



**A Special Report by  
The Women's Committee of  
the National Council of Resistance of Iran  
August 2018**

# **T**HE **COMPULSORY** **VEIL**

A brief study of the clerical regime's  
heavy-handed attempt to subjugate  
women in Iran

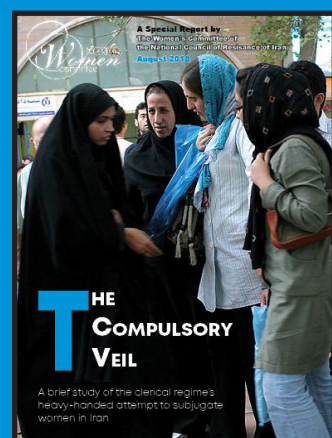


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## THE COMPULSORY VEIL

A BRIEF STUDY OF THE CLERICAL REGIME'S HEAVY-HANDED ATTEMPT TO  
SUBJUGATE WOMEN IN IRAN

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### The Compulsory Veil

A brief study of the clerical regime's heavy-handed attempt to subjugate women in Iran

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ISBN: 978-2-35822-007-1

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## A PERSONAL CHOICE OR A TOOL FOR OPPRESSION?

For thousands of years in Iran, women's clothing and covering was a matter of personal choice, a social issue that was never deemed as a privilege. Iranian women made their choice on wearing the Hijab and covering their hair and body depending on their own tendencies and the culture in which they were brought up.

The past century, however, saw Iranian dictators and specifically the mullahs' regime transforming this issue into a leverage used for imposing pressure on women and oppressing them.

Hijab was first turned into a political issue in January 1936 when the founder of Pahlavi Dynasty, Reza Shah, had a legislation passed in the parliament banning Iranian women and girls from wearing any form of Hijab, including the chador (a black head-to-toe garment that covers the whole body), neghab (a piece of cloth that covers the face from below the eyes) or scarf (a piece of cloth that covers only the head).

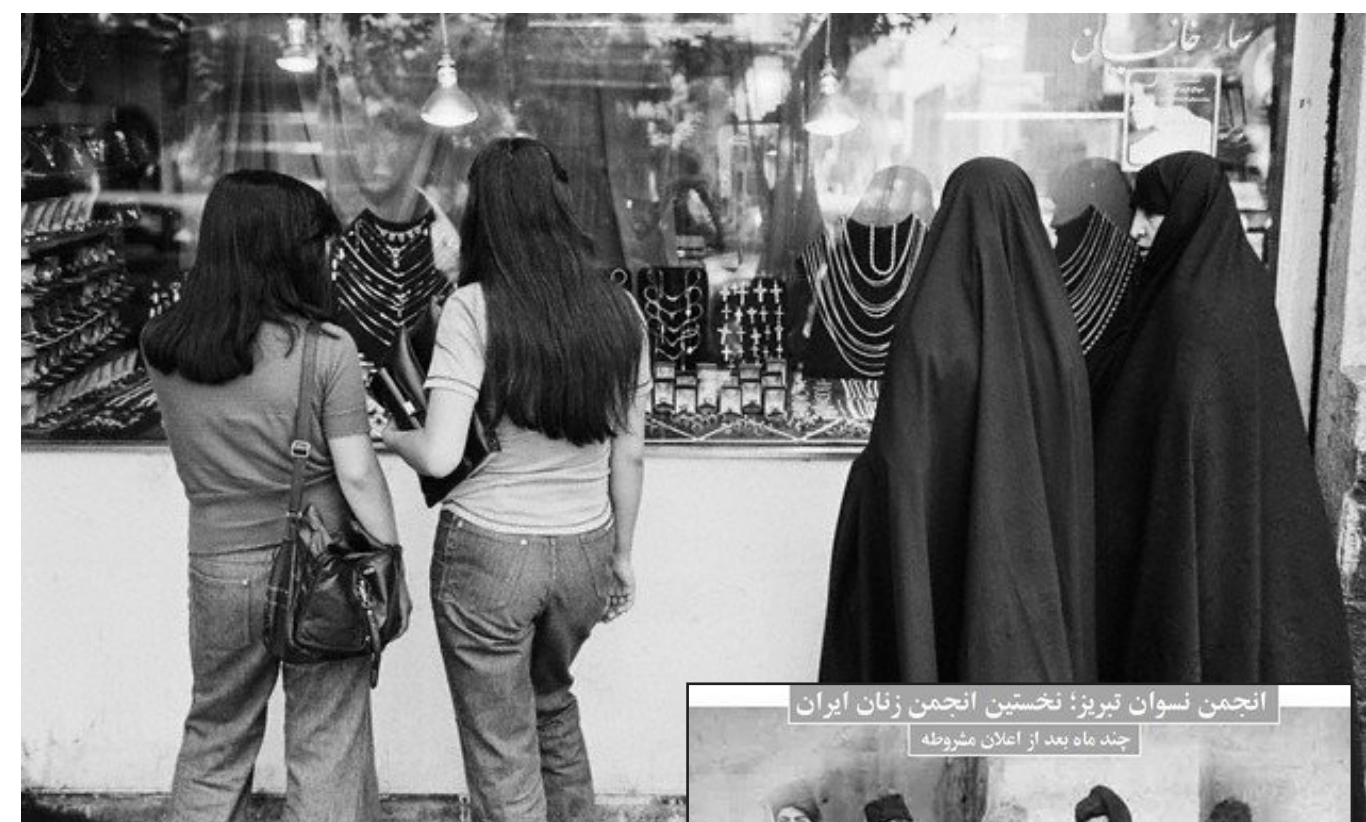
This came in the heels of a 40-day trip to Turkey by Reza Shah and his prime minister, Mohammad Ali Foroughi, in 1935 when they got acquainted with a

