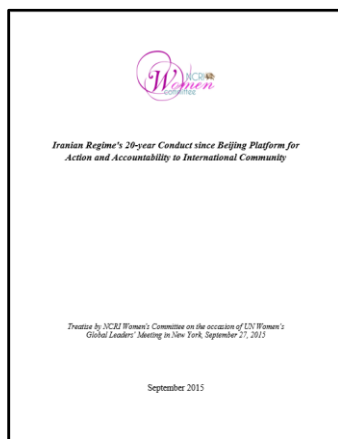




***Iranian Regime's 20-year Conduct since Beijing Platform for
Action and Accountability to International Community***

*Treatise by NCRI Women's Committee on the occasion of UN Women's
Global Leaders' Meeting in New York, September 27, 2015*

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Iranian Regime's 20-year Conduct since Beijing Platform for Action and Accountability to International Community

By: NCRI Women's Committee, September 2015

I. INTRODUCTION:

Fifteen years into the new millennium and 20 years after the historic Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations is rightly bracing to adopt a new development framework to position gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment at the center of the post-2015 development agenda.

The objective is to obtain full commitment of UN member states and other partners to make new commitments to action and financial contributions to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and achieve gender equality no later than 2030.

As the United Nations is planning to eliminate gender inequality and discrimination against women in line with UN Women's Planet 50-50 by 2030, violence, discrimination and inequality are institutionalized in the Iranian laws and law enforcement agencies.

The sharp edge of human rights abuses in Iran are directed against women and they have been degraded over the past 37 years to second class citizens, deprived of their most rudimentary rights and suffering from grave consequences of promoting violence against women by various government institutions.

Not only the Iranian regime has not signed the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but sees it as contradictory to its vision on women and undermining the pillars of family.

Therefore, the United Nations and the UN Women must not allow the mullahs' misogynous regime in Iran take advantage of the UN body and its supreme goals for its own benefits¹ and against the interests of Iranian people and most of all, against Iran's courageous women.

II. BACKGROUND:

It is common knowledge that the Iranian regime is one of the world's most repressive governments, holding its grips on power only through naked oppression.

¹ www.jamejamonline.ir, April 11, 2015: Iran became member of the UN Women – “Iran’s membership in the UN Women’s organ whose duties are in line with, and sometimes beyond, those of the Commission on the Status of Women, provides a new opportunity to devise the status and criteria of a symbol for Iranian Muslim women on the international arena.”

The Iranian people's six-month uprising in 2009 demonstrated to the world the nation's desire for a free, modern and democratic society in contrast to the mullahs' fundamentalist vision and expansionist objectives.

Women's courageous participation in the fore-front of that uprising was yet another indication of how much Iranian women embrace a total overhaul of the ruling system and a genuine regime change.

Since its inception in 1979, the mullahs' regime solidified its power through repression of women. One of the earliest measures Khomeini adopted was enforcement of the compulsory dress code or Hijab, stripping women of their freedom to choose their own clothing.

In addition to the exclusion of female judges, the regime obliged all women employed in government offices, departments and ministries to observe the new dress code, otherwise they would be expelled from their jobs. Shops, restaurants and even taxis were instructed not to provide services to women who did not wear the veil.

The Iranian regime is the only government in the world that has tortured and executed tens of thousands of freedom loving women and girls in less than four decades, including the unprecedented execution and torture of pregnant women.

The single word “torture” bears a plethora of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments varying from harsh beating, to burning, frying, mutilating, and firing into wombs, to various forms of sexual assaults, to solitary detention in “cages” and “graves”,² to vicious physical and psychological torture that turned dozens of female prisoners into mere “vegetables”.

To this date, Tehran has not yet signed the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or taken steps in the critical areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. On the contrary, every year more legislations are adopted which institutionalize further violence against women, restriction and elimination of their rights, and their exclusion from employment and economic participation, social activities and educational fields.

The execution of a young interior designer who had defended herself against rape by government agents,³ the wave of acid attacks on women in the guise of prohibiting the “vice” of improper veiling, and the numerous campaigns to enforce the compulsory veil on women against their will are but a few recent and telling examples of the Iranian regime's approach to the rights of women and the issue of gender equality.

² Face to Face with Beast, by Hengameh Haj Hassan, www.amazon.co.uk/Face-face-With-Beast-Iranian/dp/B00IGGL9JG

³ Report by UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, March 2015: “On 25 October 2014, authorities executed Ms. Reyhaneh Jabbari, despite repeated calls for the stay of her execution by international human rights organizations, including UN human rights mechanisms. Ms. Jabbari was convicted of murdering a man she claimed had tried to sexually assault her prior to the incident in question.”

III. UN REPORTS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN IRAN:

UN special rapporteurs and representatives have on numerous occasions reported about widespread, institutionalized and gross violations of women's rights in Iran. In this study, we have not listed all the reports but picked some samples in different periods to demonstrate the continuation and worsening of the same misogynous conduct by the Iranian regime over the years.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Yakin Ertürk, criticized the Iranian regime in her 2005 report for discrimination built into the Iranian laws.

Ms. Ertürk reported that the Iranian regime's laws “do not provide protection for victims of domestic violence and make it difficult to escape violence through divorce,” adding that suffering wives wishing to divorce can only demand one if they can prove their husband is either impotent, a drug addict, unable to provide for a family or living away from home for more than six months, a fact that is reconfirmed by other UN rapporteurs in the following years.⁴

Ertürk also said that women complaining of rape run the risk of being charged for adultery. Nine years later, in March 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed also reported that Iranian law allows for women who report rape to be prosecuted of adultery in cases where they are unable to convince a judge of their charges. Citing Iranian lawyers, Mr. Shaheed also pointed out that rape cases were very difficult to prove and put women wishing to report the crime at risk of being prosecuted for a capital offence, which likely deterred women victims from coming forward.

“The various forms of violence against women are underlined by a common element, namely the existence of discriminatory laws and malfunctions in the administration of justice”, Yakin Ertürk said. “Such a situation creates an environment for a perpetrator to escape punishment,” she added, appealing for the “correction” of discriminatory laws, judicial reforms and the abolition of the death penalty.

In November 2008, Special Rapporteurs Margaret Sekaggya (situation of Human Rights Defenders) and Yakin Ertürk (Violence against Women, its causes and consequences) expressed deep concern regarding the ongoing crackdown of women’s rights defenders in Iran.

“Over the past two years, women’s rights defenders have faced an increasingly difficult situation and harassment in the course of their non-violent activities in defense of women’s rights”⁵ in Iran, warned two UN human rights experts. They said while the rights defenders and peaceful demonstrators sought to work “within the existing system and regulations”, they met with “serious repression from the authorities.”

In his March 2014 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, Mr. Ahmad Shaheed, wrote that “under the Law on the Qualifications for the Appointment of Judges of 1982, Shia Muslim women may be appointed as advisory judges but may not preside over a court.”

⁴ Report by UN Special Rapporteur on Iran, Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, August 2014.

⁵ Later in this report, in the section listing facts and figures, we can see that the same situation and worse continues regarding civil rights activists and artists to this date.

The Special Rapporteur also cited witnesses that judges denigrate female lawyers by ignoring procedural objections or requests made by the lawyers and, in turn, demanding that they adjust the positioning of their head covering or by having courtroom security guards do it.

Mr. Shaheed said at least 28 women had been hanged publicly in 2013. In his report in March 2015, Mr. Shaheed registered the execution of at least 25 women in 2014.⁶

In August 2014, Mr. Shaheed noted “compound discrimination against women by further eroding their protection from forced marriage and rights to education, work and equal wages.” He reported that “some 66 per cent of Iranian women have reportedly experienced domestic violence. The legislative framework remains insufficient to combat such violence.”

He also wrote, “Laws continue to explicitly allow for non-consensual sexual relations in marriage. There are insufficient safe houses for women in need of refuge. A woman wishing to leave an abusive situation must also first prove that there is a significant risk of bodily harm or a threat to her life and safety in order to reside apart from her husband. Likewise, under the Civil Code, women seeking to obtain a divorce as a result of domestic violence must first prove that the abuse was intolerable (*osr va-haraj*).”

Ahmad Shaheed wrote, “The legal age of marriage for girls in the country is 13 years, but girls as young as 9 years of age may be married with permission from a court.”⁷

“In 2013, a legislative attempt to declare the marriage of a custodian to his adopted daughter illegal was also voided by the Council. The amended text of the relevant law now in effect recognizes the legitimacy of such a marriage provided that a competent court considers it to be in the best interest of the child,” Mr. Shaheed wrote in his report dated August 2014.

On early and forced marriages of young girls, he added, “At least 48,580 girls between 10 and 14 years of age were married in 2011, 48,567 of whom were reported to have had at least one child before they reached 15 years of age. Some 40,635 marriages of girls under 15 years of age were also registered between March 2012 and March 2013, of which more than 8,000 involved men who were at least 10 years older. Furthermore, at least 1,537 marriages of girls under 10 years of age were registered in 2012, which is a significant increase compared with the 716 registered between March 2010 and March 2011.”⁸

⁶ The NCRI Women’s Committee has registered 57 executions of women in the two years of Rouhani’s tenure. Refer to *Iranian Women under Rouhani* (August 2013 – August 2015), <http://www.women.ncri-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani>

⁷ State-run T.News website, Fars news agency, September 11, 2015: “In the past two years, our statistics indicate that we have had marriages of girls under 10 years of age,” said Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs. She said most of these marriages take place because of poverty and in borderline provinces. According to the laws in Iran, the legal age of marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys, but if a father decides that he wants to wed his daughter in younger age, the law permits him to do so.

