

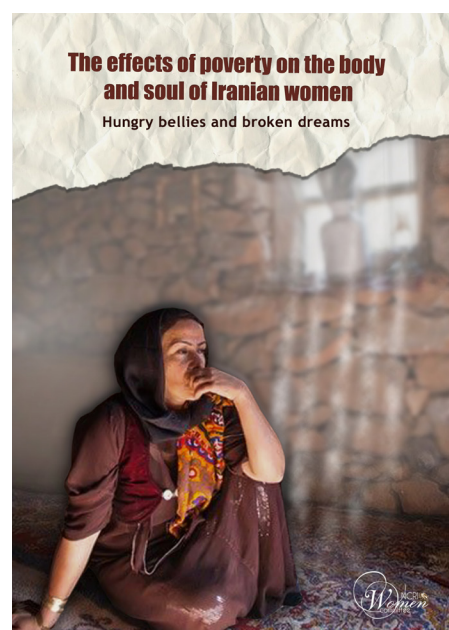
# **The effects of poverty on the body and soul of Iranian women**

**Hungry bellies and broken dreams**



NCRI Women's Committee  
October 2021





## The effects of poverty on the body and soul of Iranian women

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# Table of Contents

<b>The effects of poverty: preface and overview</b>	<b>1</b>
Overview	2
<b>Employment and Discrimination</b>	<b>5</b>
The majority of working women are engaged in informal employment	6
What is the income of women in informal employment?	8
Wage discrimination against working women	8
Forced labor as a family occupation	9
<b>Lack of access to social aid</b>	<b>11</b>
Subsidy	12
Women Heads of Households	12
Homelessness	14
Porters, collecting garbage and peddling - difficult road to survive	16
Working girls - frequent victims of oppression and discrimination	18
Malnutrition	19
<b>Class division</b>	<b>21</b>
Khamenei's wealth	22
Budget of the repressive forces	23
<b>What is on the horizon?</b>	<b>25</b>
Endnotes	26





## The effects of poverty: preface and overview

On October 17, 1987, more than 100,000 people gathered in Trocadero Square in Paris to commemorate the victims of extreme poverty, violence, and hunger. This demonstration led to the creation of the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, officially recognized in 1992 by the United Nations as the "International Day for the Eradication of Poverty."

For this reason, with a brief look at the spread of poverty in Iran and its "feminization", we focus on this aspect of the human rights violations of the Iranian people by the mullahs' regime. The gross and brutal manifestations of human rights violations in Iran makes poverty a secondary issue. However, the study of the spread of poverty among the Iranian people especially Iranian women can be a strong and sufficient reason for the illegitimacy of the mullahs' rule over this rich nation.

Even though the information and statistics that have been collected, do not tell the whole story, but since it is entirely extracted from the comments of government officials, experts, and the regime's own media, it can show the immense human tragedy being unfolded in Iran.

## Overview

Only a few months into the formation of the Raisi's government, the upward trend in prices has taken a new momentum. The prices of the items in the basket of consumer goods for people's daily needs have increased by 10 to 50 percent.<sup>1</sup> The cost of living in Iran has increased by 32%.<sup>2</sup>

The overall quality of life in general and the lives and livelihoods of deprived women and families in particular, especially in the context of both poverty and the pandemic, has moved the boundaries of disaster. Most people are in dire need of food, housing, medical care, clothing and basic necessities of life and their situation is deteriorating by the day.

The coronavirus pandemic has plunged many businesses into the verge of bankruptcy leading to many people losing their jobs and incomes. During this period, many families in Iran are dealing with a decline in their income while facing a significant rise in the price of everyday household items. For example, the price of some food items has risen by 90% and the housing rental have multiplied.

The rising poverty line and rampant inflation in Iran are among the main causes of the phenomenon known as child marriages. About the increment of poverty line it can be discussed that "If the poverty line of a family of four in the country at the beginning of this year was estimated to be 12 million Tomans per month, today this line has reached 14 million Tomans per month." said Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar.<sup>3</sup>

Roozbeh Kordoni, the head of the Higher Institute for Social Security Research, said the number of people below the absolute poverty line in Iran has doubled.<sup>4</sup>

The first report of the Ministry of Labor, and Social Welfare of Raisi's administration was published in August 2021. According to the report, it can be said that the number of people below the poverty line in Iran in 2020 had reached 36 million.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, Shahab Naderi, a member of the parliament in 2017, revealed that 80% of Iranian society lives below the poverty line.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that during the last four years with a complete economic collapse, the Iranian regime, had no intention and wasn't capable of improving the economic situation of the people. The economic statistics depict a horrifying condition of the Iranian society.