number of "manifestations of western civilization." Among the things they took back to Iran were a festival commemorating the millennium of Iran's great poet, Ferdowsi; foundation of a school called Farhangestan-e Iran to promote Iranian culture; foundation of Tehran University; transformation of men's hats to Chapeau, and banning women from wearing any form of veil.

In order to impose the mandatory change of hat on men, the regime of Reza Shah had to violently crack down on protesters on July 12, 1935, turning the protest at Goharshad Mosque in Mashhad into a bloodbath.

Eight months later, when the order for mandatory removal of the veil was issued on March 5, 1936, there was not much of a public resistance against the dictate fearing another bloody massacre. Opponents of the change in men's hats and the removal of veils went into hiding and refrained from appearing in public to stay away from harassment and arrest.

Five years later, when Reza Shah was succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in 1941,



### A PERSONAL CHOICE

Clockwise from top left: Women's clothing during Qajar Dynasty; women's diverse choice of clothing during the 1979 revolution; women watching jewelry in a Tehran street before the 1979 Iranian Revolution; members of the first women's association in Tabriz founded a few months after the victory of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906.





widespread public protests forced the new dictator into repealing the law.

The next dictatorship, the mullahs' clerical regime, however, made a round turn on the issue of Hijab after seizing power with the 1979 Revolution that deposed the Shah.

The mullahs' reactionary outlook and interpretations of Islam, including the mandatory veiling of women, were made into law and institutionalized in the country's Constitution and other legal codes.

The country's justice system as well as all the intelligence, security and military apparatuses were subsequently ordered to enforce and protect the mullahs' fundamentalist principles.

This process – in diametric opposition to all principles and teachings of genuine Islam -- started from the very early days when Khomeini, the founder of the clerical regime, took the reign. It has continued to be enforced for nearly 40 years without succeeding to subdue ubiquitous opposition to it, since Iranian women and the entire Iranian society have never succumbed to the mullahs' illegitimate laws and inhuman conducts, showing their repugnance in various forms and at every opportunity.

