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Iran's attack on Kurds in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

[Kurdish Lobby Australia calls upon the Australian Government to strongly condemn the execution of Kurdish civil rights activists in Iran, and Iran's attack on the Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran \(KDPI\) headquarters in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on September 8, 2018](#)

On September 8, 2018, Iran committed two significant acts against Iranian Kurds. Three Iranian Kurdish political prisoners – Ramin Hossein Panahi, Zaniar Moradi and Loghman Moradi – were executed in Iran for belonging to political parties, having been denied a lawyer at their [trials](#). On the same day, the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) launched [seven surface-to-surface missiles](#), targeting a central committee meeting of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) in Koya, inside the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). These missiles also inflicted damage on a nearby refugee camp. The missiles killed 17 people and wounded 49, including KDPI political leaders and civilians.

In conducting the attack on Koya, Iran violated international law by attacking a neighbouring country. Iran was sending a message to the US (there is a US military base near Koya) and Israel: 'We have the intelligence and technology to attack anywhere at any time.' The attack was also a warning to Iraqi politicians and civilians, given it took place during on-going negotiations to form a new Iraqi government, and during widespread anti-Iran protests in Basra. The attack was also a warning to Iranian Kurds not to pursue their rights using political or any other means, and a warning to Iraqi Kurds not to get too close to the US, or demand too much when negotiating with Iraqi parties in the formation of a Iraqi government.

Some reports claim the missiles were launched from [Urmia in Iran](#). Other reports claim the missiles were launched from [Surin Mountain](#), overlooking the cities of Sulaimani and Halabja, 20 kilometres inside the KRI, where the IRGC had established military positions in the week prior to the attack, bringing with them missiles, Katyusha rockets and artillery.

After the attack, Iran demanded the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) hand over all Iranian Kurdish dissidents and close all Iranian Kurdish bases and refugee [camps](#) inside Iraq. The KRG refused. In multiple cities back in Iran, Kurds closed their businesses and went on strike in protest against the missile [strikes](#) on Koya. At least [40 Kurds](#) were arrested during and the protest.

In the north west of the KRI, Turkey continues to violate international law by conducting airstrikes and ground offensives near the Qandil Mountains, targeting Kurdish freedom fighters from Turkey, but also causing Iraqi Kurdish civilian deaths, the evacuation of villages, and the burning of crops and [livestock](#). As result of



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Turkey's actions, on September 16, the caretaker Ministerial Council in Baghdad ordered the deployment of guards to the Iraq – Turkey border to prevent further [breaches](#), and announced that the Foreign Ministry would document Turkey's violations of Iraqi airspace, so this documentation could be submitted to the [UN](#).

Prior to these events on September 8:

- On August 5, [Hussein Ahmadi Niyaz](#), the lawyer for Ramin Hussein Panahi, was arrested in Sanandaj, Iran, when he went to enquire about Panahi's whereabouts, having been accused of doing interviews with foreign media outlets. He also represents two other Iranian Kurdish political prisoners on death row, Osman Mustafa Pour and Hedayat Abdollah Pour.
- Throughout August, Iranian forces repeatedly shelled the KRI border area with Iran, due to the suspected presence of Iranian Kurdish groups, causing the evacuation of KRI villages. On August 25, [four Iranian Kurdish environmentalists died](#) while battling forest fires caused by the IRGC bombarding the mountains around Marivan
- At the end of August, the [Jerusalem Post](#) reported that the IRGC killed two Iranian Kurdish members of Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), and kidnapped another two PAK members, on their return to Iran to visit their families. Between 2014 and 2017, these four had fought ISIS alongside Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga.

Three days after the Koya attack, another Iranian Kurdish political prisoner, [Kamal Ahmad Nejad](#), was executed, having been convicted of being a member of the KDPI.

Kurds in Iran are asking for cultural rights, economic rights, and political autonomy in the face of extreme impoverishment, discrimination and worse, as outlined in Kurdish Lobby Australia's reports for the Australia-Iran Human Rights Dialogue in [2017](#) and [2018](#). Iran intentionally keeps the Kurdish-majority regions underdeveloped. With an unemployment rate of 45 percent, young people often feel compelled to become civically, politically and/or environmentally active. For these activities they are arrested, detained and forced to confess under torture, before going on trial, often without a lawyer, in a special Revolutionary Court. These courts are reserved for political prisoners. Trials are closed to the public and usually last a few minutes before the prisoner is sentenced to death, or many years in prison. To avoid such a fate, many Iranian Kurds have sought refuge in the KRI since the 1980s. Most of these people, in and outside Iran, have not engaged in military activity

If the Australian Government, and others in the international community, do not condemn Iran's actions, Iran will continue to use military means to attack Iranian Kurds and others, and will continue to disrespect basic human rights and the sovereignty of other countries.

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