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U.S. Department of State

Iran Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, January 30, 1997.

IRAN*

The Islamic Republic of Iran was established in 1979 after a populist revolution toppled the monarchy. The Government is dominated by Shi'a Muslim clergy. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and functions as the Chief of State. He is also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, first elected in a popular vote in 1989 and reelected in 1993, is constitutionally barred from a third term. The Constitution provides for a 270-seat unicameral Islamic Consultative Assembly, or Majles. The Government seeks to ensure that public policy is consistent with its view of political and socio-religious values, but some serious differences exist within the leadership. The authoritarian government maintains its power through widespread repression and intimidation. The judiciary is subject to government and religious influence.

Several agencies share responsibili