



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

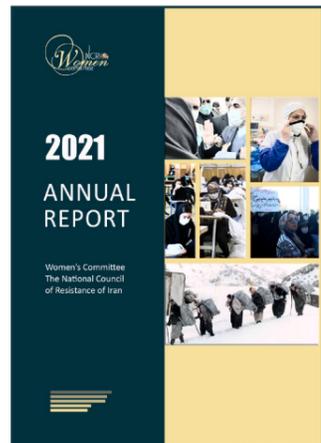
Women's Committee  
The National Council  
of Resistance of Iran





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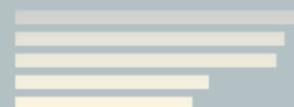


## Annual Report 2021

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# FOREWORD

**A**s women around the world are starting a new year on March 8, International Women's Day, we are happy to bring you another Annual Report of the NCRI Women's Committee.

This is an effort every year to shed light on the various aspects of women's life and struggle in Iran and violations of their basic rights as stipulated in the CEDAW and BPfA.

This year, however, all the issues had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult to address them all.

As we are publishing our Annual Report 2021, the COVID-19 has exacted a death toll of at least 230,000 from our nation of 85 million. As the country is going through the fourth peak, the mullahs' leader has banned purchase of vaccines from other countries, promising to start inoculating everyone next spring.

In the meantime, the economy is in shambles and poverty is spreading by the day leading to harrowing incidents, such as parents selling their liver and heart - yes, heart - to provide for the expenses of their families. Sometimes, they do not find any solution but to take the lives of their own children and then kill themselves.

But despite the misery the treacherous mullahs have inflicted on Iran's great nation, there is great hope for change. The courageous women of Iran are holding up the beacon of hope in the dark of the night.

Women who demonstrated their heroism in five nationwide uprisings are now organizing resistance units and preparing for more protests and uprisings.

The mothers of execution victims and the victims of the November 2019 uprising as well as the families of the victims of the Ukrainian Airliner downed by the IRGC, remained vocal throughout the year, seeking justice for their children.

Their quest for justice spreads hope in society for prosecution of the regime's leaders. Women continue to have a prominent presence in all protests by teachers, nurses, pensioners and defrauded investors.

We excluded all these issues and summarized the parts dealing specifically with women's basic rights, and yet we ended up with a book double the size of the previous reports.

We hope to have brought to light the most crucial issues concerning Iranian women, namely the Iranian regime's brutal attempt to suppress all and every voice of freedom, the various aspects of violence against women both sponsored by the state or promoted by state laws and policies, and the whopping gender gap in Iran as a result of gender discrimination in all fields.

As we begin another year on March 8, we are filled with hope and confidence that the courageous women of Iran will bring about regime change and realize the dawn of freedom on their homeland. And in this effort, they hope to enjoy the support and recognition of human rights and women's rights advocates from around the world.

NCRI Women's Committee  
March 2021

# Clampdown on opponents and human rights defenders

One of the most serious violations of women's rights in Iran is the persecution and suppression of opponents and human rights defenders. This is one of the main forms of violence against women in Iran carried out by full support of the government and under careful supervision of the Judiciary.

For exercising their freedom of speech and opinion, the Iranian regime arbitrarily and violently arrests opponents of the ruling religious fascism and human rights defenders in Iran. They are even brutalized on the way to prison. Then they are confined in solitary cells without standing trial. They endure great pressure and various forms of psychological and physical torture under interrogation. Often, they are not allowed to contact their families and inform them of their place of detention let alone, having visits or access to lawyer.

These brave women who dare to oppose the mullahs' savage regime or defend human rights, are deprived of the due process of law. In unfair trials and without having access to a lawyer, they are sentenced to disproportionate prison sentences.

On numerous instances, prisoners have to endanger their health by going on hunger strike as a last resort to achieve their demands.

Throughout the past year, the Coronavirus pandemic aggravated the already abysmal conditions in Iranian prisons. The mullahs' regime deliberately refused to provide the minimum equipment to prisons to fight the virus. They did not grant leaves to prisoners and particularly political prisoners until the end of pandemic.

Even the pandemic did not stop the regime from its arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, torture, mistreatment of prisoners and issuing heavy jail sentences for opponents and human rights defenders, sending more of them to prisons.

In fact, the clerical regime took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic, using the virus to put further pressure on its political opponents and physically eliminate them.



This is one of the main forms of violence against women in Iran carried out by full support of the government and under careful supervision of the Judiciary.

By violating the principle of separation of prisoners' categories, the regime banished political prisoners and confined them in prisons beside common and dangerous criminals. It thereby prepared the grounds for their physical elimination. In some instances, prison authorities hired dangerous prisoners to murder their political opponents.

One of the regime's common practices is torturing political prisoners by depriving them of medical treatment. The method proved even more efficient during the pandemic. Prisoners infected by the virus are detained in contaminated sub-standard quarantines, and left unattended as a bid to torture and murder them.

The information available on political prisoners in Iran is scarce and incomplete. The following pages provide the available information on these prisoners.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION PMOI/MEK

In the past year and particularly after the November 2019 uprising in Iran, the clerical regime made a considerable number of arbitrary arrests among supporters of its main opposition force, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK). The following pages contain information on some of these prisoners.



