



# **Rights of Girl Children NON-EXISTENT in IRAN**

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**T**he 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a good time to address the plight of girl children in Iran.

When the CRC was adopted in 1989, children were promised that their rights would be protected, promoted, and respected.

Iran is a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1994) but will not apply any provision "incompatible with Islamic laws or [domestic] legislation."

The Iranian regime ratified the optional protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2007) but implementation of the protocol is severely lacking.

Iran is one of only 30 countries that have not ratified UN Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflicts.

On February 4, 2016, the UN Committee on the Right of the Child condemned the Iranian regime for the rising number of child marriages, discrimination against girl children and laws that do not criminalize sexual relations with girl children.

### **Iranian girl children, most vulnerable under a misogynous regime**

Being a woman and a child, makes Iranian girl children the most vulnerable under the misogynist rule of the mullahs since the rights of women and children are neither protected nor promoted in Iran.

The bill on the rights of children has been stalled in the parliament for 10 years.

The bill to increase the age of marriage for girl children in Iran was rejected in December 2018 by the Legal and Judicial Committee of the parliament for containing "religious and social deficiencies" and for contradicting "the teachings of Islam."

Civil and Penal codes do not clarify limits on physical punishment by parents. Fathers are not punished even for killing their daughters, because they are considered owner of their children's blood.

The Iranian Law to Protect Children and Adolescents (2002) does not protest against physical abuse; no mention of sexual abuse.

A bill called the Law to Support Disadvantaged, Defenseless and Abandoned Children was passed by the Iranian regime's Parliament on September 22, 2013, which sanctions marriage between the child and her guardian (stepfather), with the approval of a court.

### **Iranian girl children accountable before the law at age 9**

The age of criminal responsibility in Iran is discriminatory. The Iranian Constitution sets 9 the legal age of criminal accountability for girl children in Iran and the mandatory dress code forces them to cover their hair since the first day of school at age 6.

Instead of ensuring their health and education, the clerical regime holds appalling annual coming of age ceremonies, called "*jashn-e taklif*", where 9-year-old girls are recognized as religiously mature and have to account before the law.





### Education, school dropouts, illiteracy

Education is neither free nor mandatory in Iran.

The Iranian Education Ministry is formally asking for tuition from students, which further contributes to school drop outs since more than 80 percent of the populace are living below the poverty line and poverty is rampant.

Poverty of families not affording to pay for their children's education, child participation in the family's economic activities, seasonal immigrations, and lacking registered birth certificates, are among the reasons Iranian children are deprived of going to school.

There are approximately 15 million school-age children in Iran, half of them girls.

Estimates vary from 2 to 4 million on the number of children who are left out of school and deprived of education mainly because their parents do not afford to send them to school.

Abbas Soltanian, deputy for mid-level education in the Ministry of Education, announced last year, "A total of 4.23 per cent of students dropped out of school in the previous academic year. Girl students constituted 4.17 per cent of it, meaning that there is a big difference between girls' and boys' drop outs."<sup>1</sup>

Drop-out of girl children, 6 years and older, is widespread particularly in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, Khuzestan, Western Azerbaijan, and Eastern Azerbaijan.



*Two to four million school age children are deprived of education*

The latest estimates put the number of illiterates in Iran around 11 million, i.e. 13 per cent of the population,<sup>2</sup> two-thirds of whom are women and girls.

A 2015 report by the presidential Directorate on Women and Family Affairs described the state of illiteracy of women and girl children in Iran as alarming, adding that the situation was critical in some 40 cities.

### Education 2030 document

Rouhani government's acceptance with reservations of UNESCO Education 2030 document in 2016, wreaked havoc within the Iranian regime.<sup>3</sup>

Opposition to the UNESCO document built up and the supreme leader weighed in. Finally, in June 2017, the regime's president, Hassan Rouhani, presided a meeting of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (SCCR) which decided to stop implementation of the Education 2030 document and consider the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) adopted under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in December 2011, as the benchmark for all educational affairs in the country.

