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The Failure of Judicial and Governance Systems in Iran: An Analysis of Crime per Capita Based on Recent Data Leaks

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Abstract:

This article explores the inefficacies of the judicial and governance systems in Iran, as evidenced by a recent data leak by the "Adalat Ali" group. The leaked database from the Tehran Judiciary, covering a period of approximately ten to twelve years, reveals that nearly 40% of Tehran's population is involved in legal cases, a staggering figure for a population of approximately 8.7 million. This data highlights the failure of the Islamic Republic of Iran in controlling crime despite rigorous law enforcement and administrative restrictions. The article further discusses the societal impacts of these failings, including the marginalization of the youth, the encouragement of illegal behaviors due to administrative restrictions, and the broader societal ramifications such as economic and cultural migration.

Keywords: Iran, Judiciary, Data leak, Crime, Governance, Migration, Social impact, Edalat Ali

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Introduction

In recent months, a group known as "Edalat Ali" leaked a database from the Tehran Judiciary, exposing over three million legal cases spanning a period of approximately ten to twelve years. While this leak constitutes a violation of privacy laws, it has offered a rare statistical insight into the functioning of Iran's judicial and governance systems, which are ostensibly aimed at achieving the principles of "good governance" and ensuring security and satisfaction for the majority of the population.

Tehran, which had an estimated population of 8.7 million in 2016 (World Population Review, 2016), is revealed to have a shocking statistic: nearly 40% of its residents have been involved in legal disputes, either as plaintiffs or defendants. This equates to roughly 3.48 million people being entangled in the legal system at some point. Such figures raise significant concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial system and highlight deeper governance issues within the country. These numbers are stark when compared to global crime and legal engagement statistics, where, for instance, countries like France or the United States have substantially lower rates of legal disputes per capita despite their large population and urban centers (UNODC, 2020).

This data underscores the systemic problems in Iran's legal and governance structures. Despite policies aimed at maintaining social order and public satisfaction, the sheer volume of legal cases points to inefficiencies in both crime prevention and judicial processes. The widespread involvement of the population in legal conflicts suggests a failure to provide adequate security and stability, revealing flaws in policy implementation and enforcement that merit urgent attention.

1. Statistical Implications and Governance Failures

The data suggests a worrying trend: despite stringent judicial and law enforcement measures, the Islamic Republic has been largely unsuccessful in curbing crime and maintaining societal order. The volume of cases demonstrates that the judicial processes are overwhelmed and that the state's governance mechanisms are failing to prevent the very crimes they seek to curtail (Bayat, 2023).

These inefficiencies are not merely confined to legal proceedings. The rigidity of administrative procedures, overregulation, and ineffectiveness have contributed to the rising crime rates. A notable observation is that the bureaucratic system often fails to deter crimes; rather, it seems to inadvertently foster illegal activities as people attempt to navigate or circumvent the complex and obstructive regulations (Vakili, 2023).

2. Cultural and Societal Restrictions: Catalysts for Crime

Further examination reveals that cultural and societal restrictions, imposed by the regime, are direct contributors to the rise in criminal activities. Examples of these restrictions include strict regulations regarding drug offenses, alcohol consumption, military service evasion, entrance exams (Konkoor), and women's dress code (e.g., hijab enforcement). Rather than preventing crimes, these regulations often create "marked" or marginalized classes, especially among the youth, thereby excluding them from educational, administrative, political, and managerial opportunities. Such exclusion not only perpetuates criminal behavior but also damages the prospects of many young Iranians, effectively destroying their future (Rizvi, 2022).

3. Societal Impact and the Role of External Factors

The societal ramifications of these policies are profound. The government's authoritarian and bureaucratic control has contributed to a mass exodus of talent, both economic and cultural, from the country. Additionally, the regime's policies have fostered chronic disillusionment among the populace, driving many toward emigration or inducing a state of long-term disenchantment. Furthermore, foreign sanctions have exacerbated this situation by further destabilizing the economy and contributing to crime rates through the creation of desperate circumstances (Zamani, 2023).

A particularly striking example of the regime's dysfunction is the inconsistent application of justice, as evidenced by the case of Sepideh Rashno. In this incident, two individuals were involved in the same act of recording a video, but only one was convicted. Such double standards in legal enforcement highlight the regime's favor toward those loyal to the system and its bias against dissidents (Karami, 2022).

