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What was the fate of the bill to prevent Violence Against Women in Iran?

A special report by
the Women's Committee of
the National Council of Resistance of Iran





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IRAN

State-sponsored Violence Against Women



**400 women
killed**

in protests in November 2019

Halimeh Samiri
was among protesters
killed under torture



105 women executed
since 2013 under Hassan Rouhani

**Flogging continued
to be used as punishment:**

Elderly woman, 80, received 70 lashes
for following up the case of her murdered son

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Introduction

A misogynist tyrannical government is a precise definition of the current ruling regime in Iran. When a state or rulers of a country think of nothing but their own power and survival, and will stop at nothing to preserve it, you have a dictatorship; combine this with institutionalized discrimination and brutality against women and we will have a misogynist tyrannical regime. This means that the regime, with its fundamentalist ideology, is empowering its forces by brutalizing women, and consolidating its power by suppressing any opposition. It is clear that in such a system, violence, and in particular violence against women, is firstly state-sponsored, and secondly, is embedded in the governing laws. The brutal repression by the mullahs during the recent uprising of the Iranian people against young men and women who came to the streets to express their dissatisfaction is the best example and proof of the brutality of this regime. The regime killed more than 1,500 of the demonstrators using live bullets, heavy machine guns from helicopters and tanks, including at least 400 women and 17 juveniles.¹ Many of the detainees were killed under torture, the likes of Halimeh Samiri from Abadan² whose lifeless body after torture was left in front of her father's residence. The savagery of the

During the protests of
November 2019

400
women killed



Halimeh Samiri

**was among protesters
killed under torture**

treatment of peaceful demonstrators, to unjust and cruel executions of at least 105 women³ during Rouhani's tenure are all part of the puzzle which depicts the cruelty of this regime. Other examples include the flogging of an 80-year-old mother for allegedly pursuing the murder of her child. She was administered 70 lashes and subsequently carried to the prison since she could no longer walk and use her own legs. Other women like Reyhaneh Jabbari and Somayyeh Shahbazi were hanged for defending their honor and resisting their rapist. Anyone of these examples are shocking



105
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to the free world, but in Iran, under the rule of the clerical regime, their Supreme Leader, and laws, these tragedies are a common occurrence.

Under such a regime, Iran has neither provided detailed statistics nor undertaken international audits in spite of having in fact one of the highest statistics on violence against women. If we check the United Nation's Women's website, despite the fact that Iran ranks 118th in the area of inequality and 139th in the field of gender gap we will notice that there are no statistics given by the Iranian government. But since violence against women is directly linked to inequality, the SIGI World Center for the Development of Social Institutions

UN WOMEN Global Database on Violence against Women

HOME ABOUT ADVANCED SEARCH COUNTRY PROFILE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

Prevalence Data on Different Forms of Violence against Women:

Lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence : official national statistics not available
Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence in the last 12 months : official national statistics not available
Lifetime Non-Partner Sexual Violence : official national statistics not available
Child Marriage : 17 % ⁽¹⁾

Reports submitted by UN Human Rights Bodies:

Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences
Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

Gender Equality Indexes:

Gender Inequality Index Rank : 118 ⁽²⁾
Global Gender Gap Index Rank : 139 ⁽³⁾

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Map updated from 2016
The geographical names shown are for designation only and do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map updated on Sep 2016



in their report for 2019 sheds some light on this matter. This report, while examining the status of 120 countries, has placed Iran in a very low ranking. According to the SIGI report, Iran's ranking in the field of family discrimination is estimated at 89.9 percent and civil liberties are estimated at 75.1 percent. Authorities admit that violence against women has increased dramatically in recent years.

Regime experts admit that the latest investigation into violence against women in Iran which was conducted 14 years ago reveals that 66% of Iranian women experience violence in their lifetime.⁴

Regime scholars and experts also acknowledge that the legal, judicial, and law enforcement structures are such that men allow themselves to commit violence against women.

The constitution and the laws of the regime promote forced early marriage, child abuse, domestic violence, and honor killings. The legal age of marriage for girls in Iran is 13 years, and the father is even allowed to force his daughter to marry at a younger age, with the approval of the judge. Last year, the mullahs' parliament rejected a proposal to raise the age of marriage for girls to 16, saying it was in violation of religious teachings.