The data made available by the National Data Registry Organization, 75 children under 10 years of age were married in 2012. Also 29,827 girls between 10 and 14 years old were married.

The marriages of more than 31,000 girls under 15 years of age have been registered between March and September 2013. This is while many of the marriages with underage girls are not registered in Iran.

⁸ The NCRI Women’s Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani* (August 2013 – August 2015)

The UN Special Rapporteur called on the Iranian regime to take immediate steps to address the increasing number of early and forced marriage, by “banning child marriage and raising the minimum age for marriage to 18 years.”

On women’s right to education, Mr. Shaheed wrote, “The percentage of female students entering university has decreased from 62 per cent in 2007-2008 to just 48.2 per cent in 2012-2013, following the institution in 2012 of gender-rationing policies. Those policies also resulted in the admission of more men than women in some fields of study between 2013 and 2014.”⁹

On the right to work, “Gender participation and income disparities”, Mr. Shaheed underlined that “No improvement in the level of participation of women in the workforce has been observed. The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to have one of the lowest rates of female representation in the labor market globally, with women constituting only 16 per cent of the labor force.”¹⁰

In another part, Mr. Shaheed reported, “The Statistical Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported that the national unemployment rate in 2013-2014 for women (20.8 per cent) was significantly higher than for men of the same age (8.5 per cent) and that increases in female unemployment over the past four years had widened that gap by 97 per cent. Unemployment gaps between men and women are significantly greater for individuals with higher levels of education, rendering women with post-secondary degrees three times as likely as to be unemployed as their male counterparts.”¹¹

Mr. Shaheed also disclosed that, “Participation rates of women in paid work are low, with Iranian women estimated to earn the lowest average incomes in Asia and the Pacific. Men earn 4.8 times more than women, making the income gap between Iranian men and women one of the highest in the world.”¹²

Noting that there are only three vice-presidential posts and three female city positions in Sistan va Baluchistan, Mr. Shaheed stressed that “female representation in senior decision-making positions remains low” in Iran. “There are no female ministers in the Administration. Overall, women occupy 17 per cent of jobs categorized as lawmakers, high-level officials and managers. They occupy only 3 per cent of the seats in the parliament and 9.7 per cent of the seats on the

⁹ Official IRNA news agency, August 2, 2015: On women’s education, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs: “Women presently comprise 60% of country’s college student population while their role in the economy is far less than this amount.”

¹⁰ According to the World Economic Forum reports, Iranian women’s economic participation decreased from 123rd rank in 2007 to 139th in 2014.

¹¹ Iranian state-run *Economists (Eghtesad-danan)*, Aug. 13, 2015: The unemployment of young people under 30 years of age in Iran has exceeded boundaries of crisis and become too complicated... Official statistics on unemployment of the 15-24 age group in 2014 shows that in some Iranian provinces this rate exceeds 50 per cent...

Women’s unemployment rate in Ardebil Province is 51.2%, in Isfahan 53%, in Alborz 55.9%, in Ilam 86.4%, in Charmahal-o Bakhtiari 80.1%, in Khorassan Razavi 69.5%, in Northern Khorassan 55%, in Khuzistan 63.5%, in Fars 70%, in Qazvin 58.7%, in Kurdistan 55.1%, in Kermanshah 61.6%, in Kogilouyeh and Boyer-Ahmad 64.7%, in Golestan 69.7%, in Lorestan 81.7%, in Mazandaran 64.1%, in Central Province 62.5%, and in Hormozgan 73.1%.

¹² The state-run ISNA news agency, August 24, 2015: “The unofficial sector of the job market has become feminine, because women are cheap labor force and because they need to earn their living, they accept such jobs,” Rouhani’s deputy in women and family affairs admitted in the weekly meeting with the state media and press.

Tehran city council. No woman has ever been appointed to the Guardian Council or the Expediency Discernment Council and only one has served as a minister,” he added.¹³

Mr. Shaheed warned that “The draft comprehensive population and family excellence plan, currently before the parliament,” would exclude “more than 4 million unmarried women between 19 and 54 years of age from participating in the workforce.”

“It introduces a hierarchy of hiring practices by both public and private institutions, stating that in all governmental and non-governmental sectors employment is to be assigned first to men with children, then to married men without children and only then to women with children. The draft seemingly excludes unmarried women from the selection process. It also prohibits single individuals from being employed in faculty positions in higher education, research institutions and teaching positions at various levels if there are qualified married applicants.”

On reproductive health, Mr. Shaheed reported, “A plan for increasing child-bearing and preventing a decrease in population growth, currently before the parliament... prohibits all acts of abortion or sterilization... Persons engaging in such activity will be prosecuted in line with the Islamic Penal Code and face between two and five years in prison.”

On “The plan to protect hijab and modesty and gender segregation in the workplace”, Mr. Shaheed wrote that the bill submitted on 8 October 2014, “appears to impose further restrictions on women’s right to work. Article 5 of the bill limits women's working hours from 7 am to 10 pm and calls for gender segregation in the workplace... The Bill also attempts to regulate workplace dress code; mandating that employees (*sic.*) private sectors that do not meet Islamic standards for proper clothing could be penalized by pay check cuts up to 1/3 of their salary, for a minimum period of one month and maximum of one year.”

Another part of the March report reads, “On 30 August 2014, authorities stated that women are banned from working in coffee shops and that women requesting business permits for coffee shops should introduce men as their supervisors. A number of musical performances were also canceled in various cities across the country between August and December 2014 because women were participating. On 2 September 2014, *Shargh* newspaper reported that women couldn’t participate in musical performances in Isfahan and in 13 different provinces across the country.”

“Concerns previously expressed over gender inequality in law and practice persist”, Mr. Shaheed noted, adding, “Recent legislative attempts made by the Iranian Parliament appear to further restrict the rights of women to their full and equal enjoyment of internationally recognized rights.”

As far as legislations affecting women, Mr. Shaheed wrote: “Following the acid attacks on women in Isfahan, the administration announced its intent to work with the judiciary to intensify punishment for such attacks. Authorities however prohibited protests against the attacks.”

¹³ The state-run Mizan website, September 8, 2015: Presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs, Shahindokht Molaverdi: “Women’s presence in the parliament is about 3 per cent and only one per cent in the decision-making and power structures, a situation that is embarrassing for the government.”

“In similar attacks in the city of Jahrom in Fars province, at least six women, (mostly university students) were reportedly stabbed from behind and injured for their immodest attire.”

Annex I to the March 2015 report to the UN Human Rights Council, in the section entitled, “Overview of Civil and Political Rights”, sub-section “Right to life” indicated the following:

“On 25 October 2014, authorities executed Ms. Reyhaneh Jabbari, despite repeated calls for the stay of her execution by international human rights organizations, including UN human rights mechanisms. Ms. Jabbari was convicted of murdering a man she claimed had tried to sexually assault her prior to the incident in question.”

“On 18 October 2014, Branch 2 of the Lawyers’ Disciplinary Court at the Iranian Bar Association, allegedly under pressure from Intelligence agencies, banned Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh from practicing law for three years.”

“Ms. Motahareh Bahrami, the wife of Mr. Daneshpour Moghadam, was arrested on 27 December 2009 and sentenced to 15 years in prison for allegedly supporting the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization. Mrs. Bahrami is serving her sentence in the women’s ward of Evin Prison and suffers from advanced rheumatoid arthritis, which has reportedly contributed to severe difficulty with mobility.”¹⁴

The section on “Gender Equality and Women’s Rights” says, “On 16 October 2014, the Iranian Students’ News Agency (ISNA) published a report on at least four incidents of acid attacks where women who were driving in the city of Esfahan were severely injured by acid thrown on them by unknown individuals. Rumors immediately spread on social media that the individuals might have been targeted on the basis of their clothing, and that the number of victims was higher than four. *Farhikhtegan* newspaper reported on the attack of Ms. Soheila Jorkesh on 20 October 2014. The article stated that families of the Esfahan victims have claimed that before throwing acid on the victims, the perpetrators exclaimed: ‘We confront women with poor hijab.’”

“On 13 November 2014, Mr. Ismaeli Moghadam, the Chief-of-Police, admitted that 380 acid attacks had been committed against both individuals and private property over the past year.”¹⁵

“On 22 October, over 2000 protesters gathered in front of the Esfahan Justice Department calling on authorities to investigate the attacks. On the same day in Tehran, dozens of people demonstrated in solidarity with the victims in Esfahan, staging a gathering in front of the Iranian parliament and calling for investigations of the attacks and the provision of security for women in society.”

“In the days following the demonstrations of 22 October, the Governor of Esfahan stated ‘any assembly on the matter is illegal,’ and the Chief of Police of Iran suggested ‘all [protestors] have a common source, and they want to influence society [and] spread a climate of insecurity; fortunately none of their calls have been widely welcomed.’ He also claimed that individuals and media advocating such demonstrations aim to ‘disseminate terror’ in Iranian society.”

¹⁴ Ms. Bahrami is nearly 70 years old.

¹⁵ State-run Noor News website, November 12, 2014

As for women's rights activists, Mr. Shaheed lists the following cases:

“A British-Iranian woman, Ms. Ghoncheh Ghavami, was arrested along with ten other women who attempted to enter Azadi Stadium for a volleyball match between Iran and Italy’s national teams on 20 June 2014, with intention to protest laws that prohibit women from sports arenas.”

“Ms. Mahdiah Golroo, a student and women rights activist who had previously served 30 months in prison on charges of ‘assembly and collusion with the intent to disrupt national security’ and ‘propaganda against the system’ following the 2009 protest, was arrested by the IRGC on 26 October 2014, and transferred to Ward 2A of Evin Prison. Ms. Golroo was detained for a total of (*sic.*) months. She was not informed of the charges against her nor allowed access to legal counsel. Ms. Golroo was released on 27 January on bail and expected to return on her trial date.”

