

## **Exclusive Report on Acid Attacks in Iran**



**NCRI Women's Committee**

**November 2014**

## **Utmost Barbarity: Acid attacks against women and girls for improper veiling**

### **Introduction**

Reports on attacks of splashing acid on the faces of women and girls in Iran, particularly in Isfahan, by gangs affiliated to the Iranian regime in the past week, again proves the depth to the misogynist nature of the mullahs' ruling Iran and their antagonism to women. This is a regime which has, from the onset of its reign, built its foundations on repression, particularly of women and was the one to come forth with the slogan of "Or wear the veil, or get beaten". It has ruled the society by establishing a fundamentalist culture. Also parallel to this, it has carried out crimes, particularly against women that do not exist anywhere else. Truly, the Iranian regime is the epicenter of a fundamentalist and fanatical Islam.

The heads of the regime have created various suppressive bodies under the name of combating "mal-veiling" which is cleric's made name to prevent the outburst of popular protests, particularly women and has increased suppression and a climate of fear. These days, they have tried to legalize their suppressive measures.

They have organized their fanatical and medieval laws so that their repressive agents and gangs can freely carry out such crimes.

For example, the recent bill that has been presented in the mullahs' Majlis (parliament) and parts of it which have been ratified under the name of "supporting the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice" has in reality lead to the recent acid attacks and any forms of discrimination and harassment against women. Article 2 of this law declares: "promoting virtue, invites and leads others to virtue / prohibiting, is stopping vice." However, it is obvious when a law is so unclear and undefined, its prime goal is to impose repression under the name of law. Who defines what makes virtue and what consists of defining vice and what would mean to promote and to prohibit and what are the requirements for this? In the mullahs' regime's culture, the misogynist agents can carry out any crime and this is how they define their laws.

The widespread demonstrations and protests by women and youth these days against the dirty and criminal act of acid attacks, despite the repression and arrests proves once again that the mullahs' and their repressive forces cannot easily implement their misogynist policies into Iran's society. The Iranian people's spirit of resistance and steadfastness against the clerical regime is a vivid example of the resistance and steadfastness found in members of the Iranian opposition, particularly the thousand women. This is a phenomenon that is an inspiration which strengthens resistance throughout the whole society, especially for freedom-loving women of our nation.

Now, what is very dirty and saddening, is the silence of many Western countries vis-à-vis such horrendous crimes. The best of this is general verbal but weak condemnations, satisfying leaders. Such a policy encourages the regime to carry on with their crimes against the Iranian people, particularly women and to increase their fundamentalism in the region.

Below, is report by the NCRI Women's Committee on the terrible crimes committed by the mullahs' against Iranian women.

### **Paving the way to crime**

The clerics ruling Iran have identified misogyny as the slogan for their programs and goals and use the repression of women as the most important instrument to impose oppression on the society. They consider mandatory hijab as a tool to limit and control women as women's freedom is considered as the end of their rule. Therefore, women's dress code is considered a security issue. This is seen in remarks made by senior regime officials that Iranian women not giving in to constraints, have made these pre-historic demons, so vicious.

- Mullah Jannati, Tehran's temporary Friday prayer leader said, *"Corruption is like a flame; if found in a region and not dealt with, it will burn everything to ashes and improper veiling is corruption."* He added, *"At times people are detained for improper veiling, but with a phone call, they are released. Yet, there shouldn't be any negotiations nor recommendations on improper veiling."*

(State-run Asr-e Iran daily – 16 June 2014)

<http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/219258/>

- MesbahYazdi, one of the highest ranking mullahs' and a close cleric to Khamenei in Bojnourd said: *"Prohibiting vice cannot be established with kindness."*

(State-run Fars news agency – 23 October 2014)

<http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13930801001043>

- Ahmad Khatami, member of the Assembly of Experts' board of directors: *"Blood must be spilled in order to resolve the issue of hijab."*

(State-run Aftab daily – 6 May 2011)

<http://aftabnews.ir/vdcbzn9qtak9xu4.rpra.html>

- Yousef Tabatabai-Nezhad, Friday prayer leader of Isfahan: *"To confront 'mal-veiling' we must raise a 'wet stick' and we resort to force."*

(State-run Asr-e Iran daily – 23 November 2011)