It should be noted that the regime's core beliefs are at odds with universal values. Despite being invited to join the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1992, Iran was one of five UN member states that never signed on. Only the first Article of this Convention known as Article 1, has 90 cases of inconsistency with the fundamental, civil, and penal rules of the clerical regime.⁵

Even though that on September 29, 2003 it became mandatory for the members to join the United Nations Convention to combat organized and transnational crimes, this regime refused to join. Countries that have accepted the Palermo Convention are committed to taking measures against transnational organized crime, including, in particular, the prevention of human trafficking, especially of women and children, contrary to the corrupt dictatorial policies in Iran.⁶

**Elderly woman, 80,
received 70 lashes
for following up the case of her
murdered son**



The adoption of a bill which was announced by state media

Elimination of Violence Against Women bill, Provision of Security for Women, or Protection of Women Against Violence, all refer to a bill concerning women in Iran that was long referred to by different administrations, but never adopted due to the overwhelmingly anti-women majority in the Parliament. With the coming to power of the Rouhani administration this topic once again started circulating and from the outset the ambiguities and interpretations of status of women became the norm of the day.

On September 17, 2019 after 8 years from introduction of the bill they finally announced that the bill was approved by the judiciary and forwarded to the government. Before forwarding the bill to the government for review, the judiciary had changed the bill's title to "Securing, Dignifying, and Protecting Women from Violence", while completely changing the purpose of the bill and depriving it of any possible effectiveness.⁷ The changes were so bad that even Parvaneh Salahshouri, a member of the Parliament, compared the changes to a "toothless lion" which will not solve any of the problems faced by women. "If the bill is passed, the situation for women will be significantly worse," Salahshouri said. The current bill eliminates the word violence against women and the parts that had addressed women's security have either been omitted or changed somehow. As a result, the nature of the bill is lost. ... In the bill, they tried playing with words."⁸

Last year Gholamhossein Mohseni Eje'ii,

spokesman for the judiciary and the first deputy minister of justice, acknowledged that one of the reasons religious authorities opposed the bill was that "it would shake the foundation of the family."⁹ Meanwhile, Ashraf Garamizadegan, a legal adviser in the Directorate of Women and Family Affairs, translated the meaning of the phrase "shaking the family foundations" in the culture of mullahs' clerical authorities as "weakening men's authority" in the family."¹⁰ Another member of parliament, Tayyebeh Siavoshi also acknowledged earlier that "women and mothers who are subjected to constant violence will not be able to have proper family management."¹¹

The current bill does not initially provide any definitions or frameworks of violence against women that would criminalize and establish a deterrent mechanism and then a punishment. Rather, in general, some of the criminal provisions of the Penal Code have been repeated in the bill.

Most of the text of the bill includes names of various organs to assist with propaganda tasks such as culture-building, and such that none have a time limit, no executive guarantees, and no credible audit authority. There is also no financial investment to prevent or organize violence and to shelter victims of violence.

Who is responsible for preventing violence against women?

Members of the National Committee responsible for the Protection, Dignity and Security of Women which include five well-known regime officials, are all men, except for Massoumeh Ebtekar, Director of Women and Family Affairs directorate. In addition to these officials, five members of the Qom Islamic Seminary are also on the committee, representing the most reactionary and anti-feminist sector of the religious dictatorship.

Who is accountable on prevention of violence against women in Iran?

**Massoumeh Ebtekar +
21 prominent male officials +
2 clergies from Qom's Seminary**



What is the content of the bill?

Some of the provisions of the bill promptly bring to mind the mindset of the enforcers of the clerical rule. For example, we read in Article 40: Anyone who attacks or harasses women or offends or insults their dignity in public places or on the streets, is sentenced to imprisonment and flogging.

Many films and images nowadays go viral daily in social media, showing the aggression of the regime's so-called Moral Police, while its perpetrators are not only never punished but also encouraged.¹² Various examples of these video clips have recently been released by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. The latest example of these images is of late October 2019.¹³ The video shows a young woman walking through a park without wearing a veil. A male officer stops her and orders her to wait for female officers to arrive so they can arrest her. As the young woman continues to move in the opposite direction, the male officer jumps and tackles her to the ground.¹⁴ Iranian women also remember bitter experiences such as the rape of Zahra Navidpour by Salman Khodadadi, a member of parliament from Malekan city. The judiciary not only did not prosecute the rapist but in return laid the blame on the young woman which ultimately led to her suicide. The member of Parliament was exonerated and exempted from any punishment due to his diabetic condition.¹⁵ Significant number of the articles including articles 45-50 instead of preventing violence against women concentrate on violations of the clerical *Sharia* laws in which women as victims are blamed and face criminal penalties. It has been repeatedly proven that the largest and main human trafficking networks in Iran are affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards.¹⁶ It is noteworthy to point out that one of the last victims of execution, Somayyeh Shahbazi,¹⁷ in an unfair judicial process was executed cruelly, on December 4, 2019 after six years of imprisonment. This was an eerily reminder of the execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari,¹⁸ who was executed for defending herself during an attempted rape by a member of Ministry of Intelligence.