“Ms. Akram Neghabi (the mother of Mr. Saeed Zeynali, who has been missing since his arrest in 1999 by security forces,) has been arrested on several occasions for pursuing and speaking out against the disappearance of her son. Ms. Neghabi has been detained and put in solitary confinement for 63 days.”

“Ms. Atena Farghdani, an artist and child rights activist was arrested in August 2014 and detained for 2.5 months in Ward 2A of Evin Prison. On 10 January 2015 she was transferred to Gharchak Prison... The guards at the Revolutionary Court allegedly beat Ms. Farghdani when she requested to visit her mother before being transferred to prison. After her release from Ward 21 (*sic.*), Miss Farghdani wrote in an open letter to the President’s and the Supreme Leader's offices informing them that women's restrooms in Ward 2A of Evin Prison are allegedly being monitored by security cameras. Ms. Farghdani emphasized that she had previously filed a complaint about the security cameras and mistreatment by prison authorities, but that neither were investigated. Ms. Farghdani began a hunger strike protesting Gharchak prison conditions on 9 February 2015. She is reportedly in very poor health as a result of her hunger strike and has possibly been transferred to a hospital. On 2 March 2015 it was reported that authorities might have agreed to transfer her to Evin Prison on the condition that she end her hunger strike.”

“On 2 March 2015, Ms. Negar Haeri was released on bail from Gharchak Prison. She had apparently been detained without charges against her in July 2014. Ms. Haeri, a lawyer, appears to have been targeted by authorities on multiple occasions due to family members' affiliation with the MKO organization.”

IV. FACTS AND FIGURES:

In this section, we attempt to provide a picture of the conditions of women in Iran through facts and figures. However, one must keep in mind that under the rule of a repressive government such as the regime ruling Iran, it is impossible to come up with accurate figures. In the meantime, the figures appearing in the official media should be considered as far below the actual figures published only to let off some steam in explosive conditions. Having these in mind, we will go over the statistics, facts and figures.

Rarely do we hear of execution of women anywhere around the world but the Iranian Resistance has registered 57 executions so far of ordinary women in Iran during Rouhani’s tenure, from

August 2013 to August 2015.¹⁶ These executions are usually carried out without fair trial and access to legal counsel. On July 29, 2015, a 43-year-old mother was hanged in Qezel-Hessar prison, Karaj. On August 10, 2015, Fatemeh Haddadi, 39, also a mother, was hanged in Gohardasht Prison, Karaj, after eight years of imprisonment.

At least 2,000 women with 450 children are presently imprisoned in Qarchak Prison for Women in Varamin.¹⁷ Other reports indicate that 30 women are imprisoned in Mahabad Prison, Kurdistan.¹⁸

There are no accurate figures available on the number of political prisoners in Iran as the government does not release any official reports and there are many secret prisons and safe houses that are not known by the public. Some sources put the number of female political prisoners at 62. However, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are prime victims of human rights violations.

Motahareh Bahrami, Reyhaneh Haj-Ibrahim, Zeynab Jalalian, Sedigheh Moradi, Nargess Mohamamdi and Fatima Rahnama are to name a few of those who have been deprived of medical treatment despite suffering from serious illnesses under interrogation and in prison.

Atena Daemi, Atena Farghadani, Afsaneh Bayazidi, Farideh Shahgoli, Zahra Ka'abi, Golrokh Ibrahimy Irayi, Nahid Gorji, Maryam Sadat Yahyavi and Manijeh Sadeqhi are also a few names of civil rights activists who have been imprisoned for exercising their freedom of speech and mostly suffer from illnesses in prison. At least eight Baha'is, five Christians and four members of the Sufis "Erfan Halgheh" group have been arrested for their beliefs.¹⁹

On June 13, 2015, Ms. Massoumeh Zia, a member of "Erfan Halgheh" was sentenced to 74 lashes of the whip.²⁰ During the crackdown on of Dervish's gathering in September 2014, women were attacked with batons and electric shockers, leading to many injuries and even fractured bones.²¹

Security agents in many cases attack the prisoners' families and use very insulting behavior. On October 19, 2014 when the family of political prisoner Jamshid Dehghani went to see him in Gohardasht Prison security agents literally attacked and started beating this prisoner's sister.

One of the institutionalized and routine causes of violence against women in Iran are the security forces' mobilizations against improperly veiled women where tens of thousands of women are arrested each time.²² In addition to such "official" campaigns, there are government-backed

¹⁶ NCRI Women's Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani* (August 2013 – August 2015), September 2015. <http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani>

¹⁷ The state-run Iranian Labor News Agency (ILNA), May 5, 2015.

¹⁸ NCRI Women's Committee, August 18, 2015: Hundreds of prisoners in Mahabad Prison, Iranian Kurdistan, went on strike on Monday, August 16. They are protesting inhuman restrictions imposed on prisoners by the new warden, Hossein Pour. More than 500 male prisoners and 30 female prisoners have participated in this strike.

¹⁹ NCRI Women's Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani* (August 2013 – August 2015), September 2015. <http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani>

²⁰ NCRI Women's Committee, July 20, 2015

²¹ Majzooban-e Noor website, September 21, 2014

²² It is difficult to give accurate figures on the number of arrests, as no official source releases exact figures. One source put the number in 2014 at 22500.

agents and mobs who take the law in their own hands and attack women under the pretext of “prohibiting vice and promoting virtue”. Such attacks are usually incited by Friday Prayer leaders speaking out against mal-veiled women. In October 2014, such incitements led to ruthless acid attacks on innocent women in Isfahan, Tehran, Jahrom and other cities. On October 17, 2014, at least 25 women were victims of brutal acid attacks by the Iranian regime’s organized gangs in the cities of Isfahan, Kermanshah and Tehran. A young girl died in Isfahan on 19 October when regime’s thugs spilled acid on her chest.²³

While women’s education rate is equal to men’s, they are badly discriminated against in employment. According to official figures, the number of working-age women is 32,252,090 people of whom only 4,289,528 are economically active and the rest have no economic role.²⁴ Therefore, Iranian women’s economic participation stands at 13 percent by some accounts and 87 per cent are unemployed. According to the World Economic Forum, Iran ranks 137th among 142 countries with regards to women’s economic participation.²⁵ Other sources indicate that at least 900,000 women have been fired from their jobs over the past ten years.²⁶

Such discrimination has a more adverse impact on single-mother head of households whose numbers have been estimated as 2.5 million households in 2011 and 82 per cent of the mothers heading them are unemployed.²⁷

Women’s participation in higher decision and policy making levels has been announced as 3% at most and in other economic sectors at 1%.²⁸ Just recently, a ministry advisor said women’s political and economic participation is non-existent.²⁹

²³ Official IRNA news agency, November 12, 2014, Ahmadi Moghadam, Commander of the Iranian regime’s State Security Force: “The Isfahan incident was highlighted because of widespread media coverage. This is while there have been 318 cases of acid attacks this year. The criminal responsible for the acid attacks hasn’t been arrested yet.”

²⁴ The state-run T.News website, Fars news agency, August 16, 2015.

²⁵ The state-run Akhbar-e Rouz, June 2, 2015.

²⁶ The state-run Fars news agency, June 16, 2015: Fatemeh Sadeqi, Professor and member of faculty of Teachers’ Training University: With a glance on the past ten years we can see that some 100,000 women have been fired from the job market every year. Also, according to official figures, 74,000 women have been expelled from their jobs after returning from maternal leaves. One could therefore say that about 900,000 women have been fired from their jobs and became unemployed.”

²⁷ The official IRNA news agency, August 3, 2015: “Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential Deputy on Women’s Affairs... stressed on low participation of women in the political arena and continued: Women’s presence in the parliament is less than 3 per cent and in other sectors does not reach even 1 per cent in the most optimistic estimates.”

²⁸ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 7, 2015: “Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential Deputy on Women and Family Affairs, said: The number of female head of households is on the rise... According to figures published in 2011, there were some 2.5 million female head of households in Iran at the time which showed an increase to 12.1 per cent from 9.5 per cent in 2006... Last year, Molaverdi said 82 per cent of women heading households were unemployed.”

²⁹ The official IRNA news agency, September 6, 2015: Vahideh Negin, advisor to the Minister of Cooperation, Labor and Social Welfare: “Women’s participation is not just having the right to vote, but they should have political and economic participation, which is unfortunately non-existent in Iran.”

Another area of discrimination against women is education. While thousands of girls are deprived of education because the available teachers are male,³⁰ the Education Ministry employs only 762 female teachers compared to 2941 male teachers.³¹ Meanwhile, gender-rationing policy in universities has eliminated more than 8000 seats for women from 2012-2014.³² Also, at least some 800,000 girls between 6 and 17 years of age are deprived of education.³³

Another discriminatory issue of significance which has led to the controversial arrests, is women's participation as spectators in athletic games as women's entry to stadiums are banned according to the Iranian laws.³⁴

Divorce amongst children aged 10 to 14 has become more common³⁵ producing a large population of single mothers under 20 years of age as forced marriage of underage women have

³⁰ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 8, 2015: Marzieh Gord, Education Ministry's deputy, announced: "2200 girls were deprived of education because their teachers were male."

³¹ Ma Zanan website, August 15, 2015: More than 114,000 volunteers registered for Education Ministry's (teachers' employment) Exam. Based on the designated quotas, 2941 men and only 762 women will have the chance to be accepted.

