



NCRI WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

A collage of several photographs showing healthcare workers in full personal protective equipment (PPE), including gowns, masks, and face shields. They are in various hospital settings, some in a ward, some in a laboratory, and some in a control room. One worker in the foreground is making a peace sign. The collage is set against a background of green and white geometric shapes.

# APRIL 2020

## MONTHLY REPORT

Nurses on the frontline  
vs. rising number of  
COVID-19 cases;  
health crisis in prisons,  
and regime's inaction

## Nurses on the frontline vs. rising number of COVID-19 cases, health crisis in prisons, and regime's inaction

As pointed out by the UN Secretary General and the Executive Director of UN Women in late March, the COVID-19 pandemic “exacerbates gender inequality” and “puts women under considerable stress.”

The [UN Women’s Executive Director](#) also pointed out that, “The majority of health workers are women and that puts them at highest risk. Most of them are also parents and care givers to family members. They continue to carry the burden of care, which is already disproportionately high in normal times.”

This is exactly the case with the nurses and other healthcare workers in Iran, the majority of whom are women.

Three months after the outbreak of the coronavirus in Iran, the number of infected cases is still on the rise. The reports obtained by the Iranian Resistance indicate that the number of fatalities due to COVID-19 disease is nearly 40,000 as this monthly is being published.

With the Iranian regime concealing the truth and covering up the scale of infections, [healthcare workers and nurses in Iran bear the brunt](#) in coping with the outbreak.



Likewise, in prisons, the regime is taking advantage of the outbreak to further crack down on prisoners, locking them up in extremely unsanitary, overcrowded conditions without providing them protective equipment and minimum hygienic needs.

These are the topics we are going to present in this month’s review of women’s conditions in Iran.

### Nurses and medical staff exhausted

Even before the coronavirus outbreak, Iran stood way below the international standards with a severe shortage of physicians, nurses, and medical staff. Presently, Iranian hospitals are stretched to the limit, and all nurses and physicians are exhausted.

The high number of fatalities and infections among the medical staff, doctors and nurses has brought ever greater pressure on the remaining ones. This is while there are 30,000 unemployed nurses in Iran. (The state-run Young Journalists Club – October 29, 2019)

Mustafa Moin, head of the Supreme Council of the Medical System, wrote to the mullahs’ President, Hassan Rouhani: “Fatigue and the physical and mental toll on the medical staff will threaten the quality of treatment for patients.”

The head of Zanjan's nursing system Fereydoun Eskandari said, “We have not yet reached the stage of controlling the coronavirus. Seventy percent of the medical staff in hospitals are nurses and providing services to patients these days has exhausted them, so the peak of the disease could be catastrophic.” (The state-run IRNA news agency – April 22, 2020)

A nurse working at the Hospital of Qazvin says, “The medical staff are exhausted ... We are getting sick one after the other and going out of work, leaving the burden of work on others. We may again have a very severe peak. This is serious.”



## Shortages of medical equipment cause deaths and infections among the medical staff

One of the serious reasons for the high number of infections and fatalities among physicians, nurses and other medical staff in Iran is the absence of protective equipment needed by hospitals.

Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, Secretary General of the Nurses Home, acknowledged, "Necessary measures are not taken to maintain the health of nurses. From the shortage of masks, gloves, scrubs and other equipment to the shortage of nursing staff that has forced nurses to care for more coronavirus patients in hospitals." (The state-run Salamatnews.com – March 18, 2020)

The Fox News broadcast conversations with a nurse in Iran who said, "We are using our own equipment for the patients. There is nothing else we could do. Whatever we have we use for the patients. We cannot do anything where there is no protective equipment. We must work without protective equipment and do the relocation of patients without protective gowns." (The Fox News, March 28, 2020)

Many physicians and nurses are unable to change their protective gowns, because of their scarcity and poor quality. So, they have to keep working for long hours without being able to eat or drink or even using the bathroom, because they have to take off their gowns in order to do so.

A report from Khoy on March 30 stated, "There is not a simple surgical mask for nurses in the hospital in Khoy. Nurses have to go to pharmacies to buy masks and protective equipment."

To show that the conditions are normal, the regime in an [inhuman measure](#), has ordered nurses in some hospitals not to wear their hazmat suits. An eyewitness said that the authorities of Tehran's Milad Hospital have taken away the nurses' hazmat suits and ordered them to wear their regular uniforms when caring for the patients. They are not allowed to talk about patients with coronavirus and have been instructed to register the disease as "acute respiratory distress syndrome" instead of coronavirus. Thus far, 35 nurses at Milad Hospital have contracted coronavirus.

### Names of nurses who died of coronavirus

More nurses have lost their lives in the past month due to the coronavirus.

