



Long prison sentences
to restrain the
restless women
of Iran

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Long prison sentences to restrain the restless women of Iran

Recent months have seen ramped up repression in Iran and escalating aggressions in international waters by the clerical regime.

Since any change in the behavior of the ruling mullahs will end up toppling them, the regime has massively clamped down on the Iranian public to contain their widespread discontent and curb their upheavals against a corrupt regime which has destroyed the country's industry, economy and environment, leaving the majority of the populace with empty pockets and baskets under the poverty line, while the regime's officials are stealing exorbitant sums of money, every day, and disappearing one after the other.

Women have always borne the brunt of oppression in Iran. So, August marked the flogging of a prisoner of conscience before being released, 5 to 24-year sentences for participation in simple acts of protests, escalation of physical and psychological pressure in various prisons, a new wave of arrests of female activists, and unfortunately, the execution of another destitute woman.

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) expressed alarm that a new wave of arrests and interrogations of female journalists had started in Iran since the beginning of August.

The limited pages of this monthly report provide a brief glance over the news regarding the women of Iran in August 2019.

Execution and flogging

A 38-year-old woman, mother of two, was [hanged in the Central Prison of Mashhad](#) on August 25, 2019. She had committed murder due to poverty. Not identified by name, she was the 94th woman executed during Rouhani's terms in office. The Iranian regime executed at [least four women](#) in July.

On the other hand, Elham Ahmadi, a Sufi woman from the Gonabadi Dervishes in Iran, was released from Evin Prison on August 13, 2019, but received 74 lashes before her departure, according to former political prisoner Golrokh Iraee.



Elham Ahmadi

Heavy sentences for civil activists and advocates of women's rights

The [24-year sentence](#) issued for Saba Kordi Afshari shocked the world.

Ms. Kord Afshari, 20, had been just recently transferred to the Women's Ward of Evin from Qarchak Prison where she had been beaten viciously several times by dangerous prisoners. She had also gone through repeated interrogations by the IRGC Intelligence to make forced confessions. The IRGC even arrested her mother, [Raheleh Ahmadi](#), to ratchet up the pressure on her, but she refused to cooperate.



Finally, the court which had tried her on August 19, sentenced her to 24 years in prison for "propaganda against the state", "association and collusion against national security", and "promoting corruption and prostitution by removing her veil and walking in the streets without the veil."

Ms. Kord Afshari was first [arrested in August 2018 during street protests in Tehran](#). She was taken to Qarchak Prison, subsequently [sentenced to one year](#) in prison for "disruption of public order" and then transferred to the women's ward of Evin Prison.

Saba Kord Afshari was released in February 2019, but was [arrested again](#) on June 1 and has been detained since.



Labor activist [Atefeh Rangriz](#), presently detained in Qarchak Prison, was sentenced to 11 years and six months in jail and 74 lashes. She was arrested in a group of 15 labor activists during a May 1st protest rally in Tehran. Ms. Rangriz has a master's degree in sociology.



[Marzieh Amiri](#), a journalist and student activist, was sentenced to 10 years and 6 months in prison and 148 lashes, after being tried in Tehran on August 13. Marzieh Amiri is epileptic and suffered from seizures under interrogation, but her lawyers' request for her temporary release on bail for medical treatment was turned down.

Marzieh Amiri was also [arrested during the protest](#) in Tehran on the International Labor Day.



[Nasrin Javadi](#) (a.k.a. Azam Khezri), a female labor activist also arrested on the International Labor Day in Tehran, was sentenced to 7 years in prison and 74 lashes. Mrs. Javadi is a former employee of the Medical Distribution Company and a retiree of the Social Security Organization, a member of the founding board of the Social Security Retirement Labor Council, and a member of the Free Union of Iran Workers.

Her trial was held by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran on August 6, sentencing her to 5 years in prison on the charge of "association and collusion against national security", one year in prison on the charge of "propaganda against the state", and one year in prison and 74 lashes for "disruption of public order."



Nine civil activists including three women were sentenced to a total of 54 years in prison on August 26, 2019. The women were [Shima Babaii](#), Mojgan Lali, and Shaghayegh Mahaki.

Each of the three women were sentenced to six years in prison. Their court hearing had been held on April 21, 2019, in Tehran, informing them of their charges which included "association and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the state."

Wave of arbitrary arrests

It was confirmed on August 1, that [Zahra Akbari-Nejad](#), wife of political prisoner Abolghassem Fouladvand, had been arrested by security forces and transferred to an unknown location.