**Zahra Safaei**

Political prisoner Zahra Safaei was arrested with her daughter, Parastoo Mo'ini, on February 24, 2020. They were interrogated in the Intelligence Ministry Ward 209 in Evin Prison and pressured to appear on TV and make confessions against themselves. After completion of their interrogations, they were banished to the notorious Qarchak Prison in mid-April and detained among common criminals. Zahra Safaei, 57, was imprisoned for 8 years in the 1980s. Her father, Hassan Ali Safaei, was a renowned Bazaar businessman in Tehran who was executed in 1981 for supporting the PMOI/MEK. Mrs. Safaei was temporarily released on bail on June 28, 2020. However, she was rearrested on July 26, and returned to Qarchak Prison. Mrs. Safaei has been threatened to death by dangerous criminals in Qarchak in June, August, November and December. She has also been brutalized several times by prisoners hired by the prison's warden. She had a heart stroke while in detention and more recently, she has been suffering from pain in the kidneys. Her health has deteriorated but Qarchak Prison authorities have prevented her dispatch to a civic hospital for treatment. On January 23, 2021, Zahra Safaei was sentenced to 8 years in prison. Her daughter, Parastoo, and her son, Mohammad Massoud Mo'ini, were also sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, each.



**Parastoo Mo'ini**

Political prisoner Parastoo Mo'ini, 20, was arrested on February 24, 2020. She was incarcerated in the notorious Intelligence Ministry Ward 209 in Evin Prison. For nearly two months, she was under pressure to appear on TV and make confessions against herself. She was finally banished to Qarchak Prison in mid-April. On September 14, 2020, Parastoo Mo'ini and Forough Taghipour were attacked by two hired inmates who attempted to pour boiling water on their heads and faces. But their cellmates prevented the assailants from doing so. Ms. Mo'ini also contracted the Coronavirus while in detention in Qarchak. She was once again badly brutalized and injured on December 13, 2020, during a vicious raid on their ward. On January 23, 2021, Parastoo Mo'ini was sentenced to a total of 6 years' imprisonment; 5 years for supporting the PMOI/MEK, and 1 year for "propaganda against the state."



**Forough Taghipour**

Political prisoner Forough Taghipour, 25, and her mother, Nassim Jabbari, were arrested on February 24, 2020. Mrs. Jabbari, 58, was released on bail in mid-March, but Forough remained in detention and under interrogation. In mid-April, she was banished to Qarchak Prison. Forough Taghipour and Parastoo Mo'ini have been under tremendous pressure. Inmates hired and incited by the warden of Qarchak have harassed and attacked them several times. Forough Taghipour contracted the COVID-19 while in detention in Qarchak. On January 5, 2020, a Tehran court convened and arraigned Forough Taghipour and her mother of their charge of "propaganda against the state." But the judge also threatened to hand down a verdict for *Moharebeh* (waging war on God). Ms. Taghipour rejected this charge and announced that she was not guilty.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION PMOI/MEK



**Massoumeh Senobari**

Massoumeh Senobari is 33 with one child. She was arrested on February 24, 2019 and taken under interrogation. Her calf broke under savage torture during interrogation. The sole of her foot fractured and her vision turned blurry among other consequences she suffered due to torture. She has been sentenced to a total of 8 years in prison and is presently detained in the Central Prison of Tabriz among common criminals. She contracted the COVID-19 in prison.

Mrs. Senobari also suffers from a heart disease, but prison authorities have prevented granting her a medical leave or even giving her the medicines provided by her family. Recently, she has been suffering from pain in the breast due to a mass suspected of being cancerous. The authorities of the Prison of Tabriz have not allowed her sonography and medical examination.



**Nejat Anvar Hamidi**

Nejat Anvar Hamidi, 62, was incarcerated in March 2019 to serve her 15-year sentence in Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz. She suffers from Thyroid malfunction, high blood pressure, and blood lipid. Mrs. Anvar Hamidi's vision is also at risk. Sepidar Prison authorities have deprived her from receiving her medications. After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, she contracted the virus and was quarantined while deprived of medical attention.

Nejat Anvar Hamidi was imprisoned for 28 months during the 1980s. She was arrested again in 2017 for supporting the PMOI/MEK and sentenced to imprisonment in March 2019.



**Nahid Fat'halian**

Nahid Fat'halian is a retired teacher. Security forces arrested her on April 14, 2020 and took her to women's ward of Evin Prison after several days of interrogation.

Ms. Fat'halian actively participated in aiding flood-stricken people in spring 2019. The Revolutionary Court of Tehran convened her trial on September 16, 2020.



**Farangis Mazloun**

Ms. Farangis Mazloun, mother of political prisoner Soheil Arabi, was sentenced to a total of 6 years in prison by Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran on July 8, 2020.

The decision was made in her absence and without a trial. She was sentenced to 5 years in prison for "assembly and collusion against national security" through alleged contact with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), and to another 1 year for "propaganda against the state."

The Appeals Court subsequently commuted her sentence to 18 months on August 25, and informed her lawyer on October 20, 2020.

Mrs. Mazloun was arrested on July 22, 2019. She was imprisoned and tortured in solitary confinement in Evin Prison for several months in 2019 for following up on the case of her imprisoned son.

## POLITICAL PRISONERS SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION PMOI/MEK



**Zeinab Hamrang**

A retired teacher, Zeinab Hamrang, was arrested in the city of Khoy on August 31, 2020. Mrs. Hamrang who is 45 and from the city of Ardabil, was travelling with her daughter to West Azerbaijan. She was moved to Evin Prison in Tehran on September 5, 2020, to serve her prison sentence. She has been sentenced to 6 years in prison for alleged “assembly and collusion against national security” and “propaganda against the state.”



