



Iran: Passive Defense Organization and Basij Sign Memorandum of Understanding

OE Watch Commentary: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) remains the central pillar to regime defense. Charged by its founding statutes with ‘defense of [Iran’s Islamic] revolution,’ the IRGC considers its mission both territorial defense and countering those domestically who would challenge the regime’s politics or ideology. In 2003, the IRGC founded the Passive Defense Organization as a means to defend the home front from more ideological challenges. In practice, the Passive Defense Organization drills to maintain control of cities and provinces during periods of domestic unrest but also assumed control over many of the IRGC’s cyber and electronic warfare activities. In 2014, for example, General Hassan Firouzabadi, chief of staff for the Armed Forces, told a Passive Defense Organization-sponsored conference that the Supreme Leader had stipulated that there should be frequent tracking and monitoring of Iranians in cyber space. This year, the organization announced it would enhance response to flash flooding, and that it would drill in defense of banking, energy, and nuclear sectors.

Many security agencies in Iran overlap. The IRGC and regular army serve overlapping functions, as do the Qods Force and the external operations unit of the Intelligence Ministry. Likewise, the Law Enforcement Forces and paramilitary Basij share similar domestic security mission sets. In the excerpted article from an official Iranian defense website, the Passive Defense Organization seeks to define its role and mission-set after 17 years of serving an amorphous but growing role. That the Supreme Leader delineated the core missions of the Passive Defense Organization suggests either that the group’s ad hoc operations no longer worked or that turf wars between the Passive Defense Organization and other security agencies—especially within the Basij—were undercutting function.

Further institutionalizing the group, Gen. Gholamreza Jalali, the head of the Passive Defense Organization, elsewhere in the article announced that the chief of staff of the Armed Forces would head a standing committee which would include Jalali, and three government ministers in order to further coordinate actions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali, the head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp’s Passive Defense Organization at a 2015 news conference.
Source: Defa Press, https://defapress.ir/IDNA_media/image/2015/10/85952_orig.jpg

“The first mission...is to protect the country’s infrastructure.”

Source: “Imza-ye Tafahemnameh Bayn Sazman-e Pedafand Ghayr ‘Amal va Sazman-e Basij-e Mostaz’afin” (“Signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Passive Defense Organization and the Organization for Mobilization of the Oppressed”), *Holy Defense News Agency*, 9 August 2020. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/409965>

MoU Signed Between Passive Defense Organization and Basij

... Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali the head of the Passive Defense Organization and Brigadier General Gholamreza Soleimani, commander of the Basij Mobilization of the Oppressed, met and talked. In this meeting, which a group of senior officials from the two organizations attended, emphasis was placed on further interaction and joint cooperation in the field of passive defense, and at the end, a joint memorandum was signed between the two organizations.

General Jalali, the head of the country’s passive defense organization, stated at the signing ceremony of this memorandum of understand, stating that the missions of the Passive Defense Organization were drawn up according to the demands and recommendations of the Supreme Leader in order to promote the country’s resilience and national stability. Three major missions have been assigned by the Supreme Leader to the country’s passive defense organization.

Jalali continued: “The first mission announced by His Holiness is to protect the country’s infrastructure and maintain the continuity of its functions; the second mission is to protect the people in the field of civil defense, and the third mission is the response of the defense to threats....”

He pointed out: Many activities of the country’s passive defense organization and the Basij organization of the oppressed are common and overlap. Therefore, many of these missions can be defined in the form of joint cooperation programs.