



**NCRI Women's Committee**

# **Monthly Report**

**May  
2016**

## Introduction

The most important development in the month of May, was escalation of social repression. A series of violent raids on private parties all across the country which involved the arrest of young men and women, especially the arrest and vicious flogging of young students celebrating their graduation, aroused public outrage all around the world.

Arbitrary arrests of political and civil activists, harassment and persecution of prisoners, discrimination against women, crackdown under the pretext of mal-veiling, etc. continued systematically while Iranian women did not lose any opportunity to express their protests against the regime.

A major victory in this month was freedom of Atena Farghadani from jail.

### Inhumane treatment and cruel punishments Amputation, flogging, torture and humiliation

Over 30 young men and women arrested on May 25, 2016, in a graduation party in Qazvin, were punished by flogging.

Qazvin's Public Prosecutor announced that in an emergency court hearing all of those arrested were sentenced to 99 lashes, each, and the verdict was carried out on the same day.

## Arbitrary arrests

### Political arrests

British-Iranian citizen, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested by Kerman's Revolutionary Guards Corps while leaving Iran. She has been kept in solitary confinement since her arrest.

State Security forces prevented a gathering in Tehran in support of Mohammad Ali Taheri on May 12, 2016. A number of participants, including two women were arrested.

Arab activist Zakieh Hor Neisi was arrested at her residence on May 17, 2016, by the Intelligence Ministry security forces in the southern city of Ahwaz. She had played an active role in organizing human chains and other protest campaigns against diversion of Karoon River's water by the Revolutionary Guards. Regime's officials attempted to deny arresting her. They summoned and intimidated her father, as well.



Sheida Rahimi, a Kurdish civil activist, was arrested by security forces in the western city of Sanandaj on May 15, 2016, for taking part in a New Year's ceremony.

On the same day, security agents raided the residence of Soheila Kargar, a civil activist in the northwestern city of Qazvin, and violently beat her up before arresting her.

Two Kurdish women, Sholeh Goudarzi and Rozhin Ibrahimi, were summoned to the Intelligence Department and interrogated for holding an International Labor Day ceremony.

Shima Babaii, a 21-year-old student of architecture, was arrested in a raid on her residence in Tehran on May 25, 2016, and transferred to Evin's Ward 2A, infamous for solitary confinement and torture. She was released a week later on a 100-million-touman bail.



### Social arrests

The month of May was marked by chain attacks on private parties all across the country, as well as the arrest of models for posting their unveiled pictures on the internet.

Some 70 people were arrested for participating in night parties, in the northeastern city of Nayshabour. 14 girls and 14 boys were arrested in a party on May 22. And 40 people were arrested in another party on May 21, 2016.

Twenty-three young men and women were arrested in a party in the southern city of Kerman as reported by the state media on May 24, 2016.

The moral police raided a private party in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Sunday night, May 30<sup>th</sup>, and arrested 62 people including 39 women.

More than 15 female lawyers were arrested in a night party in the northern city of Sorkhrood, Northern Province of Mazandaran on May 12, 2016.

Some 97 people including 10 women were arrested within 48 hours in raids on 53 houses in Semnan Province, as reported on May 24, 2016.

29 young men and women were arrested on May 29, 2016, in Mashhad by the State Security Forces who raided a garden villa.

Eight Iranian models were arrested in early May for appearing online for an "un-Islamic" network, and charged with propagation of anti-Islamic culture for posting unveiled pictures of themselves on the Internet.

Tehran's cyber-crimes court said a "sting" operation code-named "Spider 2" had been set up to trawl through social media feeds and find Iranian women posting pictures of themselves without hijab. It said it had identified 170



accounts on Instagram, including 59 photographers and make-up artists, 58 individual models, 51 "fashion salon managers", and others, that were responsible.

A 15-year-old girl, who had disguised herself as a boy, was arrested May 13, 2016, after entering Azadi stadium to watch a football game. The next day, the state-run Ghanoon (Law) newspaper ran a post in which it proposed to burn the girl in a cage: "This outlaw girl must be arrested, put in a metal cage and burned in front of Azadi stadium to teach a lesson to all the women who like football, not only in Iran but across the world." (State-run ISNA news agency - May 18, 2016)



## Prison

### Prison conditions

More pressure was brought on women political prisoners in Iran's Evin Prison.

For some reason unknown to prisoners of the Women's Ward of Evin Prison, they were deprived of having correspondence with their families. All leaves were also cancelled until further notice.

Atena Daemi, a children's rights activist who has been recently released after 16 months of imprisonment, wrote a brief article about political prisoners detained in Evin.