**Maryam Nassiri**

Mrs. Maryam Nassiri, 62, was arrested on August 17, 2020, in Qal’eh Hassan Khan (Tehran Province). She was detained and interrogated under torture in solitary confinement at Ward 209 of Evin Prison. In October, she was relocated to Qarchak Prison. Mrs. Nassiri is a lawyer and mother of four. She was imprisoned for three years in the 1980s for supporting the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK).



**Yalda Imamdoust**

Khadijeh (Yalda) Imamdoust, 47, is an athlete and a champion marathon runner. Intelligence agents arrested Ms. Imamdoust at her home in Isfahan on May 31, 2020. She was incarcerated for two months in Dowlatabad Prison of Isfahan where she was interrogated while held in solitary confinement. She is charged with “propaganda against the state.”



**Aghdas Pour Eshragh**

Aghdas Pour Eshragh, 64 and a teacher, was arrested in Narmak district of Tehran on July 26, 2020. She was detained and interrogated in the notorious Intelligence Ministry Ward 209 of Evin Prison. Two sisters of Ms. Pour Eshragh have been killed in struggle against the regime. Soghra Pour Eshragh was executed in 1983 and Massoumeh Pour Eshragh was killed in March 2003.



**Somayyeh Bidi**

Somayyeh Bidi from Karaj, Marzieh Farsi from Tehran and Mrs. Sedigheh Morsali, 55 from Qom, were also among the political prisoners detained for supporting the PMOI/MEK.



**Marzieh Farsi**



## BANISHMENT AND ABRUPT RELOCATION OF FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS

**Zeinab Jalalian**

Kurdish political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian was abruptly relocated from Kermanshah Prison to the Prison of Yazd on November 9, 2020. The security guards did not offer any explanation. This was the fourth time in six months when Zeinab Jalalian was being relocated from one prison to the other. A team of security forces first appeared in the Prison of Khoy on April 28, 2020, and took her away without presenting the reason. On May 2, it became evident that she had been taken to several prisons and finally to Qarchak Prison in Varamin. Ms. Jalalian contracted the COVID-19 while incarcerated in Qarchak Prison. Despite suffering from asthma, she was abandoned without medical treatment. Ms. Jalalian started a hunger strike on June 20, 2020, demanding to be returned to the Prison of Khoy and to receive medical treatment. Nevertheless, she was brutalized and transferred to the Prison of Kerman on June 25, 2020. She was confined in a solitary cell for three months in the Central Prison of Kerman under undecided status. After much persecution, she was relocated to the Prison of Kermanshah on September 24, 2020.

Zeinab Jalalian, 38, was sentenced to death in 2009 on the charge of Moharebeh through “membership in Pejak.” The verdict was commuted to life in prison in 2011. Ms. Jalalian has been in jail without any leaves since 2007 when she was arrested in Kermanshah. She suffers from various illnesses including asthma, pterygium, an oral thrush condition, and GI complications. As a way of torture, the Ministry of Intelligence has deprived her of medical treatment. She is presently under various forms of psychological pressure and deprived of her rights as a prisoner to express remorse and collaborate with the Intelligence Ministry. The ministry’s agents also pressured her while she was in Qarchak Prison to cooperate with them. Ms. Jalalian is in critical health conditions due to COVID-19 infection and lack of medical care and treatment.



**Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee**

Political prisoner Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee was returned to Qarchak Prison on January 24, 2021, but was sent to exile to the Prison of Amol, in northern Iran, without finding the opportunity to receive her personal belongings and warm clothing. She had just finished 43 days of interrogation at the IRGC Intelligence Ward 2A in Evin Prison. Some 50 prisoners are detained in two rooms in the women’s ward of Amol Prison. Most of them are convicted on drug-related charges and some have hepatitis. There is no quarantine to hold the new arrivals and there is high risk of contracting the virus in this prison. Before being returned to Qarchak, she was summoned to the Evin Courthouse to present her last defense against being charged with “propaganda against the state.” Her lawyer was not present during the trial. Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee was violently moved out of Qarchak Prison on December 13, 2020, to be sent to Ward 2A of Evin.

She was imprisoned for 3 years since 2016 when she was arrested for writing an unpublished story against the cruel punishment of stoning. During this time, she was violently transferred to Qarchak Prison. She was returned to Evin only after an 81-day hunger strike. She was released in April 2019, but arrested again on November 9, 2019 and transferred to Qarchak Prison to serve 25 months of imprisonment. Golrokh Ebrahimi and Zahra Safaei were assaulted and threatened to death by an incited and hired inmate in Qarchak Prison on November 2, 2020. It is said that a new case is being fabricated against her and this has been the reason for her recent interrogations.

## BANISHMENT AND ABRUPT RELOCATION OF FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS



**Sakineh Parvaneh**

Kurdish political prisoner Sakineh Parvaneh was taken out of the Prison of Quchan at 10 p.m. on December 13, 2020. She was taken to the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Mashhad, and in the morning of December 14, she was taken to the quarantine ward of the Central Prison of Mashhad. Again on February 24, 2021, she was transferred out of Mashhad Prison and to an undisclosed location. Prior to that, she had been relocated from the women's ward of Evin to the Prison of Quchan on October 27, 2020. Sakineh Parvaneh was arrested in early autumn of 2019, and subsequently sentenced to 5 years in prison for alleged "membership in opposition groups with the aim of disrupting national security." Sakineh Parvaneh was frequently brutalized when incarcerated at Evin and Qarchak prisons, and sent to a psychiatric hospital several times to be psychologically tortured.



