



National  
Foreign  
Assessment  
Center

**Top Secret**  
25X1



# Status of Iranian Ethnic and Religious Minorities

**An Intelligence Assessment**

25X1

**Top Secret**

PA 79-10364C

August 1979

Copy 271

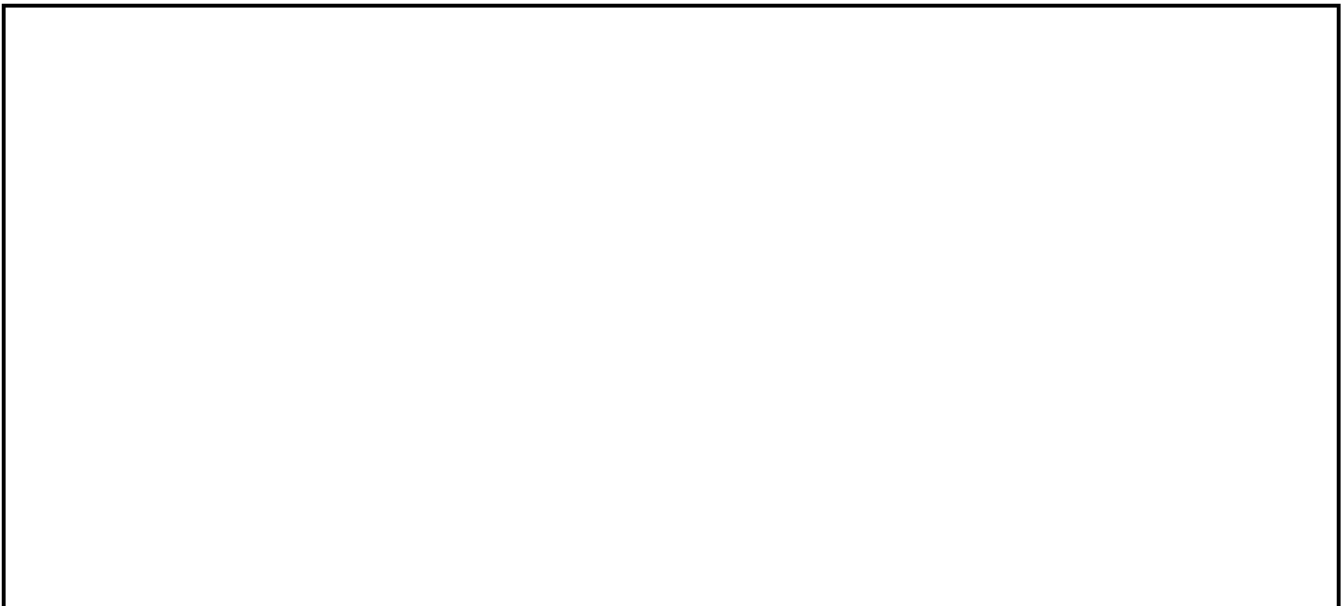
**Warning Notice**

Intelligence Sources  
and Methods Involved  
(WNINTEL)

**National Security  
Information**

Unauthorized Disclosure  
Subject to Criminal Sanctions

25X1





**National  
Foreign  
Assessment  
Center**

Top Secret  
[Redacted]

25X1

# Status of Iranian Ethnic and Religious Minorities

[Redacted]

25X1

**An Intelligence Assessment**

*Research for this report was completed  
on 7 August 1979.*

25X1

The author of this paper is [Redacted] Near  
East South Asia Division, Office of Political Analysis.

[Redacted]

This paper has been coordinated with the Office of  
Strategic Research, the Directorate of Operations,  
and the National Intelligence Officer for the Near  
East and South Asia [Redacted]

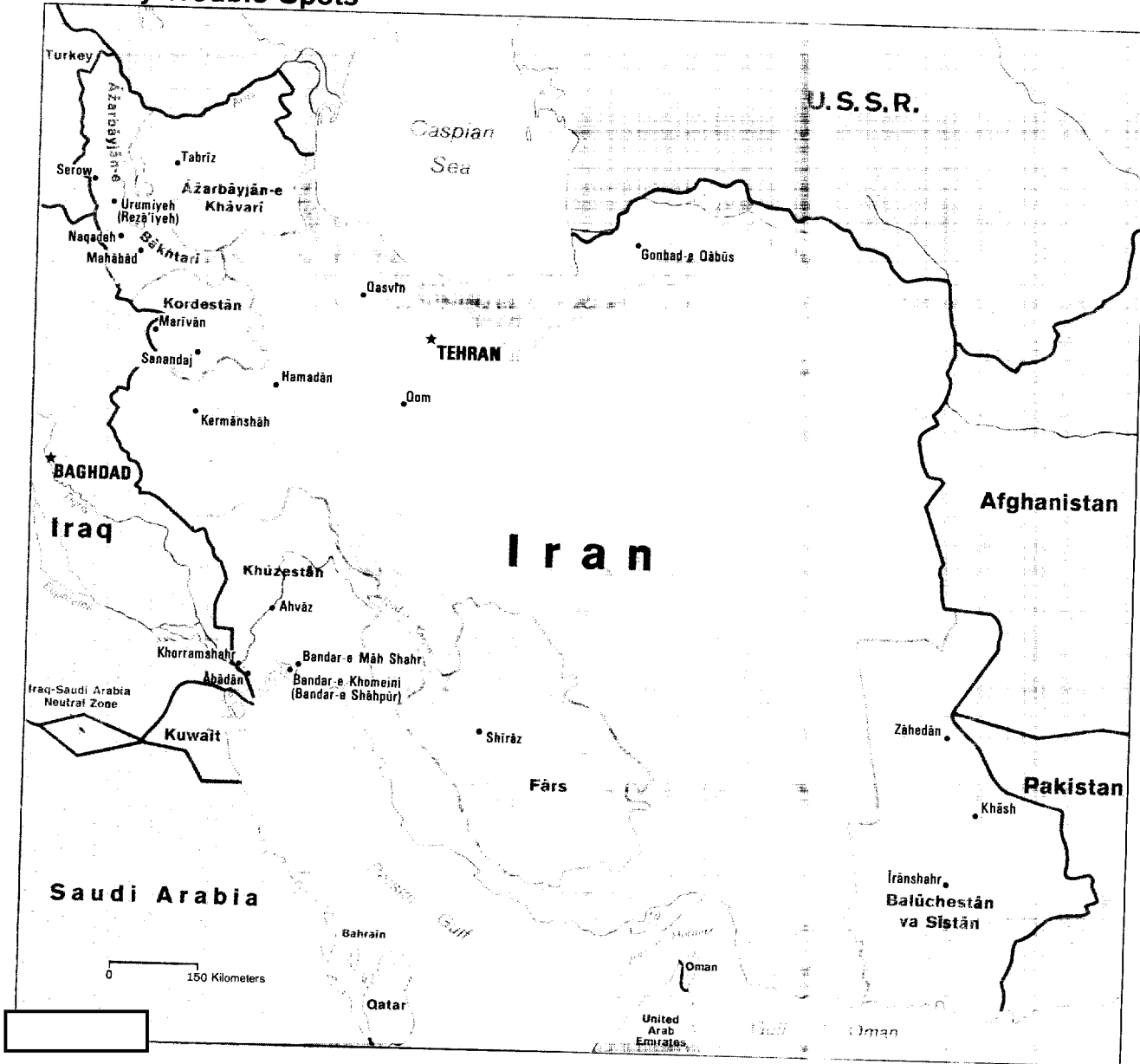
[Redacted]