<sup>1</sup> The state-run ILNA news agency - June 25, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Seyyed Mohammad Javad Abtahi, member of the parliamentary Education and Research Committee, the state-run salamatnews.com, September 26, 2018

<sup>3</sup> Education 2030 Framework for Action (SDG4) and Iranian officials' hysteric reactions to it, NCRI Women's Committee, June 2017

The reason why this "non-binding" document with the genuine goal of equitable education and learning opportunities for all sends such tremors through the ruling clique in Iran, can be clearly seen in the following paragraph from the state-run Tasnim news agency which is the mouthpiece for the IRGC Quds Force:

"In the (Education) 2030 Framework for Action, there are references to terms such as global citizenship and gender equality... The adoption and implementation of this document would transform national education in many ways. Among them, one can point to the omission of sexual stereotypes, teaching of sex education to children, and omission of some Quranic concepts and values from text books to promote peace and non-violence."<sup>4</sup>

### Inadequate educational spaces, hazardous transportation

Girl children in Iran are also victims of substandard structures of schools and unsafe transportation in light of the irresponsible approach of education officials and staff. Every year, a number of young girls lose their lives while on the road to school, [under a collapsed wall](#) or ceiling, or in fire. Unsafe heating systems have also caused repeated poisoning of students.



*Donya Veisi died in her first days in school when the wall collapsed on her*

- A worn-out minibus overturned on the road in Gha'emshahr, northern Iran, on January 15, 2019, leading to the death of a young girl and wounding of another.<sup>5</sup>
- Twenty-five girls were poisoned on January 29, 2019, after being exposed to carbon monoxide leak from the heating system in their classroom in the girls' elementary school in Bam, Kerman Province.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The state-run Tasnim news agency, May 7, 2017

<sup>5</sup> The state-run Tabnak website - January 16, 2019

<sup>6</sup> The state-run ISNA News Agency – January 29, 2019

- [Four pre-school](#) and elementary girl students lost their lives in a fire on December 18, 2018, at a girls' school in Osveh Hassaneh in Zahedan, capital of Sistan and Baluchestan Province. The victims were Mona Khosroparast, Maryam Nokandi, Saba Arabi, and [Yekta Mirshekar](#) who died two days later in hospital.<sup>7</sup>



STUDENTS HOLDING  
PLACARDS, SAYING,  
“OUR SCHOOL DOES  
NOT HAVE A CEILING  
AND IT IS SHUT DOWN  
ON RAINY DAYS” AND  
“OUR CLASS IS COLD  
AND NO ONE IS  
THINKING OF US.”



- The ceiling of a girls' secondary school in Rasht was burned due to the short circuit of the electrical wiring on the roof of the school.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The state-run Tasnim news agency – December 18, 2018

<sup>8</sup> The state-run Tabnak Website – February 6, 2019



- Twenty elementary [school girls were injured](#), some in critical conditions, on the way back from camping when their minibus collided with another car in Fasa, southern Fars Province.<sup>9</sup>
- Leila Osmani, 12, and Abbas Osmani, 13, lost their lives when a school minibus crashed with a trailer truck on the Omidiyeh to Mahshahr axis. Ten other students were injured in this accident.<sup>10</sup>
- Eleven high school girls from Kermanshah got wounded with broken arms and legs when their minibus overturned on Kangavar-Sahneh road. The accident was reported on April 22, 2019.<sup>11</sup>
- [Three young girls](#) drowned while drinking water from a Hootag. The tragic incident took place in Chabahar, in the deprived Sistan and Baluchestan Province, on May 29, 2019.<sup>12</sup>

In the absence of pipelines and even tankers, people in this region dig ditches to collect rain as a water reservoir for both humans and animals. Monireh Khedmati, Maryam Khedmati and Sierra Delshab were studying in the second and third grade.



*Monireh Khedmati, Maryam Khedmati and Sierra Delshab drowned in a hootag (background)*

- And finally, a case which must never be forgotten. In December 2012, the elementary girls' school of Shinabad village caught fire due to mal functioning of a kerosene heater. 37 girls severely burned in the fire, leading to two deaths. The girls and their families were promised compensation, but officials never delivered.

<sup>9</sup> The state-run Rouydad24 Website, April 10, 2019

<sup>10</sup> The state-run Jamaran Website – February 6, 2019

<sup>11</sup> The state-run ISNA news agency, April 22, 2019

<sup>12</sup> The official IRNA news agency – May 29, 2019

- Shinabad was not the only fire incident inflicting serious injuries on Iranian girl children. A similar case emerged last April, when six who had suffered burns in a fire incident at their school in Doroodzan, travelled to Tehran to hold a sit-in protest and demand assistance for their treatment and its high costs. Each of the six girls, now 20 years old, suffered more than 50% injuries in a fire incident 13 years ago at their school in the southern Fars Province. In their case, too, none of the promises for their treatment have been delivered.

While the Iranian regime spends billions of dollars on war in Syria and Yemen and on missile tests and terrorist activities, it allocates a little budget for the country's infrastructures, schools and universities.