The continuation of the mullahs' rule will lead to a more bleak and dire situation for women in Iran. To survive, women will be compelled to gather garbage, work as human mules, sell their organs, prostitute themselves and sell their infants amongst all kinds of other calamities.



**The poverty line  
for a family of four is  
14 million Tomans (\$500)**

**%50**

☀ The prices of basic daily staples have increased up to **50%** since the new government took office.

**%80**

☀ **80%** of Iranians live below the poverty line.



## Employment and Discrimination

1

With the spread of catastrophic poverty in Iran, women face serious inequality in employment.

According to the official statistics of the National Statistics Center of Iran, in spring of 2021, 4.2 million women have been registered as economically active population, which is equivalent to 14.1%. According to the center's indicators, an economic activist is a person who is employed or looking for a job. In other words, this statistic includes unemployed women looking for a job as well. Meanwhile, housewives, retirees, students, and all those who are frustrated with finding a job are considered as the economically inactive population and are not considered unemployed.

The center estimates the working population of women in the spring of 2021 to be 3.6 million (equivalent to 11.5 percent). This statistic has decreased by 168,000 people compared to the previous year, i.e. the winter of 2020 (1399).<sup>7</sup>

According to the statistics from the Deputy Minister of Women and Family Affairs in Rouhani's government, about 15.3% out of 4,320,000 women employed in 2019, lost their jobs in 2020, and



the ratio of women to men who lost their jobs in 2020 is 9 times more. According to the report, the unemployment rate of Iranian women is 3 times higher than the global average.<sup>8</sup>

From another report by the Statistics Center of Iran, it can be concluded that the percentage of decline in the number of working women in Iran from fall 2019 to fall 2020, during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, was almost 14 times higher than men.<sup>9</sup>

"It is not possible to predict an increase in employment and participation rates for women in 2021," said Fatemeh Azizkhani, an economic researcher on the prospects for women's employment. "This anticipation is not reachable until the infrastructure is provided for women," she added.

## The majority of working women are engaged in informal employment

According to statistics recorded in government news agencies, 60% of employment in Iran is informal employment. This figure is over 70% in many provinces of the country. The state-run ILNA news agency estimated the number of women engaged in informal employment at 3 million in March 2020.<sup>11</sup>

Informal occupations are more vulnerable to Coronavirus consequences than formal occupations. These women are among the most vulnerable workers in the Iranian labor market.<sup>12</sup>

Informal employment comes in various forms, but all of the women involved face common problems. They do not have insurances; they are deprived of medical services and medical records. They have no benefit from pensions and unemployment insurance, and finally, protection laws and safety and labor laws do not give them coverage. Sometimes, employers exploit these women by taking white-collar checks and promissory notes from them and they have to comply because any job is better than unemployment for these desperate women.

Self-employed women, including peddlers in public and subway spaces, suffer from

social and occupational insecurity, such as occasional arrests, and the tightening of employment space.

Women who work in family businesses are forced to submit to any kind of exploitation by their male relatives.<sup>13</sup>

All of these problems have multiplied since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Declining demand in the service sector has led to the widespread disappearance of these jobs.<sup>14</sup> Since no government agency cares about the safety and health of these women, they have always been alone and fought alone, and now they are alone in the Coronavirus crisis!<sup>15</sup>

Fatemeh Ghafouri, head of the Women Entrepreneurs Association in Qazvin province, says of the clerical regime's approach to women's work. She said, "Women advocacy bodies have only focused on family issues and even if they pay attention to the economy, they see everything in household businesses, while this type of job is unsustainable and cannot lead to the empowerment of women in a desirable way."<sup>16</sup>



## Blatant discrimination against women in employment

☀ **National Statistics Center:**  
168,000 of the 3.6 million working women in the winter of 2021 lost their jobs.

168,000 of the 3.6 million

☀ **An economic researcher:**  
So long as the infrastructure is not provided for women, one cannot expect an increase in their employment.