<http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/191466/>

- Mullah Alam al-Hoda, Mashhad Friday prayer leader: *“Mal-veiled women are like bats in the night and as vicious as wolves in the day. The sin of non-veiling and improper veiling is worse than theft and murder.”*

(Ahmad Alam al-Hoda’s personal blog)

<http://omolbnin4.blogfa.com/post/169/>

- ‘Kar and Karegar’ daily: Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejehei, the Iranian regime’s General Prosecutor: *“Measures will be taken against all signs of improper veiling. If needed, the prosecutor’s office will intervene. Regarding those who spread the culture of obscenity and those who, in an Islamic country encourage immorality against the law and sharia, there are relevant apparatuses that will take action against them.”*

<http://irankanon.com/shahreza/%D9%86%D9%85%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1/tabid/1058/ArticleId/2500/.aspx>

- Akrami, head of the President’s Culture Council, *“Some women with improper makeup and improper clothing cause irresponsibility and psychological insecurity. This is a threat and warning. Everyone must act because those who cause stridency don’t just hurt themselves, in fact they also hurt everyone else. 22 entities are in charge of educating about hijab and chastity and each must act based on their duty to keep the society safe from cultural threats.”*

[http://yazdrasa.ir/en\\_GB/](http://yazdrasa.ir/en_GB/)

## **The mullahs’ law**

However, the first mandatory law on hijab that is fully implemented in Iran today was not enough for regime’s officials. They are seeking to impose a law by the name of “Expanding the Culture of Virtue and Hijab” which was passed in 2005 but never implemented. According to this law, the obligations of almost 20 organizations and governmental bodies were defined to impose mandatory hijab and finally in April 2010 it became executable under an interior ministry deputy.

(State-run Asr-e Iran daily – 25 April 2010)

<http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/110442>

Considering that the regime is continuously faced with opposition from freedom-loving Iranian women and youths on the implementation of this law, it thinks of intensifying its intentions by implementing a law called “Supporting Agents of Promoting Virtue and Prohibiting Vice”. The plan, consisting of 24 articles, was passed on 8 October 2014 by the regime’s Majlis. One of the articles calls on the State Security Forces (SSF) to obligate women ‘lacking sharia hijab’ (as described by Majlis members) to take part in training courses and also fine them 2 to 10 million rials.

Another article of this bill states, *“If the driver or passengers of a vehicle are seen as not abiding the hijab... or unconventional acts that are against public virtue must pay a 1 million rial fine and if it is repeated, in addition to 10 negative points, the vehicle will be confiscated for 72 hours.”* (Radio Farda Website – 17 October 2014)



### Wave of acid attacks

The misogynist laws have a large amount of unwritten and unannounced points. In mid-October, news on the wave of horrific acid attacks on women was published in the media. The first round of barbaric attacks was carried out against 6 women in Isfahan. All were hospitalized in this city’s Feiz Hospital. One of the victims, a 21-year old woman who had acid thrown to her face, entered her mouth, burning her internal organs. Eyewitnesses said the common characteristic of all the victims were women who were **young, beautiful and did not dress in chador**.



On October 19, 2014, three more young girls were victims of the mullahs’ criminal acid-attacking gangs in Isfahan. A two-man team on a motorcycle splashed acid on three young women on Sheikh Avenue. One of the victims lost her life as acid was entered her chest and the two others were taken to a hospital.



The number of acid attack victims reached 14 to that day. However, with the news received from other cities, the victims quickly increased to 25 cases, 15 of which were in the city of Isfahan.

The crime did not stop here.



On October 24, 2014 a young women in Gohardasht Prison of Karaj was attacked with acid. On the same day, another woman was victimized by acid that burnt her face in Isfahan. 24-year old Fereshteh was the next victim of the acid splashing which was carried out in MalakShahr Intersection of this city.

The attack was carried out by three individuals on motorcycles who had covered their faces. Eyewitnesses identified one of these individuals as a member of the local IRGC Basij forces.

The next night, agents on motorcycle splashed acid on the face of a middle-aged woman inside a vehicle opposite of Tehran's Tohid metro. More than half of the victim's face was burnt as a result of the acid attack.

In the regime's in-faction fighting, state-run ISNA news agency reported on October 21, 2014 that 8 men and women were attacked with acid at a bus station and later taken to a hospital two months ago in Kermanshah.