**Top Secret**  
PA 79-10364C  
[Redacted]  
August 1979

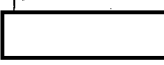


25X1

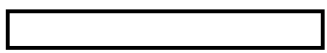
### Minority Trouble Spots



25X1



25X1



25X1

25X1

Top Secret



**Status of Iranian Ethnic and Religious Minorities**

25X1

**Key Judgments**

Rising violence among ethnic minorities throughout Iran is increasing pressure on the central religious, political, and security officials who believe that they cannot give more concessions to the minorities without endangering national unity. Tehran, however, lacks the armed forces needed to suppress the well-armed minorities.

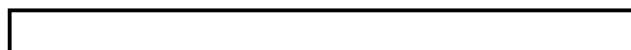
25X1

The level of tension and violence has been high in Kurdish-populated areas of the northwest, where the Kurds have established de facto autonomy in a large part of the area. The Kurds will have an outspoken representative at the constitutional review council debates, but are unlikely to be able to change the draft constitution to meet their desires. Autonomy-minded Kurds say that in that case they will ignore the central government and fight if Tehran resists.

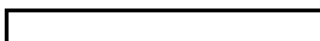
Widespread rumors, believed by the government, allege that pro-Shah former military and SAVAK officers are leading dissident bands in the northwest.  If they do in fact exist, it is more likely that they are seeking to weaken the Islamic Movement than to advance Kurdish autonomy.

Incidents of sabotage and terrorism added a new dimension to Arab unrest in the southwest in early July, but the area has been relatively peaceful since the Arabs' spiritual leader was taken to Qom under "protective custody" in mid-July. Frustrated Arab expectations, the presence of foreign agitators, and the return from exile of local extremists combine to create a high potential for violence and incidents that could disrupt oil production.

Meanwhile, members of Iran's non-Muslim religious minority communities—Jews, Bahais, Christians, and Zoroastrians—are watching events with varying degrees of concern. All but the Bahais, who are seen as a Shia heresy turned into a "political movement," have received some constitutional guarantees. Their leaders recognize, however, that their people's welfare depends directly on the attitude of individual local and national religious and political leaders and on their Muslim neighbors, who tend to become less tolerant as economic and social conditions worsen.



25X1



Top Secret



25X1

25X1

Top Secret

**Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Northwest: Kurds, Azaris and Others	2
The Kurds	2
The Azarbayjanis	4
North Central: Turkomans	5
Southwest: Arabs and Qashqai	5
The Arabs	5
The Qashqai	7
Southeast: Baluchis	8
Non-Muslim Religious Minorities	9
Zoroastrians and Christians	9
The Jews	10
The Bahais	11

25X1

25X1



v

Top Secret



25X1

Top Secret

25X1

25X1

**Status of Iranian Ethnic and Religious Minorities**

Only the most serious clashes in Iran are being publicized, but there is evidence that day-to-day violence—and the erosion of central authority—is prevalent in many areas populated by Iran's ethnic minorities. The minorities are disappointed that the government has been unable or unwilling to fulfill their expectations of political and economic improvements after the Shah's fall. They are also frustrated by the activities of the new, revolutionary committees that sprang up after Khomeini returned to Iran. The committees, which often lack minority representation, largely ignore the sensitivities and aspirations of the minorities and their local leaders. Various factions within the minorities are maneuvering for position. They all now have easy access to arms and are exploiting the general collapse of local and national security forces. In addition, violence in minority areas is employed by criminal elements and those encouraged by the availability of weapons to settle personal grievances by force.

process adequately ensures their interests. If the minority representatives elected to the 75-seat constitutional review council on 3 August accurately reflect minority interests, they will press for amendments protecting specific minority causes and eliminating Jafari Shiism as the state religion in favor of unmodified "Islam." Incomplete election results suggest, however, that there may be only one independent minority spokesman—the Secretary General of the Kurdish Democratic Party.

25X1

Striking a balance between minority demands—presented as strongly as possible by these experienced hagglers—and preserving central authority has been a difficult task for Iran's political and religious leaders. They are deeply concerned over the increasingly serious minority dissidence and the implications of foreign involvement.

The grievances and demands of the several Iranian ethnic minorities are remarkably similar. In general, all are demanding the restoration of land taken by the Shah's favorites; official use of their own languages in local government, schools, and media; local control of internal security forces; equality for all Muslim sects and ethnic groups; greater economic development of their homelands; and proportional representation in the central government.

Press reports indicate the issue was also raised at a meeting between Prime Minister Bazargan, members of his Cabinet, and Ayatollahs Khomeini and Taleghani in Qom on 17 July.

The provisions in the draft constitution, promulgated on 15 June, that apply specifically to minorities include: equality of all Iranian "nationalities" and, therefore, no special autonomous privileges for the minorities; respect for Sunnism and its use as a basis for local regulations where Sunnis are a majority; use of minority languages in local presses, but not as official regional languages; and administration of "each village, district, town, city or province" by locally elected councils. Freedom of belief or expression cannot be restricted in the name of national security, according to the constitution, and educational opportunities are to be open to all. Comments by minority leaders and organizations indicate that they do not believe that either the draft or its ratification

There is no easy way out of the Iranian leaders' dilemma. They lack the armed forces to suppress the minorities and, in any case, do not want to risk the consequences of an all-out challenge of minority dissidents. They want to calm the minorities and to increase their involvement in, and commitment to, the

Top Secret

25X1

25X1

Top Secret

[redacted]

central government, but to satisfy minority demands will be difficult. It is likely that violence and terrorist activity by ethnic dissidents would continue even if the desires of the major ethnic leaders were met. [redacted]

25X1

**Northwest: Kurds, Azaris, and Others**

**The Kurds**

The level of tension in Kurdish-populated areas is high as Kurds compete among themselves and with other indigenous minority groups, government and religious representatives, and security and military forces. Moreover, the wide availability of arms, the breakdown of the security system, and the psychological strains created by months of upheaval and frustrated expectations are fostering criminal activity and nonpolitical violence. [redacted]

