed by its IRGC must enforce compliance and acceptance of the regime's system of control not just physically, but psychologically, sociologically, and emotionally.⁹⁰ It is not enough to simply



Figure 18 Lists of the Dead, Tortured, Raped, and Disappeared women & girls in 2022-23 by the Basij and IRGC. From women.ncr-iran.org.

accommodate the regime, as its laws compel overt signs of compliance such as physical behaviour, dress, and language. This is where the wearing of the hijab, or women's head-covering, clothing types, and a range of behaviour modifications comes in. The population spend much of their time in a struggle with Iran's psychosocial life instructions that subject them to arbitrary arrest, interrogation, imprisonment, torture (physical punishment), and execution. Figure 10 lists the essential purposes of the regime and chief amongst them is 'revolution against' and 'resistance to' all aspects of modern civilisation, culture, and politics, with gender equality defined as a force of modernity that threatens the survival of the Islamic regime. Gender equality for the regime, is a poison to its patriarchal system of social order that allows older men to marry and have sexual intercourse with a pre or post pubescent girl.⁹¹ Without

⁸⁸ IranWire reported on underage marriage in July 2016, noting: "By law, [...] a girl can object to the marriage, and prevent it. But since girls under the age of 13 are normally dominated by the wishes and decisions of their fathers, and cannot realistically object, the only hope of preventing such marriages is through the courts. The court can refuse permission if it deems the marriage to be against the interests of the girl, as stipulated by Article 1041 of the Civil Code. In practice, however, to determine whether marriage is in the interests of the child, most judges only rely on a medical certificate issued by the Legal Medicine Organization testifying to the physical growth of the child. At most, they will ask the child a few broad questions about the meaning of marriage (Shakouri 2017). (Asghari, 2019)

⁸⁹ (Moore, 2016)

⁹⁰ Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general, said: "The harrowing testimonies we collected point to a wider pattern in the use of sexual violence as a key weapon in the Iranian authorities' armoury of repression."

⁹¹ (Gupta et al., 2023)

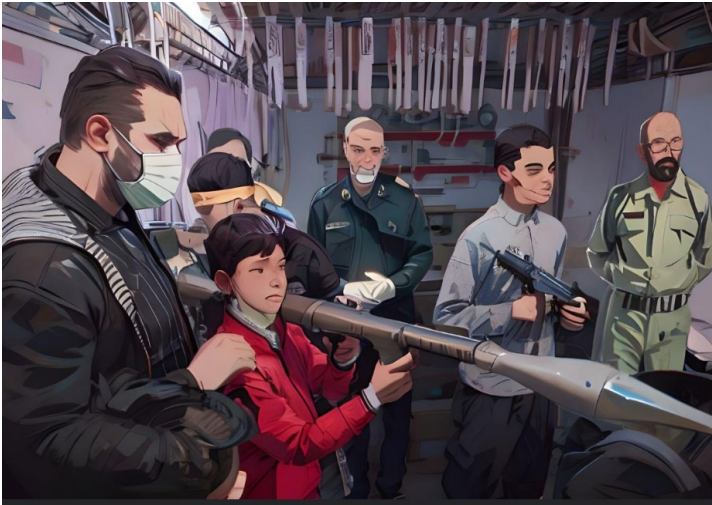


Figure 19 Iranian schoolboys hold RPG-7 rocket-launcher and a UZI-ga while standing in front of an effigy of the Iranian former commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Quds Force, General Qase.

delving into the specific psychopathologies inherent in pre/post pubescent sexual relations, the practice is a powerful social cohesion tool used by the regime to maintain sufficient loyalty of its population.⁹² This is why female led or oriented protests must be stopped at any cost, not because the female protest threatens the male regime, but because the female protests threaten the regime's support from its most benefited members of society: fathers, brothers, sons, and husbands. One important method of interfering with the female led/oriented protests is to change the nature of the mental objects of female purity and innocence. In my research, I found that select Basij units and the IRGC targeted the most vulnerable, but most dangerous population segment of Iranian society for psychological

traumatisation. The story repeated below is from one of the few members of the Basiji to have turned informant to the western media and explained to English Television Journalist, Lindsey Hilsum, how the Iranian regime goes about breaking down its most dangerous population segment – girls. Hilsom and the UK's Channel 4 news agency maintained the informant's confidentiality, but he was a member of the Basiji with his uncle, who was part of his story. Hilsom's interview and the Basiji man's story, is contextually and factually consistent with the thousands of hours of interviews that I have conducted with Iranian men and women over the years. This Basiji's story is set during the 2009 protests against the elections in Tehran between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his rival, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, who ultimately lost in what was widely believed to be a fraudulent election. The part of the Basiji's story that illustrates the concepts above is about the regime/IRGCs interest in the youngest of girls that were either attending the protests or were just in the wrong place at the wrong time: According to this Basiji man who participated in suppressing these Iranian protests:

