



Token admission of women
to stadium stops
where it began

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Token admission of women to stadium stops where it began

Iranian women managed to officially enter [Tehran's Azadi Stadium](#) in October for the first time in 40 years. This was achieved only after domestic and international pressure built up on the regime after Sahar Khodayari, "the Blue Girl," self-immolated in protest to a six-month prison sentence for her attempt to circumvent the unjust ban on women's presence in Iranian stadiums. The clerical regime's retreat, however, stopped right there at the end of the 2022 World Cup qualifier soccer match between Iran and Cambodia, and is not going to be repeated at least until March.

Limited numbers of Iranian women were able to purchase tickets and enter Azadi Stadium on October 10, 2019. Shouting, "Blue girl, wishing you were here," Iranian women showed that they [owe their presence](#) in Azadi stadium to the young woman, [Sahar Khodayari](#) who set herself alight in September.

A young woman held up a placard which read, "Iran's Blue Girl, your name has become eternal." Female security forces in the women's platform attempted to arrest her, but other spectators prevented them from doing so.

Out of 100,000 seats in Azadi Stadium which basically remained vacant, only 4,000 were allocated to women. Couples were separated and women were bused to their platform to prevent them from going to other places around the stadium. The women's platform was fenced off. Female State Security forces were stationed on alert. A considerable number of plainclothes agents were sitting among the spectators. Closed circuit cameras also kept every movement under control. Overall, women did not have any freedom of action.



A one-time hollow show

[The limited admission of women](#) to Azadi Stadium under tight security control was a hollow show designed to deceive FIFA inspectors, which ended right there at the end of the 2022 World Cup qualifier soccer match between Iran and Cambodia.

Amir Mehdi Alavi, the spokesman for Iran's Football Federation, declared, "Currently it is not possible for women to be present in league games. Representatives of the World Football Federation (FIFA) who had traveled to Tehran, said that only the international games are in their jurisdiction, and that they respect the laws enforced by countries regarding their premier league." (The state-run khabaronline.ir – October 14, 2019)

The next international game is scheduled for March.

Korosh Bahadori, the general director of the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports in North Khorasan Province, said, "The permit for women's entrance to sports stadiums is only for Tehran and not good for watching the games in other cities." (The official IRNA news agency – October 13, 2019)

Absurd religious claims to justify the ban

Officially, there are no laws in Iran banning women's entrance to sports stadiums. However, to justify the ban, religious authorities claim that "mixing of youths is the source of many moral and social problems. In some sports, men do not wear suitably in women's presence."

The mullahs' supreme leader Ali Khamenei had personally confirmed the ban in 2015, underlining that women's entrance to stadiums is "prohibited and unlawful, and defying it would amount to a breach of law."

Whereas in the most important ritual of Muslims men are semi-clad while walking side by side women during the pilgrimage in Mecca. The mullahs make up such absurd claims to impose more restrictions on women and on society at large.

The Iranian regime must formally declare that women would be allowed to attend all future matches in all stadiums, lifting all the discriminatory restrictions on women's entrance to stadiums.

International outcry

Amnesty International issued a [statement](#) on October 9, 2019, urging Iranian authorities to lift all restrictions on women attending matches in all football stadiums.

AI wrote, "Iran's decision to allow a token number of women into the stadium for tomorrow's football match is a cynical publicity stunt by the authorities intended to whitewash their image following the global outcry over Sahar Khodayari's tragic death."

"Anything short of a full reversal of the ban on women accessing all football stadiums is an insult to Sahar Khodayari's memory and an affront to the rights of all the women of Iran who have been courageously campaigning for the ban to be lifted," AI added.

Amnesty International called on the World Football Federation (FIFA) to make sure that Iranian women are permitted to attend all matches.

Brian Hook, U.S. Special Representative for Iran, also criticized Iranian authorities for putting the 4,000 women who bought the limited tickets available to female fans in a "caged off" upper corner of the stadium, separate from the male fans.

