



No letup seen in repression
of women in Iran,
despite global
censure

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Despite global censure, no letup seen in repression of women in Iran

The world was shocked in September by the [death of a young female football fan](#) in Iran who set herself ablaze in protest to her six-month jail sentence for attempting to circumvent the ban on women's entrance to football stadiums.

"What happened to Sahar Khodayari is heart-breaking and exposes the impact of the Iranian authorities' appalling contempt for women's rights in the country," said Amnesty International in a strongly worded [statement](#) on her death.

There were also two significant censures of the Iranian regime's abuses of human and women's rights. The United Nations Secretary General expressed concern over widespread use of the death penalty in Iran and urged the regime to ratify the CEDAW among other international conventions.

The [European Parliament](#) called on Tehran to immediately and unconditionally release women's rights advocates imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The regime's Judiciary, however, continued to issue heavy sentences for female activists, level new charges against those already serving their prison sentences, and put various other forms of pressure on political prisoners and activists, without letting up.

It further hanged two women, issued [death sentences](#) for another two women, and handed down [flogging sentences of 50 lashes](#) for eight women who participated in a mixed-gender Yoga class.

The clerical regime also continued in September to escalate restrictions on women's dress code and gender-segregation and step up social repression.

Another major development was finalization of the [VAW bill](#). The bill had been stalled for eight years, being passed back and forth among the parliament, Guardian Council and the Judiciary. The Judiciary finally passed the bill to the government for ratification, however, it has been totally overhauled in letter and in spirit.

Two women executed in September

The clerical regime has executed at least 12 prisoners including two women on September 25 and 26, 2019.

[An unidentified woman](#) was hanged on September 25, in Karaj in Gohardasht Prison (Rajaii Shahr). She was accused of deliberately murdering her husband.

[Leila Zarafshan](#) was hanged in the Central Prison of Sanandaj in the morning of September 26, 2019. She had been imprisoned for five years in the Central Prison of Sanandaj for murdering her husband.

The number of women executed during Rouhani's presidency reaches 96. Seven of these women have been executed only in a 3.5-month period since mid-June.



Two women also received death sentences in September.

The death decree for Zahra Derakhshan was finalized and upheld by the Criminal Court of Urmia. Another death decree was upheld by the Supreme Court on September 3, 2019, for a woman called, Fariba. (The state-run ROKNA news agency – September 23, 2019)

Many of the women convicted of murder in Iran are themselves victims of domestic violence and commit murder in self-defense.

As a consequence of the clerical regime's failure to categorize murders according to their degrees, anyone committing murder is sentenced to death, regardless of their motives.

50 lashes for attending a mixed-gender Yoga class

Iranian state media also reported that the Criminal Court of Gorgan (northern Iran) issued flogging sentences for 20 people, including eight women, for attending a private mixed-gender yoga class. Each of the participants are going to receive 50 lashes. (The state-run ROKNA news agency – September 30, 2019)

UN concerned over widespread use of the death penalty in Iran

The Iranian regime's violations of human and women's rights were condemned by some of the most powerful international bodies.

In a report submitted to Human Rights Council in Geneva on September 24, 2019, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed concern at the continued application of the death penalty for a wide range of offences.



In this report on the situation of human rights in Iran, the UN Secretary-General urged the Iranian regime "to ensure that human rights defenders and lawyers, journalists, writers, labour rights activists and environmentalists can perform their roles safely and freely, without fear of harassment, arrest, detention and prosecution; and to release all those detained for legitimately and peacefully exercising their freedoms of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly and the right to collective bargaining."

The Secretary-General also calls upon the clerical regime to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the ILO fundamental Conventions on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, among a number of others.

EP resolution strongly condemns ongoing repression of women in Iran

In a formal session on September 19, 2019, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) condemning the Iranian regime for its violations of women's rights in Iran. The resolution was adopted by 608 votes in favor, 7 against and 46 abstentions.



The European Parliament resolution "condemns in the strongest terms the ongoing repression of women for objecting to compulsory veiling and for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; calls on the Iranian Government to respect the freedom of Iranian women to choose their own dress code."

The resolution calls on the Iranian authorities to unconditionally release all arbitrarily jailed women's rights defenders protesting against the hijab being compulsory, as well as all other human rights defenders, imprisoned and sentenced for simply exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The European Parliament resolution also demanded immediate release of all EU-Iranian dual nationals, including Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

The EP resolution commended and supported the Iranian women human rights defenders who continue to stand up for their causes, despite the difficulties and personal repercussions they are facing.

In other articles of the resolution, the European Parliament urged “the Iranian authorities to revise the legal provisions which discriminate against women” and called on them “to ensure that women are allowed access to all stadiums, without discrimination or risk of persecution.”

It further urged the Iranian authorities “to ensure the unreserved and full implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), of which Iran is a signatory; urges Iran to adhere to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.”