"They had some containers ready. They had arrested some youngsters and were asking them their age and were separating them accordingly. Over 18s went into to one container and the under 18s into the several other containers. The number of children under the age of 18 was greater. They filled three or four containers of some 25 people in each. Then we heard noise from the yard. The sound came from the containers. The sound of screams and pleading and crying: 'We're sorry, please, we regret our actions'. Or screams or crying. We were confused. I couldn't believe that they would want to do such a thing: to rape. There were two men of the Sepah⁹³ and they came forward as we approached. "We asked what all the noise was about. They said "Nothing, this is Fath Al Moin (aid to victory). "We said: 'What do you mean, what are you doing? Who's in there?' (Because they were Basij from the provinces we didn't know them). We asked: 'What's happening, why are they crying?' "As we pursued the matter the confrontation got worse ...' My relative said: 'What do you mean? I'm one of the [Basij] leaders here. You can't tell me I have no right.' They said: 'Let's go. Haji wants to speak to you.' My relative was furious and very frustrated. He was very angry. When we got there, he said: 'What is this? Sexual abuse is a serious crime. Who gave this order? Who authorised this?' Haji calmly replied with a smile, 'this is Fath Al Moin. It's a worthy deed. There's nothing wrong with it. Why are you complaining?' When he said this, Haji thought it would calm my relative down to know this. But the

⁹² (Guy-Evans & Mcleod, 2024)

⁹³ The IRGC or Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps is called the Sepāh-e Pāsdārān-e Enqelāb-e Eslāmī, lit. 'Army of Guardians of the Islamic Revolution'), also called Sepah or Pasdaran.

*opposite happened, he became more upset. He raised his voice saying: 'What do you mean it's not a crime...not a recognised crime? That it's a good deed?' Haji saw that he had lost control and said, 'what's the big deal? Nothing's happened. What is the issue here?' My relative said again, 'what do you mean what's the big deal? Is there anything more filthy than this, more ugly than this? With children, these are children, they haven't done anything. They're from our own hometown.' Haji saw that he couldn't control him, that he wanted to return to the base and stop what was going on. He said: 'You can [will] stay here for now. Tomorrow we'll have a meeting about it, we can discuss it and see what the issue is'."*⁹⁴

Compare this firsthand account of violent physical control of the captives by the regime to the models in **figure 15** (sexual violence power & control wheel), **figure 11** (complex motivations of the Basij), **figure 1** (Psychosocial Mechanics of Intentional Weaponisation of Iranians), and **figure 6** (malformation of Iran's society). Can you perceive the intentionality of actions? Perhaps not on an individual Basiji level, but as a larger and intentional structuring of Iranian society. The malforming activities are not confined to one part of the regime or another and there are complex protections to ensure that members with a conscience do not act outside of their assigned roles. The Basiji member who spoke to Lindsey Hilsum, and channel 4, as an example, was found and punished by Iran's Ettala'at and Quds Force Division 48 (Psyops) hacked into a number of the websites that his interview was shown on.⁹⁵

§A5 Battle of Wills: Islamic Guardian Control of Sin versus Women-Life-Freedom Movement

The current revolutionary slogan being used in Iran against the IRGC and Mullah theocracy is **Woman, Life, Freedom** (Kurdish: *Jin, Jiyan, Azadî*) which originated with the leader of Kurdistan's imprisoned political leader, Abdullah Öcalan. His book became the guiding philosophy of the Kurdish fight for independence, empowering the new YPJ women's protection units battling the Assad regime, Russia's Wagner Group, the Islamic State, and Iran's IRGC Quds Force in Northeast Syria. From there, the philosophy spread to the Kurdish resistance in Iran, which was adopted by mainstream Iranian society against the oppressive government in Tehran. **Women Life Freedom** philosophy is not exclusively about women, but about the relationship between men and women in social life. Its emergence into Iranian society as a unifying rallying philosophy attacks the Iranian regime's foundation of its malformed society: that of male patriarchal control over women. The legal and social position of women in the Islamic Republic of Iran is one of inferiority, oppression, and control over their bodies, minds, and speech.⁹⁶ The UK Home Office CPIN has accepted the <https://iranhrdc.org/islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five/> to include Article 638 of the Penal Code on the enforcement of women's clothing. 'The government continues to require women of all religious groups to adhere to "Islamic dress" standards in public, including covering their hair and fully covering their bodies in loose clothing – an overcoat and a hijab or, alternatively, a chador (full body length semicircle of fabric worn over both the head and clothes). Although the government at times eased enforcement of rules for such dress, it also punished "un-Islamic dress" and behaviour with arrests, lashings, fines, and dismissal from employment. The government continued to crack down on public protests against the compulsory hijab and Islamic dress requirements for women.'⁹⁷ The UK Home Office, US Department of State, Canadian Immigration, and most European countries agree that child marriages, even prior to