Hoodlums linked to the regime splashed acid on another woman and easily left the scene in Isfahan's Apadna region. The mullahs' MOIS agents carried the body of the injured lady and warned local storeowners not to report the incident anywhere.

The regime's officials and media outlets had attempted to prevent the publication of news in this regard from day one.

### **A few incidents only reported in the regime's press:**

- State-run ISNA news agency, 22 September 2014: Abdul-Hossein Mousavian, head of the Hygiene and Treatment Network in the town of Kohkiluya said, *"On September 21, 2014 a 30-year old woman was the victim of an acid attack in the Central Park of Dehdasht. She was severely burnt and taken to the hospital for accidents and burns in Ahvaz. When acid was splashed, two other individuals around the victim were also hurt."*

<http://isna.ir/fa/news/93063118542>

- State-run Tabnak website, 19 October 2014, only confirmed the two seriously injured women and said: Ahmad Mohammadi, director of the Imam Mousa Kazem Burns Accidents Hospital said two ladies by the initials of S.J., 25, single and M.A., 28 married. On the injuries of the first individual (S.J.) he said, *"This lady was talking on her phone in her car around Isfahan's Bozorgmeh Square at the entrance of*

*Moshtagh Avenue when she was attacked with acid. As a result of the acid splash to this lady both of her eyes were severely damaged and one of her eyes has been gouged. The second individual is Mrs. M.A. who was attacked on the night of October 15, 2014 in Isfahan's Mehrdad Avenue and she is still in shock. The left side of her face and her left eye have been damaged. Opticians have said she has a 50% chance of regaining her sight. Two other individuals suffering minor injuries in their arms, necks, face and chin came to this hospital and were quickly treated."*

<http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/443452/>

The women introduced as S.J. by Ahmad Mohammadi told 'Ofogh No': *"My whole body was burning and I was screaming of pain. The only thing I did was take off my clothes, but instead of pouring water on me, people around me asked why did I take off my clothes? And told me to put on my clothes."*

27-year-old Soheila described these events while her entire body was dressed and she could hardly talk. If her left eye doesn't become infected and her surgery is successful, she will have 20% of her vision but she is completely blind in her right eye. Soheila tries to sit on her bed but the burns on her back and arms do not allow her. She continues, *"Two individuals picked me up and put me in the back seat of my vehicle. The back seat was full of acid and my back was also burnt."*

The first hospital she was transferred to after the incident was the Kaveh Burns Hospital. From this facility she was transferred to Isfahan's Feiz Hospital. She says, *"I was in Feiz Hospital where I heard physicians saying my face and eyes were also burnt, wash them, too. And it was then that they first washed my eyes and face."* Soheila's mother said, *"We cannot hospitalize her in an optical hospital because all of her body needs to be repeatedly dressed and cleaned and they don't do this in special optical hospitals."* She added, *"Soheila's eyes are not being treated in this hospital while they should be washed repeatedly and the ointment prescribed by the physician should be used repeatedly. However, I have to constantly ask them to just treat my girl's eyes with the ointment."*

<http://ofogheno.ir/last-of-day/6487>



- State-run ISNA news agency, 29 October 2014 – While attempts were made to describe the reason behind the acid attacks as family feuds, reports came of Tahmineh Yousefi, 29, as the next victim. To this day many surgeries have been carried out on her face.

<http://isna.ir/fa/news/92090905657>

## The Iranian regime behind the attack

Despite the regime's attempts to portray the horrific crimes as individual and social cases, through its incomplete reports, all the rushed remarks made by the regime's officials – and their internal disputes – clearly indicate that the regime itself is behind the entire incident.

- State-run Tasnim news agency, 25 October 2014 cited remarks from Seyed Hassan Hashemi, the mullahs' Minister of Health, *"All of us must know that encouraging violence is always a threat. Those who started and promoted violence were not able to manage it, and violence has not only paralyzed people's lives it has also lashed back at the promoters, too. Unbridled violence is the result of malignity and imprudence. In our country negligence regarding the issue of violence has paved the grounds for a phenomenon known as the recent acid attacks."*

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/539270>

- State-run Tasnim news agency, 25 October 2014 – The country's general prosecutor said in reference to the acid attacks in Isfahan, *"This was a very ugly act, but worse than acid attacks is taking advantage and exaggerating the whole issue by foreign and dissident media outlets of this matter."*

