

# TAL SHIAR



# DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE REPORT

UNCLASSIFIED//AOR CENTCOM, IRAN

## Title Iran Opposition Groups United in Overthrowing the Regime Despite Divisions

Produced by the Tal Shiar Directorate of Intelligence, 19 February 2026

Iran's opposition ecosystem is diverse and decentralized, encompassing exiled political factions, domestic civil society networks, and ethnic insurgent groups. Unified primarily by their desire to overthrow the regime, these entities span ideologies from secular nationalism to ethnic separatism, with end goals ranging from democratic reform to outright independence. Recent 2025-2026 protests have amplified their visibility, but deep divisions—exacerbated by regime repression and mutual distrust—hinder effective collaboration. Exiled groups like monarchists and the MEK leverage international support, while internal actors drive street-level resistance. Surveys indicate broad public support for democracy (89%), but consensus on post-regime structures is lacking.

- **Fragmentation and Diversity:** Opposition includes monarchists advocating restoration, leftist-Islamists seeking republican overthrow, reformist civil society pushing incremental change, and ethnic minorities pursuing autonomy. Ideological clashes (e.g., secular vs. Islamist) and geographic splits (exile vs. domestic) reduce cohesion, with regime propaganda exploiting these rifts.
- **Strengths and Scales:** Estimated memberships vary; exiled groups like the MEK claim thousands in organized camps, while domestic protests mobilize millions sporadically. Ethnic armed factions number in the low thousands, with broader sympathy networks. Overall influence is amplified by diaspora rallies (e.g., over 1 million globally in 2026) but constrained by internal repression.
- **Strategic Implications:** Without unity—such as proposed coalitions like the National Reconciliation Council—opposition risks post-regime chaos or regime survival. Western interests could benefit from targeted support for inclusive, secular factions to mitigate balkanization risks.



## List of Major Iranian Opposition Groups

Opposition Type	Key Examples	Ideology	End Goal	Estimated Numbers/Influence
Exiled Monarchists	Reza Pahlavi, Iran National Council	Secular nationalism, constitutional monarchy	Democratic transition; possible symbolic monarchy	Diaspora rallies: >1M (Feb 2026 global); core activists ~10K–50K exiled; broad sympathy in surveys
Leftist-Islamist Exiles	MEK (People's Mujahedin), NCRI	Marxist-Islamist hybrid	Democratic socialist republic; regime overthrow	~3K–5K in Albania camp; organized lobbying network; limited domestic base
Domestic Reformists/Civil Society	Students, women's activists, labor unions	Liberal democracy, human rights	Secular democracy; end theocracy	Protest swells: Millions (2025–2026 waves); urban networks ~100K–500K active sympathizers
Ethnic/Armed Minorities	Kurds (PDKI, Komala), Baloch (Jaish al-Adl), Ahvazi Arabs	Ethnic nationalism, federalism/separatism	Autonomy/independence; federal Iran	Armed fighters: 1K–5K per group; ethnic sympathy: Millions in regions (e.g., Kurds 10–15% population)
Republican Coalitions	Hamgami (Solidarity for Secular Republic)	Secular republicanism, pluralism	Democratic republic; separation of religion/state	Coalition of exiled groups; diaspora supporters ~50K–200K; growing but limited internal reach

## Proposed National Reconciliation Council as a Unifying Mechanism

The National Reconciliation Council (NRC) is a conceptual 28-member interim governance body proposed to bridge ideological, ethnic, and geographic divides within Iran's opposition, facilitating a coordinated challenge to the regime. Advanced by MEF Executive Director Gregg Roman, it draws from historical transitions (e.g., Poland's Solidarity) to prevent post-regime chaos like balkanization or power vacuums. Amid protests claiming over 30,000 lives since late 2025, the NRC aims to unify exiled leaders (e.g., Reza Pahlavi), domestic activists, ethnic minorities, and reformists under a pluralistic umbrella. However, adoption faces hurdles from rival coalitions like the MEK-affiliated National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and regime propaganda portraying opposition as foreign puppets.

- Proposed Structure:** A 28-member interim body representing major opposition streams: monarchists (e.g., Reza Pahlavi-aligned), republicans, reformists, ethnic minorities (Kurds, Baloch, Arabs, Azeris—~40% of population), civil society leaders, women's rights advocates, Nobel laureates (e.g., Narges Mohammadi, Shirin Ebadi), Green Movement figures (e.g., Mousavi, Karroubi), and internal resistance elements.

- **Purpose and End Goal:** Serve as a temporary governance framework to stabilize Iran post-overthrow; prevent power vacuums; draw lessons from transitions in Poland (Solidarity model), Libya, and Iraq; prioritize inclusive representation to mitigate fragmentation and ethnic tensions.

- **Origin and Advocacy:** Advanced by MEF Executive Director Gregg Roman in "After the Protests: Who Can Lead Iran?" (January 28, 2026); positions Reza Pahlavi as a high-profile figure for monarchist/constitutionalist bloc but emphasizes broad coalition over single-leader dominance.



## Conclusion

Current status of the NRC is it is in its conceptual/proposed phase with no formal establishment or broad opposition endorsement as of February 2026. This contrasts with existing exiled structures (e.g., NCRI/MEK-led, Reza Pahlavi's networks, Hamgami republican coalitions).

If properly supported, the NRC could tip the balance by fostering defections and international backing, drawing on models like U.S. aid to Solidarity.



Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with

Special Operations Forces focused on counter-terrorism missions in the CENTCOM theater. Additional roles included rotations to CIA Headquarters as the military analyst for the DNI Middle East Task Force and served as the Syria Country Director for Office of Secretary of Defense Policy (OSDP). He was recognized with Joint Civilian Commendation/Achievement Medals, the NATO Medal(x3), the Secretary of Defense GWOT Medal, DoD Expeditionary Award and the OSD Excellence Award.