**Sepideh Farhan**

Student activist Sepideh Farhan was abruptly relocated from Evin to Qarchak Prison on December 5, 2020. She was arrested during the nationwide protests in December 2017-January 2018 in Tehran and serving a 2-year sentence in Evin Prison.



**Saba Kord Afshari**

Saba Kord Afshari was transferred out of the women's ward of Evin Prison and banished to Qarchak Prison on December 9, 2020. Ms. Kord Afshari is sentenced to 24 years' imprisonment for protesting the mandatory veil. On January 26, 2021, prison guards took her by the hair and dragged her on the floor to move her from Ward 8 to Ward 6 where inmates convicted of dangerous crimes are detained. Saba Kord Afshari suffers from a stomach ulcer and other GI problems. She was taken to hospital in July and August 2020 but returned to prison before doing her tests.



**Yasaman Aryani**

Yasaman Aryani and her mother, Monireh Arabshahi, were sent from Evin Prison to exile in Kachouii Prison of Karaj on October 21, 2020. They are sentenced to 9 years and 7 months, each, for protesting the mandatory Hijab. On November 13, 2020, it was reported that Yasaman Aryani had tested positive for COVID-19, and transferred to a cell without having access to medical treatment.



**Monireh Arabshahi**

Monireh Arabshahi was abruptly relocated from Evin Prison to Kachouii Prison on October 21, 2020. She is sentenced to 9 years and 7 months, for protesting the mandatory Hijab. Based on a report on December 13, 2020, the authorities of Kachouii Prison prevented urgent medical tests for Monireh Arabshahi whose throat had swollen and she had difficulty breathing. The Forensics Office has certified that Mrs. Arabshahi cannot endure prison conditions and she should be granted leave to undergo treatment. But prison authorities have refrained from releasing her. They have denied her the medical treatment she needs. Doctors have emphasized that she needs to undergo surgical operations for her lumbar disc condition and for her thyroid gland.



**Mojgan Keshavarz**

Mojgan Keshavarz was abruptly transferred out of Evin and taken to Qarchak Prison on December 5, 2020. Mojgan Keshavarz, is 38 and mother of 10-year-old girl. She is sentenced to 23.5 years in prison for protesting the mandatory veil.

## DENIAL OF MEDICAL TREATMENT TO FEMALE PRISONERS

One of the clerical regime's common methods of torturing political prisoners and killing them is denying them medical treatment and preventing their access to hospitals, doctors and their medications. Over the past year, a female Arab political prisoner lost her life in Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz after prison authorities ignored her pleas for treatment.

### Makkieh Neissi

On the night of Monday, December 14, 2020, Makkieh Neissi was taken to the quarantine ward of Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz as she was crying out loud from pain, pleading to be taken to a civic hospital. The prison guards and authorities, however, did not take her to hospital and abandoned her in the ward without attending to her.

Tuesday morning, December 15, prisoners in the quarantine ward confronted her lifeless body.

Makkieh Neissi, 35 was married with three children. She was among hundreds of Arab women who were arbitrarily arrested, tortured and detained after an attack on an Armed Forces' parade in Ahvaz on September 22, 2018.

### Fatemeh Mosanna



Evin Prison authorities have deprived political prisoner Fatemeh Mosanna from receiving urgent medical treatment for more than five months. She was finally taken to a civic hospital on February 11, 2021, following serious deterioration of her health, intestinal pain and bleeding. But she was returned to prison after five days and before completion of her treatment process. She is presently deprived of access to her regular medicines.

Fatemeh Mosanna, 53, has been suffering from intestinal bleeding since mid-August and is not able to walk on her own.

A doctor from Tehran's Taleghani Hospital, urged the forensics office to examine her and verify that she could not bear prison conditions and that she deserved to be granted medical leave. Because of the advanced stage of her illness, the doctor said, it is not possible to treat her in the stressful conditions of prison.

As a result of prison conditions, Mrs. Mosanna suffers from GI disorders, liver problems, intestinal colitis and nervous migraine headaches. She has repeatedly fallen unconscious because of severe pain in her digestive tract. Every time, however, Evin's Assistant Prosecutor, Amin Vaziri, prevented her access to proper medical treatment.

Fatemeh Mosanna fainted while in detention in Evin Prison on August 19, 2020. She was sent to Taleghani Hospital but her hands and feet were cuffed to the bed throughout the week she stayed there. After 6 days, she was returned to Evin

Prison and detained in the quarantine.

Mrs. Mosanna's health conditions deteriorated again on September 7, 2020. She was sent to Taleghani Hospital for endoscopy and colonoscopy but again, she was returned to Evin without completing her tests.

Fatemeh Mosanna and her husband, Hassan Sadeqi, and her two children were arrested on January 28, 2013 as they were holding a memorial ceremony for Mr. Sadeqi's father who was a member of the opposition People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), and had just passed away. Her daughter was detained for three days and her underage son was detained and interrogated for about 1.5 months. The couple were later sentenced to 15 years in prison, each. Their business and residence were also confiscated by the regime's Judiciary. Mrs. Mosanna has been deprived of having visits with her imprisoned husband for nearly a year.