³² September 1, 2014, in a meeting entitled "Women and Educational Justice" held in Tehran, social researcher Parastu Allahiyari reported, "Women's share in various fields of study were completely eliminated in 36 universities from March 2012 to March 2013... During the same period, 2,319 seats, and in the next 12 months 3,962 seats, and from March 2014 to this day 2,319 seats for educating women in universities have been eliminated."

³³ The state-run ISNA news agency, June 30, 2015: Fatemeh Sadeqi, university professor: "Based on official figures, some 10% of girls between 6 to 17 years of age are deprived of education. On the population scale, this amounts to about 700 to 800 thousand girl children... 20% of girls never make it to high school."

³⁴ Ghoncheh Ghavami, 25, an Iranian-British woman was arrested for attempting to attend a men's volleyball match. Police and security forces prevented women from attending the volleyball match on June 20, 2014, arresting a number of them, including Ghavami. Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action statement calling for her release. The statement said she is a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for taking part in a peaceful protest against the ban on women attending Volleyball World League matches in Tehran's Azadi Stadium. According to the rights group, Ghavami was arrested on June 30, 2014 when she went to Tehran's Vozara Detention Center to collect her mobile phone.

³⁵ The state-run ILNA news agency, June 22, 2015: Farshid Yazdani, secretary of the Strategic Council of the Social Security Organization said, "The figures on marriage of children under the legal age are cause of grave concern. It is usually girls who are wedded before the official age, so we have around 25,000 divorced children whose ages are between 10 and 14."

The state-run Tabnak website, December 4, 2014: "Iran's registry shows that over 41,000 girls under the age of 15 were married in 2013."

Also refer to NCRI Women's Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani*, August 2013 – August 2015, pp. 72-75 www.women.ncr-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani

become prevalent in Iran as sanctioned by law.³⁶ Some officials have announced that 19 divorces are registered in Iran in every hour.³⁷

There are different accounts on the number of women sleeping in the streets of Tehran, varying from 5 to 15 thousand.³⁸ Other accounts indicate that they include pregnant women who sell their unborn fetuses in order to earn some money to survive.³⁹ The number of 14 to 18 year-old girls who run away from their homes is also on the rise adding another 10-15 per cent every year to the number of homeless women sleeping in the streets.⁴⁰ Many of these women are reportedly addicted, lowering the age of addiction among women to 13 years old.⁴¹ Concurrently, the number of women contracting AIDS has also been on the rise since two years ago.⁴²

Other prevalent social harms involving women are depression, suicide and poverty. Molaverdi acknowledged that the face of poverty in Iran has become feminized.⁴³ Social conditions and basic rights violations force women into despair and finally suicide.⁴⁴ The percentage of

³⁶ The state-run Mehr news agency, September 4, 2015: Referring to the marriage of some girls before reaching the legal age, the President's Deputy on Women and Family Affairs said: "We have been receiving distressing figures in the past couple of years on registration of marriages of girls before legal age, including even marriages of girls under 10 years of age... Presently, the legal age of marriage is 13 years, and according to the articles of the Civil Code, if the daughter's parent deems appropriate, he can wed her even before she is 13." She pointed out that most of the underage marriages are done out of poverty.

³⁷ The state-run ISNA news agency, August 17, 2015: Mohammad Islami, Health Ministry's deputy for Family Health: "19 divorces have been registered in every hour in Iran in 2014... Unfortunately, 80 per cent of divorcees are under 30 years of age."

³⁸ The state-run Arya news agency, May 30, 2015: "There are 15,000 women sleeping in the streets of Tehran every night."

³⁹ The state-run Mehr news agency, August 22, 2015: "In continuation of the meeting, Dr. Chit Chian presented a plan to the governor's office and said:I have personally slept among those who sleep in cardboard boxes in the streets... Unfortunately in these districts, I witnessed sale of kids. The conditions are so critical that they sell the fetus in the mother's womb before birth for 1 million and 750 thousand toumans."

⁴⁰ The state-run Fars news agency, August 16, 2015: Ahmad Delbari, Tehran's Welfare Organization's director general: "Every year between 10 to 15 per cent is added to the number of girls between 14 to 18 years of age who run away from their homes."

⁴¹ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 4, 2015: Shahindokht Molaverdai, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs: "The average age of addiction has plunged to 13 years for girls" and "there has been a change of pattern of addiction from traditional material to industrial material and amphetamines."

⁴² The state-run ISNA news agency, September 6, 2015: Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Gooya, head of the Health Ministry's Center for Management of Contagious Diseases: "The number of women contracting AIDS has increased since two years ago and any country that has more women suffering from AIDS is more endangered in this regard because the future generation is also exposed to this disease... Our population is young and studies indicate that contraction of AIDS has increased in recent years among youths and AIDS contraction age is gradually dropping in Iran."

⁴³ The state-run ILNA news agency, September 6, 2014: In a gathering on women and employment, Shahindokht Molaverdi said the most important challenge to Iran's economy is the unemployment predicament. She said this is particularly so with regards to female university graduates and female heads of households... The Iranian presidential deputy said: "The growing trend of female heads of households and feminization of poverty leaves no room for questioning the need to give priority to these women."

⁴⁴ The state-run Fars news agency, August 19, 2014: Fahimeh Farahmandpour, Interior Ministry's advisor on women's affairs: "The figures on depression among young educated women is on the rise... In the more under-developed cities, where girls lack athletic, cultural, educational and recreational facilities, they have no way but to enter college to express themselves and improve their lives, capabilities and talents... Today, girls comprise 60% of

depression amongst women is 14 to 19%, while it is between 5 to 12% for men.⁴⁵ Suicide rates are very high, ranking first in the Middle East. Most of the suicides have taken place in the provinces of Ilam, Khuzistan and Chahar Mahal & Bakhtiari.⁴⁶ Suicides reported during the past year just by the NCRI Women's Committee amounted to 31 cases.⁴⁷

This summary attempted to touch on some of the main issues of importance regarding discrimination against women and violation of their rights, however, a more complete study can be found in the NCRI Women's Committee report on two years of Rouhani's rule, *Iranian Women under Rouhani*, August 2013 – August 2015.⁴⁸

V. GOVERNMENT MEASURES ON WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT:

Ever since taking office, the mullahs' president, Hassan Rouhani has attempted to portray his government as being different from the previous ones in its attitude towards women and in offering them opportunities.

In a tactical measure aimed mostly at international media for foreign consumption, he appointed three women as presidential deputies to “handle” legal affairs, women's affairs, and environmental affairs.

The women appointed to these positions, however, do not enjoy any executive powers and their task is limited to “planning, policy-making and monitoring”. They have to work with other ministries' advisors or counsels on women's affairs to advance or implement the plans and policies they devise after they are adopted, and “if these counsels do not participate in the decision-making processes in their departments, they would not be able to implement the policies devised.”⁴⁹

Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy for women's affairs, also revealed in an interview that “since we do not have executive status, we have not yet found any desirable, effective

university admissions. This postpones the problem four years for girls graduating from high schools but turns it into a problem for unemployed, aimless, university-graduate girls by upsetting the (gender) balance of college population.”

⁴⁵ The state-run Khabar Online, October 5, 2014.

⁴⁶ The state-run Payam website, June 26, 2015.

⁴⁷ The NCRI Women's Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani*, (August 2013 to August 2015), page 94.

⁴⁸ <http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani>

⁴⁹ Interview with, Iranian Students News Agency, ISNA, May 10, 2015: Sussan Bastani, director for strategic studies at the presidential Directorate for Family and Women's Affairs: “The duty of the women's directorate is planning, policy-making and monitoring and it does not engage in implementation. Therefore, the directorate finds direct relations with the advisors on women's affairs in other departments. If these advisors do not partake in their respective department's decision-making, it is going to create problems in implementing the programs planned in the women's arena.”

relationship with other systems and provinces, and have faced serious obstacles from the beginning.⁵⁰

In the meantime, and in line with the mullahs' characteristic deception tactics, the Rouhani government maneuvers on these "showcase" appointments and introduces these women to the media as "vice-president" as if they can exercise the powers of the president and act in his stead!! In April 2015, the CNN interviewed "Vice President Massoumeh Ebtekar" while she only heads the Environmental Protection Organization and does not enjoy any of the powers of the mullahs' president.⁵¹

In this section, we examine the measures of the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs at the office of the President,⁵² to respond to the objectives of the universal movement for gender equality including those of the UN Women with regards to investment in gender equality, introduction of new laws and launching public campaigns to promote gender equality, enhancing women's leadership and participation at all levels of decision making, and prevention of social norms and stereotypes that condone gender inequality, discrimination and violence.

In its biannual "Report on the Conduct of Directorate of Women and Family Affairs (2014-2015)"⁵³ released on August 30, 2015, the directorate has listed 90 items in an "executive summary" table of measures and plans it has undertaken in two years under Rouhani to advance Iranian women's conditions.

Of the 90 listed items, hardly 28 of them are practical, concrete measures done through other agencies and ministries. They include measures such as providing multi-vitamins to 11,000 pregnant and lactating women, educating pregnant women about the benefits of natural

⁵⁰ TNews.IR, August 24, 2015: "She continued by pointing to the cooperation of the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs with other systems and provinces and said, "Since we do not have executive status, we have not yet found any desirable, effective relationship with other systems and provinces and have faced serious obstacles from the beginning."

⁵¹ *Associated Press*, June 9, 2015: Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Shahindokht Molaverdi, part of the Cabinet of moderate President Hassan Rouhani, said the government hopes to avoid a showdown with hard-liners over the issue.

CNN, April 20, 2015: Iran VP: We have 'radical groups,' but they're a minority

In 1979, she was a spokeswoman for students who took over the U.S. embassy. Now, Masoumeh Ebtekar speaks with Fred Pleitgen in Tehran about nuclear talks and more.