## What is the income of women in informal employment?

Mahnaz Ghadirzadeh, a labor relations expert, says, "Not only the peddlers we see every day on the subway or on the sidewalks of the city, but also a significant number of female white and blue-collar workers are also unemployed and cannot receive unemployment insurance. We know that many women work by agreement. Secretaries of doctors, service workers, and employees of private offices, etc.; in many cases they are paid less than one million Tomans (\$41) and are not insured."<sup>17</sup> Tayyebah Siavoshi, a former member of the regime's parliament, said, "Unfortunately, many working women are willing to work in any environment, not subject to any law, even for 400,000 to 500,000 Tomans (\$16.5 to \$20.5) a month due to severe financial needs. Not only they do not enjoy any benefits or facilities, the employer can terminate these workers whenever he wants for any reason."<sup>18</sup>

## Wage discrimination against working women

The clerical regime's Labor Ministry has set the 2021 minimum wage at 4 million Tomans (\$143), including every bonus or possible subsidy.<sup>19</sup> Workers' wages cover only 34% of their expenses. This means that a full-time working person who receives their full salary will finish it in the first ten days of the month. More than 14 million Iranian workers

are preoccupied with surviving for a single day."<sup>20</sup> Working women have to endure the pressures of discriminatory laws and culture dominating the Iranian labor market. Additionally, the reality of women's working conditions in Iran can only be compared to the conditions akin to slavery.

Mahnaz Ghadirzadeh told the state-run ILNA news agency: "Women earn less than men systematically and within the framework of some laws. Women do not get benefits like child support, but apart from that, in some cases we see women being employed in jobs that in many ways do not get the minimum wages. Many female secretaries in offices and most female counter staff suffer from wage discrimination ... In traditional jobs or small workshops, we find plenty of women who are paid less than men for the same work."<sup>21</sup> Most women live on an income of 300,000 to 400,000 Tomans a month.<sup>22</sup>

Qassem Sookhteh-sarai, head of the Golestan province's Agricultural Union, said, "Iranian female farmers earn 60 percent compared to male wages, whether in the paddy fields, summer crops or market gardening products."<sup>23</sup> Production costs have risen in the agricultural sector and men do not accept lower wages and refuse to work, but women are in dire need of jobs for a variety of reasons, including poverty, so they are willing to work for much lower wages. Women's wages are one-third of men's.

Employers cut women's salaries by one-third on the pretext that men are responsible for paying their household expenses. This

is an injustice to the women heads of households most of whom are daily wage earners and do not have insurance."<sup>24</sup>

## Forced labor as a family occupation

Despite the hours of rigorous work per day, many women do not receive any salary at all. In all villages and even in many cities, women carry the main burden of family jobs in addition to all household chores and childcare.

A paddy woman from Rasht, who has three children and has been producing rice in the paddy field with her husband for the past

25 years, told ISNA: "I have been engaged in the paddy fields since I was a child and I have never been paid for it."

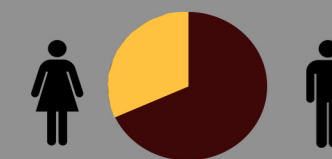
"The hard work that paddy women put on their farms is not added to the cost of rice," said another paddy woman.

"Our men go to coffee shops after harvesting rice, but rural women do not finish their work after harvesting. Besides taking care of household chores, they also must take care of livestock and poultry, and produce handicraft products to sell" said a rice farmer from Fooman.<sup>25</sup>



## Women receive lower salaries than men do in all jobs

- ☀ A worker's minimum salary is about **4 million Tomans (\$140)**, covering only **34%** of their costs
- ☀ Women's wages are one-third that of men's







## Lack of access to social aid

# 2

In addition to becoming poorer each year due to rising consumer staple costs, they also lose their ability to pay for optional insurance, which deprives them of being covered by the Social Security Organization.<sup>26</sup>

According to the state-run ILNA news agency in 2019, despite the fact that according to Article 29 of the Constitution of the regime, citizens have the right to social security, at least 1.9 million women in Iran are completely deprived of this right.<sup>27</sup>

According to statistics released by financial institutions of the Social Security Research Organization, women accounted for 80% of uninsured employees in 2017.<sup>28</sup>

All women working in temporary contract or part-time jobs are denied the minimum wage of a worker, and sometimes work for as little as 10 percent of the minimum wage. Naturally, such an employer would not transfer 12 to 18 percent of the amount of the worker's base salary to the Social Security Administration.

In 2020, the Iranian regime advertised the possibility of insuring housewives. This is while the monthly insurance premium is only 22,000 Tomans (less than \$1) for pension services



and death after retirement by the Social Security Organization, and housewives, who naturally do not have their own income, cannot pay this amount.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding housewives, Hossein Amiri Ganjeh, head of the General Department of Social Security in West Tehran, has said, "62% of women in the country are housewives and make up a population of about 20 million, and more than 75% of them do not have independent insurance. They are covered by their spouse's health insurance."<sup>30</sup>

Rural women must also enjoy rural insurance. But among women farmers, only those who are dependent on their husbands are covered by rural insurance. There is no separate insurance for these women. Despite their difficult living conditions where they work hard for long hours without receiving any wage, the Social Security Organization essentially excludes rural women from its cycle.

