

immediately following the 1979 Iranian Revolution, still occur. It is believed the security forces on occasion resort to summary killing, with very little follow-up or investigation occurring. Summary execution of alleged drug smugglers is said to be common. There is evidence that the Iranian government continues to be involved in the murder of its opponents in exile abroad, although less frequently than in the past.

Despite Iranian constitutional guarantees of freedom of belief, in practice religious expression is tightly constrained by the theocratic nature of the state, which effectively prohibits the propagation of ideas considered contrary to Islam. Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews, as members of officially recognized religions, are allowed to practice their beliefs but barred from proselytising. The regime also limits the religious activities of Iranian Sunni Moslems, and does not permit the construction of Sunni places of worship where these are lacking, unlike facilities for the Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian minority populations.

However, the Bahai religious community is treated very differently. The state considers Bahais to be apostates from Islam and actively persecutes them, for instance by denying them access to post-secondary education, to travel (by refusing them passports), and to government employment. In recent years the state's campaign against Bahais has eased somewhat, and summary executions have ended, but Bahais in Iran still experience problems and discrimination, with virtually no legal protection.

The government limits freedom of expression, basing its constraints on the Islamic criteria of the state. The best known case is the late Ayatollah Khomeini's *farwah* (religious ruling) calling for the execution of British author Salman Rushdie for heresy. Western countries including Canada have been pressing the Iranian government to withdraw or otherwise publicly reject this *farwah*. In December 1995, Iranian leaders gave the European Union an oral assurance that Iran would not actively seek Rushdie's murder. Discussions on this issue continue between the EU and the Iranian government.

The Iranian constitution gives women theoretical equality with men, except in the important areas of marriage and family law. Iran's *Sharia*-based laws discriminate in favour of men in matters of inheritance, legal testimony and marriage, although a 1995 amendment to the divorce law now allows Iranian women to initiate divorce. Although women who are mothers have prestige and authority in Iranian society, traditional social patterns generally put women at a disadvantage. The government strictly enforces adherence to its Islamic dress code by all women in Iran, regardless of nationality or religious affiliation, when they are outside their homes. However, Iranian women have the right to vote, and there are several women members of parliament. Iranian women participate actively in the labour force. Sectoral restrictions in education, such as in veterinary medicine and some forms of engineering, have recently been eased, although glaring occupational restrictions for women remain, e.g. in the judicial area.