Such overwhelming opposition to the compulsory veil has become a nightmare for the regime. The Office of Cultural Studies of the Research Center of Majlis (the mullahs' parliament) published a special report on July 28, 2018, stipulating that only 35 percent of Iranian women value the Sharia veil (Chador), and nearly 70 percent of women either do not believe in it or are among "the improperly veiled" and protest the compulsory veil in Iran.

#### DEMANDING FREE CHOICE ON HIJAB

**Iranian women remove their compulsory head coverings and take pictures under a billboard that warns women of two months in jail if they drop their veil in public, making a mockery of the mullahs' so-called "justice" - the pictures belong to the 1990s**

## DEFYING THE COMPULSORY VEIL

The compulsory veil is in fact the most visible manifestation of the mullahs' fundamentalist and misogynous vision and laws.

It is also the most detested icon of the regime widely challenged and defied by Iranian women, their main victims who have borne the brunt of repression throughout these years.

In opposing the compulsory veil, Iranian women seek something beyond their desire to freely choose what they wear. The demand the overthrow of the entire clerical regime and its religious tyranny that intervenes even in the most minute details of their everyday life and tightens their breathing space in social atmosphere.

So, it must be stressed that the compulsory veil is only the tip of an iceberg of flagrant violations of women's human rights in Iran in every respect.

This is why the issue of Hijab, an entirely personal choice for women in all times, has now become so central to the clerical rule, and women who fail to observe the Hijab are considered to pose a national security threat to the regime's pillars.



Photo: Schahram Schamsawary

Occasional hollow maneuverings on this issue by some regime officials are in reaction to two vivid realities in the Iranian society.

First, Iranian women can be best described as "a powder keg" or "a time bomb," bearing an enormous potential to explode after enduring four decades of the most ruthless suppression and inhuman discriminations directed against them as the "main victims" of the mullahs' regime. This is the terrifying specter that constantly haunts the misogynous mullahs and makes them occasionally react despite their own interests.

Second, the significant role women play in the Iranian resistance movement poses not just a political or social challenge to the mullahs but an inevitable cultural and ideological challenge to their religious justifications.

Since suppression of women is a tool for suppression of the entire society, any backtrack on issues dealing with women would necessarily impact the entire society, cracking the walls of absolute repression and loosening the ropes that keep down the populace.

The regime's theoreticians acknowledge that in

light of years of carnage and bloodshed, fraud, embezzlement and economic bankruptcy, and a pervasively disgruntled populace, the only remaining «Islamic» symbol of the regime is the women's veil (*chador*). If they lose this, too, nothing will remain of the regime's claims to Islam and its *raison d'être* for holding on to power under the absolute rule of a supreme clergy.

Furthermore, the mullahs would lose their main excuse for cracking down on the public. They will no longer have any reason to dispatch their revolutionary guards, Bassij, security forces and plainclothes thugs to the streets to terrorize the people.

This is why the Iranian women's veil (Hijab) has turned into such a sensitive national security issue. This is also the reason why women who do not observe the veil are considered as agents of the enemies.

Hence, the regime continues to suppress women by restricting their freedoms and stripping them of their social and political rights.





# STRIPPING WOMEN OF THEIR RIGHTS

## A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Gender discrimination and misogyny are the ideological essence of the regime founded by Khomeini. Therefore, suppression of women constitutes the highest motive for the forces tasked with protecting the regime.

Khomeini began his onslaught on the Iranian people's freedoms only two weeks after the 1979 Revolution with a clampdown on women's rights. Here's a brief chronology of the steps the mullahs' regime took during their rule to gradually deprive Iranian women of their rights:

- ▶ **February 26, 1979:** Khomeini's office announced that the Family Protection Act was going to be repealed. Legislated under the Shah's regime, the Act offered some limited benefits to women in their family life.
- ▶ **February 27, 1979:** The Women's Social Services Act was revoked.
- ▶ **February 28, 1979:** Gender discrimination was extended to the sports arena and women's athletic tournaments were cancelled one after the other.
- ▶ **March 2, 1979:** Women were banned from judgeship. Hundreds of female judges and juristic interns were left in limbo.