## Subsidy

According to Tejarat News, about 60 million people in Iran are eligible for both cash and subsistence subsidies. A person who receives both cash and subsistence subsidies, in total receives a small amount of 86,000 Tomans. The cash subsidy is 41,000 Tomans per month and the subsistence subsidy is 45,000 Tomans for gasoline.<sup>31</sup>

But this subsidy, the amount of which has not changed in the new year despite unbridled inflation, does not solve people's financial problems.

"Certainly, these subsidies that are being paid now have no special welfare effect," admitted Minister of Labor Hojjatullah Abdul Maleki.<sup>32</sup> People say "You can't buy a kilo of meat with this subsidy. Aren't you really ashamed?"<sup>33</sup>

## Women Heads of Households

While all people in Iran suffer from deep class divisions as well as poverty and economic mismanagement by the clerical regime, women face a double discrimination. Female breadwinners, who have to provide for multiple children, and sometimes a sick or elderly spouse, are forced into a whirlpool of hardship and enormous difficulties.

According to the state-run Fars news agency in September 2020, the number of female heads of households in Iran has increased by 1 million over the past four years to at least 4 million women.<sup>34</sup>

Massoumeh Ebtekar, the women and family affairs advisor to the regime's president Hassan Rouhani, stated the figure of 4 million women two years ago. If we take into account, the statistics provided by Massoumeh Ebtekar at that time, toady with an increase in 1 million of women heads of household, that number would be at least 5 million.

Sara Fallahi, a member of the parliamentary

women's faction, also estimates that the field numbers of these women are about 5 million.<sup>35</sup>

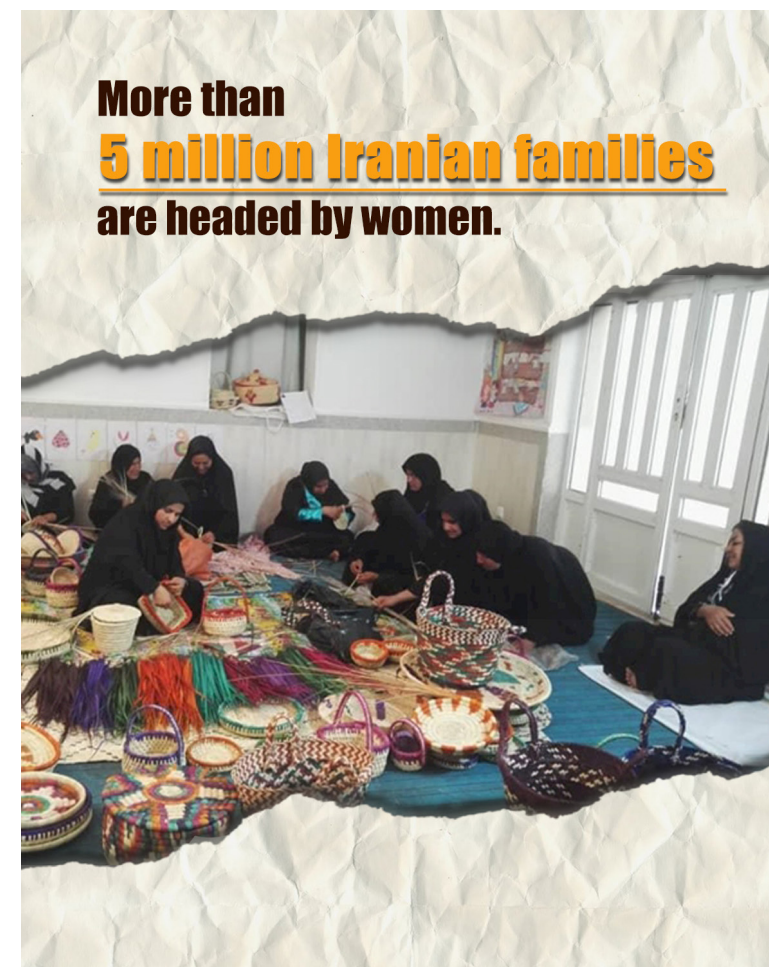
Despite these estimates, and instead of empowering these women, the clerical regime tries to cover up the problem.<sup>36</sup>

Zahra Bonyanian, the director of a charity organization, revealed that "information about women heads of households is kept confidential."<sup>37</sup>

"There are no exact statistics on the number of women heads of households in the province, because some of them are not supported by a specific institution," said Somayeh Ghassemi Tussi, director general of Women and Family Affairs at the Mazandaran provincial governor's office."<sup>38</sup>

The Welfare Organization has set many conditions for the protection of women. For example, if they are employed, their salary should be 40% less than the official minimum wage announced by the Ministry of Labor, otherwise they are considered capable and not subject to receive the services of this agency. In total, the assistance of the National Welfare Organization covers only 250,000 women.<sup>39</sup> Assuming that all of these 250,000 women are heads of households, at least 3,750,000 of the remaining women heads of household are deprived of even this meagre aid and will face deadly poverty.