25X1

There is heavy coverage of events in Kurdish areas in the Iranian media. The Kurds are arguing that the government is trying in this way to discredit their leaders and justify a full-scale military crackdown. The armed forces in the area have, in fact, been reinforced recently, but they still are unprepared for any full-scale campaign. [redacted]

25X1

The dissident incidents [redacted] fall into four general categories: organized protests and clashes sponsored by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) or some other group or individual active on the regional political stage; spontaneous incidents that may later be exploited by one of these politically motivated groups; activities by guerrilla bands, local leaders, or criminal elements protecting or expanding their interests or fiefdoms; and reactions by those opposed to any of these groups. The result has been a continuous series of armed clashes, raids on armories, landgrabs, breaks in supply and communications lines, protests and strikes—as well as accompanying rhetoric and countercharges—throughout Kordestan and Azarbayjan-e Bakhtari. [redacted]

25X1

This ferment has brought to the surface a number of Kurdish interest groups. The most prominent are the KDP [redacted] and a rival group centered on a leading figure in Sanandaj; other, more

25X1

obscure, groups include a heavily armed band associated with the leading pro-Khomeini cleric in Azarbayjan-e Bakhtari; the Progressive Party; the Central Council of the Ecclesiastical Community of Kordestan, opposed to the constitution's handling of minority rights; the Kordestan Farmer's Union, which may be associated with the KDP; the Kurdish Workers' Revolutionary Movement; and the Group for the Defense of Freedom and the Revolution in Kordestan. The last two groups, allegedly radical leftist, are headquartered [redacted] and active in Marivan—a nearby town that has experienced continuous upheaval for at least three months [redacted]

25X1

25X1  
25X1  
25X1

Widespread rumors—believed, and sometimes spread, by the Iranian Government and its spokesmen—lay responsibility for frequent armed clashes and other incidents along the Iran-Iraq-Turkey borders to an armed band or bands led by former Lt. Gen. Azzidollah Palizban, former Lt. Gen. Gholam Ali Oveisi, and/or other former military or SAVAK officers. A Kurd, and probably a Shia, Palizban was a longtime chief of military intelligence under the Shah and worked with the Iraqi Kurdish Barzani guerrilla band [redacted] Oveisi was chief of the ground forces and Martial Law Administration when the Shah fell. We cannot confirm that these men are leading pro-Shah insurgents in Iran. We have no statements from them or any such group stating their objectives, and we know of no appeals from them for support from the Kurds. If such groups exist, they are probably seeking to disrupt the Islamic Movement; Palizban, for example, is not likely to be fighting for Kurdish autonomy per se. Many of the reports of incidents attributed to these groups—including highway robbery, looting, and stealing—could have been operations by such groups to gain funds to finance their activities, the work of criminals without political motivations, or a government attempt to discredit Kurdish autonomist activities [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Top Secret

[redacted]



25X1

The three most prominent individual Kurdish spokesmen—Sheikh Ez-ed-din Hoseini, a widely popular cleric from Mahabad; his ally Abdol Rahman Qasemlu, the leftist-oriented Secretary General of the KDP; and Ahmad Moftizadeh, a powerful figure in Sanandaj who was named the Kurds' political and spiritual leader by the Islamic Movement in April—have all spoken out against the absence in the constitution of specific provisions for minority rights and have warned of violent reactions if the text of the constitution is not amended. All three feel that the government has failed to fulfill its earlier promises to them. The Kurdish leaders have also objected to the naming of Shiism as the state religion and to the process used for choosing the constitutional review council. Hoseini has denounced the voting as fraudulent and said he “will place no faith” in the council or the constitution it produces. [redacted]

25X1

Hoseini and Qasemlu held several well-publicized meetings with government and religious leaders before the text was released and probably knew shortly before its publication that the text would not fulfill the minorities' desires. Moftizadeh, who is one of several ethnic leaders reportedly paid by the central authorities to try to calm minority concerns, also met with the high-level officials. He has said that he had expected the draft to provide for closer Sunni-Shia equality. Just before the draft constitution was released, he [redacted] fired off a 15-point program to the central authorities reiterating Kurdish demands. He also called for an end to the rivalry between himself and Hoseini, which Moftizadeh said was splitting the Kurds. Soon afterward, the two issued a joint protest over the choice of Shiism as the state religion and demanded that the constitution provide for minority representation on the body that will eventually be established to review the constitutionality of all laws proposed by the Majles. [redacted]

25X1

Hoseini, a well-read ascetic man of 57 who is accepted as the Kurds' spiritual leader, denies that he seeks a dominant personal political role. He is a former KDP member who claims to have resigned to “maintain impartiality.” Qasemlu, 49, is a longtime KDP member who has worked closely with Tudeh and the Iraqi

Communist Party and spent years in Eastern Europe. He is strongly pushing his claim to be the Kurds' secular spokesman [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] Qasemlu remains only “first among equals” in the party's top leadership. In any case, he symbolizes the KDP and its aspirations and is apparently treated by the government alternately as a threat and a useful local power.

25X1

25X1

[redacted] the government believes that if Qasemlu were absent, Kurdish dissidence would be much worse in Azarbayjan-e Bakhtari Province than it is. Tehran, therefore, makes an effort to accommodate him—and presumably Hoseini as well—whenever possible. The government has nevertheless tried to limit Qasemlu's activities and constrict KDP influence. Tehran abruptly withdrew permission for Qasemlu to visit Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasir Arafat in Lebanon this spring and later turned him away from a conference on foreign policy supposedly open to “all political groups.” [redacted]

25X1

The KDP is aggressively—and apparently sometimes forcefully—trying to expand its influence and membership. Its leaders probably not only hoped to round up votes for their candidates for the constitutional review council on 3 August, but also to carve out an enclave the KDP can dominate. Qasemlu appears to be the only Kurdish spokesman elected to the council. The other two seats from Azarbayjan-e Bakhtari were won by the pro-Khomeini clerics; two Shia clergymen were the official winners in Kordestan, but with suspiciously low vote totals. KDP leaders are claiming that only voting irregularities could have prevented the election of their candidates [redacted]

25X1

Qasemlu has tried to develop close ties with longtime Iraqi Kurdish guerrilla leader Jala al-Talabani and to mediate between him and leaders of the rival Barzani band, both of which often operate from Iranian territory. [redacted] the government believes that forces loyal to Talabani occasionally operate jointly with the KDP's armed

25X1

25X1

Top Secret

wing in Iranian territory. The Barzanis, however, seem to have rebuffed Qasemlu

[Redacted]

. Idris has

also talked recently—apparently without results—with Baghdad about returning his people to Iraq; his brother, Masud, was chosen head of the KDP of Iraq in mid-July

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

25X1

The government used ethnic Turkic Azarbayjani residents of Naqadeh to close a new KDP office there in late April, causing a serious clash between the ethnic groups. Approximately 12,000 Kurds displaced by the fighting threatened to emigrate to Iraq and Turkey unless Tehran quickly made satisfactory arrangements for them. It agreed to do so, but little seems to have been accomplished. Relations between minorities in areas of mixed population in the northwest have been tense for months, with scattered reports of clashes and attempts by each ethnic group to establish exclusive areas by forcing out members of others.