- ▶ **March 4, 1979:** The right of divorce was granted exclusively to men, enabling them to unilaterally decide for divorce at any time of their liking.
- ▶ **March 7, 1979:** Khomeini issued a fatwa on the compulsory veil, obliging women who worked in government offices to cover their hair at work.

In the wake of these misogynous rulings, the club wielding thugs who enforced Khomeini's laws, started harassing and insulting women on the streets, slashing their faces with razor blades, or splashing acid on them. One of the first slogans coined in those days by the Khomeini regime was "either (accept) the veil or (receive) a hit on the head."

- ▶ **1979:** The clerical regime's Constitution was adopted, banning women from running for president.
- ▶ **May 22, 1979:** The first time a woman was flogged in public.
- ▶ **July 12, 1979:** The first time three women were executed on the charge of committing vice.
- ▶ **September 30, 1979:** A new law replaced the Family Protection Act which took away the limited benefits granted to women by the Shah. February 3, 1980: The first government directive was issued obliging female doctors

and nurses to wear the compulsory veil at work.

- ▶ **April 19, 1980:** Female singers were summoned to court, intimidated and humiliated, and forever deprived from singing.
- ▶ **June 29, 1980:** For the first time, two women were stoned to death in Kerman, southern Iran. The verdict was carried out even before the adoption in 1982 of the inhuman Retribution Law by the mullahs' parliament (Majlis).
- ▶ **1983:** According to Article 102 of the Punishment Code ratified in 1983, women who appear in public and in the streets without the religious veil are punishable with 74 lashes of the whip.

## THE POST-KHOMEINI ERA

It is a widely accepted rule that the situation of women is the most telling and reliable measure of general freedoms in any society.

Khomeini's crackdown on women's rights and freedoms, was a decision taken knowingly and deliberately, as a prelude to absolute suppression of everyone's rights and freedoms in Iran.

Discrimination against women started in the Constitution and expanded into all other penal and civil codes. In this way, women were systematically discriminated against from all sides of the compass with regards to their political, social, economic, cultural and individual rights.

After Khomeini's death in June 1989, parallel with the regime's growing need to rein in a restive populace, the mullahs stepped up their clampdown on women's rights, and therefore, the enforcement of the compulsory veil gained more weight for the regime.

## NEW LEGISLATIONS TO FORBID VICE

Article 8 of the mullahs' Constitution institutionalized the duty of "promoting virtue and forbidding vice." This ambiguous law clearly sought to give a free rein to the state-backed thugs in cracking down on women.

- ▶ In 1992, the regime adopted a law to lend Judiciary support to the paramilitary Bassij. The force was granted the mandate of "promoting virtue and forbidding vice," and the Judiciary's law enforcement agents were instructed to back them. (The state-run Ekhtebar.com, July 24, 2015)
- ▶ In the year 2010, the mullahs' extremist president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, placed greater emphasis on this law which had already been supplemented by another bill. This prepared the grounds for the adoption of more repressive laws against women during Rouhani's tenure.
- ▶ Another act was adopted in 2010, another act was adopted to "spread the culture of chastity and Hijab" according to which at least 26 government agencies were instructed to carry out duties to enforce the compulsory veil on Iranian women.
- ▶ The mullahs' parliament passed two articles of a new bill in 2014, and the rest of it in 2016, which gave priority to the views of the mullahs' supreme leader and was readily implemented. According to the bill, entitled, "Support for those who promote virtue and forbid evil," anyone who resists against these individuals must be punished and their sentence cannot be suspended or commuted.

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## PROTESTING THE COMPULSORY VEIL

**Iranian women's demonstration on International Women's Day, March 8, 1979, against Khomeini's fatwa making veil compulsory for women.**



## ACID ATTACKS

Such legislations prepared the grounds for another wave of inhuman crimes against women in 2013, when gangs tied to the regime splashed acid on a large number of Iranian women under the pretext of improper veiling, inflicting irreparable injuries and disabilities on them.