### Early, forced marriages are violence against Iranian girl children

Early marriages are considered violence against women and are the worst form of oppression of Iranian girl children and future women of Iran.

Institutionalized in the clerical regime's laws, the legal age of marriage for Iranian girl children is 13 years, and they can be given to marriage even younger if the father and a judge decide that they are mature enough.

In view of the bankrupt economic situation in Iran, rampant unemployment, and 80% of the population living under the poverty line, [forced marriage of girl children](#) has turned into the only way for a large number of families in Iran to reduce their expenses or earn some income.

Forced early marriage is also the most significant contributor to school dropouts among girl children in Iran.

In addition to creating various [mental and physical problems](#) for young girls, forced early marriages of girl children in Iran have paved the way for [a plethora of social ills](#) such as early divorces, [child widows](#), domestic violence against women and murder.



**Forcible Marriage of Girl Children**

Iranian constitution sanctions early and forced marriages

**600,000 girl children were given to marriage in Iran in 2018, Judiciary official admits**

**15,000 child widows under 15 years of age in Iran**

The infographic features a circular photograph of a young girl with a somber expression. The text is presented in a clean, sans-serif font, with key statistics highlighted in bold. The background is a light blue-grey with yellow and blue circular accents.

The number of early marriages of girl children in Iran has seen a delirious rise in recent years. Ali Kazemi, advisor for the legal deputy of the Judiciary Branch, announced on March 4,

2019, that in the course of just one year (March 2018-March 2019), some 5 to 6 hundred thousand (600,000) child marriages had taken place in Iran.<sup>13</sup>

This is three to four folds the previous official statistics of 180,000 early marriages per year.<sup>14</sup>

The Iranian census organization has released new statistics on early marriages in Iran. According to the new data, 234,000 marriages of girl children under 15 years of age were officially registered by this organization from March 2017 to March 2018 (Persian year 1396). 194 of these were marriages of girl children under 10 years old.<sup>15</sup>

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According to Farshid Yazdani, one of the officers in charge of the associations supporting children, "Early marriages take place while persons under 18 years of age are not permitted to do any business. Such marriages thus ruin their future and life." Yazdani added, "Poverty is the most important economic factor leading to early marriages."<sup>16</sup>

### Child Labor

At least a quarter of Iranian students are forced to quit school every year, a large number of whom join the estimated 3 to 7 million child laborers.<sup>17</sup>

A recent video clip produced in February 2019 on the situation of child laborers featured interviews with these children who spoke of being physically and sexually abused in various ways by municipality agents.

Earlier, in November 2017, following a research done on 400 child laborers, it was revealed by an official of Social Services in Tehran's Municipality that some 90% of child laborers are sexually abused. "We are going to prove that 90 per cent of child laborers get raped."<sup>18</sup> The state-run Salamatnews.com published a report run by the official Iran newspaper which included some painful examples of sexual assault on deprived girl children and child laborers. The same story was also reported by the state-run Rokna.ir website. The reports narrated the stories of girl child laborers who are assaulted and raped since very young age due to poverty and addiction of their parents.

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<sup>13</sup> The state-run ILNA news agency- March 5, 2019

<sup>14</sup> The official IRNA news agency, August 5, 2018

<sup>15</sup> The state-run Iran daily newspaper – October 30, 2019

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Nahid Tajeddin, member of the board of directors of the Social Commission of the Majlis, the state-run Salamat news, September 27, 2017

<sup>18</sup> The executive director of the Organization of Social Services in Tehran's Municipality, the state-run Salamatnews.com – November 8, 2017



More recently, a member of the mullahs' parliament, asserted, "Currently, there are some 15,000 scavengers in the capital, 5,000 of whom are children. 40% of them are 10 to 15 years old and their families' only breadwinners."<sup>19</sup>

State-run media have written about the girl children sifting through garbage saying they are more vulnerable to diseases than boys. Their long hairs are full of lice and they have not enough water to wash their hair. The little water they use is contaminated. Iron deficiency, lice, skin and ear infections, severe malnutrition, hepatitis A and AIDS are just some of the diseases child laborers are affected with.



*Most child laborers are sexually abused*

Elham Fakhari, a member of Tehran's City Council, had earlier said, "Most of these children have diseases, but their illnesses are not a priority among their problems, because most of them are sexually abused."<sup>20</sup>

A social activist also said, "Children sifting through garbage work an average of more than 10 hours a day. There were kids who worked 20 hours a day. This is kind of a modern slavery."<sup>21</sup>

There are children from 4 to 12 years old among the scavengers. Living in sheds made of junks and full of vermin, lack of bathrooms and showers, and contagious diseases are just some of the problems these children have to deal with.