*The Azarbayjanis*

Comparatively little information about the Azarbayjanis (Azaris)—Iran's largest minority—appears in the Iranian press or official reporting. Problems in the area they inhabit seem to stem less from ethnic divisions than from economic and political problems that have afflicted the rest of Iran. A few daily and weekly newspapers—espousing leftist ideas and Azarbayjani nationalism—are printed in the local language, and the Azarbayjani Democratic Party—the KDP's sister party—has resurfaced, but public Azari autonomist feeling is not strong, at least not in Tabriz.

The government has become increasingly concerned over the open smuggling of arms and supplies across its troubled northwestern borders, the alleged infiltration of foreign agitators, and the Kurds' efforts to establish an autonomous enclave. Tehran's options in dealing with the well-armed and effective Kurdish guerrillas are, however, limited. Police and gendarmerie units are still demoralized and understrength, where they are functioning at all, and the Army is in not much better shape. The government's forces have been able to quell individual disturbances—partly because the minorities have been prepared to retreat and fight again elsewhere—but they would be hard pressed to handle widespread disturbances.

[Redacted]

fighting" around Tabriz in June that put the local gendarmerie posts into a state of alert; some Azaris may be considering seeking asylum in Turkey from the disturbances and unidentified groups have been raiding armories seeking weapons. Ayatollah Khomeini sent a clerical delegate

in late June to try in cooperation with the local clergy

[Redacted]

There is serious disagreement among the central religious, political, and military authorities about whether the Army should be used against dissident minorities

[Redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1  
25X1

Top Secret

25X1

The Muslim People's Republican Party is associated with Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, whose power base is in Tabriz. It is a rival of Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party; is well funded, well organized, and popular among the Azaris. According to Tehran radio, the PLO opened a branch office at Tabriz University on 29 April [redacted]

25X1  
assumed control of the local army installations. Turkoman leaders believe the government has agreed that their youth will fulfill their military duties in the Turkoman region. They also thought—mistakenly—that the draft constitution would provide for a separate Turkoman province. [redacted]

25X1  
**North Central: Turkomans**

There have also been problems recently between the Shia Azaris and their Sunni Turkoman neighbors in Gonbad-e Qabus, where serious disturbances occurred earlier this year between dissident Turkomans and government forces. Azaris serving in the Revolutionary Guards have abused their position, creating tension between the two ethnic communities. We have seen no government response to this problem [redacted]

[redacted] evidence had been found that Seyh Ana Kilic Naksibendi, a Turkoman cleric who surfaced as the tribe's spokesman several weeks ago, had cooperated with SAVAK before the revolution. It would not have been unusual for an influential local leader to have established a *modus vivendi* with the local SAVAK office, but discovery of the evidence dimmed Naksibendi's star. The new spokesman and leader of the Turkoman People's Association is Seyh Yeli Mehmet Erzanis, about 39, a "humble but cultured" cleric who teaches Arabic in Gonbad-e Qabus [redacted]

25X1  
[redacted] Tehran did act quickly to calm other disputes, such as those between Turkoman farmers and local revolutionary committee representatives in an area east of the Caspian Sea, where several villagers were killed or wounded in clashes during the last harvest period. The local committee was abolished, and the members responsible for the trouble were arrested by Revolutionary Guards. But [redacted] [redacted] has said the Turkomans plan to rise again as soon as their current harvest is safely stored [redacted]

**Southwest: Arabs and Qashqais**

***The Arabs***

The outbreak of sabotage and terrorism after 4 July added a new dimension to the instability in oil-rich Khuzestan. Over the past four months, repeated clashes between autonomy-seeking Arabs and Persians, activities of agitators supported by radical Arab states and Palestinians, and the influx of arms have created a volatile situation that could disrupt oil production. [redacted]

25X1  
[redacted] the Turkomans have continued to establish systems of local control and that delegations have traveled to Tehran and Qom to explain their actions to the central authorities. The Turkoman People's Association, formed in early April, has been heading the autonomy movement. It is arranging for elections for town councils [redacted] [redacted] in the area where the Turkomans predominate, and for agricultural cooperatives to run farmland expropriated from the Shah's favorites and market their produce [redacted]

25X1  
Racial prejudice and economic distress provide the background for the continuing struggle over political authority in Khuzestan. The "least Persian" and most despised minority in Iran, the Arabs occupy the bottom rung of the economic ladder. While the details of the conflict in Khuzestan differ from those in other minority areas, its basic themes are a microcosm of Iran's problems with all its restive ethnic groups. [redacted]

25X1  
Regular police—presumably mostly Turkomans—are maintaining law and order, while Turkoman officers, noncommissioned officers, and troops from units elsewhere in Iran have returned to the area and

25X1  
The Iranian Arabs' spiritual leader, Sheikh Mohammad Taher al-Shobeir Khaqani, became the symbol of Arab aspirations and resistance to the new revolutionary groups, but Khaqani is now rivaled by Seyed Adnan Qorafi, whose support may be growing because he has always opposed Khomein [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Top Secret

Under the Shah's regime, local officials tacitly accepted Khaqani's leadership. But the Persian-controlled committees that sprang up in Khuzestan after the revolution refused to acknowledge him, despite his seemingly good working relationship with Khomeini. Because of this, and the committees' disregard for Arab sensitivities and interests, Khaqani became increasingly open in criticizing the central government, provincial Governor General Madani, and the local committees. While he probably did not order acts of violence, dissatisfied Arabs seemed to interpret his vitriolic speeches as calls to action.

25X1

Tensions between Iran's Arabs, who number about 500,000 in Khuzestan, and the dominant, Farsi-speaking Persians in the province have flared into demonstrations, strikes, and open fighting on at least four occasions since the revolution in February. Serious violence and strikes ended temporarily in early June after an agreement was concluded that committed the provisional government in Tehran to acknowledge the Arabs' demands for a greater share of the region's oil wealth and official positions in the local bureaucracy and oil industry.

25X1

The Arabs also are demanding constitutional guarantees of official use of Arabic in the local media, schools, and courts, as well as access to more senior positions in the military. Government spokesmen have made some concessions covering the local use of all minority languages, but the proposed text of the constitution deals with minority rights in much more general terms. Governor General Madani has tried to improve Arab living conditions, but the Arabs' broader demands have not been answered, leaving the potential for unrest high.