Regarding the employment status of these women, Zahra Bonyanian said, "Most women heads of households have a low level of education and professional skills and work in the informal sector of the economy. Their jobs are mostly part-time, uninsured and with lower benefits, and they will be among the first group to be fired during economic crises."<sup>40</sup>





## Homelessness

One of the consequences of the catastrophic poverty in Iran is the inability of the people to acquire housing. According to the regime's media, "40% of urban households are tenants."<sup>41</sup>

Reports from the housing market show that housing rents in Iran's large cities have increased more than seven times in less than five years.

According to the statistics of the Central Bank in October 2021, during the past year leading up to September 2021, housing rents in Tehran have increased by 42.8% and in all urban areas of the country by 45.7%. Annual growth of 43 to 46 percent in rents over the past decade had been unprecedented.<sup>42</sup>

According to Mehdi Sultan Mohammadi, a housing market expert, the rental market is breaking the backs of many tenants these days, and rental rates will rise again in the coming months.<sup>43</sup>

The report of ISNA news agency in August 2021 shows that the rental fee of an old 50–70-meter square unit is at least 150 million Tomans and it can reach up to 400 million Tomans.

According to the report of Tejarat News website on September 6, 2021, the average rent of a house in Tehran is more than two million Tomans and it can go up to 7 million Tomans as well.

"Their money is not enough, two or three people rent a house together" a real estate consultant told Tejarat News website. "There are coupled tenants (married) who rent a

house with other families," said another real estate consultant. "Two families that were six people together rent a 70- square meter house for 300 million tomans." he added.<sup>44</sup>

But the mismatch between the salaries, especially for women, and rental prices, makes many people eventually lose their rented shelter. Phenomena such as sleeping in cardboard boxes, sleeping in pits, in bags and sleeping in discarded refrigerators is a direct result of the poverty of the people and the oppressive and predatory policies of the clerical regime in Iran.

Meantime, the ruling criminal authorities instead of responding to their needs, are repressing and humiliating the people. Zahra Shams Ehsan, a cruel member of the sixth Tehran's City Council, in an interview with the state-run Hamshahri newspaper called "carton box sleepers" as "a kind of lifestyle". Pointing out that Tehran must accept the social damage of the "carton box sleepers", she said, "When it comes to the issue of the sleeping in the carton boxes for women, we must provide a model so they would change their lifestyle."<sup>45</sup>

These officials are the same authorities who ruthlessly destroy the homes of the poorest sectors of society under the guise of building without proper permits.

In September alone, pictures of at least five destroyed homes were posted on social media.

The first film was posted on September 8 on the Telegram Channel of "Independent in Farsi". This incident took place in the city of Robat-Karim in Tehran province. The water department had demolished their house

## Poverty has deprived many families of the right to housing

☀ **40%** of urban households live in rented accommodations

☀ Housing rent in Tehran ranges from **2 million** to **7 million** Tomans (\$70-\$250).

☀ Housing rents increase between **43** to **46** percent annually.

%40



despite the family having acquired official permit for the construction. The family had paid 200 million Tomans just to get the permit and then spent another 500 million Tomans to build their house with great difficulty.

The second video was published on Mojahedin Telegram Channel on September 21, 2021. This video clip demonstrated the brutal destruction of a shelter and the beating of a Baloch woman with 4 children in Zahedan. Suppressive agents of Zahedan Municipality beat this deprived woman till she fainted.

The third and fourth videos in Mojahedin Telegram Channel were related to the demolishing of people's houses in Golestan

province and in the city of Khorramabad in Lorestan province on September 22, 2021. The fifth video was again published by the same media outlet, which is related to the demolishing of at least 3 houses in Qasemabad, Zahedan. A woman was severely beaten at the scene by the cruel police officers. "She will not die, if she dies, we will pay for her blood money," repressive women officers who beat her brutally told the protesters on the scene.