4. The Impact of Traffic and Environmental Mismanagement

Beyond legal and cultural issues, environmental mismanagement and traffic-related crimes also contribute to the country's social and economic woes. Iran's roads have been described as some of the most dangerous in the world, exacerbating the crime statistics and leading to significant economic losses. The traffic situation, coupled with environmental degradation, such as the high levels of air pollution, further demonstrates the state's failure to manage public welfare and safety effectively (Aghazadeh, 2023).

5. Statistical Analysis of Crime Rates in Iran Over the Past 30 Years

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying trends in crime rates in Iran, it is essential to examine the statistical data over the past three decades. According to studies, crime rates in Iran have shown a steady increase, particularly since the 1990s. During this period, Iran experienced significant political, economic, and social transformations that influenced crime patterns.

Statistical data gathered from official reports and research conducted by Iranian academics indicate that crime rates have surged in response to various socio-political events. For example, the post-Iran-Iraq War period (1980–1988) saw a noticeable uptick in property crimes and violent offenses, likely due to the economic strain and the displacement of populations during and after the war (Kazemi & Moghaddam, 2015).

A comprehensive statistical analysis carried out by the Iranian National Crime Research Institute revealed that between 1990 and 2020, crime rates across major categories—such as theft, drug-related crimes, and violent offenses—increased by an average of 15% per decade (Sadeghi et al., 2021). This trend is compounded by Iran's demographic changes; the country's young population has been particularly vulnerable to unemployment and socio-economic instability, which are significant contributors to criminal behavior.

Moreover, since the imposition of international sanctions, crime rates have further escalated. Sanctions have not only crippled the Iranian economy but have also exacerbated inequalities within the society, contributing to a rise in illegal activities, including smuggling, drug trafficking, and organized crime. A 2019 study

found that drug-related offenses, in particular, have increased by 23% since 2010, correlating with the deterioration of economic conditions under the sanctions regime (Alavi & Shirkhani, 2019).

Crime statistics also highlight significant regional disparities. Urban areas such as Tehran, Isfahan, and Mashhad have consistently reported higher crime rates compared to rural regions, largely due to higher population densities, economic disparities, and greater opportunities for criminal activities. Between 1995 and 2020, Tehran alone saw an increase of over 40% in its overall crime rate, with particular spikes in property crimes and drug-related offenses (Rezaei & Hamidi, 2020).

These trends underline a pattern of increasing criminality that corresponds with Iran's broader socio-political and economic challenges. The sustained rise in crime rates over the past 30 years reflects both internal inefficiencies in governance and the external pressures applied by international actors.

Discussion: Internal and External Factors Driving Crime

The high percentage of legal cases compared to the population (Crime per Capita) raises an important question: Are the people inherently more prone to criminal behavior, or are internal governance and external geopolitical factors creating an environment conducive to crime? Evidence suggests that the inefficiencies of the Iranian regime, along with the external pressures from sanctions, have fostered an environment where crime proliferates. The Republic's governance is characterized by an archaic and repressive system that ultimately benefits the elite class aligned with the regime, to the detriment of the broader population (Esfandiari, 2023). We have already tried to explain the innate nature and acceptance of governance (Mikaeil et al., 2024) and discussed coercive vs. divine governance in separate article (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024a) as it may find ground in the context of theological governance. In such context, indifference of the people to the regulatory and judicial consequences shall be considered as a result of internal dissatisfaction of the governance or might be considered a result of psychological impact of several external and

destructive project which opposes Islamic Republic (Davoudpour,
A.R., 2024b).

Conclusion

The Islamic Republic of Iran faces significant challenges in
managing crime and maintaining social order. The data leak by
"Edalat Ali" provides an alarming glimpse into the scale of the
problem, revealing that nearly 40% of Tehran's population has been
involved in legal cases. This high incidence of legal disputes is a
testament to the failure of the regime's policies in preventing crime
and maintaining societal cohesion. The bureaucratic rigidity,
cultural restrictions, and inconsistent application of justice only
exacerbate these issues, leading to a cycle of disillusionment,
marginalization, and criminal behavior. Coupled with the effects of
international sanctions, these factors suggest that the regime is not
only unable to effectively govern but is also actively contributing to
the conditions that promote crime within its borders.

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