

## Women Life Freedom Australia

### Answer to question taken on notice during public hearing held 21 December 2022 before the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference Committee for the Senate inquiry on human rights implications of recent violence in Iran

**Question from Senator Fawcett:** There have been some media reports and some witnesses have raised concerns about foreign mercenaries working for the regime to assist in their repression of the Iranian people. Some of the media reports speculate on the role that third party governments could play in preventing the movement of those mercenaries to Iran (to constrain the violence by banning their travel to Iran). Just wondering whether you have evidence (from people that you're speaking to on the ground) on whether in fact mercenaries are being deployed by the regime, and if so, any indication as to where they come from.

**Answer:** There are indeed reports and videos circulating within social media among the Iranian diaspora communities around the world, that evidence the presence of non-Iranian fighters, inflicting violence and abuse (including sexual abuse) on Iranian protesters on the streets of Iran. It is understood from such footage that the security forces engaged in violence against protesters are not Iranian nationals, as they do not speak Farsi and are engaging with their fellow security personnel in what appears to be Urdu, Arabic and Dari. There is at least one video (<https://twitter.com/aliie62/status/1613438722590277633>) in which the camera man attempts to engage directly with security personnel in Farsi. After failing to be understood, he switches to English, and elicits a response in English suggesting that the security personnel may indeed not be Iranian.

The extent of information available through official media channels about the Islamic Republic's use of such mercenaries to supplement their local security forces is limited. However, it is well recognised among Iranians that Islamic Republic authorities are likely utilising foreign mercenaries in order to supplement and replenish their own local personnel who are experiencing fatigue from the constant protests over the last 3 months. It is also widely recognised that the following groups are currently on the ground in Iran, and actively engaged in assisting the Islamic Republic with their repressive acts of violence:

Fatemiyoun Brigades – from Afghanistan

Hizbullah – from Lebanon

Hashd al-Shaabi – from Iraq

Zainabiyoun Brigade – from Pakistan

Notably, the Islamic Republic of Iran has financial ties to each of these militia groups and has a longstanding established relationship with each, who are typically engaged in terrorism within neighbouring countries in the region. These groups are therefore at the ready for the regime's use within its borders, as required.

As [this article of 3 October 2022](#) provides (<https://www.arabnews.com/node/2174421>), "these militants are Iran's insurance policy to protect its interests, even if they do not pick up arms". The article goes on to say that the Zainabiyoun and Fatemiyoun Militants would not resist firing on Iranian protestors, as they are indoctrinated to sacrifice their lives for the preservation of the so-called Islamic revolution, and that these "unemployed zealots would not hesitate to be trigger-happy".