

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE FACTORS THAT CAUSED ARISING KURDISH MOVEMENT**

The condition of Kurds in Iran had never been noticed by any international actors since their political struggle to ask greater rights as Iranian citizen. While the dreams of Kurdish national political movements to change the central regime in Tehran and asking for autonomy had gone time by time, it was like a mission impossible. Then, all of requests from Iranian Kurds came into small scale requests that were self-determination rights to be given by government practically and legally binding, because constitutionally, the rights of minority ethnics in every aspects of life were given and it was there since the beginning of Islamic Republic establishment. At least, for the first step, by the presence of self-determination in their regions, they predicted that they could get wider rights in culture, education, economic, language, and religion in the next phase. In this situation, PJAK came as a movement that wanted for greater right rather than only self-determination that was re-establishing separatism idea.

There were a lot of repressive actions from the Dynasty of Persians toward Kurdish people in the past, then there were much more discrimination policies, laws, and practices from the new regime of Islamic Republic of Iran to their people, who ethnically Kurds, in almost every aspects of life. Yet, above of all, there was one critical and serious problem that was faced by Kurds in Iran which were the limitation of the participation and involvement in political arenas or activities by central authority of

country. Moreover, the restriction of a Kurdish political entity has been applied until this day.

## **A. LOSING OF KURDISH IDENTITY**

A diversity ethnic country in Middle East named as Iran, is known as most influential Shia country in the world. The ideology and paradigm of Shia as the political thought have become the vital instrument to run a theocratic country and Persians mainstream added the pattern of being Iranian in Iran. There is no excuse for anything, what or who want to be different from Shia and Persians in Iran. No matter what, these two principal things have become a strict standard of life to discriminate other ideologies and elements besides them. In the early days of the communal conflict, Islamic regime relied on Persian power which had helped from Azeri, ethnic community who majority are Shia, volunteers to confront minority ethnics such Kurdish, Baluchis, and Turkmens who supposed to be integrated into Persians Islamic rules and rulers.

Practically, the pride of being Persians and Shia brought the elimination of Kurdish politicians who came from independent candidacy to compete in Iran *Majles* or Parliament for many times. Guardian of Council clearly disqualified or rejected candidate of parliament member that came from Kurds background.<sup>1</sup> Further, a Kurdish

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<sup>1</sup> Mouna Naim, 'Le Monde', 2014, [http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type\\_item=ART\\_ARCH\\_30J&objet\\_id=840785](http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=840785), consulted on 20 May 2015.

politician who came from Sunni background would fear the Shia rulers toward their existence in Iranian political arena. For instance, when Bijan Namdar Zanganeh, Iranian oil minister, came from Shia Kurds background, appointed Emad Hosseini who was a Sunni Kurds, as his deputy for engineering, the attention was raised in the holy city of Qom where the senior Shia clergy lived. The appointment of Emad Hosseini was seen as a chance by many Sunni Kurds who believed the Islamic regime mistrusted them more because of their religion rather than their ethnicity. A Sunni Kurds told that they, Sunni Kurds, didn't have enmity with anybody but would not stay quiet in face of injustice.<sup>2</sup> Kurds assumed that as Iranian citizen, they had have a rights to involve in any activities in Iran, but the chance to transform their assumption into reality never came easily. The barrier to do came from the Iranian regime which thought that minority Kurds could not play their role as Iranian citizen properly, because mean of Iranian politician was a Persians who laid on Shia political thought and majority of Kurdish people did not meet this standard. That is why most of Kurdish politicians in Iran's state institutions today are Shia Kurds. Adding one more note, to be politician in Iran they should pass *Ghozineh* which require good understanding on Shia political thought. Later, it will be very difficult for majority Sunni Kurds to be Iranian politicians, because ethnically and ideologically, they are different enough. It produced representative Kurds in Parliament which remained to poor governmental representation and it also occurred in any legal bodies in Iranian political structure.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/3a246c0a-86d7-11e4-8a51-00144feabdc0.html>, consulted on 19 May 2015.

The dominant Persian identity and their interests are presented as any ethnics' or citizens' interests in Iran and they had to accept Persian identity as their own voluntary or involuntary. In fact, this ethnical movements was about how to provincialize Persian identity in Iran which imposed universality of ethnic and faith. In this stage, it is clear that Iranian Kurds became the victim of Persians hegemony and all of their ideas.