### Raheleh Ahmadi



Political prisoner Raheleh Ahmadi is in dire health and on the verge of paralysis.

Raheleh Ahmadi is the mother of Saba Kord Afshari. She was arrested to put pressure on her daughter. She is sentenced to 31 months in prison. In the wake of Saba's relocation from Evin and banishment to Qarchak Prison, Ms. Ahmadi suffered various nervous disorders but remained deprived of medical treatment.

A December 13, 2020 report from Evin said that she needs a walker to walk as she as suffered rupture in her discus. The prison clinic's doctor says her immobility is due to nervous pressure and she must be examined by a specialist neural doctor.

Given the physicians' serious concern over the likelihood of paralysis, Ms. Ahmadi must be urgently granted medical leave to receive treatment.

Raheleh Ahmadi has been imprisoned since February 15, 2020. She suffers from thyroid malfunctions which affect her immune system, making her more vulnerable to COVID-19.

## DENIAL OF MEDICAL TREATMENT TO FEMALE PRISONERS

### Hadisseh Sabouri



Political prisoner Hadisseh Sabouri is imprisoned in the women's ward of Evin Prison in Tehran. She is deprived of accessing medical services and treatment.

Ms. Sabouri was arrested during the protests in August 2018 in Tehran's Aryashahr district. Hadisseh Sabouri, 44, is married with three children. She suffers from various illnesses. In 2015, she underwent a surgical operation and part of her intestine was removed.

### Somayyeh Kargar



Somayyeh Kargar is a Kurdish citizen from Ilam. She is a graduate student of philosophy from the University of Tabriz. She was arrested on October 18, 2020 at her home in Tehran.

She was incarcerated and interrogated in the notorious Ward 2A of Evin Prison for 4 months. She was transferred to Ward 8 of Qarchak Prison in mid-February. Somayyeh Kargar urgently needs her medications because of a rare eye disease she has. Her eyesight is seriously at risk and she is in need of others' help to do her daily work. Nevertheless, she has been deprived of having access to her medicines throughout her detention. In a couple of brief calls to her family, Ms. Kargar complained of the deterioration of her health because of lacking access to her medications.

### Zahra Jamali



Zahra Jamali is serving a 3.5-year sentence in the women's ward of Evin Prison.

She has a cyst in one of her ovaries and a painful tumor in the sole of her foot. Evin Prison authorities prevent her from going to a medical center where she can be treated.

Ms. Jamali was arrested and imprisoned because of her remarks during the funeral of political prisoner Alireza Shir Mohammadi who was murdered by dangerous criminals in the Great Tehran Penitentiary on June 10, 2019.

### Massoumeh Asgari



Retired teacher Massoumeh Asgari was arrested for participating in a teachers' protest in Tehran in August 2018, and sentenced to five years in prison.

After one year, she was sent on medical leave upon the forensics office's certification that she needed to be treated for the various illnesses she has. But she was returned to the women's ward of Evin Prison on November 22, 2020, before completing her treatment, to serve her remaining four years.

Again on December 20, 2020, she received certification for conditional release indicating that she could not remain in prison because of her illnesses. But prison authorities have not granted her leave.

Massoumeh Asgari is a single mother with a 15-year-old son. She suffers from various physical and psychological illnesses. She recently had an accident breaking her leg at 8 points. She cannot walk on her own and uses a walker and a wheelchair.

## TRUMPING UP CASES AGAINST FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS



**Maryam Akbari Monfared**

*One of the systematic conducts of the clerical regime's Judiciary is fabricating new cases against resistant political prisoners to increase and extend their terms of imprisonment, imposing added pressure on them. Political prisoners Maryam Akbari Monfared and Atena Daemi were targeted by trumped up charges by the Revolutionary Guard Corps' Intelligence.*

Maryam Akbari Monfared was summoned to the Evin Courthouse on June 10, 2020, to be arraigned with charges in a new case opened for her. But she did not attend the hearing because she had not received a written summon, and also because of the Coronavirus outbreak.

Her court hearing convened on August 31, 2020. She is charged with "disruption of order in prison" through chanting anti-government slogans on the night of the anniversary of the 1979 Revolution on February 11. She says she had only protested a sick prisoner being left unattended for which she was deprived of her visitation on February 16, 2020.

Maryam Akbari Monfared has three daughters. She was arrested on December 31, 2009, after the tremendous uprising on December 27 that year which shook the pillars of the regime.

In June 2010, the Revolutionary Court of Tehran handed down a 15-year prison sentence for *Moharebeh* on the alleged charge of "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 since the day she was detained.

She suffers from Thyroid malfunction and joint rheumatism.

Maryam Akbari's sister and brother were executed during the massacre of political prisoners in summer 1988. Another two of her brothers were executed during the mass executions in the early 1980s.

**Atena Daemi**



Evin Prison authorities informed Atena Daemi on June 6, 2020, that she had been summoned and needed to appear before the courthouse on June 7. She appeared before the court, thinking that this was a follow-up on her previous case. But she found out that this was a new case and that she was accused of disrupting the prison's order by chanting anti-government slogans on the night of the 1979 Revolution's anniversary in February 2019. Ms. Daemi rejected the charges leveled against her.

