A NEW HEIGHT IN IRANIAN WOMEN’S PROTESTS
WITH ELECTION BOYCOTT MOTTOS

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MONTHLY REPORT

NCRI WOMEN'S COMMITTEE
A new height in Iranian women's protests with election boycott mottos

Throughout May, the streets of all major cities in Iran saw Iranian women's protests chanting NO to the regime's upcoming sham presidential election.

The clerical regime has stepped up suppression in recent months, increasing executions and other violations of human rights violations. So, despite the dire circumstances during the pandemic and its high death toll exceeding 300,000, people from different social sectors took to the streets every day, and the protests reached new heights.

Over the past month, women from all walks of life, including teachers, nurses, pharmacists, students, retirees, the defrauded clients, and the families of victims of the Ukrainian plane downed last year by the IRGC, held protests in most cities. Women in various villages and regions also staged protests against water shortages, power outages, and the demolition of houses. Families of farmers and workers also joined the protests.

"Widespread unemployment, unprecedented socio-economic inequalities, astronomical wealth (of a small minority), unmatched administrative, cultural and social corruption, weakening of the people's purchasing power and the livelihood crisis of a large part of the population, rampant addiction, unfettered growth of crimes, violence and suicide, (the phenomena of) street women, child labor, brain drain, capital flight, and etc.," are part of the problems of the Iranian society, which were mentioned by the Shargh state-run daily on May 8, 2021.

The flip side of so many problems and poverty is the escalation of protests by the Iranian people, who have decisively boycotted the sham presidential election scheduled for June 18.

Some of the main slogans in all these protests boycotted the elections. By their chants of "we will vote no more," protesters attested to the outright illegitimacy of the regime's election sham. Ebrahim Ra'isi, the Executioner in the 1988 massacre, the mullahs' supreme leader's choice, symbolizes this illegitimacy.

Iranian protesters also demanded punishment of the regime leaders by chanting slogans such as "Death to Rouhani."

Having experienced the angry protests of the Iranian public, women, and youth in several consecutive demonstrations in recent years, the clerical regime leaders see their only way out in suppressing any dissent, as they have in the last 42 years.

Reacting to the protests and chants of "We will vote no more," Qassem Rezaei, the acting Commander of the State Security Force, declared, "We will deal with any seditionist who wants to disturb the peace of the system!" (The state-run Entekhab news agency – May 20, 2021)
Iranian women’s protests in different walks of life

Iranian women’s protests amounted to at least 127 during May. Women teachers staged at least 29 protests in May. Young teachers held protests for four consecutive days. Most of these teachers are graduates with Masters and Ph.D. They want official employment, but the regime does not provide them the opportunity. Literacy teachers also protested for three days in a row.

Health care retirees also want their salaries equalized to those employed. In their slogans, they protested against the tyrannical rulers because of their empty baskets. Young female students took part in at least 42 protest rallies this month against the face-to-face exams. They want to hold the exams online.

Nurses and hospital staff fed up with the non-payment of salaries and benefits during the Coronavirus outbreak, also held protest rallies on different days.

Women’s activities in resistance units

The brave and courageous women in the resistance units keep alight the flame of resistance, protests, and the boycott of the sham elections in cities across the country every day.

They install placards in the roads and highways and write anti-regime graffiti on walls, calling for the nationwide boycott of election farce to respond to the killers of the 1,500 martyrs of the November 2019 uprising. Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Ilam, Kermanshah, Hamedan, Lahijan, Gorgan, Neyshabour, Saqqez, and other major cities saw these activities.

For example, from 18 to May 22, 2021, the women and youth in the resistance units distributed flyers bearing these messages: “Election boycott is a patriotic duty.” They filled the city walls with the slogan, “My vote is overthrowing the Regime.”

Women and girls, members of the resistance units, make videos of their activities and publish them on social media. These courageous actions shine the light of hope in the people’s hearts and crack the walls of fear and repression in every city.

Mothers of November 2019 martyrs

The mothers of the November 2019 martyrs were at the forefront of Iranian women’s protests. They used every opportunity to declare their decisive vote, overthrow the mullahs’ corrupt and blood-thirsty regime.
They have published dozens of video clips, letters, and posts on social media. They have also held various protest gatherings, holding up the photos of their loved ones and seeking justice for them. In one such meeting, the mothers of the November 2019 martyrs vowed to seek justice for their children until their last breath.