In case of communal identity of Shia Persians, the political activities of Kurds that are defined by central government as legal or illegal movements, mostly restricted on behalf of national security. Tehran was easily to define political dissent toward Kurds as a national security issue which, this strategy, could be effective for Iran to circumvent the laws related to human rights and finally put the Kurds in a state of exception. Then, they could apply any treatments to eliminate Kurdish political activities, ideas, and members.

The communal relationship between the majority Persians and ethnic minorities seems never changed since early of 2000 until today. In contrary, the condition between them in parallel was always in worst level. Mainly, it was caused by the Persian community's identification on who Iran's rulers were and what kind of laws needed for Iranian rulers to maintain Persians' power from the beginning of Islamic Republic' establishment. PJAK that represented minority Kurds in Iran saw this great barrier for them, even to have a talk peacefully in negotiation table with Iranian politicians which stated by member of PJAK after the execution of senior their leader of PJAK, Habibullah Golparipour,

“But as usual, Iran's response to our peaceful attempts is attacks, pressure and the execution of Kurdish political prisoners.” He added, “In a situation like this a ceasefire becomes quite difficult and we will have to reassess Iran's policies towards the Kurdish people.”<sup>3</sup>

Process to discriminate Kurds on their political activities which was considered as action to resist government's policies was also shown by military action. Even government's reaction toward them sometimes would be depended on the scale of Kurdish political party's movements in Kurds' inhabited. In one time, Tehran authority would dispatch officials to Kurds regions to show interest and attempt to reduce the tension. In another time, they used repression such as arrest, unjust trial, and execution or killing the member of Kurdish political party's members, supporters, and sympathizers. The brutality respond to Kurds mass protests could be viewed when Iranian security forces killed Shawan Qaderi, a Kurds demonstrator, while his body was tied to a jeep and dragged through the streets of Mahabad.<sup>4</sup> It signed an extreme action of the Persians ruler represented by their lethal security forces. Following the killings, the security forces repeated this extreme action prevention and responded harshly to mass protests. In 15 July 2005, security forces fired ammunition directly into a crowd of Kurds demonstrators, and large numbers of troops and helicopter gunships which were deployed in the Mahabad region and killed 20 people and hundreds more injured during the unrest. Instead, the government recognized that five people were

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<sup>3</sup> 'PJAK Warns Iran of Retribution for Leader's Execution' on web <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/271020132>, consulted on 21 April 2015.

<sup>4</sup> <http://kurdishrights.org/2012/11/09/human-rights-watch-account-kurds-in-2011-part-i/>, consulted on 21 April 2015.

killed but the finding of truth about their death never made known after some investigations.<sup>5</sup>

A lot of similar cases about the clash between Kurdish demonstrators came for showing their protest on government's policies toward them against Iranian security forces. These clashes were ended by the death of demonstrators who were never able to find the answers of investigative reports of their death. Consecutively, in February 2006 and 2007, reported that clashes between Kurdish people and the security forces in Mahabad, Maku, Sanandaj, and other towns led to dozens of Kurds deaths and injured. Moreover, there were suspicious deaths in custody. After the repressive actions of security forces of Iran, Kurdish representatives in *Majles* asked President to follow up the cases of protestor deaths. Demanding an investigation into the 'green table' to find people who were responsible to bring to justice. Unfortunately, the request of Kurdish *Majles* members could not run well and they did not find the answer forever because every cases of death that involved Kurds the government, did not take it seriously and cases were closed.

Iranian government also took a serious action to eradicate the political members and supporters of Kurdish political parties outside Iran territory, such what happened in June 2007. Iranian forces shelled Iraqi Kurdish villages which became the military bases of Kurdish parties, such as PDKI and PJAK, with disproportionate attacks. The operation not only engaged security forces but also thousands of IRGC deployed which

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<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International report on Iran: Human Rights Abuses Against The Kurdish Minority in 2008.

targeted Kurdish army or *Peshmerga*, who fought against Iran armies in Iran territory. Even the protest was made by of Iraqi Kurds regional authority and Iraqi authorities, such attacks on Iraqi villages continued for several months. In the name to eradicate the wing of military of Iranian Kurdish political parties, thousands of Kurdish villagers died and caused some Kurds fled to be a refugees in other parts of Iran or went to Turkey.