Branch 26 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court had held another court hearing on a separate case for Atena Daemi and Golrokh Iraee on June 18, 2019, sentencing each of them to 3 years and 7 months in prison. This is the sentence she is presently serving.

Atena Daemi, 32, must have been released on July 4, 2020, after completing her 5-year prison term. But she was sentenced 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).

A children's rights activist, Atena Daemi was first arrested on October 21, 2014, and detained for 16 months for participating in a protest gathering outside the UN Office in Tehran, a protest against execution of Reyhaneh Jabbari, and other peaceful activities.

On November 26, 2016, she was arrested again and taken to Evin Prison to serve her sentence. During this period, she started a 54-day hunger strike in March 2017 which ended successfully when the prison sentences for her two sisters were rescinded.

Atena Daemi has suffered various illnesses during her years of incarceration, including numbness of her limbs, kidney infection, hormonal imbalance, and she is suspected of having multiple sclerosis and cancer.

## FEMALE KURDISH POLITICAL PRISONERS

**M**any Kurdish citizens, including a considerable number of women, were arrested and detained by the clerical regime over the past year. The wave of arbitrary arrests climaxed particularly in December 2020 and January 2021. This section is devoted to the reports on mistreatment of these women.

### Sakineh Parvaneh

Kurdish political prisoner Sakineh Parvaneh, 29, was arrested in autumn 2019 for visiting her family in Soleimaniya, in the Iraqi Kurdistan. Security forces took her to the Iran-Iraq border and interrogated her for 10 days in the detention centers in Marivan and Sanandaj. Subsequently, she was sent to the Intelligence Ministry detention center in Ward 209 of Evin Prison for further interrogations. She was transferred to the women's ward in mid-February 2020. In March, she was badly brutalized by prison guards for writing slogans on the walls of Evin. Then, she was handcuffed and shackled and sent to exile in Qarchak Prison. After 4 days of solitary confinement, she was sent to Aminabad Psychiatric Hospital in Shahr-e Rey. According to a report on April 21, 2020, she was returned to Qarchak and detained in the quarantine ward with a bruised and swollen face. Again on May 9, she was sent back to Ward 2A of Evin for one week of interrogation where she was severely beaten. On May 25, 2020, the 26th Branch of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced her to 5 years in prison for disruption of country's security. She was also banned for three years from membership in political groups. On the same day, Sakineh went on hunger strike in protest to the court's verdict and also to the violation of the principle of separation of prisoners' categories. In June, several inmates convicted of dangerous



crimes and enticed by the prison's warden, attacked and brutalized her in Ward 3 of Qarchak. She started another hunger strike on June 18, demanding end to harassment of her family and her own in detention. On July 4, 2020, Sakineh Parvaneh was transferred with a battered and bruised body from Qarchak Prison to the quarantine ward of Evin Prison. She ended her hunger strike after this transfer. On October 27, 2020, Sakineh Parvaneh was banished from the women's ward of Evin to the Prison of Quchan. During her detention there, she was deprived of having visitations with her family. On October 30, sensing that she was possibly being transferred to a prison in Isfahan, Sakineh went on hunger strike and sewed her lips on the eighth day. On November 9, 2020, she was sent to solitary confinement. After 20 days, she ended her hunger strike on November 20. Finally, on the night of December 13, 2020, she was sent to the Public and Revolutionary Court of Mashhad and relocated to the quarantine ward of the Central Prison of Mashhad, a.k.a. Vakilabad Prison, the next morning. Again on February 24, 2021, she was relocated to an undisclosed location.

### Shahnaz Sadeghifar

Shahnaz Sadeghifar, 32, and her 17-year-old daughter, Aynaz Zare'e, were arrested in October 2019 by agents of the IRGC Intelligence. They were interrogated for 2 months and subjected to psychological torture to make false confessions against themselves. They were subsequently transferred to the Central Prison of Urmia.

On July 26, 2020, the Revolutionary Court of Urmia sentenced Mrs. Sadeghifar to 15 years in prison.

Mrs. Sadeghifar has two mortar shrapnels in her heart because of having lived in the war zones in the Iranian Kurdistan. She needs to be urgently operated on, but she has been deprived of medical services.

Eventually, the first branch of the Penal Court of Urmia for children and adolescents sentenced Aynaz Zare'e to five years in prison on November 16, 2020. But Aynaz was later released from jail on November 25.

### Zeinab Esmaili

Dayeh Zeinab Esmaili, 58, and a member of Kurdistan's Mothers for Reconciliation, was sentenced to 6 years in prison on the charge of "membership in Kurdish parties and propaganda against the state."

### Hajar Saeedi

The Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj sentenced women's rights activist Hajar Saeedi to five years of jail sentence suspended for four years. The court convened in the absence of her lawyer. Hajar Saeedi is accused of participating in illegal gatherings and having contact with labor activists.

### Zahra Mohammadi

Kurdish political prisoner Zahra Mohammadi was sentenced to 5 years in prison by the Revision Court of Kurdistan Province on February 13, 2021. Zahra Mohammadi was arrested on May 23, 2019, for teaching Kurdish language to children. She was under savage interrogations for 6 months and pressured to appear on TV and make false confessions. Her interrogators threatened to arrest her family members if she did not collaborate with them. She was finally released on a 700-million-toman bail on December 2, 2019. Zahra has a Master's degree in Geopolitics from the University of Birjand.

