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After the Iranian revolution, one of the main focuses of the Iranian government has been the religious purification of the country. The solution has always been to remove the so called "alien" or "pagan" laws and casting aside anyone who abides by those laws. During the past 30 years, Farsi-speaking Christians have been a target of [religious persecutions](http://myengproject.weebly.com/religious-persecutions-translated-reports.html) in Iran but that has not stopped large numbers of people from converting into Christianity. These persistent conversions have concerned the Iranian government to the point where 3 years ago they started closing down all Farsi-speaking churches and only authorizing church services in [other languages](http://myengproject.weebly.com/foreign-languages.html). Also, another strategy that has been used in the recent years has been to imprison the more evangelical Christians, leaving them no choice but to [seek refuge](http://myengproject.weebly.com/christian-refugees.html) in other countries.  Nowadays, most Farsi-speaking Christians meet in house churches and get [foreign support](http://myengproject.weebly.com/foreign-support-to-iranian-churches.html) from several European countries and America.

 In my research I will be attempting to analyze the religious activities against Farsi-speaking Christians in a specific Middle Eastern Country: Iran. This analysis will be done through a Melodramatic perspective where the use of emotional manipulation is of great importance in forming the view of the public. So why am I writing just about the Farsi-speaking Christians as opposed to other Christians and why did I choose a specific country like Iran? Well, I grew up in the country of Iran as a Farsi-speaking Christian and have experienced many of the issues reported by social media first hand, so I thought, it would help to actually have a both insider and outsider view on the religious war in Iran.

After the Iranian revolution, one of the main focuses of the Iranian government has been the religious purification of the country. As Lewis writes, “The solution is the same for all of these - to remove the alien and pagan laws and customs imposed by foreign imperialists and native reformers, and restore the only true law, the all-embracing law of God. The proponents of this doctrine won power in Iran in 1979” (161). Therefore, anyone who does not submit to the shared values of that of the state, faces difficulties. But does this “anyone” include Armenian and Assyrian Christians too or is it only Farsi-speaking Christians who are being oppressed by the government? One can answer that question by looking at the history of Armenians and Assyrians in Iran.

Armenians and [Assyrians](http://myengproject.weebly.com/assyrians-in-iran.html)form a great population of racial minorities in Iran. They have lived in different parts of Iran for hundreds of years and have enriched Iran’s culture in many ways. There were no united Armenian communities in Iran until Shah Abbas relocated a huge number of Armenians from Armenia to an area of Isfahan called [New Julfa](http://myengproject.weebly.com/new-julfa.html) in the 17th century. After that time, [Iranian Armenians](http://myengproject.weebly.com/armenians-in-iran.html) have learned Farsi and have contributed vastly in the development of Iran. Assyrians have a much longer history in Iran. It is stated that Assyrians in Iran have existed in the north-western Iran for thousands of years. The Assyrian population in Iran used to be over 200,000 prior to the Iranian revolution but that number had shrunk immensely to about 32,000 by 1996. Many Assyrians have fled to foreign countries after the revolution since they saw threat to their existence in the Middle East region.

So as we can see, although the government claims to have allowed the Armenian and Assyrian Christians to practice their faith, the huge number of escapes from the country account for the pressure that they have felt due to persecutions. But, even considering worst circumstances, in order for Iran to maintain the status of allowing religious freedom, they have always been much more flexible with the Armenian and Assyrian Christians in terms of allowing them to live in peace.

Therefore, again, the main purpose of the government by oppressing Christianity is the promotion of the idea of having a “unified body of Shia Muslims.” One of the best ways to look at the reasons behind Christian persecutions in Iran is by looking at the documents and reports presented in the Farsi language. There are two types of reports one might stumble upon, some that are for persecution of Christians and some that come from outside the country and are against it. Nowadays, most people in Iran are connected to outside sources through satellite news channels and get both the inside and outside sources of news. My attempt is to help my non-Farsi speaking readers to get a taste of what a Farsi-speaking Iranian who lives in Iran experiences in terms of fearing the threat of imprisonment and the reasons why many of them decide to escape the country and leave their friends and families behind. The office of intelligence service in Iran, has many high tech, well developed, and strategized plans that it utilized in monitoring the lives of Christians in Iran. Their strategies that are actually very effective allows them to have a clear idea of what is happening in the country and enables them to prevent any potential causes of threat from happening to the national security. One of the highest priorities of the Iranian Government after the Iranian revolution has been the unification of the country towards a cohesive Islamic state. They have therefore identified the different ways that Christianity is introduced to the public and are trying to alert the general public of the evilness of [mischievous Christianity](http://myengproject.weebly.com/tebyan-reports-on-mischievous-christianity.html) (Shia News). On the other hand, satellite channels such as [VOA Persian](http://myengproject.weebly.com/voa-news-report-on-christianity-in-iran.html) and BBC Persian, are two of the only outside news sources in Farsi that the Iranian Christians have access to. Therefore, they expect these channels to express their needs to the west. During the past 35 years, there have been many Christians who have been put in jail because of their faith. Some of them were killed, some lost their money, and most were forced to leave the country. At this point, Mccallum believes that “When dealing with insecurity, churches are faced with a dilemma: whether to defend communal rights at all costs or to exercise some self-censorship in the knowledge that the government is the ultimate provider of their security” (Third World Quarterly, 116). Therefore, whether or not a church decides to lean towards democratic ideas or not plays a great role in its survival in an Islamic states like Iran. [Youcef Nadarkhani](http://myengproject.weebly.com/youcef-nadarkkhani-bbc-persia.html" \o ") was one of those Christians who had been sentenced to death but with the help of news coverage and satellite programs, his family was able to ask for support from the UN which prevented the Iranian government from executing his death sentence (BBC News).