Articles 45-50 are as follows:

Article 45- Any request or suggestion for illicit relations with women shall be considered a crime and shall be punishable by law.

Article 46- Whenever one encourages or persuades a woman to engage in acts contrary to her chastity, he or she shall be sentenced under one of the penalties provided for in Article 127 of the Islamic Penal Code (2013).

Article 47- Unauthorized abduction (exporting or importing or transit), unauthorized transportation or transfer of a woman into or out of the country, although with her consent, if convicted in an organized manner, shall result in a fourth-degree imprisonment and otherwise a fifth-degree imprisonment.

Article 48- Anyone who commits or conducts an act, contrary to the provisions of law, which leads to the forced removal of a woman's veil, shall be punished with imprisonment or a fine of sixth degree.

Article 49 - Anyone, through telecommunications or cyberspace, and other methods, invites women to mixed parties, or to other places and centers of corruption or prostitution, will be charged with minimum or maximum penalties for the establishment or administration of corruption centers or Prostitution.

Article 50- Whenever in public places if a man deliberately rubs his body or makes contact with a woman in any way, shall be sentenced to lashes.

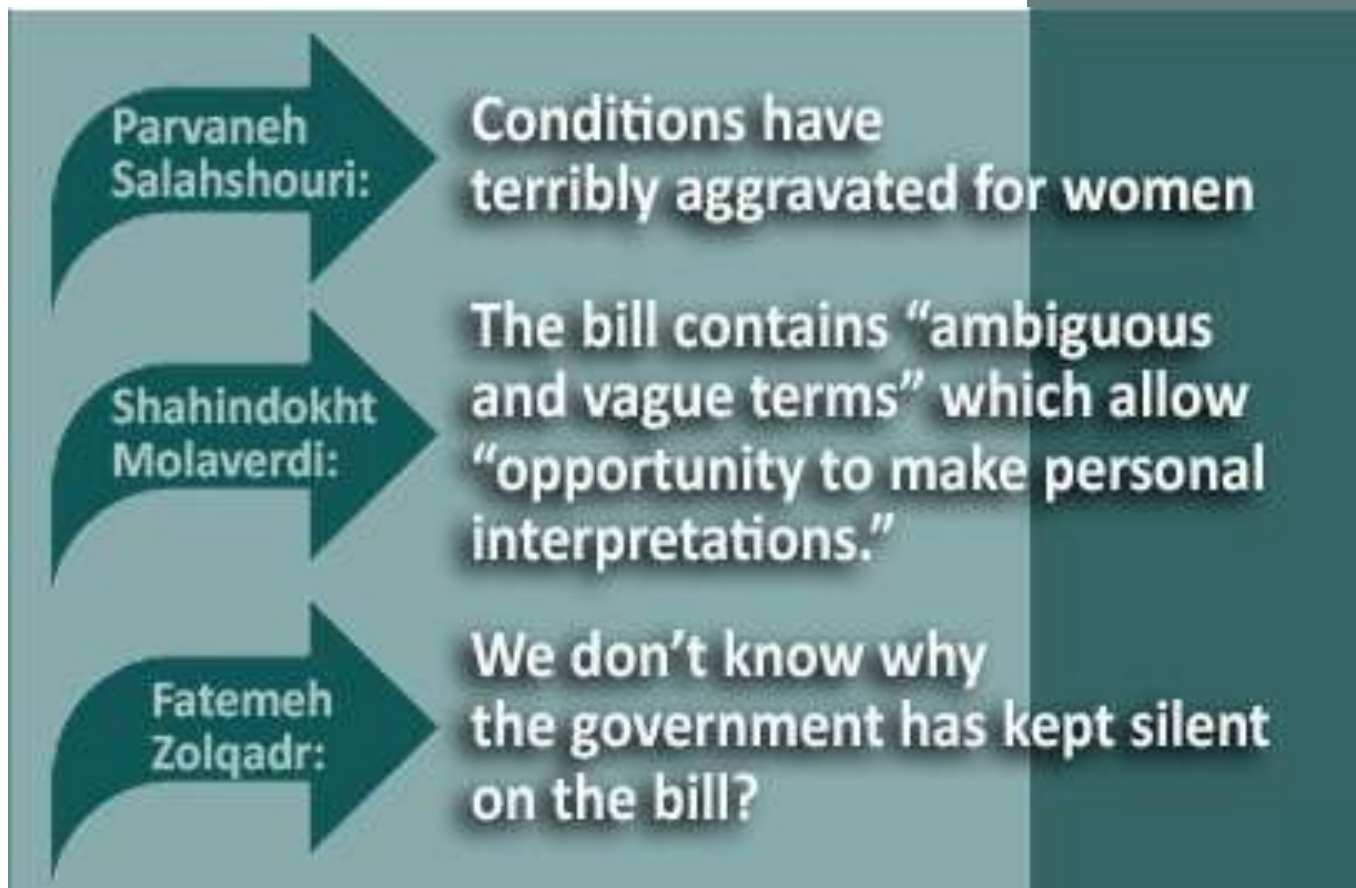
According to Article 75 of the bill, "crimes that fall within the jurisdiction of the criminal courts with a multiplicity of judges should be dealt with in presence of a female counselor if possible." The law already existed for family courts, but regime officials had dismissed female advisers under the pretext of lack of funding.¹⁹