## Porters, collecting garbage and peddling - women's difficult road to survive

Poverty and hardship have forced Iranian women to engage in activities which not only tarnish their human dignity but also exceed their physical capacity and pose a serious threat to their health. They engage in these activities simply so that their families and they could survive.

Some Iranian women have turned to garbage collection due to extreme poverty and destitution. Instead of supporting and empowering these women, the Iranian regime has recognized these types of activities as official employment.

In the southwestern city of Ahvaz, about 120 laborers work at a waste separation site called Safireh.<sup>46</sup> The majority of the site's workers are female heads of households and are threatened by many diseases. The women working on this site are homeless or abused and have difficult lives. These women heads of household work eight hours a day among garbage in order to earn a living. They receive a monthly salary of 2 million Tomans, which is below the minimum wage in the regime's own laws, and significantly lower than the current 14 million Tomans poverty line in Iran.<sup>47</sup> Still, even by these low standards, the workers of this site have not been paid since March 2020, roughly since the time that the coronavirus pandemic broke out in Iran.

Tahereh Assadi, 25, is sifting through garbage as a job because her father is ill and their family has lost all their life assets.

"I come to work at around 5 or 6 a.m. and go home at 12 midnight. I pay for my father's medicine and doctor. I have three sisters and three brothers. People my age wear the best clothes and drive the best cars, but I have to dip my head into garbage. I am a 100 percent sure that most officials see this situation but they do not care. We go to the Welfare Organization and the Aid Committee, but we do not receive any response. They say, 'your financial situation is sound.'"<sup>48</sup>

Another type of these "jobs" is street peddling, which threatens the lives of these women during the pandemic at a time when COVID-19 has taken hundreds of thousands of lives in Iran.

Hassan Khalilabadi, a member of the Tehran City Council, announced an increase in peddling in the capital due to the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting unemployment, stating: "Due to the coronavirus situation, many people in the capital have lost their permanent jobs and are making a living only through street peddling."<sup>49</sup>

In September 2020, the CEO of the Tehran Organization and Employment Company, Seyed Ali Mafakherian, put the number of Tehran street peddlers who have registered in the system of this organization alone at 10,000.<sup>50</sup>

Another life-threatening "job" forced upon Iranian women by poverty has been delivery of commodities. These women are called "porters."

Poverty, unemployment, lack of prospects for the future, the hungry bellies of children,

injured bodies of wives, are among other reasons that force women to give in to this extremely arduous work. Most female porters in Iran are single women whose husbands have either been disabled or have died. Female porters in Iran often disguise themselves as men. They use heavy painkillers to cross difficult passages and to endure the extreme physical hardships on the road.

These oppressed women typically walk up to 8 to 10 hours, and after delivering the cargo on their backs, they have to walk this long way back home.

Most of the time, women have to do this work during nights. The night prevents them from being seen by regime agents who would shoot porters. But even if the female porters survive the bullets fired by the regime's guards, the cliffs and valleys of the arduous path may still kill them. The slightest mistake, error in vision, or slip would cause them to fall down while walking in the mountains.

These women avoid talking to anyone along the path in order to avoid being identified as women.

Since a female porter froze to death in the cold last year, women are no longer given cargo in the winter. Unfortunately, there are no credible statistics about the number of women working as porters.

There are no specific statistics on women porters. The increase in women porters in the border provinces of Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah is an issue that the regime cannot cover up.

Some 4,000 to 5,000 households in the

Uramanat region of Kurdistan earn their living by working as porters. Some 4,000 people live in Shamshir village near the city of Paveh, in Kermanshah Province; most of them work as porters.<sup>51</sup>

Some 110 female porters have been identified in seven villages of Kermanshah.<sup>52</sup> Behzad Rahimi, a member of parliament, acknowledged, "People do not pursue these jobs to deliberately or consciously endanger their lives. They must do these jobs because they do not have any income and their baskets are empty. We cannot tell them not to do these jobs; otherwise, they do not have any revenues to spend for their basic needs. The only thing we can do is to provide job opportunities."

## Working girls - frequent victims of oppression and discrimination

Long working hours, disproportionate work to physical capabilities, violence, sexual harassment and being deprived of education are the realities of everyday life for thousands of working girls.