The bereaved mothers declared together: “We want the overthrow of this regime. We vote for the regime’s overthrow.”

A mother said: Those who vote in this election are just as guilty as the regime officials who ordered the killing of our children. We will never forgive. Anyone who casts a ballot and participates in this election commits a crime and treason.

Another bereaved mother said: Voting (in this election) betrays future generations and could never be compensated.

One of the other mothers said: Don’t vote for this regime. Voting for this regime is voting against the future of your children. I wish no more parents would experience the loss of their children.

In another development in May, the Department of Intelligence of Ahvaz arrested Mrs. Badrieh Hamidavi, the mother of a young man, Ali Tamimi, killed by security forces in November 2019, on Sunday, May 16, 2021. Mrs. Hamidavi had welcomed and greeted the young men who had gathered outside her home hailing her fallen son, Ali Tamimi. The intelligence services arrested some 10 to 15 young men during their raids on these ceremonies.

Mothers of victims of the 1988 massacre

The families and mothers of the victims of the 1988 massacre gathered in Khavaran Cemetery on Thursday, May 13, 2021, to express their condemnation of the regime’s destruction of the site of the mass graves of their loved ones.

They held placards and chanted slogans including against Ebrahim Raisi, the head of the regime’s Judiciary, who is the regime’s presidential hopeful in the upcoming election charade. Ra’isi was a member of the Death Committee in Tehran and played a central role during the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners. The United States has blacklisted Ra’isi for his crimes in flagrant violation of human rights in Iran.

The families and mothers of the victims of the 1988 massacre held up signs which read: “Khavaran, the enduring document of crime against humanity in Iran, the 1988 massacre” and “until the prosecution of, and accountability for the criminals, we will neither forgive, nor forget.”
Onerous conditions of female prisoners and women’s wards

The following sections will glance over the conditions of some female political prisoners, arbitrary arrests of Baha’i women in various cities, and the situation in the women’s wards of Tabriz, Sepidar, and Qarchak prisons.

Exiled political prisoner Maryam Akbari Monfared

Political prisoner Maryam Akbari Monfared remains under maximum pressure by the Ministry of Intelligence, nearly three months after her exile to the Central Prison of Semnan.

Her case is being followed up directly by the Intelligence Ministry. No one, even the assistant prosecutor who oversees the issues of political prisoners, is allowed to interfere in Maryam Akbari’s case. The Intelligence Ministry does not allow granting any of her requests.

She is deprived of the most fundamental rights of a prisoner, including having access to newspapers, medical treatment, and prison leave.

Maryam Akbari Monfared was violently moved from Evin Prison and exiled to the Central Prison of Semnan on March 9, 2021.

Maryam Akbari Monfared has three daughters and is serving her 12th year in prison without a single day of leave. Arrested on December 31, 2009, she is sentenced to 15 years in prison on the alleged charge of Moharebeh (waging war on God) for “membership in the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran,” a charge which Mrs. Akbari has never accepted. She has been in prison without a single day of leave. She suffers from Thyroid malfunction and joint rheumatism.

Exiled political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian

Kurdish political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian is serving her 14th year in prison under a life sentence. She is presently detained despite critical health conditions in the Central Prison of Yazd. She contracted the Covid-19 while detained in Qarchak Prison. Her asthma condition has complicated her case with short breath and bad coughs.

The Ministry of Intelligence does not allow her treatment in a civic hospital and has deprived her of even essential medical services in Yazd Prison.

The doctors working at the dispensary of the Central Prison of Yazd have openly told Zeinab Jalalian that they do not have sufficient resources to attend to her and that she needs to be taken to a civic hospital as soon as possible.

On the orders of the Intelligence Ministry, her occasional phone calls home are brief and she is only permitted to speak in Farsi.

For the fourth time in six months, the Intelligence Ministry transferred Zeinab Jalalian illegally to Yazd Prison on November 9, 2020, to ratchet up pressure on her.

Resistant political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian, 38, was viciously tortured after being arrested in 2007 to make false confessions against herself. The interrogators banged her head against the wall and attempted to rape her. As a result of the tortures, she suffers from blurry vision and is at risk of going blind. She also suffers from various other illnesses.
Exiled political prisoner Atena Daemi

Mr. Hossein Daemi, the father of political prisoner Atena Daemi, posted a tweet on May 21, 2021, containing her daughter’s message from prison. In her message from Lakan Prison of Rasht, Ms. Daemi defies the regime’s offer to ask for an amnesty. She said: I believe that unconditional release is the right of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. I remind them that you are the ones to plea to people to forgive you and grant you amnesty.”