Winfred Schaefer, former head coach of Esteghlal

Mr. Winfred Schaefer, former head coach of Tehran's Esteghlal team, criticized FIFA in an interview with a German website on October 14, 2019. Mr. Schaefer is an experienced coach from Germany and has lived in Iran for two years.

Schaefer said, "This is exactly what had happened in previous years. It will not change anything. I am very disappointed that FIFA took action only after the outburst in Instagram and other media. FIFA must have given a serious ultimatum to Iran. The Iranian league should not have started. FIFA should have announced that Iran must implement the law, otherwise its clubs and national teams would not be allowed to participate in national competitions. No compromise..."

In another place in his interview, Mr. Schaefer added, "That young woman (Sahar Khodayari) did not commit suicide because they did not allow her inside the stadium; she committed suicide because she was sentenced to six months in jail for attempting to enter. Everyone in Iran knows what is it like in the prisons...."

"I have not met anyone in Iran who supports the ban (on women's entry to stadiums); no one supports the mandatory hijab. No one supports the government. But everyone is scared. It is hard for you to imagine if you have not lived in Iran. In the two years I lived in Iran, I met many people in various professions, industrialists, academicians, footballers, taxi drivers, and even ministers. I did not find a single person who supports the regime... But fear is prevalent among people, not only over this issue, but generally for making any political remarks," he added.

At least 300 women, children infected with HIV

October was also marked by a tragic development in Charmahal Bakhtiari Province, in southwestern Iran, where at least 300 women, children and even infants were found infected with [HIV virus in Chenar Mahmoudi](#) village apparently due to repeated use of disposable syringes for diabetes test by the clinic in this village. The angry residents of this and other villages in Lordegan County held anti-government protests lasting more than two weeks.

Local sources said, "Two months ago, some of the residents of this village noticed that after taking the diabetes test, some of them are suspected of being infected with HIV/AIDs. These patients did not stop at this point and referred to medical centers in Isfahan and Shiraz where the test results were also positive." (The state-run ROKNA news agency – October 2, 2019)

Chenar Mahmoudi protesters say the agent from the House of Health had used contaminated syringes for multiple persons to take diabetes test, leading to the infection of a large number of residents of this village to HIV virus.

Government officials have evaded responsibility with regards to the widespread HIV infection in Chenar Mahmoudi and other villages in that area.



Supreme court lets rapist deputy off the hook

In another shocking development, Tehran's Supreme Court rejected the flogging and exile verdict for Salman Khodadadi, accused of raping a young woman.

Following a suit filed by [Zahra Navidpour](#), Tehran Province's Criminal Court convicted Salman Khodadadi of adultery "without use of violence" and sentenced him to 99 lashes in addition to two years of internal exile and deprivation of holding elected or appointed positions.

Khodadadi objected the ruling.

While rejecting the charge of "rape," the Supreme Court branch accepted the convict's objection and did not uphold the preliminary ruling because Khodadadi suffers from diabetes and injects insulin. The case was turned back to the Criminal Court of Tehran to be re-examined. (The state-run Fararu website – October 15, 2019)

Zahra Navidpour, 28, was looking for a job after her father's death, when she was offered a job in Tehran by Salman Khodadadi, the so-called deputy of Malekan in the mullahs' parliament.

Malekan is a small city in East Azerbaijan Province.

Zahra was locked up, harassed and subsequently raped by Khodadadi at his office in Tehran.

Finally, Zahra Navidpour was found dead at her mother's house on January 6, 2019. The coroner's office was supposed to perform autopsy on her to determine the reason for this suspicious death, but security forces stole and secretly buried her body in a village before autopsy.



Many faces of poverty afflicting Iranian women

Other news in October further shed light on the plight of Iranian women grappling with difficulties of life under the rule of the mullahs.

More than 80 percent of the Iranian society live under the poverty line and poverty has taken on a feminine face.