## RESTRICTING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ In mid-April 2013, Khamenei offered a plan to increase the country's population, by boosting the average birth rate. The mullahs' parliament followed suit and passed a legislation which openly placed further restrictions on women's employment and family rights.
- ▶ In July 2014, Tehran's municipality issued a directive instructing their managers to recruit their new employees only from among men.
- ▶ In September 2014, women were banned from working in the coffee shops.
- ▶ In January 2016, the mullahs' parliament passed a bill to protect chastity and veil, according to which women could be employed only in businesses where the work place is completely gender segregated. Women were also subjected to new time limits restricting their work to between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.
- ▶ In February 2016, the mullahs' parliament passed another bill entitled, "reducing the working hours of women with special conditions," which practically paved the way for further expulsion of women from their jobs.

## PUNISHMENTS FOR FLOUTING THE VEIL

- ▶ The mullahs' law prescribes imprisonment of 10 days to two months for any woman who appears in public without the veil plus a cash fine of 50 to 500 thousand toumans.
- ▶ Women could also be punished to 74 lashes for "hurting public chastity" by appearing in public without the veil.
- ▶ The State Security Force announced on February 23, 2018, that encouraging the public to shun the veil is punishable by one to ten years of imprisonment.



The SSF announced, "Appearing in public without the religious veil (Hijab) is punishable by up to two months' imprisonment according to the waver of Article 638 of the Penal Code. This could be transformed to alternative forms of punishment and avoid imprisonment. "However, encouraging people to shun the veil applies to paragraph 2 of Article 638 and is punishable by one to 10-year prison sentence which cannot be transformed to alternative forms of punishment."

## SEGREGATION OF UNIVERSITIES

In 2012, the regime implemented an extensive plan in all universities, designating gender quotas for admission of female students. According to this plan, girls were completely banned from applying for B.S. or B.A. in 77 fields of study. In the same year, new universities were built to facilitate gender segregation among university students by admitting only one sex.

## MONITORING WOMEN DRIVERS

A new stage of activity by the Moral Security Patrols started on April 16, 2016, in Tehran to counter mal-veiling and unveiling in vehicles. Tehran's Police Chief also announced on April 18, that 7,000 invisible security police forces had been organized to implement the Moral Security Plan in the capital. He said they would monitor and report those who drop their veils in their cars, as one of their four main duties.

## 2,000 WOMEN ARRESTED EVERY DAY

On September 29, 2016, Commander of the State Security Force, Hossein Ashtari, admitted that "some 2,000 women are arrested every day in Tehran and some other provinces, for wearing unsuitable clothes."

# A WIDE RANGE OF SOCIAL RESTRICTIONS ON WOMEN

The clerical regime has created countless restrictions in all aspects of women's life, some are instituted in the laws, some are imposed by religious decrees, and some are unwritten. To make it brief, some of these restrictions are listed as the following:

- ▶ ban on travelling without her husband's permission;
- ▶ ban on marrying non-Muslim men;
- ▶ ban on women's cycling;
- ▶ ban on entry of women spectators to sports stadiums;
- ▶ ban on entry of female reporters to sports stadiums;
- ▶ ban on taking selfies with famous athletes;
- ▶ ban on broadcast of and any form of reporting on women's sports matches by the state press and media;
- ▶ restriction of women's musical performances on stage, and cancellation of concerts for presence of female musicians;
- ▶ ban on solo singing of women;
- ▶ ban on activities of actresses who post unveiled pictures of themselves on the social media;
- ▶ ban on mixed-sex camping and parties;
- ▶ ban on women's sterilization and abortion;
- ▶ ban on smoking hookahs;
- ▶ segregation of parks;
- ▶ segregation of buses;
- ▶ segregation of trains;

...  
And the list goes on.

PARLIAMENTARY LEGISLATIONS WHICH SANCTIONED FORBIDDING OF VICE, PAVED THE WAY FOR A WAVE OF ACID ATTACKS ON DOZENS OF WOMEN IN 2013, BY THUG GANGS TIED TO THE REGIME.