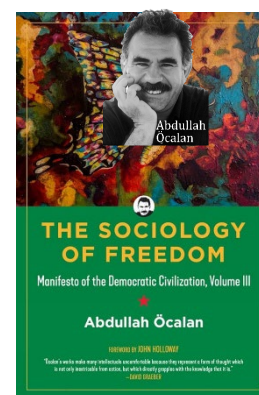


Figure 20 The Sociology of Freedom by Abdullah Öcalan

⁹⁴ (Amnesty International, 2023; Hilsum, 2009; Staff, 2023)

⁹⁵ (RANJIPOUR, 2020)

⁹⁶ (Nayyeri, 2013; WOMEN LIVING UNDER MUSLIM LAWS (WLUML), 2014)

⁹⁷ USSD IRF Report 2019

puberty, are legal in Iran and the United Nations notes that such sexual abuse of children is on the rise there as well.⁹⁸ The underlying research within the international community clearly stipulates that women in Iran do not have control over



Figure 21 The 'Woman Life Freedom Movement' in Iran 2022 to Present

their bodies, their participation in sexual activity, and that this control extends to early life as a pre and post pubescent child.⁹⁹ This research report addresses this issue of women in three interrelated parts. The first part addresses the real or perceived stakes for the Iranian regime in maintaining the legal and social position of women in Iran as part of political control of the populace. The second part addresses the underlying psychosocial motivations by the Iranian regime that drive its political treatment of women. Finally, part three addresses how the Iranian regime maintains control over Iranian women (and men) despite nearly a decade of every

intensifying resistance. For the past several years, the Islamic Republic of Iran is in the midst of a women led counter-revolution that threatens the existence of the Islamic Revolution because it directly challenges both the principalist and the reformist ideologies of the cleric led government. The clerics in Iran assert that *human beings are inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded and controlled by Islamic jurisprudence*. Most often, those human beings most 'inherently sinful' are women and males are their religious and cultural guardians and responsible for their control. The protesting women of Iran and the men who support them counters this socio-religious dogma and undermines the central message of the theocracy – that any deviation from the “revolutionary” path characterized by the forces of modernity and gender equality directly threaten the Islamic revolution. The Reformist ideology is based on the modern realities of keeping the population from outright rejection of the Shi'a Theocracy and open revolt: *Human beings may be inherently sinful and must be carefully guarded by Islamic Jurisprudence, but much of the work of commerce, business, science, trade, require a psychosocial space for market forces and creativity*. Every protest and act of defiance, however, offers the principalist ideological forces in Iran with further proof of their inherent sinfulness and the regime's need to exert ever greater levels of control and guardianship of women from themselves. The theocracy regime's challenge is to coopt one half of the population (males) to actively work against and suppress the other half of the population (females), providing them with intellectual and emotional reasoning (however weak) for their success at the expense of others. The past 45 years of Iranian experiences have created a malformation of social life that is incompatible with normal healthy mental and emotional health. All available research leads me to believe that the body of women in Iran and Iranian women in Diaspora, will not cease their campaigns against Iran's patriarchal social structure. Against this conclusion, the structure of the theocracy's control over its population and resources prevents its acceptance of any changes in its social order involving gender relationships and hierarchy. Either the women's rights campaign succeeds, or the regime survives, but not both. The risks faced by Iranian women who are unwilling to accept male control over their bodies, their sexuality, their clothing, their minds and speech is real. The physical and psychological coercion is painful and disfiguring, not to mention psychologically and emotionally debilitating. When these types of



Figure 22 Women's protest art from Iran

⁹⁸ (Asghari, 2019; Azimi, 2020; Dawson, 2022)