"Mahvash Shahriari and Fariba Kamal Abadi were detained 2.5 years in the solitary cells of Ward 209 and spent 8 years in prison without any leaves.

Their children married and they became grandmothers while in jail...

"The other example is Maryam Akbari, four of whose brothers and sisters were executed and now, she has a 15-year sentence of her own. She has spent seven years in prison without any day off, and she has had to watch her young girls grow up from behind the window of the visit cabins...

"Elham Farahani, who is in prison along with her husband and her son and her sweet grandchildren have to remember their childhood memories in the dark corridors of Rajaii-shahr and Evin prisons....

"Reyhaneh Haj-Ibrahim with a 15-year prison term, married a man in jail who is sentenced to death along with his father, and his mother and wife are sentenced to 10 years in prison....

"Fateme Mosanna's brother and sister-in-law were both executed. She was incarcerated along with her mother for 2.5 years when she was only 13. Now, she is sentenced to 15 years with her husband. Both of them are in prison, their property has been completely confiscated. The only things left for them are their young son and daughter....

"Azita Rafizadeh is in jail with her 5-year-old child and her husband..."



Another one of Evin prisoners is Ms. Maryam Naghash Zargaran, who is imprisoned because of converting to Christianity. She is presently suffering from various illnesses. She went on hunger strike in protest to the undetermined state of her case, and her being deprived of medical treatment and medical leave. After 11 days of hunger strike, she was granted a furlough but was summoned back to prison without completing her treatment and while she was still in hospital in critical conditions.



### Prison sentences

Nargess Mohammadi was sentenced to 16 years in prison on Wednesday, May 18, 2016, by the 15<sup>th</sup> Branch of Tehran's Revolutionary Court. She has already served six years in prison. Ms. Mohammadi is charged with "founding LEGAM Campaign", "anti-government association and collaboration" and "anti-government propaganda."

Sahar Eliyassi, 22, a coach of women's football team in Arak, Central Province was sentenced in May to six years prison for involvement in the teachers' extensive protests in March 2015.

## Basic freedoms and rights abuses

As admitted time and again by various officials of the clerical regime, there is no protection for women who are victims of domestic violence in Iran. Several cases revealed in the month of May further attested to this fact.

The state-run press published the case of a woman by the name of Maryam who lived with her two sons in a 9-meter room in Tehran. Her husband has sold their third son Reza, only six months old, for only 150,000 toumans to pay for his drugs. Maryam and her children have been tortured repeatedly by her husband and the forensics has also confirmed it. Maryam desperately expects that the law would retribute her rights and bring back her child but there is no legal protection for her under the mullahs' rule.

On April 30, Mashhad's Public Prosecutor admitted that the woman who was tortured by her husband in that city had repeatedly referred to the Social Security and Justice Department but she had been sent back to her house without any legal actions against her abusive husband who subsequently attempted to kill her and her daughters under torture for 21 days.

There was also the case of a 9-year-old girl called Neda who had been molested by her teacher at a school in a Zanjan suburban village. Despite confirmation by the forensics, the teacher was released on bail after a short arrest and subsequently exonerated in the court. The 30-year-old man was married with two children.

According to the statistics released in May, every four minutes, one divorce takes place in the mullahs-ruled Iran. Over 80% of applicants for divorce are women. Poverty and unemployment as well as child marriages are main contributors to this situation.

More than 50% of divorces are directly or indirectly related to early or under-age marriages.

Six girls under the age of 10 were wedded in the western province of Kurdistan in the span of a year and 164 young girls were married to men at least 20 years older.

114 girls under 15 were given to marriage in the town of Ahar (northwestern Iran) in the course of a year.

The average age of homeless women has dropped to 17 and even young women under 15 years of age are sleeping in the streets.



The news published in the state-run press and media depicted a grim picture of women's suicide in the month of May.

A 12-year-old girl in Mashhad who had been dismissed from school, committed suicide to escape punishment by her father by throwing herself off a building on her way back home.

A 24-year-old woman jumped down a bridge in Tehran and died after crashing with a vehicle.

A young girl, almost 18 years old, threw herself down a bridge in Tehran on May 6, 2016.

A 16-year-old newly-wed in Mashhad, left her husband and committed suicide after a stranger's phone call to her husband led to a quarrel between them.

An 18-year-old high school graduate in Mashhad who was preparing for the university admission test, hanged herself under mental stress.

In Tehran, a 17-year-old girl killed herself by taking poisonous rice pills. The evidence suggests that the cause of this suicide was family disputes.

An elderly woman, 71, hanged herself by her scarf in the southern city of Dezful on May 21.

The rising number of women committing suicide in Iran is caused by rampant crackdown, numerous restrictions, and misogynous policies of the mullahs' regime in all realms of women's life, education and employment.