25X1

Serious demonstrations and clashes with government and Islamic representatives broke out again in late June when Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali, the head of the revolutionary tribunals, cited Sheikh Khaqani in calling for the death penalty for all "separatists." Soon after, Khaqani announced that the agreement of early

25X1

June had broken down because the government had failed to implement the most important short-term provisions calling for the release of Arab prisoners and the prosecution of those who had attacked Arabs. He warned Tehran that more serious outbreaks would occur if the government did not give the Arabs increased control over their affairs.

25X1

Arab grievances over labor conditions, growing unemployment, and economic distress intensified the recent disturbances. The government fears that Arab-Persian tensions will spill over into the province's oil industry, where worker unhappiness has already threatened production at the Abadan refinery and leftist activity among the workers is a continuing problem. This concern, coupled with the increased level of violence, led the government in mid-July to order Khaqani taken from Khorramshahr to Qom under "protective custody." Khaqani later announced that he would remain in Qom indefinitely. Madani has refused to allow him to return to Khuzestan, and the government will not let him leave the country. The province has been relatively calm since his departure.

25X1

The oil installations in Khuzestan not only are threatened by the various radical groups that hope to contribute to the instability in the province, but are an obvious target for the venting of workers'—especially Arab workers'—grievances against the government. In southwest Iran, there are thousands of miles of pipelines carrying crude oil, natural gas, liquefied natural gas, and refined products that, even in the best of times, would be impossible to protect fully.

25X1

Khaqani and his closest followers have not advocated separatism and probably would prefer to avoid violence. Other, more clandestine Arab groups have no such reservations. Among these groups are the National Front for the Liberation of Arabestan (also called the Islamic Arab Revolutionary Front) and the Ahvaz Liberation Front. Both groups have long-standing contacts with radical Arab states and Palestinian groups. Many of their members are now returning to Khuzestan from exile. Members of radical Palestinian groups, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine are also infiltrating the

Top Secret

Top Secret

[redacted]

25X1

25X1 area. The Popular Front claims to have several of its members working in the Abadan refinery.

[redacted]

25X1 Although both Iran and Iraq have quieted their propaganda attacks on each other, there is evidence that Baghdad is training and arming Arab dissidents and assisting in the infiltration of outside agitators. There have recently been several pitched battles between Revolutionary Guards and arms smugglers—apparently arriving by way of Iraq—in the area of Khorramshahr [redacted]

25X1 Libya also has ties with dissident Iranian Arabs. The Egyptians have tried unsuccessfully to reopen similar contacts; and the USSR, acting through Tudeh, is said to be very active among the Iranian Arabs.

[redacted]

25X1 [redacted] the Palestine Liberation Organization opened a branch office in Ahvaz, the provincial capital, allegedly to help Khomeini by keeping tabs on radical Iranian Arabs and reporting on outside agitators. PLO leader Arafat has tried to exclude radical Palestinians from Iran and to support Khomeini's interests in Khuzestan. He expected his relationship with Khomeini, which dates from the early 1970s, to provide important dividends for the PLO, but instead the Iranians have become increasingly wary of Palestinian intentions in the province [redacted]

25X1 There have probably been few well-trained Arab dissidents, but their numbers will increase quickly if reports of foreign training available to them are accurate. Local leaders like Khaqani have drawn on the support of large numbers of undisciplined followers whose emotions could also be exploited by the more radical dissidents. The Arabs have impeded the government's efforts to reestablish law and order in Khuzestan and can engage in sabotage with relative impunity, especially if they are helped by Palestinians or radical Arab states. [redacted]

25X1 The government apparently has no idea who was responsible for the sabotage by explosion of the 42-inch water main that runs from the Karun River to

Bandar-e Shahr, Bandar-e Khomeini, and its industrial park on 4 July. A new Arab group called Black Wednesday has claimed responsibility for the attacks on the Abadan oil product lines and on a rail link between Ahvaz and Khorramshahr. The group threatened to carry out more such attacks and to take hostages until Arab political prisoners are released and the local revolutionary committees abolished. The government realizes that the fact that an Arab group now claims to be engaging in sabotage and terrorism will encourage others to follow suit. It quickly executed several Arabs allegedly responsible for acts of terrorism in Khuzestan in mid-July [redacted] 25X1

The Director of the National Iranian Oil Company in early July asked for military police guards for NIOC installations. The then commander of the military police claimed he could send up to 3,000 men to the area. The Defense Ministry was not willing to agree, however, despite the fact that the regular Army unit there—the 92nd Armored Division at Ahvaz—is at about half strength and far from combat ready. Moreover, troops often are not willing to carry out operations against fellow Iranians. Local Revolutionary Guards, plus reinforcements from Tehran, were able to calm earlier disputes—in part because the Arabs were ready to cease and desist—but they lack the training and discipline, as well as the numbers, to subdue a large disturbance or to patrol the area effectively. Officials responsible for one small key industrial installation announced in late July that anyone approaching within 300 feet of its perimeter without permission would be shot. [redacted] 25X1

*The Qashqai*

There is also increasing unrest in the provinces inland from the Gulf coast. Nasser and Khosrow Qashqai, the two senior leaders (khans) of the Shia Qashqai tribe, the largest and most powerful tribe in the Shiraz area, have been heavily arming their people and testing the political winds in Tehran, Qom, and among local political, religious, and military leaders. They supposedly reached agreement with Khomeini to help maintain order in their area in return for noninterference in tribal affairs by the local clergy or other Khomeini supporters. They have, nevertheless, toyed with the idea of backing a secular political party designed to advance tribal interests and seem skeptical of Khomeini's staying power. [redacted] 25X1

Top Secret

[redacted]

25X1

25X1

**Top Secret**

[Redacted]

25X1

The Qashqai leaders are also seeking ways to protect their people from food shortages and other problems resulting from the deterioration of central authority. In a press conference after a meeting with the Interior Minister on 27 June, Nasser Khan referred to recent clashes between the Qashqai and Basseri tribes in which five were killed and 27 wounded. The incidents were reportedly prevented from becoming a "major bloodbath" involving "thousands of casualties" by sheer luck and fast talk by Khosrow Khan. The Qashqai leaders blame agents of the Shah for stirring up the current troubles between tribes, but Nasser Khan told the Interior Minister that the tribes in his region have wide-ranging grievances about the provision of social services and facilities and that the government must act quickly if there is not to be a bloody counterrevolution. Incidents of violence have been reported throughout Fars Province [Redacted]

[Redacted] as in other tribal areas, there has been a massive increase in arms smuggling in Baluchestan that has raised the potential for violence. [Redacted]

25X1

Baghdad is seeking to reopen old contacts or develop new ties among [Redacted] Baluchis who are [Redacted] prepared to cooperate" with Iraq. [Redacted]