<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/04/20/intv-amanpour-iran-pleitgen-masoumeh-ebtekar.cnn>

CNN, April 21, 2015: Iran VP: Rezaian will get 'fair approach'

Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian has been charged in Iran with espionage. Fred Pleitgen challenges Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar about his detention.

<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/04/21/intv-amanpour-pleitgen-iran-masoumeh-ebtekar-rezaian.cnn>

Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC News), June 20, 2015: Iran vice president Shahindokht Molaverdi scolds hardliners after women banned from volleyball match

The Guardian, June 20, 2015: Iranian vice-president attacks hardliners over volleyball ban for female fans

⁵² "Directorate on Women and Family Affairs at the office of the President" is the correct and accurate translation of the office headed by Shahindokht Molaverdi, as opposed to the deceptive official translation as Vice-President by the Iranian regime.

⁵³ *Gozarsh-e Amalkard-e Mo'avenat-e Omour-e Zanan va Khanevadeh dar Dowlat-e Tadbir-o Omid*, 1392-1394, pp. 7-14

childbirth, giving consultations to 2410 women and girls on the verge of marriage or divorce, setting up a women's website and at best, teaching skills to women recovering from addiction.

The other 62 items include making proposals (12 items); following up on various issues from treatment of acid attack victims to membership in a certain council to adoption of the bill on insurance of housewives, etc. (12 items); holding or taking part in meetings and paying visits to various institutions (9 items); writing the drafts of various bills (5 items);⁵⁴ preparing various forms of reports (4 items); signing agreements with other ministries and countries (4 items); cooperation with other agencies and supporting specific projects (2 items); conducting interviews with the 229 national and international media (1 item); and items that are not specifically related to women (13 items).⁵⁵

The report, of course, has been evaluated as “superficial”, “unprofessional” and “unacceptable”.

Parvaneh Mafi, a former government official and active in women's affairs, was asked to evaluate the conduct of the presidential deputy on women and family affairs. She said, “In the past two years, this directorate has addressed mostly ultra-structural and superficial works, gatherings and meetings, etc. These are not bad, but they must comprise only a small part of their conduct. (The directorate) must undertake infrastructural works that could cause fundamental change in women's affairs or at least initiate basic and infrastructural work with regards to women.”⁵⁶

Also Zohreh Tabibzadeh, parliamentary deputy, said “the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs presently does not account to any authority... Since Mrs. Molaverdi was appointed to this post, no report has been provided on the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs to the parliament so that we know what they have done... We cannot examine an unprofessional report containing only generalities on the conduct of the directorate. Only exact figures and accurate explanations on the conduct of an entity can explain the quality of its work, not the number of memoranda and contracts signed with other centers. They must report on the number of coops they have set up, the number of books they have published, the amount of support they have provided to elite women, etc. Statement of generalities and highlighting just a few agreements as the report of conduct is totally unacceptable. Instead, they must provide exact details of their conduct.”⁵⁷

One of the official women's websites in Iran criticized the government and its Women's Affairs deputy, Shahindokht Molaverdi, on August 17, 2015, for being “ineffective” in the 18 months since her appointment. In an interview with this website, a civil activist on women's affairs says,

⁵⁴ Some of the items in the table, including some of the drafts, have been marked with zero per cent achievement meaning that they have not been done at all or have been rejected altogether, but are still listed as actions undertaken by the directorate.

⁵⁵ *Gozaresh-e Amalkard-e Mo'avenat-e Omour-e Zanan va Khanevadeh dar Dowlat-e Tadbir-o Omid, 1392-1394*, pp. 7-14

⁵⁶ The state-run Iran-e Zanan Network website, September 3, 2015.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“She is good at rhetoric and making promises in line with women's demands, but in practice, she has not taken any steps that could be evaluated.”⁵⁸

Referring to one of the most controversial legislations of the past couple of years, the bill legalizing marriage of custodians with their stepdaughters, Molaverdi is assailed for “not being able to do anything with regards to annulation” of the bill. “Her work has been mostly for propaganda, protocol and showcase,” the article says. “She has not undertaken any infrastructural steps to advance the cause of women even one step further.”⁵⁹

To decide whether these are just claims made by the rival faction or the Rouhani government has been truly “ineffective” and its measures merely for “propaganda, protocol and showcase”, let us take a look at the remarks made by the women’s affair deputy Molaverdi and other regime officials in just the month of August 2015 and judge.

“Unfortunately, the number of women who sleep in cardboard boxes has increased...”⁶⁰

“Poverty has become feminine... Today, more than 64 per cent of impoverished families under cover of our Assistance Committee are female heads of household.”⁶¹

“Most of these forces (the Houses of Health employees) are women but there have not been any effective measures regarding their employment and insurance... Unfortunately, they do not have any job security and cannot even benefit from maternity leaves.”⁶²

“The unofficial sector of the job market has become feminine, because women are cheap labor force and because they need to earn their living, they accept such jobs.”⁶³

“The most significant problem in the city of Tehran is the feminization of social damages.”⁶⁴

“Compared to boys, less girls are passing stages of education because of early or forcible marriages or taking care of other members of the family.”⁶⁵

“The age of victims of social damages has significantly dropped among girls and this is cause of grave concern.”⁶⁶

⁵⁸ The state-run Iran-e Zanan Network website, August 17, 2015, interview with a civil activist on women’s affairs, Touran Vali-Morad on the record of the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Tehran mayor’s deputy for cultural affairs, mullah Maysam Amroudi, the state-run ISNA news agency, August 28, 2015.

⁶¹ Mer’at Rassuli, director of the state-run Assistance Committee (charity) in Shiraz, the state-run ISNA news agency, August 26, 2015.

⁶² Mohammad Haghani, vice-president of Tehran's City Council Health Commission, the state-run ISNA news agency, August 25, 2015.

⁶³ Shahindokht Molaverdi, Rouhani’s deputy on Women and Family Affairs in the weekly meeting with the state media and press, the state-run ISNA news agency, August 24, 2015.

⁶⁴ Farzad Hooshyar Parsian, General Director of Tehran’s Welfare, Social Services and Cooperation Organization, the state-run IRNA news agency, August 16, 2015.

⁶⁵ Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs, the state-run Fars news agency, August 18, 2015.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

“49 per cent of households headed by women are poor... The number of families headed by women has increased 60 per cent in recent years.”⁶⁷

“Unfortunately, this phenomenon is increasing day by day and every year between 10 to 15 per cent of girls between 14 to 18 years of age run away from their homes.”⁶⁸

“Working age women comprise a population of 32,252,090, but only 4,289,528 of them are economically active and the other 27,962,562 women [87 per cent] have no role in the country’s economy.”⁶⁹

“The influx of cheap imports facilitated by oil revenues caused women to lose a large share of their employment. And the rate of our women’s employment has gradually dropped so much that the number of working women was around 3.1 million last year, which is not a suitable condition in any respect.”⁷⁰

Only 630 out of the 5,000 persons who pass the Education Ministry’s Employment Test will be women. In Tehran, only six of the 190 new employees of the Education Department will be women.⁷¹

“The number of women contracting AIDS has increased in the past two years and any country that has more women suffering from AIDS is in greater jeopardy in this regard because the future generation is also exposed to this disease.”⁷²

These are but the tip of the iceberg of Iranian women’s predicaments that have found their way to the state-run press and media. However incomplete, the facts depict an abysmal picture of women’s plight in Iran and the horrendous consequences of 37 years of institutionalized misogyny in power.

The high and still growing rate of women and girls running away from home and sleeping on the streets or committing suicide is very meaningful and at the same time stunning, especially when we consider the fact that the number of talented Iranian girls gaining admission to universities have been always above 50 percent in the past couple of decades.

⁶⁷ Akbar Souri, Director General of Hamedan Province’s Welfare Organization, the state-run Bahar News website, August 18, 2015.

⁶⁸ Ahmad Delbari, Tehran’s Welfare Organization’s director general, the state-run Fars news agency, August 16, 2015.

⁶⁹ The state-run Ettelaat newspaper, August 15, 2015.

⁷⁰ Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs, the state-run Fars news agency’s T.News.IR, August 11, 2015.

⁷¹ The state-run Fars News Agency, August 8, 2015: “The Education Ministry’s Employment Exam will be held on September 18. From among 3703 forces to be admitted by the Exam, 3073 will be men and 630 will be women. Based on the license that the Education Ministry has received from the presidential Management and Planning Organization, some 1300 of the 5000 people to be employed by this ministry are not going take part in the Exam and this quota belongs to the families of martyrs and those wounded [in the war].”

⁷² Dr. Mohammad Mehdi Gooya, head of the Health Ministry’s Center for Management of Contagious Diseases, the state-run ISNA news agency, September 6, 2015.

Now, let us take a look at the actual measures adopted by the government to tackle these problems as reported in the press.

The report of the women's directorate boasts of holding or supporting various exhibitions to promote economic participation and employment for female heads of household and women's empowerment.

A much-publicized and, so far, the most concrete plan adopted by the women's directorate has been countering women's unemployment by supporting petty jobs that women could do at home.

One such plan was carried out in Ahwaz (in the southwestern province of Khuzistan) starting with two women in 2007 and including 100 women in 2015 after eight years. These women produce anti-bacterial and deodorant (repelling odor) clothes and garbs that are sold in Iran and in the Gulf countries.⁷³

So much for the effectiveness of any plan that employs only 100 women over eight years while nothing is said about the quality of work, the amount of income or provision of insurance and security for the women involved.