# OFFICIAL VIEWS ON HIJAB

In the mindset of the mullahs' misogynous dictatorship, sexual sin and piety is the yardstick for measuring one's value. This yardstick has made the walls of gender segregation taller, ticker, and more inclusive.

The mullahs see "woman" as a "satanic" being who symbolizes sin and seduction, because of which she must not be allowed to leave home, since her presence would breed sin in society. At home, too, she should serve as a slave and comply with the desires of her husband.

Khomeini says, "Express your hatred against equal rights... Women's involvement in social life brings about countless vices." (Khomeini's statements and declarations 1962 – 1982, Volume III, Amir Kabir publications, page 142)

On January 5, 1997, Ressalat daily newspaper cited Khomeini as saying, "Hijab is obligatory and those who violate it must be excommunicated." In the logic of Tehran rulers, the punishment for excommunication is execution.

Rafsanjani, the regime's so-called moderate figurehead, had this to say about women: "Justice does not necessarily mean that all laws must be the same for men and women." (Ettela'at daily newspaper, July 7, 1986)

Ali Khamenei, the regime's incumbent supreme leader, says, «Any debates over the voluntary or mandatory nature of Hijab (women's veil) is deviatory, and is not justified in the Islamic Republic.» (The state-run Rajanews website, May 9, 2016)

Hassan Rouhani, the mullahs' president, re-published his memoirs in May 2015, and proudly declared that he had personally banned entrance of unveiled women to government offices. (The state-run Afkarnews, May 8, 2015)



Ahmad Alam-ol Hoda, the Friday prayer leader of Mashhad and Khamenei's representative in Razavi Khorasan Province, shamelessly said, "When someone swindles people's money, makes an unlawful statement, or looks in an unlawful manner at somebody, he commits a sin which affects only himself. But flouting the Hijab is a sin that makes a tool out of a human being to help Satan mislead others." (The state-run Khabaronline.com, April 9, 2016)

The Friday prayer leader of Ahvaz said, "Those who do not observe the Islamic Hijab whether in a hospital or outside, they show themselves to strangers... These people should not be considered as sane, decent human beings." (The state-run radio, September 6, 1997)

Fereshteh Rouhafaza, deputy director of the Socio-Cultural Council of Women, endorsed the views of misogynous mullahs and said, "Observing the Hijab paves the way for pervasive provision of social security." (The state-run Fars news agency – February 12, 2017)

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SANCTIONED BY LAW

In his book, Tahrir-ol vasileh, Khomeini writes, "Women are malicious creatures. If a woman refrains from preparing a suitable, satisfying milieu for her husband, her husband has the right to beat her and make the beating more intense every day until she complies."

This inhumane vision sanctioning violence against women is similarly reflected in the regime's laws including the Constitution and the penal and civil codes implementing continuous and systematic discrimination against women in all aspects of their social and political life.

Indeed, the only place where women enjoy priority over men is where they are subjected to violence.

According to the clerical regime's laws, women who do not properly observe the veil in public, are sentenced to imprisonment and payment of cash fine. Women who appear in public without the veil are easily sentenced to whipping.

The clerical regime has given the mandate of enforcing the veil on women to 26 official government agencies who operate under direct supervision of the regime's President. Each agency has specific duties.

At the same time, Moral Security patrols, invisible patrols, Mountains Police, Beaches Police, Street Police, etc. launch numerous operations every year to monitor women more closely and in all social environments and clampdown on them by harassing and arresting women under the pretext of controlling their Hijab.

These are the very forces who arrest 2,000 women every day and take them to detention centers where they are mistreated and humiliated. This figure --which is neither accurate nor transparent-- amounts to 730,000 arrests of women every year. It does not include the multitudes of women who receive verbal warnings or are humiliated on the streets in other ways.