25X1

It is clear that the Iranian Government perceives a serious threat in the isolated province where there seems to be considerable pro-Shah sentiment. Government and religious leaders have reiterated their concern over problems there, and Baluchi leaders are reportedly among those being paid to keep their people in line. A senior Interior Ministry official [Redacted]

25X1

[Redacted] publicly charged that the USSR is encouraging leftist Baluchi penetrations from Afghanistan in order to gain an outlet to the Indian Ocean—a fear that is a holdover from the Shah's regime. About two months earlier the provincial gendarmerie was ordered to request as many reinforcements as necessary to crush "disturbances, riots, and confusion" created in the province [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

**Southeast: Baluchis**

[Redacted]

[Redacted] In June, a new Army unit—designated the 2nd Armored Brigade, probably subordinate to the 88th Division at Zahedan—was formed and assigned to Khash. The brigade, made up of two tank battalions and an artillery battalion from other Iranian units, began moving to its new location by rail on 30 July, soon after clashes broke out in Iranshahr between the local committee and pro-Shah residents. [Redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

[Redacted] The BSO leader, Razegh Baluch, has grandiose plans for either winning the allegiance of tribal leaders or eliminating them, galvanizing the people, and eventually declaring the area independent. BSO headquarters allegedly are in Zahedan, the provincial capital, and the organization probably has branches in the largest towns in the province [Redacted]

[Redacted]

25X1

25X1

**Top Secret**

[Redacted]

Top Secret  
[redacted]

25X1



• No. 51: Religious minority Majles members may take the oath of office on their own holy book. In addition, each of the three communities elected representatives to the council of experts that will review the constitution. [redacted]

25X1

*Zoroastrians and Christians*

[redacted]  
Zoroastrian and Christian communities is small, but neither group seems to have suffered serious problems.

[redacted]  
that about 1,000 of the 35,000 Zoroastrians—primarily the wealthy—had left Iran during the revolution. Several individuals had returned by the time of their conversation, and more were expected before the end of July. Meetings between the community's leaders and Khomeini have apparently been reassuring to the Zoroastrians. [redacted]

25X1

More recently, [redacted] a Zoroastrian leader, told [redacted] that his coreligionists are suffering economic hardship along with other Iranians whose income is dependent on a lively economy, and many are thinking of leaving Iran. He confirmed, however, that there has been no religious persecution, although he himself has suffered severe financial distress and is vulnerable to arrest because of his position as a former Majles member. Commenting on meetings between community leaders and Ayatollahs Khomeini and Taleghani, he said that both the ayatollahs were polite and reassuring—and that it probably was for the best that “neither has the slightest understanding of Zoroastrianism.” [redacted]

25X1

The three community temples in Tehran have not been disturbed, and attendance at services has not fallen. About 3,000 students, 95 percent of them of other faiths, are enrolled at the Zoroastrians' six—elementary through secondary—schools in Tehran. The Ministry of Education threatened three months ago to close the schools, but there has been no action and Dr. Mehr expects operations to continue. The Zoroastrian leader added that the community is more affected by its own radical and disaffected youth than by Iranian Muslims. [redacted]

25X1

The Baluchi leader believes his people are waiting to see what the new government can or will do for them. The general peacefulness of the region during the revolution reflected their satisfaction with the Shah's development projects and the minimal impact of the central government on tribal activities, such as smuggling to supplement the residents' income. He said that the tribal leaders will be able to overcome their divisions and make a joint decision on this crucial matter, adding that any actions before then would be intended only to demonstrate their strength to the central authorities. As in other tribal areas many of the incidents of violence ascribed to dissidents are probably the work of aggressive and greedy, well-armed bands without political motivation [redacted]

**Non-Muslim Religious Minorities**

The Bahais and Jews are more seriously concerned about the new government's attitude than the Christians and Zoroastrians. Under the draft constitutional provisions:

- No. 14: Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians are recognized as “official religious minorities” and are free to practice their beliefs.
- No. 26: Formation of . . . religious . . . associations is free and unrestricted so long as they are not a threat to national interests. No one can be prevented from joining or be forced to join any such group.
- No. 50: Zoroastrians and Jews shall elect one deputy each and the Christians two deputies to the new Majles. Additional deputies will be allotted as the minorities' population expands by increments of 150,000 persons.

Top Secret  
[redacted]

25X1

25X1

Top Secret

[redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

There is little recent information on Iranian Christians [redacted] at least 38 Assyrian families have applied to emigrate to Australia [redacted]

[redacted]

The approximately 30,000 Assyrians are concentrated in Tehran, Kermanshah, and in Kurdish areas of the northwest. Most are blue-collar workers and many have been associated with Tudeh and the left. It is possible that Assyrians were involved in one of the many clashes in the west and northwest that were reported as Kurdish incidents.

[redacted]

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

The Armenian representative chosen for the constitutional review council is Hara'ir Khalasia [redacted]

[redacted] 152 Armenian families from Azarbayjan-e Bakhtari are seeking visas to join relatives in Soviet Armenia, but [redacted]

[redacted] most

of his people plan to watch and wait until about 1 September to see if conditions improve before they begin to leave Iran. The Christian hospitals in Isfahan and Shiraz have been appropriated by local committees; no other private hospitals in these cities have been taken over. [redacted]

25X1

**The Jews**

The Iranian Jewish community believes its situation is precarious—despite assurances from several ayatollahs, including Khomeini and Khalkhali, and efforts by government officials to distinguish between their policy toward Israel and their attitude toward Iranian Jews. Jewish leaders are aware that local Islamic interests and prejudices could severely hurt the scattered Jewish communities and that their people are vulnerable to charges of economic exploitation or collaboration with Israel simply by being businessmen and Jewish. Many Jewish homes have been the target for random searches by revolutionary committee members; those houses where literature about Israel or letters from Israel were found have been subjected to especially close scrutiny. Most day-to-day harassment of Jews, however, seems to be precipitated by Iranians who desire to appropriate the Jews' wealth—real or imagined. Not only individuals, but revolutionary

25X1

committees and other elements of the Islamic Movement are apparently harassing the wealthy—whether or not they are Jewish—to replenish their coffers. There has been no disruption of Jewish religious services, according to the Chief Rabbi of Tehran, and the Jewish school there is still operating. [redacted]

25X1

The then head of the revolutionary courts, Mehdi Hadavi, told a visiting French lawyer in mid-May that anyone who had put money or information at the disposal of Israel would be liable to prosecution. According to press reports, Hadavi added that only two Jews were then awaiting trial on charges of aiding Israel. Subsequent reports indicate that they were released in late July. Other reports of harassment, confiscations, and imprisonment are verified in substance, but the number of individuals involved is hard to determine. [redacted]

25X1

The Jewish community generally believes that the Iranian leaders want to avoid the kind of international outcry that followed the execution in May of Habib Elqanian, a prominent Tehrani Jewish businessman charged, among other things, with aiding Israel. Unfortunately, the nature and vagueness of the charges probably increased the fears of Jews already alarmed because of Elqanian's death and the murder of an elderly Jewish woman in Shiraz in the same month. The attack on a wealthy Isfahani Jew on 7 July by a group protesting Israeli actions in south Lebanon added to Jewish concerns [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] the community is afraid of a backlash if publicity in the Western—especially US—press and official inquiries about their status continues. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Tensions eased slightly in the Tehran community in late June, but Shirazi Jews—the largest community outside the capital—are worried that the present calm there will not last long. Very few older members of the community are considering emigration, but large numbers of those under 35 are planning to leave Iran. The situation in Hamadan—an area of unrest—is said to be tense, but contacts with Jews in other outlying areas have been broken and their status is not known.