Another exhibition held in September by the Ministry of Industries, Mines and Trade deputy for women's affairs, aimed at presenting "a new model to the world of women's development in the Islamic Republic", can demonstrate that women are active in only "28 different kinds of social, economic and charity activities."⁷⁴

Regrettably, in a country with so many college-educated women and with a large work force of 15-49 year old women,⁷⁵ "women's economic and political participation is non-existent" and the regime can boast of only 28 fields of activity for Iranian women.⁷⁶ According to officials'

⁷³ The state-run ISNA news agency, August 9, 2015: Backing house jobs and petty jobs in the form of a support plan.

⁷⁴ The state-run ISNA news agency, August 1, 2015: Holding the second exhibition on women and sustainable development in September.

⁷⁵ The state-run Asr-e Banovan website, August 5, 2015: The former minister of science, Jafar Tofighi Darian, admitted that "more than 77 per cent of Iranian women who are between 15 and 49 years of age, enjoy a great potential for activity in social, economic and political arenas" but they have not been recruited as much as they should have. "The rate of employment for women is very small compared to world averages, indicating that educated women have not been employed as much as they deserved."

⁷⁶ The state-run IRNA news agency, September 6, 2015.

admissions, women have no presence in the administrative councils⁷⁷ and their 3% role in the parliament⁷⁸ has been ordered for showcase.⁷⁹

Altogether, the 11th government reports that it created only 583 jobs for women in its two years in office.⁸⁰

Earlier in this section we referenced officials of the Directorate of Women and Family Affairs admitting that having no executive power of their own, their office has to work through women's counsels in other ministries and departments or through popular-institute organizations known as SAMAN in Farsi. Some press reports proved to be very useful in revealing the nature of the SAMANs and the works they do.

According to a report published on August 17, 2015, one of the women's most active SAMANs in northern Khorassan Province is called "easy marriage". They charge young couples 500,000 tomans and provide them wedding services such as the bride's gown, hairdressing, invitation cards, wedding cake, filming the ceremony, etc. So we can see that instead of promoting economic participation and empowerment of women, these SAMANs are a source of income for their directors.⁸¹

One of the other activities of the women's presidential directorate is holding or supporting exhibitions. Let us take a look at one of the examples that was publicized with much fanfare.

A ten-day "Shahr-e Banou (Ladies' City)" festival was held in mid-August in Tehran's luxurious Milad Tower to demonstrate Iranian women's "capabilities". The festival included medical, psychological and traditional-medicine workshops where women could receive free consultations. It also featured street theatres focusing on religious and cultural matters, cooking and photography contests, flying kites by mothers and daughters and, most interesting of all, a "granny's tale telling" event where actresses attempted to revive the culture of story-telling. Participants could also take pictures with models wearing traditional Persian costumes.⁸²

⁷⁷ The state-run ILNA news agency, August 25, 2015: On women's appointment to managerial positions, Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs, said, "Initially, there were some good moves in terms of appointment of female governors, which were halted after a while for reasons that I would not get into right now." She added, "Unfortunately, we do not see women's presence in the administrative councils of provinces."

⁷⁸ The state-run Mizan website, September 8, 2015: "Women's presence in the parliament is about 3 per cent and, in the most optimistic estimations, only one per cent in other decision-making and power structures, a situation that is embarrassing for the government," said Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy on Women and Family Affairs.

⁷⁹ The state-run Zanan-e Iran Network website, August 5, 2015: Tooran Vali-Morad, secretary of the Women's Islamic Coalition: "In the past 36 years and especially the past 26 years, our country has moved in the wrong direction in tackling women's issues... Unfortunately, all that has been done for women is summarized in gatherings and meetings. Women's mandatory presence both in the parliament and government have not solved any of the existing problems."

⁸⁰ *Gozaresh-e Amalkard-e Mo'avenat-e Omour-e Zanan va Khanevadeh dar Dowlat-e Tadbir-o Omid, 1392-1394*, (Report on the Conduct of Directorate of Women and Family Affairs (2014-2015)), pp. 7-14

⁸¹ The state-run Zanan-e Iran Network, August 17, 2015: The details of regional meetings with women's SAMANs, significance and benefits.

⁸² The state-run Arya news agency, August 12, 2015.

Clearly, spending so much money on such festivals that promote cooking, story-telling and flying kites are not compatible with UN Women's 50-50 Plan and its goals of achieving gender equality and women's empowerment by 2030. One can see that there are not any new opportunity for women to work outside their stereotype jobs or fulfill the objectives stated in the Beijing Platform for Action.

VI. GOVERNING VISION:

In this section, we intend to develop an understanding of the regime's fundamental nature and vision which do not afford to allow gender equality or women's empowerment.

Indeed, why does this misogynous regime want to improve the situation of women and what is its definition of women's improvement?

A look at the emblem chosen by the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs will help us find the answer and is actually very telling of the goals and objectives of the Iranian regime.



The emblem pictures a veiled woman holding a baby in her arms, surrounded by a house. These are actually all the elements that comprise the mindset of the mullahs' regime at its best. This is the ideal they pursue and present for women.

As for the goals of the Iranian regime in participating in the women's summit in the margins of the Global Leaders Meeting, they see this as "a new opportunity for defining the status and criteria of the exemplary model of Iran's Muslim women in the world arena."⁸³ And the model is what they have very well pictured in their emblem.

An interview with Zahra Shojaii,⁸⁴ former presidential advisor and head of the Women's Participation Center in the so-called reformist government of Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), is also helpful in developing an understanding of the mullahs' vision of an exemplary model of women.

In this interview, Zahra Shojaii first explains that men are obliged to provide for the needs of their wives and their daughters and women do not need to work. However, if they wish to work to earn money to provide for their needs or if they need to supplement the income of their husbands as is the case today in Iran because of dire economic conditions, they are allowed to do

⁸³ www.jamejamonline.ir, April 11, 2015: Iran became member of the UN Women.

⁸⁴ The state-run Zanan-e Iran Network website, August 29, 2015.

so. Then she continues, “Today many jobs can be done at home with computers... In this way, women can be at the service of their family and at the same time not feel useless.”⁸⁵

The most interesting of all is Shojaii’s proposed solution to raise the embarrassing rank⁸⁶ on women's economic participation and access to employment. She says:

“There is a problem in calculating the country's employment rate because we do not count housework as a job... If we consider housework as a job, its first effect would be an increase in the rate of women's social employment and we would not face any challenge on the international level. Secondly, it will also affect our Gross National Product and our GNP rate will also increase if we take into account the profit produced by women doing housework...”

Shojaii believes “women's social participation is equal to employment plus other social activities like charity, coops, cultural activities and giving consultations, etc.” Then she interestingly reveals the government’s approach: “In the government, when we talk about deploying women's human asset towards growth and development it does not necessarily mean that we want employment for women... We can give the responsibility of many cultural and social activities to women so that they can undertake them through local centers, local associations, and meetings in their homes, cultural centers and mosques...”

Shojaii’s views represent the most “advanced” and the most “pro-women” outlook among the Iranian regime’s factions. Yet, we can see that she does not go beyond the boundaries of a woman’s home and suggests that the meetings she needs to participate in be held inside the house or in their local mosques. However, she does not mention how women could participate in social decision and policy makings from their homes and local mosques.

Clearly, their aim is not to create employment for women who have no income and head a household, or sleep on the streets and become victims of prostitution and human-trafficking,⁸⁷ but to fend off international embarrassment and at the same time take advantage of the world forum to advance their expansionist objectives.

On the other hand, some hardline deputies believe “talking about young women’s employment is a diversionary discussion.”

Zohreh Tayyebzadeh, member of the parliamentary Social Commission, says, “We have laws and rules in Islam which have made certain designations for women and men. Considering that men are the main breadwinners and managers of their families, in times of economic recession

⁸⁵ Ibid: “It is upon men to provide for the expenses of women. Husband provides for his wife and as long as the woman has not married, her father is responsible. This is why the blood money and inheritance for women is half that of men... In fact because of the present economic conditions, it has become necessary for women to work.”

⁸⁶ The state-run Roozan News website, July 11, 2015: According to the World Economic Forum, Iran ranks 139th among 142 countries in women's economic participation and access to employment. It also ranks 135th among 142 countries in women's participation in policy-making and decision-making.

⁸⁷ NCRI Women’s Committee report on Human Trafficking under the Mullahs’ Rule in Iran,

<http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/images/publications/documents/Human-trafficking.pdf>

US State Department Report on Trafficking in Persons 2015, www.state.gov/documents/organization/245365.pdf

and high inflation, the priority is with men to enter the job market. In such circumstances, it is a diversionary discussion to speak about employment for girls.”⁸⁸

Minoo Aslani, head of Women's Community Mobilization Organization, expressed alarm over an increased activity of “feminists” and dubbed them as “the enemy’s cultural attack on the subject of women and family”. She said: “The activities of feminists have increased in the country over the past two years so much that the officials in charge have made many commitments to the UN in the area of women in their recent trip to New York. These commitments include equality of men and women or more employment for women... and aim to undermine the pillars of family.”⁸⁹

Fatemeh Rake’ii, secretary general of Muslim Women’s New Thinkers’ Society, once said in an interview that although there are a number of women in the parliament, but unfortunately they have acted very weakly in terms of demanding women’s rights.⁹⁰

Mullah Nateq-Nouri, former speaker of the mullahs’ parliament and member of the Assembly of Experts, also said, “In our parliament, the plans and views against women are actually brought up by female deputies.”⁹¹

On high-level appointments of women as provincial governors or ministers, Shahindokht Molaverdi points out, “Male officials would not risk granting macro responsibilities to women and their excuse for not choosing women is the extraordinary and too critical state of affairs.”⁹²

In another place she admits that women are not trusted enough to be granted crucial responsibilities.⁹³

And finally, here are the words by the mullahs' supreme leader. In his remarks, Khamenei said, “Contrary to some viewpoints, employment is not one of the main problems of women.”⁹⁴

As for college education, he said, “If there are any differences in the fields of study, it is not against justice because employment and education that are not compatible with women’s nature should not be imposed on them.”⁹⁵

Criticizing international conventions on women’s rights and warning against joining them, he pointed out: “The insistence by the West on this wrong infrastructure will destroy humanity. For

⁸⁸ The state-run Fars News Agency, August 8, 2015.