⁹⁹ (Hosseini B, 2021; Yaghoobi, 2020)

negative affect producing, psychosocial-emotional conditions of majority life continue beyond a point of endurance for the least stable minds, fantasies of aggression will eventually turn from passive-aggression acted out through social media and resistance-tagging (paint, chalk, etc) to fantasies of active aggression. The fantasy of active aggression serves to allow the ego-self an outlet for excess emotion that builds up from intolerable conditions of life. An act of civil resistance, even when no one sees it, allows the ego-self to fight back against its awareness that life has *“become worse...and no one listens to them, and no one even values what they say.”*¹⁰⁰ The safest method for releasing aggression is passively, where the excess anger-rage-shame is released in a way that does not bring immediate punishment or repression onto the victimized sufferer. The passive release of aggression can take many forms, from graffiti ‘tagging’ to deliberately poor work product, to seemingly innocent mistakes that damage public infrastructure (pouring caustic or oil waste products into the public sewer systems), or any action that works to undermine or damage public infrastructure, public confidence, public safety, or public compliance with government laws or public values. One unique method that women are using in Iran to passively release aggression is by resisting morality laws regarding the hijab or headscarf that all women are required to wear that completely covers all their hair:

*“Iranian women are sharing videos of themselves removing their headscarves in public, despite a recent ruling they could face 10 years in jail for doing so. Masih Alinejad, an Iranian journalist and prominent activist based in the US, started a social media campaign in 2014 encouraging women in Iran to share self-portraits without the Islamic veil, which she then goes on to share on her Facebook page called ‘My Stealthy Freedom’. Ms. Alinejad said campaigners had carried on sending her pictures and videos even after Tehran’s Revolutionary Court ruled, they could face up to 10 years in prison on Monday. ‘Today I have received lots of videos from inside Iran. And women in these videos are braver and angrier than before,’ she said. Ms. Alinejad said Iran’s government was ‘scared of women practicing civil disobedience and engaging in peaceful protest’. Wearing the Islamic headscarf is compulsory in public for all women in Iran – with those who do not wear a hijab or are seen to be wearing a ‘bad hijab’ by allowing some of their hair to show, facing punishments spanning from fines to imprisonment. ‘Women in these videos are braver and angrier than before,’ says Masih Alinejad”*¹⁰¹

In the current example above, the women in this story release aggression-from-frustration in a passive manner by letting their hair show, partially or fully. Likely, some portions of this category of women do so when no one is watching them. Others, however, demand a larger and more public audience of their release of aggression, which they obtain through taking photos and videos of themselves not covering their hair in public and uploading them to the internet. They risk punishment to reclaim subconscious feelings of independent agency, which in turn, raises their subconscious self-esteem/self-worth, which in turn combats the symptoms of depression and feelings of emptiness that accompany ego-self-identity conflict. The women’s passive release of their aggression

Figure 23



¹⁰⁰ Tehran University Student, male, 32 years old.

¹⁰¹ Maya Oppenheim, Women’s Correspondent, Independent: Iranian Women defy threat of decade long jail sentence by taking photos of themselves without headscarves. Thursday, August 1st, 2019.

becomes a symbolic-object¹⁰² of resistance to government; to oppression; to repression; and/or to generally release pent up aggression created by the frustration of their goal achievement. The passive but public psychological resistance to oppressive authority relieves symptoms of depression and feelings of helplessness. Their successful demonstration against oppression then ‘authorizes’ others to do the same and can result in a movement under the right psychosocial-emotional conditions. The right conditions are as follows:

- a) the psychosocial-emotional stressors (*eg. Those conditions that are causing or symbolizing oppression, humiliation, deprivation, etc*) continue and increase despite the state’s intervention actions¹⁰³;
- b) the emotion-feeling affect (*shame, helplessness, fear, terror, hopelessness*) increases and expands throughout the population segment(s);
- c) the state does not take such drastic steps that reduce the population segment(s) to a negative survival condition through withdrawal of security and physical needs (*e.g. extra-judicial killings, starvation, heat/cold*);
- d) cultural leadership from within the population segment(s) exists or arises and sparks the necessary resistance-ideas that inculcate open rebellion and a willingness to sacrifice life to resist.

The growth of urban Iran’s ‘White Wednesdays’ campaign is one visible example of a psychological emotional need that has become a cultural symbolic object of individual empowerment. Both females and males think about and act on this symbolic object (a colour and a day) to create feelings of empowerment and combat feelings of helplessness. The symbolic object of White Wednesday is linked psychologically and emotionally to a ‘stealthy freedom’ that meets their unmet, underlying subconscious needs, for individual agency and expression of culturally appropriate archetypal forms of femininity, masculinity, intellectual agency, sexual agency, as well as existential interaction with a globalizing world.