Top Secret

[redacted]



Top Secret  
[redacted]

25X1

Rabbinical leaders have quietly been encouraging emigration, and suggesting that members of provincial communities—where Jews are more obvious and Muslims more conservative—move to Tehran.

[redacted]

ished their people that differences should be kept within the community and that supporters of each group should stop denouncing their rivals to the local Islamic committees. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

Jews seem to be leaving Iran at an accelerated rate—about 150 to 300 a day, most in family units—since Elqanian's execution. They are usually able to do so with little or no harassment. Some individuals have been returning to Iran to handle personal financial interests after settling their families abroad. [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] Iranian Jews are split over what role they should assume in the Islamic Republic and in their relationships with its Muslim leaders:

25X1

- One group, composed mainly of younger Jews who have worked with Muslims for years and do not consider Israel an attractive second homeland, believes in close contacts with the Muslims. It was these people who sent a delegation to Qom to meet with Khomeini after Elqanian's execution and who were generally encouraged by their reception. They believe the position of Jews in Iran will improve.
- Another group, composed of older, more traditional Jews who identify anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, prefer an aloof, wait-and-see approach toward the new Islamic leadership. They believe anti-Jewish sentiment, especially against poorer Jews, is increasing.

25X1

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Hoping to calm emotions and avoid a clear split between the Jews, rabbinical leaders have admon-

**The Bahais**

The Bahais—unlike the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians—are not recognized as an official religious minority by the Shia Muslims. Despite Bahai prohibitions against political activism, the Islamic Movement sees them as a Shia heresy that has become a “political movement.” Members of the sect have been subjected to increasing pressure by the Islamic Movement and local Muslims:

- Bahai officers and enlisted personnel are being purged from the armed forces. The most senior are subject to arrest, while others are being retired. No other minority is being so excluded.
- In strongly conservative areas of Tehran, Bahai families have been evicted from their homes—possibly because neighbors objected to their presence—and their property confiscated.
- The “Confiscated Goods Committee of the Poor People's Organization” was authorized by the revolutionary court on 6 June to confiscate all property of the Bahai National Organization. The “master” membership list has “disappeared”; and other membership lists and financial records have been seized by revolutionary committees in Tehran.
- At least 90 civil servants have been dismissed since December specifically because they are Bahai; 8,000 Bahai homes in [redacted] have been destroyed; and [redacted] Bahais were forced at knife point to convert to Islam.
- The personal bank accounts of the top [redacted] leaders have been frozen, and all personal Bahai accounts may soon be seized.

Top Secret  
[redacted]

25X1

25X1

**Top Secret**

[redacted]

- Bahais have been receiving letters from Qom at their home addresses—apparently obtained from the missing membership lists—urging them to convert. Bahai meetings have been broken up by Islamic gangs, and the Bahais have reduced attendance at their meetings from an average of 200 persons to from 10 to 15 in order to escape notice.

- Twenty Bahais have been imprisoned, although none have been killed or executed since Khomeini came to power. [redacted]

25X1

Bahai leaders see these actions as the beginning of a campaign to “strangle their people administratively, socially, and financially.” Protests sent to leading ayatollahs and government officials have been largely ignored, although some government officials have replied that the government has no jurisdiction over the revolutionary committee structure responsible for harassing the Bahais. Some Muslim clergymen, including Ayatollah Mahdavi-Kani, the head of the Tehran Central Revolutionary Committee, have been somewhat sympathetic. Mahdavi-Kani wrote to several Tehran district committees pointing out that confiscation is not allowed under Islam, but his letters had no effect. [redacted]

25X1

The Bahai leaders feel that their community is facing the worst crisis in its 135-year history. They have especially feared that fanatical local Shia clerics would encourage attacks on their people during the Muslim

fasting month of Ramazan which began on 26 July and asked Prime Minister Bazargan to intervene on their behalf. We have no evidence yet of any such attacks occurring. The Bahais are also taking their case to the World Council of Churches and may appeal to the UN human rights organizations. Like the Jews, they are wary of US assistance, which they believe could create a backlash. [redacted]

25X1

Bahai leaders are, nevertheless, urging their people to remain in Iran near many of their holy places. They are continuing to emphasize in appeals to Islamic leaders that Islam does not allow confiscation. They claim that some public support for that principle may be forthcoming from Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, and even from Khomeini. In addition, they are trying to have the constitutional principles relating specifically to the three official minority religions modified to general references—which would not so clearly exclude the Bahais. The Bahais are fighting an uphill battle, however, and like the Jews, their best hope lies in the return of political and economic stability that will allow the religious minorities to slip back into the background. [redacted]