Now let us focus on the melodramatic nature of this issue. Emotions play a great role in forming the view of the general public on a certain subject. This is also the case when talking about the war against Farsi-speaking Christianity in Iran. As Goodwin et al. write, “Emotions, we have argued, are collective as well as individual, and they permeate large-scale units of social organization, including workplaces, neighborhood and community networks, political parties, movements, and states, as well as the interactions of these units with one another” (Passionate Politics, 16). In order to analyze the stated issue from a melodramatic perspective, it is important to see the emotional response that the members of each group—persecutor and persecuted—give in response to the idea of creating a pure Islamic state. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, the government of Iran has been promoting the idea of having a unified population of Farsi-speaking Shias. Therefore, anyone having deviating thoughts from that of the unified body does not belong to that country. At this point, many of the Iranian citizens support this belief which is parallel to what Goodwin et al. believe that “A movement which has widespread social impact, which arouses the moral concern of a majority of the surrounding society, to a considerable extent creates that moral concern in the very process of mobilizing the movement. On the other hand, the persecuted think that they are the victims and see injustice in the way they are deprived of their natural social rights. This idea is also similar to Goodwin’s view that “It is well known that social movements often arise from a sense of grievance and/or of injustice. This points toward status issues between some who deny adequate status to others and others who feel they are denied the amount of status they deserve” (67).

One side the story can be explained when one looks at a certain ideology and calls it faulty by saying that a nation cannot deprive its citizens of their right of free religious practices. This idea is backed by what is written in Article 13 of Iran’s constitution which reads “Zoroastrian, Jewish, and Christian Iranians are the only recognized religious minorities, who, within the limits of the law, are free to perform their religious rites and ceremonies, and to act according to their own canon in matters of personal affairs and religious education” (Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran). Hence, within the limits of the law, a Christian must be “free” to practice his/her religion. It can be claimed that “freedom” is a big word to use when it comes to a Middle Eastern country, but this is the 21st century and also we do not live in a jungle where one can break all laws and oppress a group of people who have been given freedom by the constitution.

On the other hand, someone from the Islamic state of Iran can claim that the sole purpose behind overthrowing the Shah was to be able to promote and develop an Islamic nation and if the citizens are against that idea why did they overthrow the Shah in the first place? That is an absolutely valid argument and can be backed by the fact that in 1980, 99.7% of the population voted for the Islamic Republic. Therefore, this should give the government power to work in favor of the majority and create a state that promotes only and only Shia Islam. Also as stated by VOA Persian, “Article 225 of the new Penal Code, adopted in 1390, the Parliament and the Guardian Council, said that Iranian judicial authorities in accordance with Chapter 6 of about 6 verses in Qur'an, Hadith, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and the Imams, that has been developed, categorizes apostasy or conversion of Muslims in 2 categories of "indigenous” and “national” apostasy and has established death penalty for the men and permanent imprisonment for the women who convert from Islam to any other religion.”

Therefore, it is not possible to say which party is right or which one is wrong or be prejudiced against the members of either group since they are both following after a certain ideology that they think is the right one based on their social circumstances. But I, as someone who has lived in Iran for the majority of my life and has seen the struggles that Iranian Christians have to go through, am against the oppression of Christianity. I believe that we, as humans, have been made for more important purposes than to spend so much time fighting over our differences. We have been created to love each other despite our differences and that can be only made possible when one not only tolerates but even actively seeks to understand other points of views better. Even though that does not result in a nation made of unified members, but does that even matter?

As written by an anonymous writer, “The challenge before us is to find a set of policies that allow Western governments to stand up against this persecution” (Daniel Pipes: Religious Persecution in Islamic Middle East). I believe that in order for the west to be able to stand against the religious persecutions in the Middle East, they need to be able to see the world in an Islamic perspective and also try to give refuge to the members of the persecuted group until the issue is resolved.

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