The Persians political domination to take control Tehran and discriminate actions to other political and personal identity based the differences on ethnic or religious thoughts have risen in high level in last decade when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad occupied a President office in 2005 and continued by Hassan Rouhani in 2013. Analysts argued that occasionally, Kurdish groups have briefly taken up arms again to eliminate discrimination actions of government toward Kurdish identity after several years without a fight in arms between Kurdish fighters and Iranian armies, then this armed struggle will continue for next few years.<sup>6</sup>

A small scale of hit and run tactic by PJAK military wing to attack government troops in Kurdish regions or in Iran-Iraq border was done to take attention of Tehran authority for their demands. Arbitrary actions toward Kurds on behalf of identity differences have been stopped, suppression actions in their political rights have made them as second class citizens in Iran. After they did not do separatism actions in Iran since 1996, PDKI and Komala representatives came to negotiate Kurdish rights with

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<sup>6</sup> Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, 'Internal and International Dynamics of Ethnic Conflict: The Case of Iran', Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

peaceful talks alongside Iranian government which also failed. Then, it created a frustration condition for Kurdish elites when they did nothing for harmful action against government and could not reach anything for peaceful negotiation while in the other side discriminated policies and treatments from government never changed toward them.

Caused by the identity of identification in all activities in the country, the deprivation on human basic needs are like prosperity and security were also suffered by Kurdish people in Iran. These two needs related each other. When security is unstable, then the economic activities cannot run effectively. On the other hand, when economic process does not exist properly, poverty happens and it will bring to the situation where people should do anything to survive and safety does not become priority or people will choose to join Kurdish parties hoping they can prosper and get secure. The condition of deprivation on human basic needs for Kurds seemed to be kept by government.

In one occasion, Kurdish Member of Parliament's had ever complained on economic issues such as insufficient jobs and high rate of unemployment which was told by Saeed Haidari Tayib, an MP from Kermanshah province, "I know that it is either the highest or the second-highest in Iran".<sup>7</sup> Underdeveloped condition in Kurdish areas that led to migration in some urban cities outside Kurdish areas, discrimination in getting jobs ultimately making the gap between rich and poor, and chaos in economic

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2014/1/irankurd1032.htm>, consulted on 19 May 2015.



activity as whole were the real situation that faced by Kurdish society in Iran. It happened because Iranian government applied centralized economic policy in Kurdish areas. It means, the development in Kurdish areas only focused on one place, where not every Kurds can look for a decent living whole places such as in the village or in small town. They cannot upgrading their live as it should be as the effect of this policy.

Meanwhile, in government level, the Kurdish member of *Majles* could not do nothing when the *Majles* decided to give only few allocations in annual budget for Iran's Kurdish regions likes Kurdishtan, Sanandaj, and Kermanshah provinces, the most places inhabited by Kurds. Deliberate action Persians majority parliament members impoverished Kurds minority economically. The poorest people and underdevelopment regions were still in remain, frequently the Kurdish representatives quit from the session of parliament to show their protest until threaten to withdraw from parliament membership. All of these conditions and treatments from central government in Tehran showing the communal identity of being Iranian citizens were important element to consider and put them into priority list of first class citizen.

Another side, in case of security, a double standard was used by government. Forming a security forces in conflicted or conflicted-prone areas by recruiting Kurdish young people was fully backed by government. Two advantages would be got by government if this way ran successfully. First, they could filter and reduce the involvement of Kurds to military wing of Kurdish opposition parties. Second, they could confront among Kurds in side of government and opposition parties by using

tactic 'posse'. Systematically, it is important to note that Kurdish opposition parties gradually will have weak position even within Iranian Kurdistan.

Political discrimination based on identity which continued to the deprivation on human basic needs turned out to have a domino effect on the system as whole Kurdish people's lives. The logic is, if political rights for Kurds had been suppressed institutionally, they could not represent and fight for their other life rights and also impoverished in the level of state's institutions through legal policies and laws. Then, Kurdish people in Iran deserved to disable to compete and fight against their government for defending their lives independently. If this trend continues, this will have the impact on massive dependence in their whole live activities to central government in Tehran.