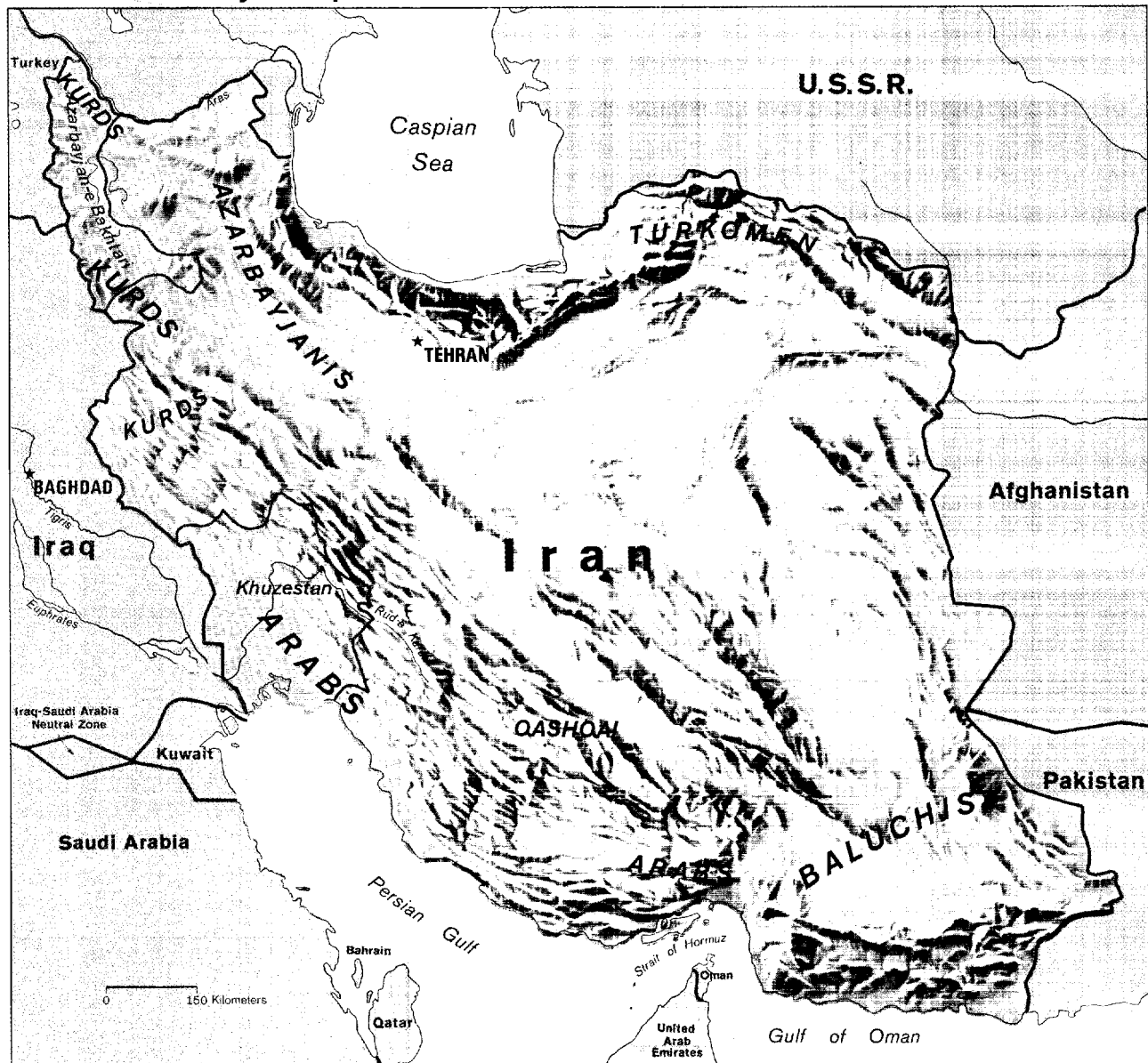
25X1

25X1

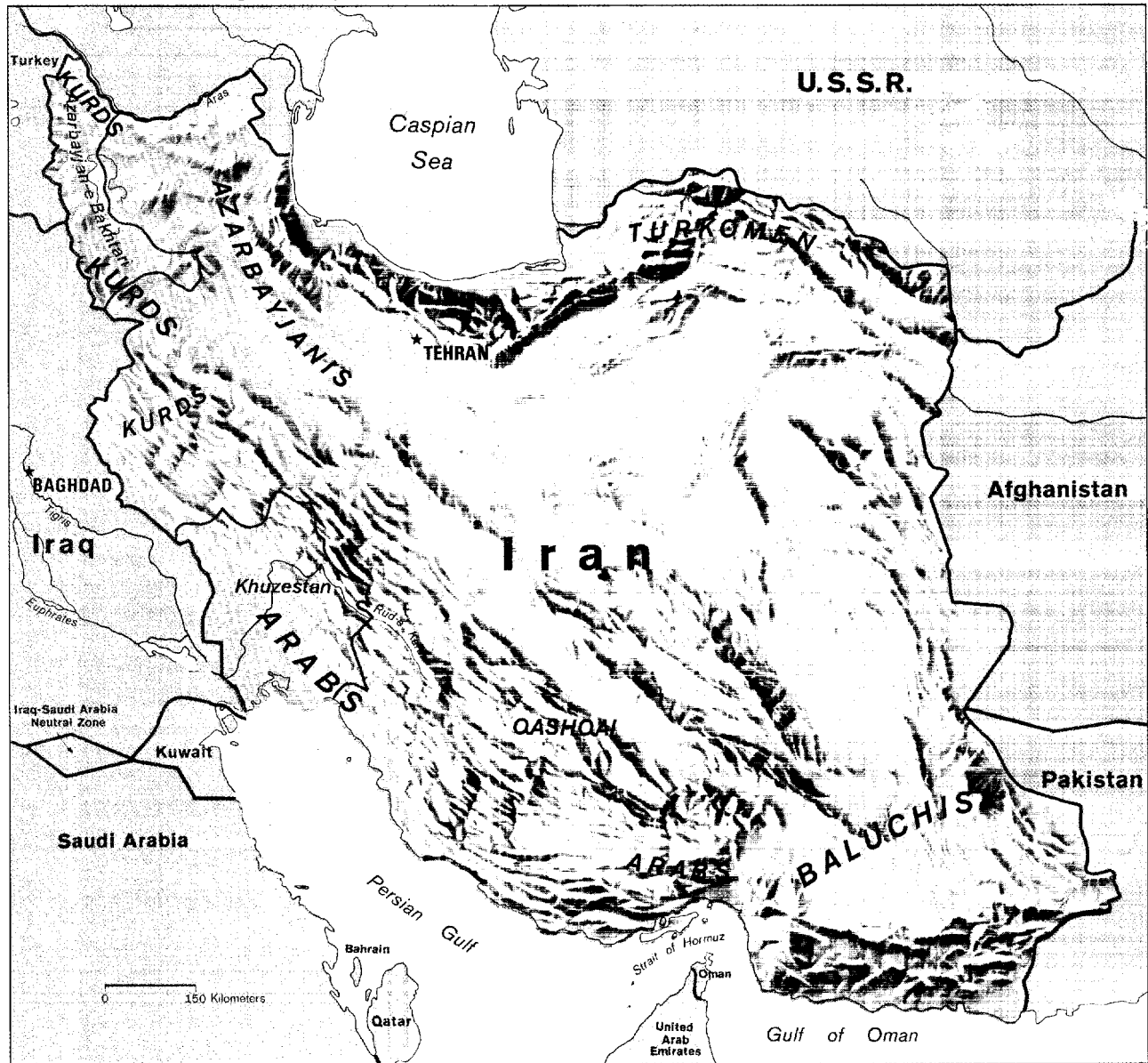
**Top Secret**

[redacted]

### Selected Minority Groups



### Selected Minority Groups



**Page Denied**