Nevertheless, the only important issue for the ruling regime as regards women is their veil and the issue of compulsory hijab. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, the mullahs' Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei

declared that women breaking norms are the most dangerous moral and physical threat to society. He reiterated that the State Security Force should be present in all residential neighborhoods. His representative in Isfahan also declared that “women riding bicycles, in various parts of the city, causes insecurity in society.”

In the meantime, the Public Prosecutor of Karaj announced that 1333 cars had been impounded in a year from improperly veiled women who did not observe the Sharia laws.

## Religious and ethnic minorities

Three members of a house-church in the northern city of Rasht were arrested during a raid by security forces on the morning of May 13, 2016. Ms. Fatemeh Pasandideh was among those arrested.

According to reports received in the month of May, Bahai prisoners in Yazd (central Iran) have been deprived of their legal right to have leaves. Yazd Prison has the largest number of Bahai citizens under custody. Eight Bahai prisoners are currently detained in this facility.



Based on another report from the northeastern city of Mashhad, Bahai women are incarcerated in a small room in Vakilabad Prison. These women are constantly harassed and insulted by prison guards. They can have fresh air for only one hour every day. They are isolated and must not be seen by other prisoners. Most of these women have contracted various diseases because of being deprived of sunlight and even the color of their skin has changed.

The women's ward in Vakilabad Prison has two sections, both of which have abysmal health conditions. Women are forced to work and the prison's conditions are similar to the slavery era.

## Discrimination against women

Canadian Senate's Human Rights Committee heard Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, on May 6, 2016. According to his testimony, women and children face additional discriminatory practices. Of course, the Iranian regime is not ashamed of this record, as it formally refuses to join the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and has totally halted deliberations in this regard for 13 years.

The Interior Ministry's advisor on women's affairs, Fahimeh Farahmandpour, declared, “We have never defended gender equality! We are only demanding justice with regards to women.” Zahra Akhavan Nasab, deputy for women's affairs at Isfahan's Chamber of Commerce, announced admitted, “Sixty per cent of female graduates of the province are looking for jobs.”

Kolthoum Ghaffari, manager of women and family affairs in the Governor's office, announced on May 1, that "only 18.2% of the female population are employed" in the northern Golestan province.

Female members of a traditional music orchestra were banned from performing in the group's concert in the central city of Isfahan and were replaced with male musicians.

Bicycle riders were arrested in Mashhad on May 20, 2016. The State Security Force announced that women are forbidden from riding bicycles and men are only allowed to do so if they wear trousers.

The Security Office of the provincial unit of the University of Mazandaran's Applied Sciences issued a directive, announcing that holding mixed-sex concerts and camping are strictly forbidden.



## Women's protests

A number of female teachers staged a protest gathering in front of the Iranian regime's parliament building, Monday, May 2, 2016, demanding official employment.

At the same time, a number of female instructors of the Literacy Movement held the second day of their protest, by holding a sit-in at the entrance to the parliament. They are also demanding official employment as well as their past-due wages.

The laid-off employees of the Education Ministry, most of them women, also staged a protest in front of the parliament building, demanding being returned to their jobs.

Women in the northeastern city of Nayshabour staged a protest gathering for a number of days in early May, before the Governor's office to protest against drinking water and gas cut-offs.

Also a group of housewives declared their support for political prisoners who are on hunger strike.

Gohar Eshghi, mother of the worker and blogger, Sattar Beheshti, who was slain under torture, sent a message on the International Workers Day. In part of her message, she said:

"Everyone knows that they killed my son, a worker, under torture in only three days for protesting against high prices, injustice, discrimination and the deep gap between the poor and the wealthy under a government claiming to advocate the cause of the poor and oppose the kings and the rich. Instead of restituting the trampled rights of our country's workers, this government seeks to suppress them most savagely, by raiding their gatherings and jailing their activists for long terms."



## Successful Campaign

Imprisoned cartoonist and civil activist, Atena Faraghdani, was released from prison, in the evening of May 3, 2016, after 18 months of imprisonment for exercising freedom of expression and painting cartoons critical of the government.

“Some people may think that art cannot express protest or it cannot be so important... But I believe an artist’s responsibility is to challenge and be challenged. When you are being challenged, the price may be very heavy. It may be prison or many other things... However, we must remember that every artist has a mission,” said Atena Farghdani as she walked out of jail, in a video clip that was widely circulated on the internet.



In a statement published on May 4, Amnesty International said, “Atena Farghadani’s release represents a legal and moral victory for her and encourages the efforts of activists worldwide to campaign for the release of other prisoners of conscience in Iran, as well as for reforms to the unjust laws used to put them behind bars in the first place.”