The arrest was made on July 23, 2019, when the Ministry of Intelligence agents attacked her residence without warrant. Mrs. Akbari-Nejad briefly called her relatives 48 hours later, informing them that she was being held at Ward 4 of Evin Prison.



Mrs. Zahra Akbari-Nejad, 49, has a number of illnesses, including heart disease, and is very vulnerable to stress and mental and physical stress.

[Abolghassem Fouladvand](#) is a supporter of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), who has been in prison since 2013 without a single day of leave and is currently held in [Gohardasht Prison](#) in Karaj (Rajaii Shahr) under inhumane conditions and deprived of minimum facilities.



It was also reported on August 1 that a Kurdish woman activist, Parvin Advaii, had been arrested at home during a raid by agents of the Intelligence Department of Marivan, Iranian Kurdistan, on July 27, 2019.

Sahar Shahrabi Farahani, a female labor activist, was arrested on August 3, 2019, during a gathering outside the court hearing for Asal Mohammadi, Sanaz Allahyari, and others who had participated in the protests of the Sugar Cane Factory of Haft Tappeh in Shush. She is 32, a painter and student of Persian Literature.



[Asal Mohammadi](#), a civil rights activist and a Pharmaceutical Sciences student, and one of the defendants in the case of Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane workers' protests [was arrested on August 4, 2019](#), and taken to Evin Prison. Ms. Mohammadi has been charged with "forming groups with the intention to sabotage national security, membership in groups or collectives with the intention to sabotage national security, propaganda against the state, and assembly and collusion against national security."



On August 4, 2019, security forces arrested Ms. [Raha Ahmadi](#) and took her to an unknown location. Her family has inquired about her whereabouts without any response.

Fifteen civil rights activists, including [five women, were arrested on August 11, 2019](#), for participating in a protest in front of the Court of Mashhad where a university professor was being tried. Three of the women were identified as [Hurriyeh Farajzadeh, Fatemeh Sepehri, and Poursan Nazemi](#). The state-run Fars News Agency accused the arrested protesters of "disrupting security" and of being in "contact with groups supporting regime change."



Four Baha'i women were arrested on August 12, 2019. Monireh Babil Soflayee and Minoo Zamani were arrested in Tehran and taken to Evin Prison. Paris Sobhanian Najafabadi and Soheila Haghighat were arrested by security forces in Roudehen and Shiraz.

Labor rights activist Narges Mansouri was arrested by security forces on August 12, 2019. She is a member of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company. Her whereabouts are not known.



Theater and cinema photographer, Noushin Jafari, was arrested by security forces outside her home on August 3, 2019. The spokesman for the Judiciary [confirmed the arrest and detention of Noushin Jafari](#) on August 13, 2019,

and said she had been arrested for denigrating a religious mourning anniversary and for disseminating propaganda against the state.

Ms. Shahla Entesari, a women's rights activist, was arrested on August 22, 2019, in [Rasht](#). Ms. [Giti Pourfazel, a retired lawyer](#), was arrested on August 19, 2019, and Zahra Jamali, a civil activist, was arrested in Tehran on August 24, 2019. The whereabouts of the arrested women are not known.

In the meantime, the family of former political prisoner Sedigheh Moradi and her husband are concerned about their fate. They were arrested on July 7, 2019, by intelligence agents in Tehran, and no information has been available on their fate. Sedigheh Moradi, 57, has a 20-year-old daughter.



Sedigheh Moradi

Three months after the [arbitrary detention of Zahra Mohammadi](#), director of Nojin Social and Cultural Association in [Sanandaj](#), her fate remains unknown.

Heavy bails and rejecting release of prisoners on bail

The trial of labor activist Atefeh Rangriz was held on August 5, 2019, in Tehran where they set a bail of 2 billion tomans for her temporary release, but she was returned to Qarchak Prison because her family did not afford to pay for the bail.

Reports released on August 14, 2019, suggested that the detention sentence of Asal Mohammadi had been changed to a 2 billion toman bail, which her family was not able to secure.



The court convened on August 19, 2019, to examine the charges of Sanaz Allahyari and her husband, turned down the request to change their detention warrant to bail bond.

The court also issued a heavy bail of 300 million tomans for temporary release of Farangis Mazlumi, mother of political prisoner Soheil Arabi, held in poor physical conditions in solitary confinement in Ward 209 of [Evin Prison](#). Her family did not afford to pay the bail bond.

