

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Islamic Republic of Iran

**CAPITAL:** Tehran

**SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT:** Unitary Islamic Republic

**AREA:** 1,648,000 Sq Km (636,296 Sq Mi)

**ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION** 74,692,000

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**LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY:** Iran is located in South West Asia. It is bound by Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea to the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the east, Iraq to the west, Turkey to the northwest, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea to the south. The country consists of four geographical regions. (1.) The central interior plateau which is a barren series of closed basins completely surrounded by mountains. The plateau is partly covered by salt swamps or kavirs and plains or dashts. (2.) The Zagros Mountains, which include the fertile northwestern regions of Azerbaijan and the southern coastal plain of Turkmenistan (3.) The Elburz and Talish Mountains and the Caspian Lowlands. (4.) The eastern mountains along the Pakistani and Afghan borders, which are barren ranges with fertile valleys. The principal river is the Karun and the largest body of water is Lake Urmia (formerly Lake Rezaiyeh). Major Cities (pop. est.); Tehran 6,475,500, Mashhad 1,759,200, Esfahan 1,127,000, Tabriz 1,089,000, Shiraz 965,100 (1991). Land Use; forested 7%, pastures 27%, agricultural-cultivated 11%, other 55% (1993).

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**CLIMATE:** Iran has a continental climate, although much of the country has a desert climate with an average annual precipitation below 300 mm (12 inches). Summers are warm to hot with two summer winds, the Shamal from the northwest and "The Wind of 120 Days" from the southeast. Winters can be extremely cold with cold winds blowing from the northeast. Generally, rainfall occurs from October to May with annual average precipitation in the coastal areas between 800 and 2,000 mm (31 to 79 inches) while high humidity is also common along the coastal areas. Average temperature ranges in Tehran are from -3 to 7 degrees Celsius (27 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 22 to 37 degrees Celsius (72 to 99 degrees Fahrenheit) in July.

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**PEOPLE:** The principal ethnic groups are of Aryan origin and include the Persian or Farsi who account for 46% of the population while the Azerbaijani account for 17% and the Kurds for 9% of the population. Other ethnic minorities include Arabs, Armenians, Assyrians and Jews.

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**DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS:** Density; 35 persons per sq km (90 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 57.0% urban, 43.0% rural (1992). Sex Distribution; 50.8% male, 49.2% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 64.0 years male, 65.0 years female (1991). Age Breakdown; 46% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 15% 30 to 44, 8% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and

over (1990). Birth Rate; 44.0 per 1,000 (1991). Death Rate; 9.0 per 1,000 (1991). Increase Rate; 35.0 per 1,000 (1991). Infant Mortality Rate; 66.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

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**RELIGIONS:** The official religion is Islam with 91% of the population Shiite Muslims while 8% are Sunni Muslims. Less than 1% of the population are Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian.

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**LANGUAGES:** The official language is Persian or Farsi which is spoken by 54% of the population. Other minority languages include Kurdish, Luri, Baluchi, Turkmen, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Assyrian and Arabic.

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**EDUCATION:** Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 12.8%, primary 40.4%, secondary 38.0%, higher 7.8%, 1.0% unspecified (1986). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 52.2% (1986).

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**MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993:** In 1950 Ali Razmara became Prime Minister and was assassinated less than nine months later. Mohammed Mossadeq succeeded him as Prime Minister and in 1951 the Majlis nationalized the oil industry which resulted in Britain boycotting the purchase of Iranian oil. Following which a power struggle developed between Mossadeq and the Shah. With US and British backing, the Shah replaced Mossadeq in 1953 with Gen. Fazlollah Zahedi. In 1963 the Shah launched the "White Revolution" which was a program of land reform as well as social and economic modernization. In 1965 Amir Abbas Hoveyda was elected Prime Minister. During the late 1960's the Shah became dependent on the Secret Police (SAVAK) for control over the opposition parties after there was an Islamic uprising against the policies of the White Revolution. Throughout 1978 riots, strikes and mass demonstrations resulted in the deaths of a number of people. In 1979 revolutionaries took control of Iran's government and the Shah was forced into exile. In Feb. 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini, an Islamic fundamentalist, returned from exile and took power, launching an "Islamic Revolution". In Nov. 1979 Islamic militants stormed the US embassy taking the staff hostage. In Jan. 1980 Abolhassan Bani Sadr was elected as the first President of the new Islamic Republic and his government embarked on a nationalization program. On Sept. 22, 1980 Iraq invaded Iran over the Shatt al Arab waterway, although the war soon escalated into larger territorial rights. In June 1981 Khomeini dismissed Bani Sadr. During the war Iran rejected all peace initiatives and demanded that the first condition for a truce was the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. In 1985 after the US and Soviet Union had cut off arms supplies, the US government attempted to win the release of kidnapped hostages by offering secret arms deals, which was later known as the Iran-Contra affair. In 1988 after waves of Iraqi military victories, Iran accepted a ceasefire negotiated by the UN a year before. In Nov. 1989 the US released \$US567 million dollars of frozen Iranian assets while during 1990 a number of hostages were also released. In June 1990 a major earthquake struck Iran killing around 40,000 people. After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in Aug. 1990, Iraq