In addition to the above, Shahindokht Molaverdi, the presidential deputy for citizen's rights, has acknowledged that the bill contains "general, ambiguous, cautionary and interpretive" terms that "provide an opportunity for personal takes and interpretations." She also points to the replacement of the word "women" with *Banovan* or (ladies),²⁰ asking: "Recently, the Judiciary spokesman has speculated that the bill is intended to ensure the safety of women who adhere to religious laws and regulations, so what about the rest of the population!?"²¹

The fate of the bill

After being stuck behind organizational bureaucracy in various government circles for many years, and while not very effective in providing security for women, the bill has now been held up since September 17, 2019, for more than three months by the Rouhani government. MPs say even if the bill reaches parliament in the final months of this session, which ends in June 2020, it will not come up for consideration.

Fatemeh Zolqadr, a spokeswoman for the parliamentary Cultural Commission, in an interview told ROKNA News, "The bill has been sent from the judiciary to the government, but we do not know why it is being held up in the government." Parvaneh Salahshouri reiterates the fact that there is no hope for women's rights under this misogynist regime, by saying "I do not believe that the situation in the next parliament will be better than this one and that the bill could be implemented. Even if a good parliament is formed, with the Judiciary and the Guardian Council in control, it is unclear what will happen to the bill. The same is true in the State Expediency Council. So, it's very difficult to work in the women's field."²²



Regime experts:
Legal, judicial and
disciplinary structure promotes
violence against women

Latest investigations on
violence in Iran took place:
14 years ago

%66 of Iranian women
experience violence in their life time

Two out of every three women
are subjected to violence in Iran



Conclusion

As we have seen, the claim of combatting violence against women in a fundamentalist system like Iran, whose brutality and inhumanity have been proven in law and in practice in its 40-year history, is no more than a joke. The fact of the matter is that the regime does not have the power to renounce itself and the misogynist laws underlying its rule. It is for this reason it has so far refused to adhere to international conventions on the prohibition of violence against women like CEDAW and other international conventions, including Istanbul and Palermo.

It is clear that Iranian women do not put their hopes in such maneuvers by the regime but as government officials have repeatedly acknowledged, brave Iranian women are at the forefront of the protests and lead the uprising to overthrow the regime which is the main source of violence against them. They bravely pay the price for freedom and equality because of the fact that they realize it is the overthrow of this regime which will put an end to “institutionalized violence against women” leading to equality, rule of law and prosperity for the Iranian women.

Endnotes

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3. Maliheh Haji Hassani executed in Shiraz – 105 women executed under Rouhani ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, January 18, 2020
4. The official IRNA news agency, July 18, 2018
5. Why the Iranian regime does not join the CEDAW? website of the NCRI Women's Committee, March 5, 2016
6. The state-run Tasnim news agency, February 1, 2018
7. The official IRNA news agency, September 17, 2019
8. The state-run khabaronline, December 16, 2019
9. The official IRNA news agency, February 17, 2019
10. The state-run ILNA news agency, September 18, 2018
11. The state-run Donya-ye Eqtesad website (World of Economy), July 17, 2018
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13. Compulsory veil, the state-sponsored most common VAW in Iran ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, November 24, 2018
14. Security Force beats up young woman walking without the compulsory veil ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, October 30, 2019
15. Tehran Supreme Court rejected flogging and exile for the rapist deputy ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, October 17, 2019
16. MODERN SLAVERY, a brief study of human trafficking in Iran ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, September 19, 2018
17. Somayyeh Shahbazi Jahrouii hanged for defending herself against rape ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, December 4, 2019
18. Reyhaneh Jabbari hanged early morning ,website of the NCRI Women's Committee, October 25, 2014
19. The official website of the clerical regime's parliament, ICANA, November 20, 2016; the state-run Aftab website, April 21, 2010
20. *Banovan* or ladies in Iranian culture relates to respected women who usually refers to married women.
21. The state-run Jamaran.ir, October 2, 2019
22. The state-run khabaronline, December 16, 2019

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