Elaheh Ghorbani, a sociologist with a masters in women studies, describes the reasons why young girls work in Tehran as poverty, inability of the family to provide a living, marginalization, family divorce or homelessness, parental abuse, and migration. Another reason for the prevalence of this sad phenomenon is the marriage and childbearing of the parents or polygamy. These children work to help support their families. In addition to working outside the home, these children are also responsible for chores at home as well, such as doing dishes, preparing food, sweeping, and so on. According to the study, most of these girls are illiterate and rarely reach fifth grade. They often suffer from oral diseases, nausea, and headaches.<sup>53</sup>

According to Elaheh Ghorbani, who conducted research about this phenomenon, these girls work as much as an adult until late at night. "Most children knew they were in danger, and they were in fear of being kidnapped or having harm done to them," says the sociologist. "In some cases, girls even pretended to be boys, cut their hair short, and disguised themselves as boys as much as they could to feel more secure. Although these children

hardly spoke about sexual harassment, they all knew what had happened to which friend."<sup>54</sup>

Many working children, including girls, end up in harsh, humiliating, and unsanitary garbage-searching for very little income. Mohammad Reza Javadi Yeganeh, the social and cultural deputy of Tehran Municipality, announced that there are 5,000 garbage-searching children in Tehran.<sup>55</sup>

Tehran Municipality has a monthly income of 4,000 billion Tomans by exploiting children in these jobs.<sup>56</sup>

Referring to the repression and humiliation of these children by government repressive forces, Ghorbani said, "the application of a specific terminology as "collecting the working kids" by municipality officials and police forces for these children inducts this image that working-children, in total, are stray, thieves, or members of a mafia group. It is part of preparing the public opinion for the repression of working children, which is encouraged through Iranian films and TV series."<sup>57</sup>

The Iranian regime has not been transparent about child labor and does not provide accurate statistics. The number of working children in Iran is estimated to be at least 7 million, half of whom are girls. But with the increase in poverty and marginalization in recent years, it can certainly be said that the number of working girls is also on the rise.<sup>58</sup>

## Malnutrition

Due to the widespread poverty in Iran, the people's sense of food security has been damaged and people can no longer provide the standard calories they need per day for their family. Due to the high costs of food items, many essential items in people's daily lives have been removed from their families' consumption basket.

According to the state-run website Tejarat News, the price of beans in August 2021 has increased by more than 50% compared to last year. The price of Iranian rice has risen about 42 percent, pasta by more than 20 percent and bread by more than 50 percent.<sup>59</sup>

Study data from the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare shows that meat consumption in all income deciles of Iranian society has been halved and people consumed less rice, meat and dairy products in 2019 than in 2011. Under this condition, they have also paid more to provide essential items and high-consumption foods. In other words, they spent more but have less to eat. Just in the first five months of this year (March 2021-August 2021) alone, the price of some food products, such as rice and sugar, has risen by 30 to 90 percent.<sup>60</sup>

The studies of the Ministry of Labor of the regime show that the intake calories of Iranians have had a decreasing and critical trend between 2011 to 2019, and the average intake calories of Iranians in 2019 has reached 1950 kcal per day.<sup>61</sup>

A report by government agencies shows

that during the past three years, seven-tenths of the population have not been able to consume the required number of calories according to standards, which indicates that food security in Iran is at risk.<sup>62</sup>

Although the head of the Iranian Nutrition Association recommends that people replace cheaper food with more expensive food, some people do not even have the financial means to do so.<sup>63</sup>

Malnutrition of women and children impacts the future generations of the country with various diseases. Maternal malnutrition, physical weakness, or maternal illness are directly related to poverty. In 2017, 8.6% of new-born children were underweight.

According to the Ministry of Labor, in 2016, about 2.6% of children in Iran were malnourished.





## Class division

# 3

The other side of Iran's social face is a huge class gap that is deepening day by day. "The average income of the richest strata of Iranian society is 34 times higher than the average income of the poorest strata. The expansion of interest-based incomes has intensified class divisions in the society. Besides an increase in legendary wealth of the wealthiest, it has also rapidly increased the population below the poverty line."<sup>64</sup>

The Gini coefficient index and the cost ratio of the tenth decile (richest) to the first decile (poorest), which is one of the indicators for measuring equality in income distribution, represents that the situation of Iran in the Gini coefficient is worse than 87 other countries. The cost ratio of the tenth decile to the first decile in Iran is nearly 14 times. This index is about 6 to 7 times in developed countries. The results show that the mullahs' regime did not pay attention to the adverse consequences of class division."<sup>65</sup>

In Iran, no one is surprised to hear terms such as "card board sleeping", "grave-sleeping", "roof-sleeping", "tent-housing", "marginalized", "working child", "street kids", and "organ sellers."

Traditionally only those people who did not have a job were exposed to misery and poverty, but in the midst of waves of inflation and staggering costs of medical expenses and housing, poverty in Iran has become so common that families with several working members who usually work more than one shift per day, literally are affected by poverty.

