

# Kurdish minority

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**In news**— Nationwide protests over the death of a young Iranian Kurdish woman in the custody of Iran's morality police are going on intensely in Iran.

## A brief note on the Community-

- Minority Kurds, **mainly Sunni Muslims in Shi'ite-dominated Iran, speak a language related to Farsi and live mostly in a mountainous region** straddling the borders of Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.
- **Kurdish nationalism stirred in the 1890s when the Ottoman Empire was on its last legs.**
- The 1920 **Treaty of Sevres**, which **imposed a settlement and colonial carve-up of Turkey** after World War One, promised Kurds independence. Three years later, Turkish leader Kemal Ataturk tore up that accord.
- **The Treaty of Lausanne, ratified in 1924, divided the Kurds among the new nations of the Middle East.**



## Iran Kurdish community-

- In Iran, Kurds originate from different peoples with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- For example, the **Kurdish dialect of Kirmanji is spoken in northern Iran and much of Turkish Kurdistan, Sorani is spoken in most of Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan.**

- In southern Iran, **Gurani which is a distinct language** is spoken, but Kurds around Kirmanshah speak a dialect closer to Persian.
- **Kurdish separatism in Iran first bubbled to the surface with the 1946 Republic of Mahabad**, a Soviet-backed state stretching over Iran's border with Turkey and Iraq.
- It lasted one year before the central government wrested back control.
- **Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution touched off bloodshed in its Kurdistan region** with heavy clashes between the Shi'ite revolutionaries and the Kurdish Party of Iranian Kurdistan (KDPI) which fought for independence.
- After the 1980 eruption of the Iran-Iraq war, regular Iranian armed forces and Revolutionary Guards doubled down on their repression of Kurds so as to prevent them becoming a fifth column in Tehran's fight against Saddam Hussein.
- **New militant groups such as the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK) have emerged** over the past two decades and have occasionally clashed with security forces. Their leaders have often sought refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan and have been attacked by Iranian missiles.
- **Kurdish claims have oscillated between full-on separatism and autonomy within a multi-ethnic Iranian state**, spanning a wide political spectrum from left-leaning secularism to right-wing Islamist thought.
- With eight million to **10 million Kurds living in Iran**, Tehran fears pressure for secession will grow among a minority with a long history of struggle for its political rights.
- Rights groups say Kurds, who form about 10 percent of the population, along with other religious and ethnic minorities face discrimination under Iran's Shi'ite clerical establishment.