The EP resolution strongly condemned “the use of the death penalty, including its use against juvenile offenders; calls on the Iranian authorities to introduce an immediate moratorium as a fundamental step towards its abolition,” calling on Iran “to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, including by allowing him to enter the country.”

Handing down more sentences for activist women, including long prison terms

While the United Nations, the European Parliament and other international bodies stressed on the need to stop persecution and repression of women in Iran, the Iranian regime continued to hand down additional and heavy sentences for them.

Tehran’s Revision Court upheld prison sentences of 3 years and 7 months for [Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee and Atena Daemi](#). They were also deprived of membership in parties and groups for two years.

It is important to note that Atena Daemi is presently serving her 7-year sentence in Evin Prison. Former political prisoner Golrokh Iraee was freed just last April after three years in detention.

On Saturday, September 7, 2019, [Asal Mohammadi, Sanaz Allahyari and Sepideh Oolian](#) were each sentenced to 18 years in prison, a total of 54 years.

Tehran’s Revision Court upheld the preliminary sentence issued for Tehran University student, [Parisa Rafii](#). The student activist is thus sentenced to 7 years in prison, 74 lashes, and a two-year ban on leaving the country and membership in parties and groups.

The Court of Kerman sentenced two Baha’i women residing in Kerman, [Kiana Rezvani and Kimia Mostafavi](#), to six years in prison each.

The Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced a Baha’i woman, [Samin Maghsoudi](#), to five years in prison for her faith, on September 22, 2019.

The Revision Court of Khuzestan sentenced Baha’i woman Mitra Badrnejad, residing in Ahvaz, to one year in prison.

The 36th Branch of Tehran Province’s Revision Court upheld the ruling of the preliminary court for Ms. Shahnaz Akmal, mother of Mostafa Karim Beigi, martyr of the 2009 uprising. She was sentenced to one year in prison, banned from leaving the country, and deprived of political activity or membership in the social media.



Increasing pressure on political prisoners and women activists

Female political prisoners and activists continued to bear more pressure in various forms in September.

Political prisoners [Fatemeh Mossanna](#), detained in the Women's Ward of Evin Prison, was deprived of having a visit with her husband, Hassan Sadeqi, who is detained in Gohardasht (Rajaii Shahr) Prison in Karaj. The visit, the first after several months, was cancelled because Mr. Sadeqi did not accept to wear the prisoners' garb and be transferred with shackles and handcuffs.

Fatemeh Mossanna and her husband, Hassan Sadeqi, are sentenced to 15 years in prison for having contacts with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran. The Iranian regime's agencies confiscated their house and their shop in March 2019.

In Kerman, Baha'i citizen Rouha Imani was arrested and taken to prison on September 3, 2019, to serve her 9-month prison sentence.

Another Baha'i woman was arrested at home in Shiraz on September 1, 2019. Shahnaz Sabet was taken to an unknown location.

In another development in Baharestan county of Greater Tehran, Zahra Zare'e Seraj, convicted in a political case, was sentenced to two years in prison on September 28, 2019, by the Revision Court, and transferred to Qarchak (Shahr-e Rey) Prison in Varamin to serve her sentence.

On September 11, 2019, Leila Hosseinzadeh, secretary of the central council of students, faced news charges. Presently, she is serving 3.5 years in Evin Prison.

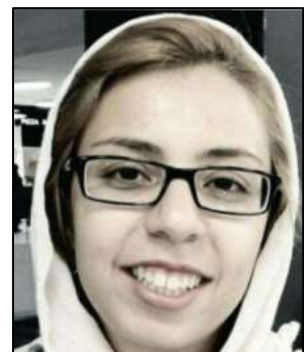
Imprisoned student Soha Mortezaei was deprived from studying for Ph.D. She has a master's degree in the humanities and was a secretary of the students Central Council of Tehran University. She was arrested during the protests in January 2018 and was sentenced to six years in prison last year by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran.

Mojdeh Negahdar, a master's student of theatre, has been detained in Evin Prison since July. The court has set a bail bond for her temporary release, but she remains in jail since her family do not afford to pay the bond.

Zahra Mohammadi is held in the Central Prison of Sanandaj for four months without being informed of her charges. She has been subjected to great pressure to make forced confessions.

[Yalda Firouzian](#), a Baha'i citizen from Semnan, who has been detained for five months since April 30, 2019, because of her faith is presently held in solitary confinement in undetermined conditions.

[Sedigheh Vasmaghi](#), an Iranian writer and poet, was banned from leaving the country. She was informed of this at the airport upon departure for a seminar abroad on September 21, 2019.



Tragic death of football fan Sahar Khodayari

A female football fan, Sahar Khodayari, died in hospital on September 9, 2019, one week after she [set herself ablaze](#) in protest to a six-month jail sentence for her attempt to enter Azadi Stadium.

Sahar Khodayari, 29, was a graduate of English translation. She had disguised herself and attempted to enter Azadi Stadium on March 12, 2019, when she was caught by security forces and detained in the notorious Qarchak Prison for four days.