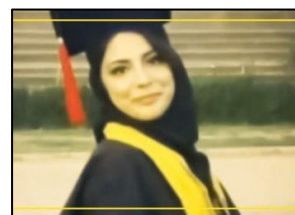
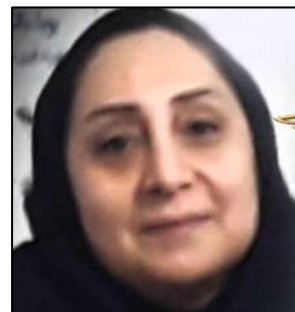
[Shahrbanou Jafari](#) who worked at the health center of Ziaz village in Gilan Province, was among those who lost her life.

[Aria Sigaroudi](#) lost her life on April 6, 2020. She was an expert on family health in the health center of Sari, capital of Mazandaran Province. She was also an employee of the Medical Sciences University of Mazandaran.

[Kimia Mohammadi](#) was nurse working at Tehran's Baharlou Hospital, who lost her life on April 7, 2020 due to COVID-19 disease.

Others were Ashraf Malmali, a medical staff in Tehran; Roghieh Ronaghi, a paramedic working in Somehsara in Gilan Province; Sara Azizi, 28, who worked in the Army's Family Hospital in Tehran; Tahereh Esmaili from Qom were among the nurses and medical staff who died in April.

Another two nurses who have not been identified by name, died in Astara, Gilan Province, on March 27, but their news was obtained in April.



Dr. Niloufar Esmaili, a general physician in Tehran, and Dr. Shirin Rouhani Rad, a physician in Pakdasht, were among the doctors who lost their lives while fighting the coronavirus.

### **Infection of nurses and medical staff an irreparable blow**

Despite the regime's cover-up with regards to the [infection of the medical staff](#), some reports from inside Iran indicate that around 2,300 doctors, nurses and medical staff have been infected or died of COVID-19.

Various regime officials have also admitted to the infections of 90 of the medical staff in East Azerbaijan, 40 of the nurses and medical staff in one of the hospitals of Saqqez, some 350 of the medical staff in Golestan Province, 107 of the medical and healthcare workers in Kermanshah Province, 250 of the medical staff in Isfahan Province, 50 nurses of private and public hospitals in Zanjan, and 170 physicians and nurses in Qom.

On March 4, 2020, Jabbar Kouchakinejad, a member of the regime's parliament from Rasht, said, "Many of our nurses and doctors have been infected and the number of staff has dropped dramatically. Treatment has become difficult."

### **Dismissal of nurses amid the Coronavirus crisis**

The clerical regime's failure to support hospitals and particularly private hospitals has led to their bankruptcy and in turn to the dismissal of their nurses.

Many nurses have been [laid off from their jobs](#) in private hospitals between February and April 2020.

A private hospital in Tehran has laid off half of its 1,200 staff because they did not have the budget to pay them. Another private hospital in Tehran has fired more than 30 nurses.



The official IRNA news agency reported on April 7, that "many hospitals have been forced to lay off their staff and bid them farewell! Some of the main financial problems of private hospitals included their not being paid by insurance companies and the Social Security Organization."

It was reported on April 14, 2020, that a private hospital in Mashhad has also laid off 30 nurses.

Tehran's [Milad Hospital](#) is considering firing 70 of its nurses under the pretext of downsizing the hospital.

In a shocking example, a nurse reported that some of her colleagues who have contracted the virus have also been fired.

The state-run daily Shahrvand newspaper reported on April 7, 2020, that some private hospitals have gone bankrupt and many of their nurses, doctors and medical staff have lost their jobs. In the same report, Shahrvand cited a nurse saying that the nurses who get fired are reluctant to complain as they do not want to ruin their chances for a possible re-employment when the situation gets better.

Iran was already short of some 150,000 to 240,000 nurses before the COVID-19 pandemic. These dismissals bring even further pressure and stress on Iran's nurses and medical staff.

### **Extreme economic pressure on nurses**

Some 80 percent of nurses in Iran are women. They have a heavy workload but their income is among the lowest in Iran. But it often happens that they do not receive their small salaries for months

and they do not have any job security. Nurses care for patients only out of their own sense of responsibility.

The Ministry of Health has called on nurses to join government hospitals with 89-day contracts in order to make up for staff shortage while it also made it clear that signing short term contracts will not create any obligation for the hospitals to employ the nurses later on permanent contracts.

Mohammad Mirza Beigi, head of the Nurses Organization, admitted that the delay in payment of salaries of nurses ranges from 8 to 22 months. (The state-run Arman Melli website – January 2, 2020)

More recently, the state media reported on the work of nurses and staff at medical universities who are facing delays in their payments for about 8 to 14 months! (The state-run Salam News website - March 14, 2020)

The salary of a nurse in formal employment with all perks is 3.3 million tomans a month (\$220). But most nurses earn around 2 million tomans a month (\$133), and many work for as low as 500,000 tomans (\$33) without even having health insurance.

## The horrible prison conditions, call for international visit to Iran prisons

Another hotspot for the Covid-19 disease are Iranian prisons. The Iranian Resistance has time and again called on the UN and international human rights organizations and authorities, particularly the UN Security Council, to take urgent action to visit the prisons in Iran and secure the release of prisoners, especially [political prisoners](#).