Atena Daemi, 32, must have been released on July 4, 2020, after completing her 5-year prison term. But the clerical regime’s Judiciary sentenced her again to a total of 5 years of imprisonment and 74 lashes because of trumped-up charges filed against her by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Tehran’s Evin Prison authorities abruptly and forcibly sent Atena Daemi to exile to Lakan Prison of Rasht on the night of March 16, 2021, on the eve of the Persian New Year.

Political prisoner Somayeh Qoraishi

The authorities of the Central Prison of Urmia denied urgent treatment to political prisoner Sommayeh Qoraishi. Reports from the Central Prison of Urmia say that Sommayeh Qoraishi had a bad heart condition on May 9, 2021. Her cellmates tried to take her to the prison’s dispensary since she needed urgent treatment, but the prison guard prevented them from leaving the ward and going to the clinic.

Prison authorities have rejected Ms. Qoraishi’s repeated appeals for medical leave since January 2021 to receive treatment for her heart condition.

In February 2020, she was sentenced to a total of 5 years in prison on charges of “acting against national security” and “propaganda against the state” through cooperation with the opposition People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK).

Ms. Qoraishi resides in Urmia, the capital of West Azerbaijan Province. She was arrested in December 2019, interrogated for 17 days in the detention center of Urmia’s Department of Intelligence, and subsequently transferred to the Central Prison of Urmia.

Hunger strikes

At least five female political prisoners went on hunger strike in May. Saba Kord Afshari, Raheleh Ahmadi, Giti Pour-Fazel, Mojgan Kavousi, and Sakineh Parvaneh protested continuous pressures on prisoners and violations of their rights in prison.
Political prisoner **Saba Kord Afshari** went on hunger strike from May 8 until 17, refusing food and medicine in **Qarchak Prison**. She demanded the authorities lift pressure on families of political prisoners and specifically release her mother from Evin Prison.

Saba Kord Afshari went on hunger strike, despite suffering from a bleeding stomach ulcer and a previous record of contracting the Covid-19 in prison. She ended her hunger strike after ten days due to severe health conditions but vowed to follow up on her demands.

In an [open letter](#) she sent out of prison on May 11, Saba revealed some of the regime’s crimes against her and other female political prisoners.

Ms. Kord Afshari, 22, is [sentenced to 24 years imprisonment](#) for protesting the mandatory veil. She was sent to exile in Qarchak Prison on December 9, 2020.

On May 17, 2021, political prisoners Giti Pour-Fazel and Raheleh Ahmadi, the mother of Saba Kord Afshari, started their hunger strike in Evin Prison despite severe health conditions in solidarity with Saba Kord Afshari.

In a brief phone call to her granddaughter, Mrs. Pour-Fazel explained: “I am like Saba’s grandmother. I can’t see the life of a young woman being perished. Her mother is not feeling well, at all. There is a lot of discrimination among prisoners. I cannot sit silent. I have to do something.”

Giti Pour Fazel, 79 and a lawyer, has been imprisoned for signing a letter in summer 2019 to the mullahs’ Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, demanding his resignation.

Raheleh Ahmadi, Saba’s mother, had earlier written an open letter to Saba, expressing regrets that she could not join her in hunger strike because of her dire health conditions.

Mrs. Ahmadi has to consume medications because of her lumbar disc condition. Nonetheless, she has started a hunger strike in solidarity with her 22-year-old daughter.

Raheleh Ahmadi is sentenced to 31 months in prison and incarcerated since February 15, 2020. She was [arrested for putting pressure on her daughter](#) to make forced confessions.

Kurdish political prisoner **Sakineh Parvaneh** started a hunger strike on May 21, 2021, in the Central Prison of Mashhad (Vakilabad). Among the reasons for this protest is her illegal exile to Mashhad Prison. Ms. Parvaneh has been on hunger strike several times and suffers from low blood pressure and GI complications. The Department of Intelligence turned down the physicians’ medical advice to immediately move her to a civic hospital.

Kurdish writer and researcher **Mojgan Kavousi** started a 10-day hunger strike on May 16, 2021, in Evin Prison. She went on strike to protest the authorities’ discriminatory treatment regarding prison leaves during the Coronavirus outbreak. She suffers from several ailments, including digestive problems, diabetes, and cardiac arrhythmias.