### Faranak Jamshidi

Agents of the Department of Intelligence of Sanandaj arrested conservationist Faranak Jamshidi at her home in Sanandaj, on June 28, 2020. A member of the Green Society of Kurdistan, she was interrogated and pressured for making false confessions. She is charged with "acting against national security" and "propaganda against the state." The warrant for her arrest was extended five times and her release prevented. During this period, she contacted her family only twice. After 4.5 months, she was released temporarily on a 200-million-Toman bail on November 10, 2020. On January 23, 2021, the First Branch of the Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj sentenced her to 4 years in prison on the charge of "membership" in a Kurdish opposition group.



## FEMALE KURDISH POLITICAL PRISONERS

### Other arrestees

**Savin Mahmoudian Rad**, 23 from a village in Sardasht, was arrested by agents of the IRGC Intelligence in December 2019. She was detained in solitary confinement and interrogated in the detention center of the IRGC's Mahdi Corps in Urmia. After 2 months of questioning, she was transferred to the Central Prison of Mahabad on January 26, 2020.

Forces of the Intelligence Department of Paveh arrested 4 young Kurdish women on September 16, 2020. They were **Bahar Ahmadi, Nargess Mohammadi, Elham Moradi, and Negin Veissi**.

Fariba Ahmadi in Naghadeh and Rojin Mohammadpour were arrested on January 19, 2021, and Gelavij Abdollahi from Naghadeh was arrested on January 12, 2021.

**Azimeh Nasseri** was arrested in Bukan on January 9, 2021 and transferred after several days to the detention center of the IRGC Intelligence in Urmia. **Roya Jamali**, an environmental activist and member of the Green Society of Kurdistan, was arrested during a raid on her home by agents of the Department of Intelligence of Sanandaj on February 2, 2021.

### Young poetess threatened with cutting her tongue



A young Kurdish poetess, Taraneh Mohammadi, was kidnapped by intelligence agents on January 11, 2021.

After being insulted, humiliated and harassed, she was told that they would cut her tongue if she continued her activities.

Taraneh's posts and poems were mostly about human rights of the Kurds, women's rights, children, and violence against women, including forced marriages.

Roya Jamali has two children and suffers from multiple sclerosis (M.S.).

**Nazanin Atabaki and Nasrin Yazdani** were summoned to the Security Police of the State Security Force of Kermanshah and subsequently arrested on January 16, 2021. The two are solo singers in the all-women Gelaris musical band. They were interrogated and subsequently released temporarily on bail until final disposition of their case.

**Arezou Mostafaii**, 17, was summoned to the Department of Intelligence of Marivan and arrested on February 4, 2021. She was battered and injured under interrogation. She was released after 3 days on February 6, after signing a pledge. She bore bruises and scars on her face and arms.

## ARAB FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS

**A**rab citizens are regularly targeted and arrested by the mullahs' regime. Among those arrested are a considerable number of women. Following is a brief profile on some of those detainees.

### Political prisoners in Sepidar Prison

Female political prisoners are harassed, and frequently insulted, brutalized and tortured in Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz, in Khuzestan, including those who are pregnant. Following are some of these political prisoners.

1. Elaheh Darvishi, 20, married with a child. She was 18 and pregnant at the time of arrest. She delivered her child while in detention;
2. Sakineh Segour, 35, married with two children. She was pregnant when she was being interrogated. She was sent to hospital to deliver her baby as she was drenched in blood and her hands and feet were in cuffs;
3. Mahnaz Amouri Faissali, 38, married with a 10-year-old son. Her only crime was to help her 15-year-old niece, Maedeh Sha'abani Nejad, and hide her from agents of the Intelligence Department who wanted to arrest her;
4. Maryam Hemadi, 28, married with two children;
5. Fatemeh Tonitzadeh, mother of Maryam Hemadi, arrested in October 2018;
6. Zeinab Afrawi, arrested on September 21, 2018;
7. Zoveydeh Afrawi, 55, arrested in October 2018, from Albu Afri village in Susangerd;
8. Gheisiyeh Afrawi, 60, arrested in October 2018, from Albu Afri village in Susangerd;
9. Maryam Zobaidi, 53, married with three sons and a daughter, from Zeitun district of Ahvaz. She was arrested on March 15, 2018 along with two of her sons, 26 and 29 years old. One of her sons, Benjamin Albu Ghabish, was killed under torture on June 26, 2019;
10. Massoumeh Sa'eidawi, 48;
11. Sussan Sa'eidawi, 45.



### Sahba Hemadi

Sahba (Lamya) Hemadi was sentenced to 7 years in prison on December 30, 2020, and immediately transferred to the Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz. Sahba Hemadi comes from Sussangerd and has two children. She is a poet, writer, and a student of agricultural engineering. She was only 20 and 7 months pregnant when she was arrested for the first time in October 2018, after writing and publishing an article on racial discrimination, economic problems, and poverty in society. She was subjected to cruel physical and psychological tortures while in detention for 2 years, including 6 months in Evin Prison. The scars of burn by electric shocks were clearly evident on her arms.

## ARAB FEMALE POLITICAL PRISONERS



**Fatemeh Tamimi**

Agents of the Intelligence Department of the Port of Mahshahr arrested Fatemeh Tamimi at her home on December 9, 2020, and took her to an unknown location. Fatemeh Tamimi is a cultural activist in child and Arab folklore literature. She is 39 and married with two children, 15 and 11. She lives in the city of Jarrahi at the Port of Mahshahr. Fatemeh Tamimi also made documentary films.