Health conditions and dense population of prisons in Iran were already far below international standards. The clerical regime has not taken any effective measures to prevent or decelerate the spread of the virus. It neither releases the prisoners, nor does it treat or quarantine the affected patients. This indifference on the part of the regime is a practical example of torturing prisoners to death.

### Qarchak Prison: Some 20 to 100 inmates affected with covid-19

Some 2,000 female inmates are detained in the Qarchak Prison in Varamin. [Health conditions in Qarchak](#) were very poor even before the outbreak of the coronavirus. According to inmates, the prison did not have any resources to cope with lice. All they did was to shave prisoners' heads and apply bleach. After the outbreak, authorities have not provided any special resources to the prisoners. The prison's clinic has very little resources but not gloves or masks.



According to a prisoner who was just released in April, some inmates who had developed symptoms of covid-19 and went to the infirmary with fever, were told to go back to their beds and use their head scarves as mask to cover their mouths.

The prison store considers only one bar of soap and one box of laundry powder for each inmate which is not enough even under normal conditions for a female detainee. The prices at the prison store for food and hygienic material are several times the price outside.

Since all visitations have been banned by the regime, obviously many inmates do not have any money to purchase their sanitary needs from the store and the general hygiene has further depreciated.

Prisoners released from Qarchak in the past month have reported on the infection of "the infirmary's doctor and nurse" and of "at least 20 inmates in wards 5 and 6."

One of these witnesses said the prisoners who catch the disease are detained in conjunctional visiting rooms void any special facilities, medications, doctors, or ventilators. While many of them suffer from respiratory problems.

According to eyewitnesses, [sick and healthy women prisoners are all held together](#). 186 people are held in a prison ward [using their beds as make shift quarters](#). At present, the doors of the corridor are closed, and prisoners are not allowed to enter the corridors.

One of the wards is known as the mothers' ward. Many children under the age of two and nursing mothers are being held in this ward.

A more recent report from inmates indicates that some 100 prisoners have contracted the virus and are being locked down in a ward called the "club."

### **New sentences add the number of political prisoners**

In these circumstances, the clerical regime's Judiciary has been [summoning woman activists](#) and sending them to jail to serve their sentences in Evin, Qarchak or other prisons.

Kurdish political prisoner [Zeinab Jalalian](#) was [abruptly relocated](#) from Khoy Prison to the Qarchak Prison in Varamin on April 28.

Also, in April, political prisoner Samaneh Noruz Moradi was returned to the women's ward of Evin Prison after her furlough expired.

The mullahs' Judiciary has also turned down the request by Narges Mohammadi for conditional release and temporary release, her lawyer said. Ms. Mohammadi is presently in exile in the Central Prison of Zanjan.

In the Central Prison of Mashhad (Vakilabad), Mrs. [Fatemeh Sepehri](#) was sentenced to 3 years and six months on March 29, 2020.

The new Christian convert, Mary (Fatemeh) Mohammadi who is presently detained in Qarchak Prison, was sentenced to 3 months and one day in prison and 10 lashes on April 14, 2020.

The Revolutionary Court of Amol sentenced [Shora Fekri](#) to six months in prison, and [Ayda Javani](#), [Azadeh Javani](#) and [Fereshteh Mahmoudi](#) to eight months in prison, each, for participating in the memorial ceremony and lighting up candles for victims of the Ukrainian aircraft downed by the IRGC in January.

The Revolutionary Court of Birjand sentenced each of [six Baha'i women](#) to six years in prison. The Baha'i women were Atiyeh Salehi, Farzaneh Daimi, Nasrin Qadiri, Banafsheh Mokhtari, Arezoo Mohammadi, and Roya Mallaki.

Labor activist [Nahid Khodajoo](#) was summoned to the Bureau for the Implementation of Verdicts at Evin Prison on April 15. She has a sentence of six-year in prison and 74 lashes.

More woman activists were apprehended last month.

Nargess Mansouri was called by intelligence agents on April 13 and ordered to report in to the Evin Courthouse the next day.

Retired teacher and civil activist Nahid Fat'halian was arrested by plain clothes agents on April 14.

Dr. Fatemeh Asma Esmailzadeh, psychologist and lecturer at the University of Birjand, was taken to the Prison of Birjand after she could not deposit a bail of 500 million tomans. In the absence of her imprisoned husband, she single-handedly took care of her four children who range in age from 7 to 16 as well as her elderly parents.



### Calls by UN human rights rapporteurs and experts

UN human rights rapporteurs and experts have urged the [Iranian regime](#) to immediately release political prisoners in Iran.

Parts of the [call](#) by the UN rapporteurs, published on April 17, 2020, reads as follows: “The country has been hit hard by COVID-19. However, most prisoners of conscience, human rights defenders, conservationists, and dual and foreign nationals remain imprisoned. We call on the authorities to immediately release them. Iran’s prisons have long-standing hygiene, overcrowding and healthcare problems. We urge the Iranian authorities to implement measures consistent with their obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.”