**Cracking down on the Baha’i community, widespread arrests of women**

The mullahs’ regime stepped up its pressure on the Baha’i community in May, arresting many Baha’i citizens and handing down heavy sentences.

Tehran’s Revolutionary Court sentenced **Atesa Ahmadaii Rafsanjani** to 8 years imprisonment on the charge of forming a group to empower women.

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* women.ncr-iran.org  @womenncri  @womenncri
Security forces arrested Sholeh Ashouri on May 5 and took her to an undisclosed location. The agents broke into Mrs. Ashouri’s house in Hendijan, a city in Khuzestan Province when her husband was not home. Her arrest came in the wake of the arrests of Baha’i citizens in Baharestan, Isfahan Province, on April 25 and 30, 2021.

Mmes. Shourangiz Hamin, Roya Azadkhosh, Maryam Khorsandi, Sara Shakib, Firouzeh Rastinejad, Sanaz Rasteh, Azita Rezvani, Mojgan Pour-Shafi, Nasrin Khademi, and Noushin Hemmati were among those arbitrarily arrested in Baharestan. Intelligence agents raided the residences of at least 29 families because of their Baha’i faith, brutalizing the inhabitants and making violent arrests.

Ms. Maryam Khorsandi was undergoing chemotherapy, but security forces did not allow her to take her medications with her.

Ms. Azita Rezvani has contracted the Covid-19 and was under treatment at home.

The Revolutionary Court of Borazjan, in Bushehr Province, also handed down 61 years and six months of prison for five Baha’i women.

Mmes. Maryam Bashir, Faranak Sheikhi, Hayedeh Ram, Minoo Bashir, and Dorna Isma’ili, who reside in Shiraz and Borazjan, received jail terms of 12 years and six months, each.

**Women’s ward conditions in Tabriz, Ahvaz, and Varamin**

The authorities of the Central Prison of Tabriz moved the women’s ward to a new place on April 3, 2021. The new ward has two floors. The upper floor is a small hall divided into four relatively big rooms and a small courtyard. Each room houses some 57 to 68 inmates.

The limited space in the ward and lack of sufficient resources and facilities cause frequent fights among inmates. Eighty percent of the arguments among inmates are about using the phone.

Each room has two closed-circuit cameras in two corners high on the wall next to the ceiling to constantly monitor the inmates.

Each room has a small window located high above, just below the ceiling, and inmates cannot open it. So, they cannot let fresh air in the ward. Since prison guards close the door of the corridor, there is no air to breathe.

Every night, they pack prisoners in their rooms for headcount. They close the doors and keep the lights on. So, the inmates cannot rest until morning because they cannot breathe.

A small room on the lower floor is the women’s ward clinic. It is open only at fixed hours and gives out tranquilizers, sedatives, cough medicine and syrup, and sleeping pills. So, if an inmate feels pain at other times, they have to wait until the time comes.

Many prisoners have submitted requests to go to the doctor at their own expense, but their pleas have gone unnoticed by prison authorities.

[Link to women.ncr-iran.org]  
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Qarchak Prison

Qarchak Prison authorities starve female prisoners in this prison. Starving prisoners is tantamount to torture. Qarchak Prison detains some 2,000 female inmates. The meals are small, and the quality is terrible, so much that the food is inedible.

The political prisoners in Qarchak are not allowed to talk to other prisoners. A guard accompanies them in every movement to other wards, the library, or when they go for fresh air. The new warden or Qarchak, Soghra Khodadadi, has instructed her agents to “make conditions difficult for political prisoners so that they would feel that they are in solitary confinement.”

Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz

The women’s ward of Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz is experiencing a new wave of Coronavirus outbreaks. Instead of attending to the sick and transferring them to civic hospitals, Sepidar Prison authorities have banned inmates from making telephone calls to their families.

Despite the new wave of outbreaks, prisoners are not tested. They are detained in a limited space without sufficient hygienic products. The place used for the quarantine of infected prisoners is separated by bars from the main ward, and they go to the same place for fresh air.

In these circumstances, prison authorities are still refraining from granting leave to prisoners. Last year, this time, some 50 female inmates contracted the virus.

The prisoners in the women’s ward of Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz are not separated according to the category of crimes, making the conditions even more complex and intolerable for the female political prisoners.