Mrs. Mazlumi has been on hunger strike since August 16, 2019, in protest to [cancellation of her visit and weekly calls](#) to her family. Mrs. Mazlumi has been under pressure since being arrested on July 22 to make forced confessions. Despite her illnesses, [she has started a hunger strike since August 16, 2019](#).



The court also rejected the proposal to change the two-month detention warrant for [Raha Ahmadi](#) to a 600 million toman bail.

New prison chief imposes more restrictions on inmates

The new warden of Evin Prison, Gholamreza Ziari, has devised new rules, creating more restrictions and deprivations for prisoners.

Prisoners' health insurance has been removed, leaving the prisoners to pay for all their medical expenses. So, if a prisoner does not afford to pay for her treatment she would be deprived of medical treatment altogether.

Prisoners used to have a family visit every 28 days, without submitting any request. Now they have to submit a written request for any visit.

Inmates of the Women's Ward of Evin are experiencing more restrictions.

Women prisoners could visit their under-18 children once a week, but now, their visits have been restricted to once a month and their calls to once a week for 2 to 5 minutes.

At the same time, prison authorities prevent delivery of clothes or electric appliances brought for the prisoners by their families.

Sending message of Resistance from inside prisons

Despite experiencing tremendous pressure in prison, the brave and freedom-loving women have not budged on their rights. A number of these women have sent out open letters from inside their cells, passing on their message of resistance.

Political prisoner [Atefeh Rangriz sent an open letter](#) from Qarchak Prison in Varamin on August 15, 2019, describing the situation as "Hell."

Around [200 female prisoners](#) detained in the notorious Qarchak Prison in Varamin expressed their protest to the unbearable prison conditions in a letter to Tehran's Director-General of Prisons on August 17, 2019, in which they wrote, "the question we keep repeating every day is how can we earn our living to survive?"



Monireh Arabshahi who is presently detained in the Women's Ward of Evin Prison sent a letter out of Qarchak Prison on August 3, 2019, in which she wrote, "Tomorrow is promised to no one. This was a sentence I had heard many times and I, like most people, believed it. But at this moment, in a corner of the prison cell without finding a cozy, quiet place for a bit of concentration and thinking, my view and perception on this old and pervasive saying has changed 180 degrees, and I have come to realize that all human beings can be aware of their tomorrow... with the steps they take toward tomorrow, with the ideas that orient their lives, and with a heart that has faith in their steps and ideas. One can mix their faith and practice to open the doors to the future and see what's beyond. In such a quest, it is not important when and how one dies. And today, I feel like a free bird who has chosen the path ahead of herself and moves on with confidence."



International censures

The Iranian regime's issuing of [55 years of prison sentence](#) for three women's rights activists in Iran aroused widespread international outrage. The Revolutionary Court of Tehran [informed](#) Yasaman

Aryani, Monireh Arabshahi, and Mojgan Keshavar of their sentences in the absence of their lawyers on July 31, 2019.

On August 16, 2019, the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a [statement](#) condemning the 55-year prison sentence for three women's rights activists in Iran, saying, "We call upon the Iranian authorities to quash these convictions and immediately release all human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily detained for their work in advocating women's rights, and to ensure full respect for the rights of women to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and non-discrimination."

The statement by UN experts added, "According to reports, since January 2018, at least 32 people have been arrested and at least 10 imprisoned for protesting against the mandatory wearing of the hijab."

The State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus, and German Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office, [Bärbel Kofler](#), also condemned the "hefty prison terms" and called for the "immediate release of these women and of all other detained women's rights activists."



Earlier, [Amnesty International](#) had declared, "Making criminals of women and girls who refuse to wear the hijab is an extreme form of discrimination."

The 24-year sentence handed down for Saba Kord Afshari also raised widespread international outrage. The US State Department's Morgan Ortagus again condemned the sentence. What is more, hundreds of press and media outlets in the West and the Arab world reported on this injustice sentencing this 20-year-old woman to stay in jail for "quarter of a century."

In its latest report published on August 26, 2019, the Paris-based international organization, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) declared, "The Islamic Republic is now [the world's biggest jailer of women journalists](#), with a total of ten currently held."

The RSF expressed alarm that a new wave of arrests and interrogations of female journalists had started in Iran since the beginning of August.

The global media watchdog said Sanaz Allahyari, Marzieh Amiri, Shima Entessari, Noushin Jafari, Avisha Jalaluddin, Farangis Mazloom, Assal Mohammadi, Nargess Mohammadi, Sepideh Moradi, and Hengameh Shahidi are among the women journalists presently imprisoned by the Iranian regime.