<http://yasouj.irna.ir/fa/News/81364313/>

- State-run Mehr news agency, 26 October 2014 cited Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejehei and wrote, *"The latest attacks took place on October 15 with acid sulfuric. In this regard no individual has yet to be clearly arrested. So far we can say this incident was not organized. If some of this exaggeration had not taken place, we could have arrested the elements sooner, and this will result in them going into hiding and making the whole process more complicated."*

<http://www.mehrnews.com/news/2410329>

- State-run Tasnim news agency, 26 October 2014: Former Majlis member Zohreh Elahian described associating acid attacks to agents of 'Promoting Virtue and Prohibiting Vice' as the West's fear of women's hijab.

<http://www.tasnimnews.com/Home/Single/540730>

State-run T-News, 27 October 2014 – Director of the judiciary's Human Rights Department on the recent acid attacks in Isfahan, said, *"The hands of some other countries are behind this crime, and certainly if this is true we will cut off the hands of those countries. Attacking us with the issue of 'Promoting Virtue and Prohibiting Vice' has certain meanings."*

<http://tnews.ir/news/DEDF32339850.html>

State-run Tabnak website, 27 October 2014: Isfahan Governor Rasoul Zargpour said, *“To this day 10 suspects have been arrested in relation to the acid attacks in this province and the police is currently interrogating them. There is no doubt that these rumors have been raised by the country’s enemies. Therefore, the province’s security and judicial apparatus will seriously deal with rumors and exaggerations.”*

He described holding any gatherings to protest or supporting these social and political incidents are conditioned on having permission from the relevant apparatuses. *“In this regard these permissions must be issued ten days prior to the holding of the gatherings or marches.”*

<http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/445177>

State-run Sharqdail, 22 October 2014: After the acid attacks the samples of the remaining acids on the clothes and vehicles of the victims were examined and proven the acids were similar. The type and depth of the wounds left on the women also confirm this.

Despite all this, Khosravi Vafa, head of Isfahan Province’s Judiciary said, *“There is no feeling of concern or insecurity at all. We are following up on the acid attacks every day, and once the suspects are arrested there will be a firm ruling issued for them immediately.”*

- State-run ISNA news agency, 19 October 2014: Commission member Abbas-Ali Mansouri said, *“Some are attempting to link the issue of hijab and virtue and such measures as all linked to each other, which is exactly similar to the measures ISIS is pursuing to implement in Iraq and Syria and through such acts against sharia they are trying to portray a harsh image of Islam.”*

### **International condemnation**

The acid attack crimes received strong international condemnation. The Iranian regime’s officials have become terrified and they have tried to whitewash the attacks.



Following the furry of the people of Isfahan and Tehran against recent acid attacks against young Iranian women, the US Permanent Representative in the United Nations described these measures as inhumane and said, *“the US completely condemns these inhumane attacks against women that were said to be carried out because of improper veiling”*

(RTE – 23 October 2014)



Ed Royce, Chairman of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee said, *“The regime’s response to the recent acid attacks on Iranian women is appalling but not surprising. When a number of young women such as 27-year old Neda were blinded by acid thrown from men on motorcycles, the regime responded to popular protests by detaining a prominent female human rights lawyer, Nasrin Sotoudeh, and passing a law that could incite, rather than discourage, similar heinous attacks. I fear that Iran’s Basij militia will see this new law as an even more liberal license to attack Iranian women for how they are dressed.”*

## Protests

The main stance against the inhuman attacks was taken by women and the Iranian people. On October 22, 2014, protest rallies were staged in Tehran and Isfahan. Demonstrators in these protest chanted *“Death to Iranian ISIS”, “You worse than ISIS, you splash acid on us?”, “Death to acid attacker”, “No to mandatory hijab”, “With or without hijab, no to acid attacks”, “Women’s share of security? Acid attacks, crimes”, “Anti-women laws must be annulled”, “No fear, no fear, we all stand together.”* Participants in these rallies were attacked by repressive forces using to batons and bird shots. They detained over 50 youths and transferred them to unknown locations. The arrest of a woman protester in Tehran raised extreme anger and chanting against the mullahs’ regime, with protesters demanding her release. Following the protests, people in Isfahan called for widespread strikes in universities, schools, offices and the Bazaar on Saturday, October 25, 2014. Similar calls were posted on social media Tehran and other cities.