Effectively, the spirit of Kurds who declared and expressed their identity and faith differently from the rulers of Islamic Republic was overpowered. This expression will only complicate Kurds lives in Iran. Thus, government hopes they no longer ask and claim for greater political power and rights or even autonomy, and they are expected to be able to integrate to Persians with Shia ideology like Iranian Azeri. However, the inability of Kurdish politicians who legally presented in state's institutions to contribute significantly toward the life of Kurdish, further encourage Kurdish national political movement, PJAK, to emerge or arise. PJAK attempted to replace those politicians' roles with expectations and demands that central government do not take any actions arbitrarily and discriminatively toward Kurds. Their identity should be respected, not discriminated or instead being eliminated.

“Shia Persian chauvinism” has denied the wish and will of other people lives. The political rights of Kurdish people was restricted because of this difference. Their basic needs were ignored and government policies legally supported the discrimination toward them. Kurds should learn and be Persian and Shiite. At least, to survive, they must follow of Persians identity. As the result, a country reported on human rights practices for 2006, released on March 6, 2007,<sup>8</sup> stated that the government’s poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous and serious abuses, such as lack of government transparency in law, violence and legal and societal discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities.

## **B. Disappointed of Kurdish Elites to Iran’s Policy**

The disappointed reactions in Kurdish elites circle and groups represented in level of government and national political parties which were conducted illegally, refer to Tehran authority, emerge after some decades of repressive and discrimination actions of Iranian government. Iranian Kurdish elites wanted for the changes of their condition as whole and greater rights as Iranian citizens. In fact, the changes had never come and in contrary their condition can be described worst time by time and treated as second class citizen in their homeland.

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<sup>8</sup> Hussein D. Hassan, 'Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities', CSR Report for U.S. Congress, 25 November 2008.

Deprivation on human basic needs of prosperity and security were being the second request for Kurdish elites. The political rights which meant separation rights for Kurds to manage their own life democratically was the main request for them to be fulfilled by central government in Tehran. Forming of Islamic Republic of Iran which based on Shia Persians centric was known as the great barrier for Kurdish elite to be accepted in political activities in Iran. Moreover, this form has made the regime fear toward any changing or deal with Kurdish elites will for greater rights.

Xalid Azizi, one of leader for PDKI, told a Kurdish online news for his group struggle for asking Iranian Kurdish greater rights in one occasion. Generally, he said that the point of view from Iranian regime today who dominated by Shia Persians centric cannot see the demand of Kurds in Iran as their priority, which taken seriously, and a legal issue. Elites in PDKI thought that government judged Iranian Kurds national movements as clandestine groups who wanted to overthrow the regime and it effected the treatment of government toward the struggle of Kurdish parties in Iran. It was seen as *moharebeh* and they were asked to repent of their any actions and vanish their differences of identity toward government. It is not logically acceptable logic for Kurdish elites who fought for their legal rights.

Military solution that was being done by Iranian government was also not acceptable for Kurdish elites. The presence of military wing from Kurdish parties who fought against Iranian troops were not long if the government did not use their military power to repress Kurdish politicians and their movements. As asserted from PJAK source,

“They formed a military force that was purposed to protect their selves and protect their movement, the rule of our party is to avenge the blood of our martyrs.”<sup>9</sup>

Jailed and tortured were still happening to eliminate or eradicate the Kurdish political movements that curb the activities of Kurds to fight for their political rights. Formally, this kind of judgment always gave a difficulty for Iranian Kurds to talk and negotiate with authorities. In fact, the soft diplomacy shown by Kurdish politicians positively did not get positive responses from government and it always failed.

Iranian government and politicians actions as whole in *Majles* discrediting Kurdish parliament member’s contributions who struggled in political legal system by proposes, decided a lot of unfair decisions for what they were fighting. Yes, there were Iranian Kurdish in *Majles* but they were mostly isolated from the political scene of the country. It made them look like having poor services for Kurdish rights and this disability could be seen as the purposeful action to discriminate Kurdish politicians legally. In parallel, this situation also gave the contribution for Kurdish elites outside Iranian legal political institutions to against the policy of central government which discriminated their brothers in *Majles*. At the end, there was no place for Iranian Kurds to contribute and give aspiration in order to develop Iran as state generally and Kurdish rights especially.