⁸⁹ The state-run Fars news agency, August 30, 2015.

⁹⁰ The state-run ISKA news agency, August 13, 2015.

⁹¹ The state-ran ISNA news agency, August 12, 2015.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 4, 2015: Shahindokht Molaverdi, presidential deputy for women attended the opening ceremony of the gathering of the Education Ministry’s advisors on women... While stressing the need to build trust in women and their qualifications, she said: "The Education Ministry and the media, especially the national radio and television, can be active in this regard and assist us in shaping the proper culture of trusting the qualifications (of women) in society."

⁹⁴ The state-run ISNA news agency, August 12, 2015.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

this reason, one should stay away from these foundations to acquire a proper and balanced outlook.”⁹⁶

VII. WOMEN POSE NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT:

Young women make up the majority of college entries⁹⁷ and graduates⁹⁸ in Iran despite numerous restrictions and imposition of gender-rationing quotas for admission of young women in general and admission to certain fields of study in particular.⁹⁹

The large number of college entrees among women is therefore not an achievement by the regime, as they like to claim, but the outcome of Iranian women's defiance of the numerous social restrictions imposed on them and a manifestation of their passive resistance to a regime that has been trying to subjugate them for the past 37 years.

As a result of this passive and yet courageous resistance, the clerical regime has failed during its rule to completely impose its mandatory dress code and compulsory black veil on women and regards the “mal-veiled” or “improperly veiled” women as “a national security threat”.

Just recently, Tehran’s provisional Friday prayer leader, mullah Ahmad Khatami while giving a stern warning to men for lacking zeal over women’s improper veiling, said, “We must know that the main aim of the enemy is to strike at our Islamic government by promoting the culture of not wearing the veil in society.”¹⁰⁰

Mehran Valipour, head of the Justice Department in the northern Iranian city of Chaloos said, “Today, one of our most important social problems is the improper veiling of women.” He said, “Improper veiling is the root cause of many crimes, therefore, the judiciary will confront any form of improper veiling.”¹⁰¹

“Women who are improperly veiled make a mockery of the state.”¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ The official website of the Directorate on Women and Family Affairs, September 7, 2015: Abol-Hassan Firouzabadi, Deputy Minister of Labor, Cooperation and Social Welfare: “Twenty-two percent of government employees and 14 per cent of those who work in the private sector are women... More than 57 per cent of Iran’s university admissions are comprised of women.”

⁹⁸ The state-run Fars news agency, August 24, 2015: Researcher Azam Rawad Rad: “60 per cent of university entrees are women, yet many of these women have to stay home after graduation.”

⁹⁹ Report by UN Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed, August 27, 2014: “The percentage of female students entering university has decreased from 62 per cent in 2007-2008 to just 48.2 per cent in 2012-2013, following the institution in 2012 of gender-rationing policies. Those policies also resulted in the admission of more men than women in some fields of study between 2013 and 2014.”

¹⁰⁰ The state-run Digarban website, August 22, 2015.

¹⁰¹ The state-run Fars news agency, August 23, 2015.

¹⁰² The state-run ILNA news agency, August 14, 2015.

“Women’s veiling is an essential principle that must be preserved and protected... Unfortunately, some women make a mockery of veil in society or adopt a political attitude towards this. That’s why they should be punished severely according to the law.”¹⁰³

Indeed, suppression and exclusion of women as well as violence and discrimination against them have been the “essential principle” in the vision and conduct of the clerical regime since its inceptions. It was through massive subjugation of women in a so-called Islamic guise that the regime began its crackdown on the entire Iranian populace who had just freed itself from the shah’s dictatorship. And it has been so throughout all the years of the mullahs’ rule and this is why we always witness some form of mobilization for cracking down on women who comprise an inherently-defiant half of the population.

VIII. CONCLUSION:

The Iranian regime officials are tremendously concerned¹⁰⁴ about the challenges they would face at the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment as the summit is inherently and entirely contrary to the official views of the religious fascism ruling Iran.

As we have mentioned earlier in this study, the Iranian regime seeks to abuse the legitimacy and credibility of the UN to advance its own expansionist and misogynous objectives and present its fundamentalist model for Muslim women to the world in the international forum.

We saw that women’s rights, as part of the basic human rights of the people of Iran, have always been violated by the unpopular and repressive regime of the mullahs and this has not changed for better, if not worse, in the past two years, as manifested in the unprecedented execution of 57 women under Rouhani.¹⁰⁵

Iran ranks among the lowest in women’s economic participation and access to decision and policy making.¹⁰⁶ The small number of jobs reportedly created for women has been outbalanced by laying them off from their jobs. There are no laws to prevent violence against women, rather

¹⁰³ The state-run Fars news agency, August 23, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ The state-run Mehr news agency, August 29, 2015: “Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment/What challenges will the Iranian government face? - Of course the issue of how the governments would face the said commitments which go beyond the framework of treaties is one of the important subjects of debate. In light of some challenging articles in the UN new development framework like ‘ensuring global access to sexual health and reproduction and reproduction rights, according to the Platform for Action of the International Convention on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent documents’ and/or ‘reform of domestic laws and regulations to grant equal rights to women and men in all affairs’ on the one hand, and the lack or conditional membership of some Islamic governments in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the question is what should we expect from the government? Specifically, what position the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran would adopt and what program has it devised for the Global Leaders Meeting on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment?”

¹⁰⁵ NCRI Women’s Committee, *Iranian Women under Rouhani*, September 2015.

www.women.ncr-iran.org/publications/documents/item/1928-iranian-women-under-rouhani

¹⁰⁶ The state-run Roozan News website, July 11, 2015: According to the World Economic Forum, Iran ranks 139th among 142 countries in women’s economic participation and access to employment. It also ranks 135th among 142 countries in women’s participation in policy-making and decision-making.

violence against Iranian women is institutionalized in the laws and in the systematic security forces' crackdowns on women.

Massive restrictions on women's rights and freedoms have led to draconian figures on victims of social damages, such as homeless women, runaway girls, addicted women, victims of human trafficking, rising rates of underage marriages and divorces and, of course, women's suicide.

None of the Iranian regime's goals and objectives or visions on women's equity (rather than equality)¹⁰⁷ fit the UN goals for gender equality and women's empowerment. If not dealt with, the regime can take advantage of the world body to further intensify repression of Iranian women.

The least to demand from the Iranian regime is to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, to rectify and balance its misogynous laws with universal human rights and international standards.

The honorable, courageous, talented and capable women of Iran have demonstrated their demand for a free, independent and humane life in all forms of opposition to the regime which have never halted over the years, from women who have resisted and died under torture, to the young women and girls at the forefront of all protests across the country, to the outspoken women who are suffering in the prisons today, to the pioneering PMOI women who lead the opposition movement in Ashraf and at Camp Liberty, in Iran and around the world.

Their demands have been summarized and echoed in the ten-point plan of Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the Iranian Resistance's President-elect, on women's rights in tomorrow's Iran:

1. Fundamental freedoms and rights

- Women shall have the equal right to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, social class or demographics, women everywhere, in whatever village or city, must have the same rights as men in all economic, social and political spheres. Discrimination¹⁰⁸ against women must be abolished in all its forms.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 8, 2015: Fatemeh Rahbar, head of the women's faction at the mullahs' parliament said: "Western communities' laws on gender equality cannot contribute to protection of the status and dignity of women and families. Based on the teachings of Islam and the Quran gender equity is beyond gender equality... The common instructions adopted in international organizations on women are not compatible with the cultures of various countries and cannot help in the development of women's status in the world."

¹⁰⁸ "The term 'discrimination against women' shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Part I, Article 1).

¹⁰⁹ The constitution of the clerical regime has made gender equality contingent upon the criterion of "conformity with Islamic criteria." According to Article 20 of that constitution, "All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights,

- Women are free to choose their place of residence, occupation, and education. They must have the opportunity to travel freely, have the right to freely choose their clothing and spouse, and have the right to leave the country, to obtain foreign citizenship, to devolve citizenship to their children, to divorce, and to obtain custody and guardianship over children.¹¹⁰
- Belief in a specific faith or religion must not count as a factor to degrade any women or to prevent them from access to employment opportunities or educational and judicial resources.

2. Equality before the law

- Women must enjoy protection of the law equal to men.
- Women must enjoy access to guaranteed judicial recourse in the face of violence, rape, discrimination and deprivation of liberty.
- Women must have equal rights as men before the courts.
- Courts must view testimonies and affidavits submitted by women as equal in weight to those submitted by men.¹¹¹
- The legal age for girls shall be 18. Prior to this age, girls shall not be subject to criminal punishment;

3. Freedom of choosing one's own clothing

- Women are free to choose their own clothing. Government interference in this regard is prohibited.
- The law of forced veiling shall be repealed.¹¹²

in conformity with Islamic criteria." And Article 21 states, "The government must ensure the rights of women in all respects, in conformity with Islamic criteria." Since the ruling mullahs have a reactionary interpretation of Islam rendering it in effect a misogynistic religion, their views and laws are based on discrimination and suppression against women.

