

The Emirate of Ahwaz should join the Gulf Cooperation Council, Ahwaz is the Arab, oil-rich southwest of Iran.

It's okay if you've never heard of Ahwaz the region is mentioned about two dozen times in the Bible as *Elam*, often in the wrathful, smitey style typical of the Old Testament (Jer. 49:38: “And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the Lord.”)

Its oldest name is *Khuzestan*, the official name in the present-day Iranian province. The capital city of Khuzestani (Ahwaz), is known for having the **worst air pollution in the world**.



The Iranian province of Khuzestan (Ahwaz) is shown in orange. The area in white is all Iran which controls Khuzestan (Ahwaz).

The Ahwazi Arabs – 1.5 million in all, or about 2% of Iran's total population of 78 million – are concentrated in Ahvaz and other Khuzestani cities, but also are farmers and fishermen in the surrounding countryside, and nomadic pastoralists further east on the Gulf's coastal plain. Their complaints are legion, and familiar for many ethnic minorities: politically ignored, economically deprived (poor), forced cultural assimilation (must follow the customs and traditions of Iran).

Unfortunately, Iran's harsh rule is only half of the Ahwazi tragedy (problem). Iran continues to dominate Ahwaz due to its strategic position along the Persian Gulf and oil rich fields.

Until 1924, Ahwaz was its only independent state separate from any outside country ruling over it. Then in 1924 Iran invaded and seized power over Ahwaz for its oil rich fields. Since then small rebellions by the Ahwaz people in the 1920's and 1940's were quickly squashed by the Iranian government.

After World War II, Ahwaz discontent (anger) was channeled (put) into political parties demanding autonomy (self-government), or even outright independence: the Al Saada party, founded in 1946, was the first to demand independence for Ahwaz. The Arabistan Liberation Front was founded in 1956, the National Front for the Liberation of Arabistan in 1960, and the Ahwaz Liberation Front in 1967. Armed resistance had all but stopped by the 1970's.



The Ahwaz national flag

That is the drama of Ahwaz, Iran will always believe any calls for independence are helped by other nations like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Great Britain and the USA.

In the 1970's Iraq and Iran had battled each other for supremacy in the Middle East. One of the disputed lands was Ahwaz. Ahwaz borders Iraq (see map) to the left. The Iran Iraq battles led to one of the bloodiest wars in the late 1970's into the early 1980's.



An alternate map of Ahwaz, more compact but extending deeper into the interior. (Also from the National Assembly of Ahwaz website)

Ahwazi people ultimately were pawns in Saddam's attack on Iran in 1980, which he thought would be a 'Whirlwind War' that would secure him the control over all the oil in Ahwaz and, finally, the coveted mantle of undisputed leadership over the Arab world. In fact, the war, which lasted until 1988 and cost the lives of over a million soldiers and civilians, ended in a tie and proved the beginning of Saddam's master plans.

The Ahwazi Arabs have since staged a few more revolts – the last in 2011, echoing Arab Springs elsewhere in the Middle East. But they remain firmly under the power of Iran. Although Ahwaz province itself only is roughly the size of West Virginia and only extends along no more than 100 miles of the Gulf coast. The map of shows Ahwaz leaves Iran landlocked Iran and no access to the Arabian Gulf.