In addition to the official government agencies, at least 301 so-called cultural associations spend exorbitant sums of money to constantly produce so-called cultural products like books, video clips, posters, and huge billboards and hold hundreds of rallies every year to propagate a misogynous culture described as "chastity and Hijab" and facilitate further humiliation and restriction of women in society.

THE ONLY PLACE WOMEN HAVE PRIORITY OVER MEN IS WHEN THEY ARE SUBJECTED TO VIOLENCE. SOME **730,000** WOMEN ARE ARRESTED EVERY YEAR FOR FLOUTING THE COMPULSORY VEIL.



# IRAN WOMEN'S REAL DEMAND

With a deep political and social awareness, Iranian women have well understood that freedom from the regime's coercions and achieving equality and human rights comes through an all-out struggle for freedom and democracy.

After four decades of enduring inhuman oppression at the hands of the mullahs, the women of Iran are compressed as a coil with an enormous potential force to challenge the religious dictatorship in its entirety.

Women have played a remarkably active role in virtually all the protests before, during and after the nationwide uprising in December and January.

Not only they say no to the compulsory veil, but also to the compulsory religion and the compulsory rule of the mullahs.

The regime's officials have admitted that the uprising in December and January was led and organized in various cities by women who were members of the main Iranian opposition, PMOI/MEK (The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran/Mujahedin-e Khalq).

Women's courage and audacity, as well as their prominent, inspiring and omnipresent role in every social and political protest in Iran confirms that they reject not only the compulsory veil but the mullahs' compulsory religion and their compulsory government.



# THE FINAL WORD

The mullahs' misogynous dictatorship has been engaged full force in suppression of Iranian women and freedom loving activists since it seized power.

Clearly, their aim was to take away the freedoms the people of Iran had gained through their suffering and sacrifice in the 1979 Revolution. Khomeini knew well that the best way to contain the nation was to rein in half of the populace, namely the enormous potential of Iranian women unleashed during the anti-monarchic revolution. He, therefore, created and imposed a plethora of restrictions and coercions using the pretext of religion.

Iranian women thus faced a difficult choice. If they succumbed to the mandatory Hijab and the restrictive rules the mullahs set for them, they would have denied their own gender and human identity. If they did not give in, they would have been considered sinners and criminals who deserved brutal punishments.

But Iranian women rejected both these options. Relying on their rich culture and history, they did not engage in this filthy game and said no to all forms of coercion. Instead of focusing on the compulsory Hijab, they targeted the regime in its entirety and the mullahs' illegitimate rule.

Iranian women have, of course, paid a heavy price throughout the 40 years of struggle. Thousands upon thousands of PMOI women gave their lives for freedom. They can be exemplified by the 13-year-old student Fatemeh Mesbah, the PMOI heroine Sorayya Abol-Fat'hi with her unborn fetus, and Maryam Qodsi-Mo'ab.

Maryam, who was only 16, endured vicious tortures but resisted to the last breath and did not cave in. She thus became a historic symbol of enduring torture.

There are also examples like Neda Agha Sultan and Reyhaneh Jabbari who died innocent but proud, and became symbols of Iranian women's purity and innocence.

Countless number of women political prisoners embraced suffering with their flesh and bone under inhuman conditions of the regime's torture chambers such as the so-called "residential units," but did not surrender to the evil demands of the mullahs.

Today, women political prisoners follow in their footsteps and stand firm while gazing into the eyes of the beast. They stand as prominent icons in the Iranian people's historic confrontation with the clerical regime.

Iranian women seek regime change and the overthrow of the entire Velayat-e Faqih regime; they seek to establish justice and freedom, and restore all of their own and their people's human rights. They will be satisfied by nothing less than the overthrow of the entire mullahs' misogynous theocracy and the downfall of their absolute dictatorship.

Most definitely, the women of Iran who have stood up to the mullahs for nearly four decades and refused to give in to their coercion, will keep on their defiance of the regime. And the clerical regime will certainly receive the final crushing blow at the hands of the very women it has oppressed over the years.



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ISBN 978-2-35822-007-1

US\$9.99

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