¹¹⁰ The clerical regime's Civil Law has explicitly rejected the rights of women in these respects, stating among other things:

"The husband has the right to prevent his wife from engaging in a profession which goes against the interest of the family or the honor of the husband or the wife" (Article 1117).

"A man can divorce his wife any time he so chooses" (Article 1133).

"A wife must live in the home her husband chooses, unless she is given the right to choose the location of her residence" (Article 1114).

¹¹¹ In accordance with the Iranian regime's laws, a woman's testimony in court has half the weight a man's testimony has.

¹¹² Article 638 of the Islamic Punishment Act (ratified in 1996) states: "Anyone who openly engages in a forbidden act in public or in public places will receive punishment proportional to the act in addition to imprisonment ranging from 10 days to two months or up to 74 lashes. In the event that they commit an act which essentially has no attributed punishment but nonetheless tarnishes public morals, the punishment shall only be imprisonment ranging from 10 days to two months or up to 74 lashes." Amendment: "Women who appear without Sharia veiling in public and public places will be sentenced to imprisonment ranging from 10 days to two months or monetary penalties ranging from 50,000 to 500,000 rials."

- Laws that prescribe administrative punishment for lack of veiling of female workers or employees shall be repealed.¹¹³
- Written or unwritten laws on controlling the clothing or behavior of women under the rubric of “mal-veiling,” which have violated Iranian women’s right to freedom and security, shall have no place in tomorrow’s Iran.

4. Equal participation in political leadership

- Women shall enjoy the right to participate “in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.”¹¹⁴
- Women must specifically enjoy the right to equal participation in the country's political leadership.¹¹⁵
- In order to dispense with any inequality, the government must appoint women for at least half of its posts, and political parties are obliged to choose at least half their candidates from among women for parliamentary elections.
- Any laws that cause prohibitions or limitations on women occupying government posts or senior judicial and legal positions must be repealed.

5. Equality in the economic sphere

- Women shall enjoy equal rights as men in terms of inheritance, entering contracts and management of property.¹¹⁶
- Women shall have equal opportunities as men in the labor market.¹¹⁷
- Women must receive equal pay for equal work as men, in addition to having job security and complete benefits.
- In accessing housing, appropriate nutrition, medical services, and employment, as well as athletic and artistic endeavors, women shall enjoy equal opportunities as men.

¹¹³ Paragraph 20 of Article 8 of the laws on “Examination of Administrative Offenses” (ratified in 1993) deems lack of compliance with forcible veiling on the part of women as an “offense in places of work,” which carries punishments such as written warnings or in some cases even dismissal from work.

¹¹⁴ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

¹¹⁵ According to the clerical regime’s laws, women cannot be president or judges:

Article 115 of the Iranian regime's constitution views the right to hold the office of presidency as limited to only “religious and political statesmen.”

Article 163 of that constitution has made qualifications for a judge contingent upon the “principles of religious jurisprudence,” stating: “The conditions and qualifications to be fulfilled by a judge will be determined by law, in accordance with principles of religious jurisprudence.”

The “Law on Conditions for Appointing Judiciary Judges” (ratified in April 1982), states, “Judges will be appointed from among men with the following qualifications: 1. Practical faith, justice, and commitment to Islamic principles and loyalty to the system of Islamic Republic of Iran...”

In 1985, amendments were made to the above law allowing women to hold advisory positions or become investigative magistrates in judicial bodies. But, they still cannot draft judgments.

¹¹⁶ Inheritance under the regime's laws is based on the notion that the share belonging to a woman is half of what belongs to a man. This ratio appears in all of the mullahs’ civil laws regarding inheritance rights.

¹¹⁷ Women only account for 12 percent of the active labor force in Iran.

6. Equality in the family

- Women must have free and equal right to choose, marry or divorce a spouse.
- Polygamy is prohibited.
- Marriage before reaching legal age is prohibited. In family life, any coercion or compulsion of women is prohibited.¹¹⁸
- Familial responsibilities such as housekeeping, raising children, employment, and educating children are the obligation of both men and women
- Women shall have the rights to obtain custody over their children.¹¹⁹
- Employment of young girls below the legal age shall be prohibited. They will enjoy special privileges in field of education.
- Government inquisition and meddling in women private lives is prohibited.

7. Prohibition of violence

- The death penalty against women shall be annulled and torture, offensive and degrading treatment of women shall be prohibited.
- Rape shall be considered a crime wherever it occurs.
- Various forms of violence¹²⁰ against women, acts of intimidation or forcible deprivation of their freedoms shall be considered crimes.

8. Prohibition of sexual exploitation

- Sex trade is prohibited.
- Trafficking of women and forcing them into prostitution is a crime and those responsible shall be criminally prosecuted.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Amendment 1 of Article 120 of the regime's Civil Law states, "The legal age for boys is 15 and for girls is 9 lunar years (8 years and 9 months)." Despite Article 1041 of the Civil Law, which has prohibited "marriage before puberty," this amendment legalizes forcible marriage of girls younger than 9 years old.

¹¹⁹ In accordance with Article 1169 of the Civil Law, when a husband and wife are divorced, "The mother will have priority for raising the child up to two years after birth. After this period, the father will have custody, except in case of young girls over whom the mother will have custody until the seventh year."

¹²⁰ The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (Article 2) states, "Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs."

¹²¹ Experts from the US State Department's 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP): "Iran is a source, transit, and destination for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and involuntary servitude. Iranian women are trafficked internally for the purpose of forced prostitution and forced marriage. Iranian and Afghan children living in Iran are trafficked internally for the purpose of forced marriage, commercial sexual exploitation, and involuntary servitude as beggars or laborers to pay debts, provide income, or support drug addiction of their families. Iranian women and girls are also trafficked to Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom for commercial sexual exploitation. ... The law permits temporary marriage for a fixed term ("sigheh"), after which the marriage is terminated. Some persons abuse this institution in order to coerce women into sexual exploitation; there are reports of Iranian women sold

- Anyone committing sexual crimes against children shall be prosecuted.
- Any form of sexual exploitation of women under any pretext shall be prohibited and all customs, laws and regulations which allow the parents, guardian or a third party related to a girl or woman to give away the latter to another party for sexual pleasure or exploitation under the pretext of marriage or anything else shall be annulled.¹²²

9. Repealing Mullahs' Sharia laws

- The mullahs' Sharia laws shall not have a place in the laws of the future Iran.
- Emphasis shall be "to repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women."¹²³
- Appalling and brutal laws such as stoning shall be repealed.¹²⁴
- All laws authorizing crimes against women under familial pretexts shall be repealed.¹²⁵

10. Social benefits

- Women must have access to social benefits, especially as it relates to retirement, unemployment, old age and other forms of disability, in addition to the right to maternity leave during pregnancy and after delivery, and the right to sufficient nutrition and free services during this period.
- The government is obligated to plan to provide for the nursery and day care requirements of working women.
- All employed women must have access to nursery and day care centers for raising their children.

into fixed term marriages to men from Pakistan and Gulf states or into forced prostitution. It was extremely difficult for women forced into sexual exploitation to obtain justice: first, because the testimony of two women is equal to that of one man, and second, because women who are victims of sexual abuse are vulnerable to being executed for adultery, defined as sexual relations outside of marriage. ... The government reportedly punishes victims for unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, for example, adultery and prostitution. There were reports that the government arrested, prosecuted, and punished several trafficking victims on charges of prostitution or adultery" (pp. 161-162).

¹²² The National Council of Resistance of Iran's Plan for Women's Freedoms and Rights, ratified on April 17, 1987.

¹²³ Articles 102 to 105 of the mullahs' current penal code (Islamic Punishment Act) states the following about stoning:

¹²⁴ "For the purposes of stoning, a man shall be buried until the waist and a woman shall be buried until the chest, after which the stoning shall be carried out" (Article 102).

"Whenever a person manages to flee from the hole in the ground they were placed in, if their adultery has been proven with the power of a testimony, then they shall be returned for the continuation of the sentence. But, if the adultery has only been proven by their own admission, then they shall not be returned" (Article 103).

"The size of the stone for stoning must not so big as to kill the person with one or two hits. It must also not be too small so that it cannot be called a stone" (Article 104).

¹²⁵ Some articles in the mullahs' current penal code (Islamic Punishment Act) state:

"If a father or grandfather murders their own child, he will not be punished in kind [death penalty] and will be sentenced to provide financial compensation to heirs of the slain and maximum or minimum punishment allowed by law" (Article 220).

"Manslaughter shall only be subject to a retaliatory punishment if the slain did not deserve to die in accordance with Sharia. If the slain deserved death, the murderer must demonstrate this in court in accordance with the principles" (Article 226).

- Women belonging to minorities, female refugees or immigrants, women living in villages or remote areas, underprivileged women, female prisoners, young girls, and disabled or weak or old women, shall enjoy special financial, educational and medical support from the government.
- Depriving women employed under temporary contracts of social benefits shall be prohibited.
- Dismissing women from work or reducing their wages due to pregnancy or delivery, or obligating them to perform harmful jobs during this period shall be prohibited.
- The government shall assume responsibility for supporting single women who provide for their families.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ This expression is used for women who are the sole breadwinner for families that in some instances are comprised of older parents or several children. These women have either lost their husbands or have divorced, or are married but their husbands are on the run, addicted to drugs, in prison, unemployed, an immigrant or disabled. They usually earn a living from seasonal or low-paying jobs. Such families are among the poorest sectors of society in Iran. According to a 2006 census in Iran, the number of such households was 1,641,000 at the time. But, on December 22, 2009, a government official told the media that that number has now peaked at two million.

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