These protests took place in different cities based on previously announced programs. Large crowds, especially the youths in Isfahan, rallied at the Dolat Gate and Sepah Avenue, protesting acid attacks by the mullahs’ gangs against women. Repressive forces, including the Special Anti-Riot Unit, used tear gas to raid on the youth.

Repressive State Security Forces and plainclothes agents were stationed in Imam Hossein Square opposite of the municipality building, calling on the people to limit their commuting throughout the city.

In Tehran a number of students in Enghelab Square chanted *“Perpetrators of this vicious crime must be punished”* and protested the execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari

and acid attacks against women in Isfahan. During the rally SSF forces used black vehicles to attack students and arrested a number of students.

Rallies protesting acid attacks also took part in the city of Mashhad where a number of women and youths rallied in Mellat Park located on Imamat Avenue. The protesters were beaten by repressive agents some of the protesters were detained. The people of Saghez in Kurdistan Province joined the anti-acid attack rallies. A large crowd gathered near the regime's governorate office and chanted "*Death to Dictator*" while clashing with repressive SSF agents.

A group of political prisoners in Gohardasht Prison went on hunger strike to join the national strike. They announced their hunger strike in their statement which reads in part: "*Heroic women have been directly, blatantly and viciously repressed by the mullahs' regime for years now... we political prisoners, join in solidarity with the popular protests and will go on hunger strike on October 25, 2014 to express our abhorrence to this hideous and inhumane measure.*"



Over one hundred young women gathered in Tehran's Enghelab Square to protest the acid attacks by criminals linked to the mullahs' leader Khamenei on October 26, 2014. Fearing the spread of this demonstration State Security Forces closed off roads leading to this square.

On this same day, a group of students in Babol's Noshirvani University boycotted their classes and gathered at the campus, protesting criminal measures of acid attacks on the head and faces of Isfahan women and girls. A number of students delivered speeches condemning the hideous crimes. The students also held placards written, "*Security, freedom are our indisputable rights*" and "*Street security is our indisputable right*".

Similar protests were carried out by students of Alameh Tabatabai University. In their final statement they condemned violence against women and protesters called for the perpetrators of the crimes to be convicted.



Students of Shahroud University rallied on October 28, 2014 to condemn the horrendous acid attacks. They chanted, "*Acid attackers must be punished*".

## The Iranian regime trying to whitewash their image

Following the wave of condemnations and protests, the mullahs' regime has gradually changed its remarks and by now, is attempting to whitewash their image.

- State-run Tabnak website, 27 October 2014: Ahmad Mohammadi, director of the Imam Mousa Kazem Burn Accident Hospital said three individuals have been hospitalized in this facility due to acid attacks this year; two individuals hospitalized are recent victims and a man was hospitalized in this center earlier because of an acid attack. He said family matters are the main reason behind acid attacks. *"There have been cases in the industries. In the past two or three days there have been no new cases of acid attacks reported or brought to this hospital,"* he said. *"Currently there is no concern of security around Isfahan Province and the best measures possible have been taken to confront the subject of acid attacks,"* Mohammadi added.

<http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/443452/>

- State-run Fars news agency, 22 October 2014: Hossein Zolfaqari, Deputy Interior Minister in Security-Police Affairs said, *"We say very certainly that acid attacks taking place in Isfahan were not organized and from October 15 onward there have been no new cases. Those who have been victims of acid attacks had proper hijab on conventional standards. The rumors that state these measures were taken against women with improper veiling, are baseless."*

<http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13930730001715>

State-run ISNA news agency, 24 October 2014 cited a regime's clergy MakaremShirazi: *"Now Majlis (parliament)members have decided to act based on their legal and sharia duty... suspicious acid attacks have recently been carried out in various cities that security officials have stated have nothing to with the issue of hijab."*

It is crystal clear that the unrestrained viciousness of government gangs against Iranian women, leaving new incurable wounds on their souls and bodies, is the final and firm result of creating a climate of fear and silence for Iranian women and the people in general in order for the mullahs' regime to continue their dark rule. However, the steadfast people in Iran will not succumb to such repressive laws and will continue to pay the price for freedom and democracy.