The RSF indicated that the Islamic Republic previously ranked fifth among the countries with the highest number of detained female journalists. However, "Iran is now holding more women in connection with their journalistic activities than any other country in the world."

[Young women detained for entering sports stadium](#)

The World Federation of Football ([FIFA](#)) set a deadline of August 31, 2019, for the Iranian regime to allow Iranian women enter stadiums to watch football.

The mullahs' General Prosecutor, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, expressed his opposition, saying, "Do you think this a simple matter when FIFA officially announced that if women are not allowed to enter the stadiums they will ban Iran from attending international matches? ... Do they feel sorry for women when they are pining for women to be allowed to enter stadiums in Iran? Are they worried

about our sports centers? Or are they worried for women not being deprived of the great graces of watching football? Do not take this as a simple matter.” (The state-run ISNA News Agency – August 7, 2019)

Nasser Makarem Shirazi, one of the regime’s religious authorities, also said, “Women need to refrain from attending such programs. Especially since they can watch them from the media and their presence is unnecessary.” (The state-run Aftab News Agency – August 5, 2019)

To double down on the issue, the IRGC ([Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#)) arrested several young women on August 12, 2019, for attempting to enter Iranian stadiums disguised as men. They were detained in the notorious Qarchak Prison for several days and subsequently released on bail.



[Zahra Khoshnavaz](#), [Leili Maleki](#), [Hedieh Marvasti](#), and [Forough Alaei](#), a photographer for Donya-ye Eqtesad, were among those arrested.

[New plan to ratchet up pressure on women](#)

A [new plan has been enforced](#) across Iran to further ratchet up suppression of women for improper veiling.

According to the new plan, Police will be present in public places, major stores, and beaches to give warning to women who are considered improperly veiled according to the regime’s standards.

The acting commander of Police, Ayyoub Soleimani, said, “The plan is going to be implemented in every place which is more public, our presence and monitoring will be more serious.”



Earlier this year, talking about the plan to send text messages to car owners, Hossein Rahimi, commander of Tehran’s Police, stressed, “The police will identify and deal with vehicles whose passengers remove their veils.” (The state-run IRNA news agency - April 25, 2019)

According to a survey published in July 2018 by the Research Center of the mullahs’ parliament, nearly 70 percent of Iranian women either do not believe in the compulsory veil or are among “the improperly veiled” and protest the compulsory veil in Iran. The report further confirms that Iranian women observe the veil only through coercion and harsh restrictions.

[Shocking suicides to evade poverty, oppressive marriage laws](#)

The news in August confirmed that poverty has been a major contributor to the suicide of young mothers with children and whole families. There was also a case where the unemployed father killed his wife and children for whom he could not provide. At the same time, oppressive marriage laws were another source of despair for women who chose to end their lives.

[A mother and her 11-year-old daughter](#) ended their lives by consuming [aluminum phosphide](#) on August 2, 2019, in [Neyriz](#), Fars Province. On August 3, 2019, the father of the family also killed himself in a deliberate accident.

Five days earlier, Iranian official media had reported another collective suicide in [Yazd](#), where four members of a family committed suicide on July 28, 2019. The mother of the family ended her life with high dose of insulin injections. The three children of the family, after informing the emergency, also committed suicide by consuming aluminum phosphide, before the emergency units arrived. Rescue forces succeed in rescuing the family's son, but his two sisters lost their lives. (The state-run Fararu website - July 28, 2019)

[Elaheh Amiri](#), the mother of a two-year-old, hanged herself on August 2, 2019, in a village in [Saqqez](#).



Elaheh Amiri

A 16-year-old young woman by the name of [Ziba set herself on fire](#) to evade her family's insistence that she marries an old man. The state-run Khorasan daily on August 26, 2019, reported that the young woman was being forced into this marriage by her step mother. According to this report, many parts of Ziba's face and body got burned, but she is still alive.

According to the marriage laws under the clerical regime, the legal age of marriage of girls is 13.

In another shocking report from Dehloran, a married woman by the name of Mandana Hosseini, with four sons, set herself ablaze to protest her husband's second marriage. She died after four days in a medical center in Ilam on August 19, 2019, due to the extent of burns.

Based on the clerical regime's oppressive marriage laws, men can have four wives. At the same time, they are authorized to divorce their wives without informing them.

[Iran ranks first in the Middle East](#) for the number of women committing suicide.