Related to the political situation in *Majles* level, Kurdish elites again were disappointed with the policy of Tehran authority which only allocated them with one seat addition where 20 new extra seats of parliament membership. According to source,

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<sup>9</sup> James Brandon , ‘Iran’s Kurdish Treat: PJAk’, 15 June 2006, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=805&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=181&no\\_cache=1#.VWcFO0bLqYQ](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=805&tx_ttnews[backPid]=181&no_cache=1#.VWcFO0bLqYQ)

close to Members of Parliament from Sanandaj that referred to political, economic, and geographical factors, their representatives' number in *Majles* should be increased but they failed to raise the additional allocation of representative seats from their constituency.<sup>10</sup> Constituently, there is one representative for every 150,000 population and by using this formula, then cities in Sanandaj have the right to get more than one additional representatives. In this case, many Iranian Kurds felt disappointed with the promise of Iran's President on minority affair and they realized the condition of unrepresented Kurds representative continued in Iranian parliament.

In period of President of Khatami, a reformist leader, Kurdistan have had a Kurds governor, name Abdollah Ramezanzadeh who served and concerned on Kurdish rights and development. In his tenure, he appointed Sunni Kurds as official in some managerial positions in Kurdistan province for the first time in Iran history since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. This condition brought a fresh wind to the Kurdish politicians participation in Iranian political system which Kurdish hoped they who were appointed would make changes of their condition into better than before. In fact, the regime afraid of this situation. Finally, by sending the power of Iran's Guardian Council, influential political body consisting of twelve members that constitutionally mandated and appointed by the Supreme Leader, government nullified the votes in two

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<sup>10</sup> <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iran/05012014>, consulted on 14 May 2015.

cities of Kurdistan. Then, in next period of governor term of office, Ramezanzadeh was succeeded by non-Kurds governor.<sup>11</sup>

The condition of Kurdish elites' frustration continued to happen in Ahmadinejad first term as President of Iran. He did not make any visible effort to support Kurdish demands for representation and quickly rejected to place qualified Kurds in his new administration. This condition also happened in Rouhani period, by promising Sunni Kurds who would manage Kurdistan province. In fact, Rouhani appointed non-Kurds governor. By proposing a provocative statement, Ministry of Interior said that "after much research and probing, the Interior Ministry could not find a local official with enough expertise and experience for the governorship of Kurdistan."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a former Reformist and Member of Parliament, Jalal Jalalzadeh, expressed the appointment of a new governor for Kurdistan by commenting "unfortunately, the government does not trust the Sunnis and never appoints Kurdish officials to important positions." Next, he described it as 'a missed opportunity for the Rouhani administration'.

At the core point, massive disappointment of Kurdish elites in Iran who worked and fought for their legal rights as Iranian citizenship happened when their hope or expectation were buried by the actions of Iranian government. Time by time, government promises to develop and give greater access to Kurdish politicians by

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/publications/reports/1000000089-on-the-margins-arrest-imprisonment-and-execution-of-kurdish-activists-in-iran-today.html#6>, consulted on 16 May 2015.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/12/rouhani-disappoints-iran-kurds.html>, consulted on 27 May 2015.

letting them to self-govern Kurdistan region actually were only lies. Promises that cannot be fulfilled and never be. Government was not sensitive toward Kurdish needs while their regions were exposed on natural resources and instability in economic and security were left to occur continuously. The will of being active to care and promote the needs of Kurds are important for Kurdish elites in recent time. To take government's attention of what they want, PJAK which determined as rebel group tried to send this message to government and there was no purpose of the establishment of this group except their expectation could be heard and shared by central government.

Generally, a researcher and political analyst in one moment expressed his speech in front of Iranian Kurds the disappointment toward Islamic Republic regime. He explained that regime has done most unlikely undemocratic order which ignore the rule of law and they could not accommodate the Kurdish nation's political and territorial rights equally compared to other ethnics and faith. Clearly, as an unaccepted behavior, if Kurds always did not get same accommodation like other citizens. Kurdish elites who wanted to play their roles as the right-hand of Kurdish people in Iran would feel disaffection to the unfair and unjust treatment because the policy of government did not give them space to do it.

Discrimination of Kurds minority ethnic in Iran which engaging every aspect of live and disappointment Kurdish elites toward the regime were two main factors that makes Kurdish national political movements are existing until today. Asking for greater rights would not meet the unwritten policy of Shia Persians mainstream which demand of greater rights were only close to the policy of 'enmity of God' and 'corruption on



earth'. For Kurdish politicians, activist, and rights defending, at the end, would only see on regime changing on Islamic Republic of Iran is absolute, there would be no democratic space for political recognition, self-determination, and representation of the Kurds still unrecognized where Iran was under Islamic regime. Moreover, separation rights would not be given by them.