<sup>19</sup> Hossein Maghsoudi, member of the mullahs' parliament, the state-run ICANA news agency - October 18, 2019

<sup>20</sup> The state-run ILNA news agency - June 12, 2019

<sup>21</sup> The state-run Tahlil-e Iran website- January 8, 2018

### Child abuse

Child abuse and violence against children is the first social ill in Iran, but accurate data are unavailable.<sup>22</sup>

One social expert reported of over 16,000 instances of violence against children being registered in just six months in 2018, without specifying the scope.<sup>23</sup> A Welfare Organization deputy announced that 13,000 cases of child abuse had been reported only to one emergency center in West Azerbaijan Province in the year 2017.<sup>24</sup> He did not say how many emergency centers exist in the province.

Every now and then a case of child abuse shocks the society.

The discovery of three children including two girls who had been tortured by their father and stepmother outraged the public in the city of Mahshahr, Khuzestan Province, in southwestern Iran.

Fatemeh, 12, Omolbanin, 8, and their five-year-old brother, Ali Akbar were tortured physically and psychologically by an ax, a hammer, hot iron rods, etc.<sup>25</sup> The children had been kept in the back yard in hot weather and their mouths were glued to prevent them from screaming. Fatemeh, 12, was discovered tied to iron bars and not able to move. Her stepmother broke her elbow by an ax and her teeth using a hammer. Various parts of the children's bodies had been burnt.



*Fatemeh and Omolbanin, and their brother were found in Mahshahr, Khuzestan, tortured by stepmother*

<sup>22</sup> Kamel Delpasand, sociologist and a researcher in social sciences, interview with the official IRNA news agency, July 18, 2018

<sup>23</sup> Reza Jafari, head of the Social Emergencies, interview with the state-run ILNA news agency, February 25, 2018

<sup>24</sup> Mehrdad Motallebi, Social Affairs deputy of the Welfare Organization of West Azerbaijan, the state-run Uromnews.com, August 7, 2018

<sup>25</sup> The state-run Asriran.com, April 24, 2018

In Damavand, Tehran Province, it was reported that a two-year-old girl was burned by her father and stepmother.<sup>26</sup>

A three-year-old girl in a village in Marand, East Azerbaijan Province, went into coma after being brutalized by her addicted father.<sup>27</sup>

A young woman, 20, divulged that she had been abused and raped by her father since she was eight, but had feared to talk about it.<sup>28</sup>

A six-year-old girl by the name of Haddiseh died after 8 days of brain death, on January 2, 2019, at Kamyab Hospital in Mashhad. There were scars of infected burns by cigarettes and hot wire on her body and genitalia.<sup>29</sup>



<sup>26</sup> The state-run Tasnim news agency, September 1, 2019

<sup>27</sup> The state-run ISNA news agency, May 27, 2019

<sup>28</sup> The state-run Fararu website, June 2, 2019

<sup>29</sup> The state-run Khorasan daily, January 2, 2019



**Death penalty for juvenile child offenders**

Iran continues to execute children and youth who committed a crime while under 18 years of age, in violation of international standards. It has executed 9 juvenile offenders in 2019, alone.

Zeinab Sekaanvand, 24, was hanged in the Central Prison of Urmia, in West Azerbaijan on October 2, 2018. She was accused of killing her husband in 2012 at the age of 17. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet issued a statement condemning this execution. She added, "The sheer injustice in the case of Zeinab Sekaanvand Lokran is deeply distressing... The serious question marks over her conviction appear not to have been adequately addressed before she was executed. The bottom line is that she was a juvenile at the time the offence was committed and international law clearly prohibits the execution of juvenile offenders."

Forced into marriage at the age of 15, Zeinab Sekaanvand lived two painful years, being battered everyday by her husband. The 24-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman was convicted of killing her abusive husband at the age of 17. She told the judge that her husband's brother, who had raped her several times, had actually committed the murder.



The poster features a yellow background with a white world map. On the left, a black arrow points right with the word "URGENT" in yellow. Below this, the text "ARRESTED AGED 17" and "TORTURED IN DETENTION" is written in large, bold, black letters. To the right of this text is a portrait of Zeinab Sekaanvand, a woman wearing a black headscarf. Below the main text, it says "Tweet now to stop the imminent execution of Zeinab". At the bottom left is the hashtag "#SaveZeinab". At the bottom right is the Amnesty International logo, which includes the word "AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL" and a stylized torch icon.

*Zeinab Sekaanvand was executed despite international campaigns to save her life*