An Iranian sociologist by the name of Kazemipour was cited as saying, "Presently, some 21 million people live in Iran's rural areas. Ten million and 600 thousand of them are men and 10 million and 100 thousand are women." (The state-run ISNA news agency – October 16, 2019)

Some 10.1 million Iranian women living in rural areas have to engage in extremely difficult work in agriculture, carpet weaving, animal husbandry, etc., but they do not have access to reasonable hygiene and medical care.

Two teenage girls drown in water ditch

Poverty and deprivation in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, in southeastern Iran, cause various forms of death among the oppressed women and children in this region.

[Two teenage girls](#), Sara and Basmeh Kalmati, 14 and 16, drowned in a water ditch in Dashtyari district near Chabahar on October 10, 2019. They slid into the ditch (Hootag) when they had gone to wash clothes and dishes. (The state-run Khabarfori website – October 10, 2019)



Water piping projects in 210 villages in Dashtyari district have remained incomplete. Everyone receives only 15 liters of water per day which is brought in by tankers. So, the inhabitants dig ditches to save rain water. The water collected in these ditches called Hootag are used both for humans and animals and is contaminated. Occasionally, the girls and women who go to bring water from a Hootag fall into the ditch and lose their lives.

Young woman dies in Bahmaii

Another tragic incident happened when a young woman fell from a mountain in the town of Bahmaii in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. She had gone to the mountain to pick bushes to sell and earn a meager living, but she fell from the mountain and died, instantly.

The heart-rending video clip showing her lifeless body being carried by locals went viral. (The state-run Aparat website – October 28, 2019)

Female Koolbars

Many women and girls have joined the long line of couriers in Kurdistan who [carry huge loads](#) on their backs.

Halaleh Amini, representative of the Iranian Kurdistan Province, told this to the 23rd general summit of provincial councils. "It is most regrettable that we face women and girls who have to disguise themselves as men and join the long line of couriers," Amini said. (The state-run Tasnim news agency – October 10, 2019)



Women working in the brick kilns

Female workers hired by a brick kiln in south Tehran, live in small rooms made in the same place. They have no hygiene. Women do not have separate restrooms and taking bath is problematic for them. Water cut offs are frequent. Scorpions or snakes might sting them when bathing.

These women do not afford to pay for medical treatment. One of them had tooth infection, but could not afford to go to a dentist. The odor of her infected tooth had filled the room. A pregnant woman delivered her baby in the heat of summer right there amidst the bricks in the middle of a desert.



These women work six months in this brick kiln and return to their home town in Khorasan Province for the other six months of the year where they collect garbage.

Rahleh who has been working in the brick kiln since she was 13, says, "For every 20,000 bricks per day, I earn 60,000 tomans (\$5). But the master does not pay women but their husbands. It depends on the wishes of the man to spend the money at home or for something else and no one can ask them what they did with the money." (The state-run Iran newspaper – October 24, 2019)

Sifting through the garbage

Poverty also drives many [women and children to work for the “Garbage Mafia.”](#)

“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,” said Hossein Maghsoudi, member of the mullahs’ parliament. (The state-run ICANA news agency - October 18, 2019)

Girl children sifting through garbage are more vulnerable to diseases than boys. Their long hairs are full of lice and they do not have enough water to wash their hair. The little water they use is contaminated. (The state-run ICANA news agency - October 20, 2019)



Suicides due to poverty

Recent months have seen a growing number of women committing suicide due to poverty. Shockingly, this includes a relatively large number of women with children and even pregnant women.

According to Maryam Rasoulia, head of the Association of Iranian Psychologists, the Health Ministry’s data indicate that 73 percent of suicides are committed in slums. This shows that economic problems contribute to social ailments.” (The state-run Etemad newspaper – October 14, 2019)

Mohammad Norouzinia, head of the Education Department of [Dishmuk, in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad](#) Province, also revealed that 11 women had set themselves alight in this small town over a six-month period since March. He said poverty and destitution were among the main causes of these self-immolations. (The state-run Iran newspaper – October 6, 2019)