Images of multimillion-dollar cars and villas, special trips, and the luxurious lives of government officials and their families are shocking. The cost of a meal or one of their regular parties that they throw, is equivalent to the cost of living for a month for several Iranian working families.

It is said that the amount of assets of Astan Quds Razavi, Astan Hazrat Masoumeh Qom, the Martyr Foundation, Mostazafan Foundation and the Executive Headquarters of Farman Imam cannot be estimated. Neither these institutions nor the economic groups affiliated with religious institutions are willing to make their financial activities transparent or pay taxes. Wealthy individuals and institutions that own important and money-making collections in Iran are practically exempted from paying any taxes.<sup>66</sup>

The state-run website Mashreq News admits to parts of this wealth accumulation. "Since 2017, the import of goods with preferred (Tarjihi) currency has been so attractive for importers that the number of active companies importing livestock feed has increased from 15 to 400 companies. "These companies besides selling imported goods at a free market price, are exempted

from paying taxes and insurance as well."<sup>67</sup> The state-run newspaper Kar also reveals that "we take the tax share of the foundations from low-income tax paying employees."<sup>68</sup>

### Khamenei's wealth

When we want to point out the corruption within the Iranian government, we must point to the accumulation of wealth by Khamenei himself. The US Embassy in Baghdad on Friday, April 26, 2019, estimated Khamenei's wealth to be \$ 200 billion while, Jeff Bezos, Amazon's CEO, fortune reached \$ 196 billion by July 2020! "Corruption is pervasive in all parts of the Iranian regime, from the top to bottom," the statement added.

On July 7, 2015, Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper wrote a detailed article about the wealth of Ali Khamenei's children. "The wealth of Khamenei's children is more than billions of dollars which are mainly deposited in Britain, Syria, and Venezuela. Mojtaba, the second son of the supreme leader, has a fortune of \$ 3 billion, most of which has been deposited in the UAE, Syria, Venezuela, and banks in some African countries. Furthermore, his gold and diamond collections exceed 300 million dollars. Ali Khamenei's son has seized large parcels of land in the city of Mashhad and turned them into his private property. Meanwhile, ex-mayor of Tehran and current parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, had donated several acres of governmental lands in the best areas of



Abbas Abad in Tehran. In Mashhad, he owns the largest shopping mall, the largest commercial and commercial-residential project, a private jet and a helicopter for urgent travels, and a convoy of new Mercedes-Benz cars and horses."<sup>69</sup>

In addition to personal wealth, these vast fortunes are spent on the survival of the clerical dictatorship. On March 22, 2020, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, "While Iranian officials are asking for more money, it is important to note that Iran has spent more than \$ 16 billion on terrorism abroad since 2012. Lifting imposed sanctions by JCPOA has been used to replenish the treasury of its proxy forces. Regime officials stole more than 1 billion euros in medical supplies and continue to hoard masks, gloves and other essential medical equipment for sale on the black market."<sup>70</sup>

### Budget of the repressive forces

In addition to the specific budget for Khamenei, his family and other officials of the regime, a large amount of money is allocated annually from the budget for the oppressive forces and the export of terrorism.

In the budget of 2021 of the Iranian regime, 38.564 billion Tomans have been allocated to the Revolutionary Guards. Despite the sanctions, the budget of this infamous body has increased by almost 100% compared to the previous year. With this budget, 200,000 apartments can be built for homeless families, or a certified coronavirus vaccine can be provided for 77 million Iranians.

The regime's Research and Innovation Organization, with a budget of 245 billion tomans, which is 6 times more than last year, spends the wealth of the Iranian people on the production of nuclear weapons.

Other military and reactionary bodies annual budgets have all been increased in this year's budget.





## What is on the horizon

The United Nations celebrates Poverty Eradication Day 2021 with the theme "Making Progress Together: Ending Continued Poverty, Respecting All People and Our Planet." However, the mullahs' regime not only does not try to improve and elevate the Iranian people human rights and economical condition, but it is actually accelerating a campaign to make the Iranian population poorer.

Degrading and demeaning the human dignity of Iranian people, especially women, is part of the policy and foundations of this misogynist government. The people of Iran have all realized that for a better future they must bring an end to this corrupt and inhumane regime. The overthrow of this corrupt regime is imminent and numerous video clips in cyber space showing people at great risk to themselves demanding an end to this brutal dictatorship. It remains to be seen that in the struggle for the future of our people which side of history will the United Nations and European governments stand on.

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