quickly settled all outstanding hostilities with Iran and sent some 140 jet fighters to Iran for safe keeping, although the Iranians quickly impounded them. After the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini in June 1989 and the end of the 8 year Iran-Iraq war, Iraq was seen internationally as the regional villain instead of Iran and in early 1991 with the US-led armed intervention in Kuwait hard-line radicals used the situation to raise anti-US sentiment throughout the country. From July to September 1991 economic hardship and food shortages led to a series of arson attacks and violent riots across the country. On Sept. 20, 1991 eight members of the Freedom Movement were sentenced to prison for authoring and allowing to be published a letter to the President calling for human rights in Iran. In the second half of 1991 an effort was made to end Iranian involvement in Lebanon's civil war through the negotiated release of many Western hostages that included John McCarthy, Edward Tracy, Jack Mann, Jesse Turner, Terry Waite, Thomas Sutherland, Joseph Cicippio, Alann Steen and Terry Anderson. On April 5, 1992 Iran launched air attacks on opposition Mujahedin-e Khalq bases in Iraq resulting in the loss of one Iranian jet. In April 1992 general elections for the National Assembly (Majlis) resulted in a number of hard-line groups losing their seats. In May 1992 riots erupted in urban areas such as Meshed, Shiraz, Tabriz and Arak resulting in the direct deaths of several people while eight others were later executed for their involvement. During 1991 and 1992 the government has also focused on the reconstruction of its war devastated economy with a number of multilateral trade groupings and bilateral trade agreements being initiated with the former USSR Caucasian republics and Central Asian republics. In April 1993 Secretary of State, Warren Christopher accused Iran of being an "outlaw" nation that further distanced US-Iran relations while claims that Iran was supporting the Islamic government in The Sudan as well as Islamic revivalists groups in Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon and the West Bank added further strains on their relations. On May 25, 1993 Iran launched further air attacks on opposition bases in Iraq. On June 11, 1993 Presidential elections resulted in Rafsanjani being re-elected for another term with 63% of the vote. In Oct. 1993 the Iranian deputy foreign minister visited Iraq to discuss prisoner exchanges while the conflict between Iran and the United Arab Emirates subsided over territorial claims of a number of islands annexed by Iran in 1971.

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**CURRENCY:** The official currency is the Rial (RIs).

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**ECONOMY:** Gross National Product; USD \$111,008,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$8,880,000,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$19,287,000,000 (1994). Exports; USD \$18,080,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$70,000,000 (1994). Balance of Trade; USD - \$1,207,000,00 (1995). Economically Active Population; 12,854,702 or 26.0% of total population (1986). Unemployed; 30.0% (1994).

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**MAIN TRADING PARTNERS:** Its main trading partners are Japan and Germany.

**MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS:** Barley, Cattle, Chrome, Coal, Copper, Cotton, Crude Oil and

Natural Gas, Dates, Fish, Goats, Iron, Lead, Raisins, Rice, Salt, Sheep, Sugar Beets, Tea, Timber, Tobacco.

**MAJOR INDUSTRIES:** Building Materials, Cement, Electrical Equipment, Food Processing, Furniture, Fishing, Oil and Gas Refining, Steel, Textiles.

**MAIN EXPORTS:** Carpets and Rugs, Crude Oil and Refined Products, Fruit, Leather Goods, Nuts, Raw Cotton, Textiles.

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**TRANSPORT:** Railroads; route length 4,601 km (2,859 mi) (1988), passenger-km 2,526,000,000 (1,570,000,000 passenger-mi) (1988), cargo ton-km 3,861,000,000 (2,644,000,000 short ton-mi) (1988). Roads; length 139,368 km (86,599 mi) (1987). Vehicles; cars 2,448,385 (1987), trucks and buses 550,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 393 (1990), deadweight tonnage 8,692,096 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 5,561,000,000 (3,455,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 113,653,000 (77,841,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

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**COMMUNICATIONS:** Daily Newspapers; total of 13 with a total circulation of 1,250,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 13,000,000 (1994). Television; receivers 7,000,000 (1994). Telephones; units 3,598,000 (1994).

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**MILITARY:** 513,000 (1994) total active duty personnel with 67.3% army, 23.4% revolutionary guard, 3.5% navy and 5.8% air force while military expenditure accounts for 3.5% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).