



A scene of Iran protests in September 2022

Iran To Set Up A Fourth Major Intelligence Entity

Sunday, 08/06/2023 3 minutes

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Iran Conflict - Military Iran Protests



The Islamic Republic of Iran is about to create its fourth full-fledged intelligence agency mainly to respond to growing domestic opposition and likely protests.

In fact, it is perhaps not accurate to say that the regime is creating a new agency, rather it is elevating the existing “protection and intelligence” department of its notorious Judiciary to an intelligence “Organization.”

The same process took place 13 years ago when the intelligence department of the Revolutionary Guard was elevated to the status of an ‘organization’ in the aftermath of mass protests in 2009. Since then, the IRGC’s intelligence arm has become the leading instrument for domestic repression.

Media in Tehran say that starting Sunday the Islamic Republic's parliament will discuss a bill presented more than a year ago to officially elevate Judiciary's intelligence organization. That would mean more power and budget for another instrument of repression amid the regime's fear of renewed unrest as the first anniversary of last year's Mahsa protests approaches.

Last December, **a lawmaker commenting on the initiative** said that gathering information and reports about sensitive cases "to counter the propaganda campaigns by the global arrogance" is part of the duties of the new organization, indicating that the body will also coordinate with other entities outside the judiciary's apparatus. "Global arrogance" is a term used by the Islamic Republic to refer to the United States.

The clerical regime is known for its habit of creating parallel bureaucracies, having dozens of organizations for Islamic propaganda, or actually keeping two distinct militaries, the IRGC and the traditional army called Artesh in Persian.

Members from different forces of Iran's traditional army (Artesh) during a ceremony in Tehran

Part of this modus operandi stems from the internal politics of the regime and the need to dole out power and perks to factions and players in its inner circles. But in some areas, such as intelligence it could be an authoritarian impulse not to trust any single organization with the security of the regime's inner core.

Four decades ago, there was only one official domestic-foreign intelligence bureaucracy – the Ministry of Intelligence – or information, as the Persian

word for both is interchangeable. Then came the IRGC and the police intelligence organizations, to be augmented now with Judiciary's parallel arm.

Unlike Western countries, such as the United States, there is no sign of distinct areas of responsibility between the four top intelligence-security organizations. They all spy on citizens, arrest dissidents with or without a warrant, have their own offices in infamous prisons such as Tehran's Evin penitentiary. They all interrogate, and torture political prisoners and extract forced confessions. The only discernible distinction is that the Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC intelligence have extensive foreign operations.

Speaking of foreign espionage and black ops, there is, in fact, a fifth entity, the IRGC Quds Force, that controls tens of thousands of paid militia forces throughout the Middle East. These forces are used for espionage, political influence operations, intimidation of politicians and groups in other countries, and the use of force.

The Iranian regime, which also has smaller intelligence entities has a Council for Intelligence Coordination comprised of at least **13 to 16 separate active intelligence agencies**, according to different sources. Most of these parallel agencies have strong **ties with the IRGC and the judiciary** as well as the office of the Supreme Leader. The intelligence minister, the interior minister, foreign minister, and the country's chief justice are members of the body. The IRGC's Intelligence Organization, and its Intelligence Protection Organization, and their counterparts in the traditional Army and Police force as well as cyber police are some of the other members.

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