¹⁰² *Symbols* are the basis of *culture*. A *symbol* is an *object*, word, or action that stands for something else with no natural relationship that is *culturally* defined.

¹⁰³ TR Gurr’s statistical findings on relative deprivation provide a sense of the population segment’s necessary depth of effect to inculcate open rebellion.



Adapted from the *Power and Control Wheel*
 created by Domestic Abuse Intervention
 Project at theduluthmodel.org

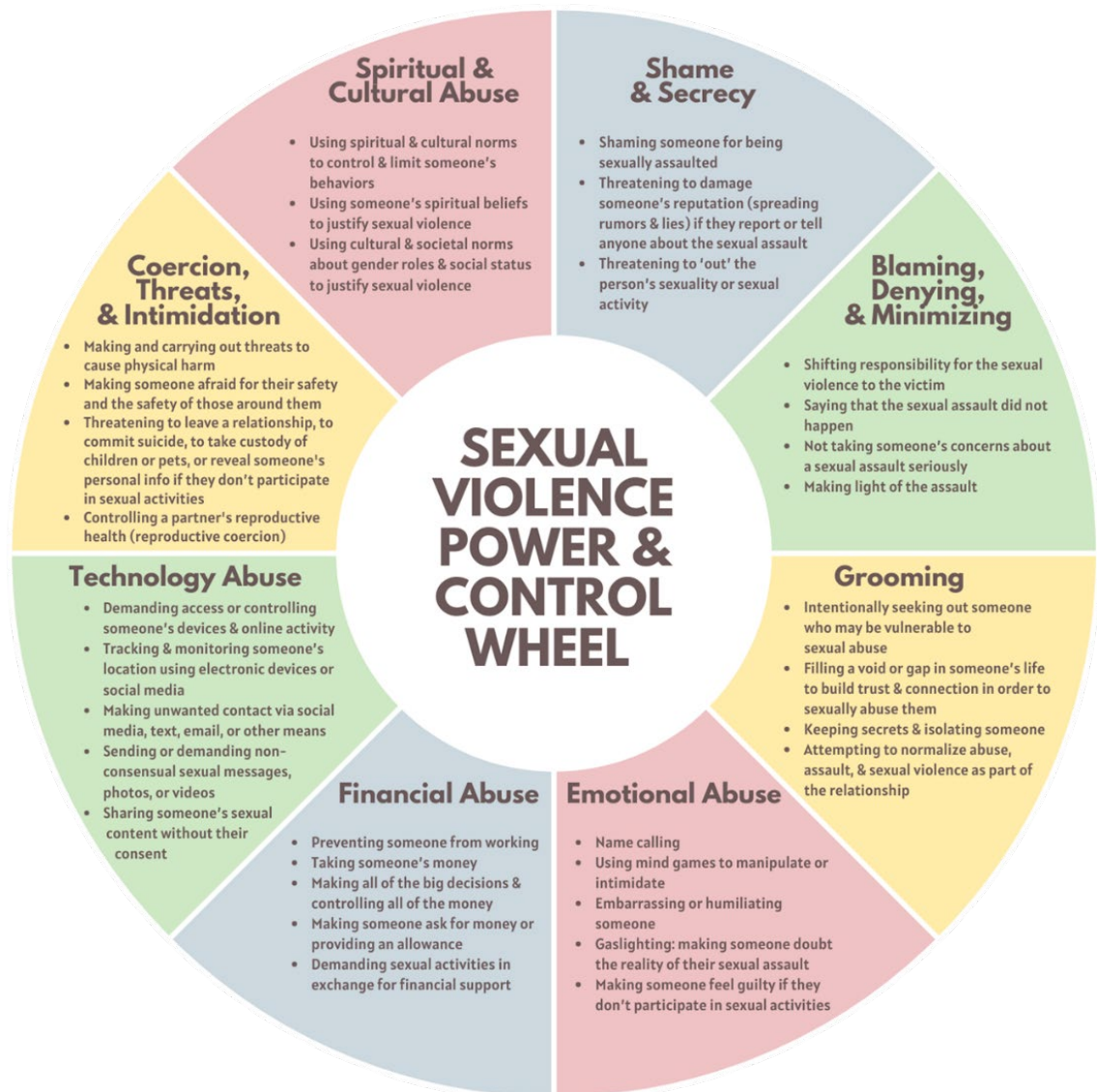


Figure 15 24 Sexual Violence Power & Control Wheel.

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