On September 2, 2019, Sahar set herself ablaze [upon exiting the courthouse](#) where she learned of her six-month prison sentence for attempting to circumvent the stadium ban on women.



Sahar's death must not be in vain – Amnesty International

Sahar's death sparked widespread outrage in Iran and throughout the world and focused international attention on violations of women's rights in Iran. [Amnesty International](#) issued a statement on September 12, 2019.

"What happened to Sahar Khodayari is heart-breaking and exposes the impact of the Iranian authorities' appalling contempt for women's rights in the country. Her only 'crime' was being a woman in a country where women face discrimination that is entrenched in law and plays out in the most horrific ways imaginable in every area of their lives, even sports," AI said.

Amnesty International also addressed the stadium ban on Iranian women, saying, "This discriminatory ban must end immediately and the international community, including football's world governing body, FIFA, and the Asian Football Confederation, must take urgent action to end the ban and to ensure that women are allowed access to all sports stadiums without discrimination or risk of prosecution or punishment."

It was reiterated in the statement, "Amnesty International believes that Sahar Khodayari would still be alive if it were not for this draconian ban and the subsequent trauma of her arrest, detention and prosecution for attempting to circumvent it. Her death must not be in vain. It must spur change in Iran if further tragedies are to be avoided in the future."

On September 22, 2019, football fans in Iran sang, "Sahar, we will always remember you," before Tehran's derby at Azadi Stadium. In this way, they expressed solidarity with Iranian women who seek to enjoy their natural right to attend sports stadiums and watch their favorite teams.

Iran officials remain intransigent on stadium ban despite global outrage

Despite worldwide and domestic censure of the ban which led to the death of Sahar Khodayari, the Iranian regime continued to stress on their repressive restrictions for women.

Tehran's Police Chief [Hossein Rahimi](#) warned, "No woman or girl is allowed to enter Azadi Stadium to watch the derby held in the capital, and if they are seen, they will be arrested." (The state-run ROKNA news agency – September 17, 2019)

Nasser Makarem Shirazi, a religious authority echoing the views of the mullahs' supreme leader, stressed that women could follow the games from the media and their presence was unnecessary. (The state-run Aftab News Agency – August 5, 2019)



Reacting to the deadline set by FIFA for the Iranian regime to allow women into stadiums, General Prosecutor, Mohammad Jafari Montazeri, said women's presence in the stadiums is a calculated move by the enemies. "What is the law according to which FIFA is allowed to decide for a country how to set up (the spectators) in its stadiums?" (The state-run Entekhab.ir, September 29, 2019)

FIFA shocks the world

Despite such official reactions, [FIFA President](#) shocked the world by his remarks on September 22. Gianni Infantino announced, "We have been assured, that as of the next international game of Iran, women will be allowed to enter football stadiums" during World Cup qualifier in Tehran in October!



Critics say in light of recent developments and official reactions in Iran to FIFA's deadline, Infantino's remarks could be considered naïve, at best.

Restricting women's presence in the stadiums to just one game, would literally give an open hand to the Iranian regime to continue the status quo which is nothing but discriminating against women and suppressing their most fundamental social rights.

[Iranian women cannot understand](#) FIFA's position since they are paying the price of struggling for their right to enter stadiums every day by being widely arrested, brutalized, jailed and with their lives. But the World Football Federation gets easily persuaded by statements of Rouhani's officials who seek to buy time and fend off further international pressure by such publicity stunts. Rouhani has time and again confessed that his government does not have the power to implement their promises.

Total overhaul of the Provision of Security for Women bill

A [VAW bill](#) was finalized by the Iranian regime's Judiciary and sent to the government on September 17, 2019. The bill called "[Provision of Security for Women \(PSW\)](#)" had been stalled for eight years in the labyrinths of decision making in the parliament, the Guardian Council and the Judiciary Branch.

The Judiciary changed the bill's name to "Protection, Dignity and Provision of Security for Mesdames Against Violence."

The regime's Judiciary removed at least 41 articles of the original bill ostensibly because they overlapped with the Islamic Punishment Code and the Criminal Procedures Regulations, or because they contradicted the regime's so-called policy of de-imprisonment. The present bill has been re-written in five chapters and 77 articles. (The official IRNA news agency – September 17, 2019)

Some experts say a major deficiency in the new bill is replacing the word "women" with "Mesdames" which refers only to married women. Therefore, girls under 18, single women, victims of social ills and those subjected to such harms, are not covered by this bill.

Neither does the bill criminalize sexual harassment, rape, and sexual exploitation of women and it does not contain any punishment for the assailants.

Another serious problem is the lack of effective and sufficient guarantees in the bill to prevent violence against women or counter it. The bill has totally turned a blind eye on the state-sponsored violence against women to enforce the compulsory veil, as the main systematic form of VAW.