**Maryam Ameri**

Intelligence forces raided the residence of Maryam Ameri on December 10, 2020. They arrested her and took away her personal belongings. Intelligence agencies had summoned Maryam Ameri repeatedly over 10 days preceding her arrest, and questioned her about her cultural activities. Ms. Ameri and Fatemeh Tamimi collected Arab stories, lullabies and songs from villages.



**Azhar Albughabish**

The IRGC Intelligence arrested Azhar Albughabish, a social activist, and her two brothers in Shadegan, in early December 2020. All three are under 20 years of age. Azhar helped the poor in the city of Shadegan, near Ahvaz.

**Zeinab Savari**

Zeinab Savari, a teacher living in Howeizeh, was arrested with her brother, Hamza, and her younger sister on December 11, 2020.

## WOMEN ARRESTED DURING PROTESTS IN NOVEMBER 2019 UPRISING

**D**uring the November 2019 nationwide uprising, a significant number of women participating in the uprising were arrested. Some are still languishing in prison since that time. Others were temporarily released, but the mullahs' judiciary later sentenced them to prison and they were transferred to prison last year to serve their sentences.



**Fatemeh Davand**

Fatemeh Davand was arrested on August 6, 2020, and transferred to Urmia Central Prison to serve her sentence. Ms. Davand is 42 years old and is the mother of three children. The Bukan City Court sentenced her to five years and five months in prison and 30 lashes. Her request was to be released with an electronic bracelet, but officials of Urmia Central Prison did not agree to her conditional release. Ms. Davand went on a hunger strike on November 12, 2020, to protest the decision. Eventually, the Bukan city prosecutor objected to this request, and Ms. Davand was transferred to a high security ward in Urmia Prison. The religious fascism ruling Iran does not allow alternative forms of punishment to replace imprisonment for mothers.



**Maryam Payab**

Maryam Payab, a civil activist from Behbahan, was temporarily released from Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz on January 13, 2020, pending trial and after posting a bail of 1 billion Tomans. She was shot in the back during the November 2019 protests. After undergoing surgery, and while she was being treated at the hospital she was arrested by the regime's security forces in Behbahan on December 19, 2019, and transferred to Ahvaz Detention Center. She was later transferred to Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz. In November 2020, Maryam Payab was sentenced to one year in prison and 74 lashes on charges of disturbing public order.



**Soha Mortezaei**

Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced student activist Soha Mortezaei to 6 years in prison. She is charged with "conspiracy to act against national security." Intelligence agents arrested Ms. Mortezaei on November 17, 2019 and detained her in Ward 2A of Evin Prison for over 2 months. Soha Mortezaei has a Master's degree in anthropology but was deprived of her Ph.D. education. In October 2019, she held a 21-day lone sit-in strike on the campus of Tehran University. The authorities pressured her mother by threatening to take Soha to a psychiatric hospital if she continued her sit-in. She had been previously arrested during the protests in December 2017-January 2018, and in February 2015 when she was detained for two months.

## WOMEN ARRESTED DURING PROTESTS IN NOVEMBER 2019 UPRISING



**Azam Shirafkan**

Azam Shirafkan lives in Alborz province and has one child. The Revolutionary Court of Karaj sentenced her to 5 years in prison on charges of “forming gatherings and collusion to incite others with the intention of disrupting the security of the country” and to 1 year and 6 months in prison on charges of “propaganda activities against the regime.” She was sentenced to a total of 6 years and 6 months in prison.

### **Samira Hadian**

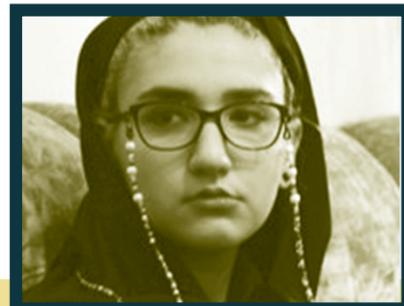
Samira Hadian was sentenced to 8 years of non-suspended imprisonment for “conspiracy, collusion, disobeying state officials’ orders and insulting officials,” of which 5 years will be executed. She is currently being held at Qarchak prison in Varamin.



**Marjan Es'haqi**

Marjan Es'haqi, a political science student at the University of Tehran, was sentenced to five years in prison for participating in the November 2019 protests. Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced Marjan Es'haqi to one year of prison without bail and four years of suspended imprisonment on November 11, 2020.

Marjan Es'haqi was arrested by IRGC intelligence agents on November 17, 2019, after participating in a student rally at the University of Tehran, while leaving the campus. She was transferred to the IRGC Intelligence Detention Center (Ward 2A) at Evin Prison. She was released on bail after 18 days. Marjan Es'haqi has been charged with “participating in a gathering and collusion against national security.”



**Melika Qaraguzlu**

Melika Qaraguzlu, a journalism student at Allameh Tabatabaai University, was sentenced by the Tehran Revolutionary Court to 6 months in prison. Melika Qaraguzlu was arrested on Sunday, November 17, 2019, during the November uprising. She was summoned to the disciplinary committee in May 2020 on charges of “participating in an illegal university gathering” and “mal-veiling.”

### **Zeinab Alipour**

Zeinab Alipour, a 28-year-old nurse, was arrested during the protests in January 2020 and sentenced to two years in prison. She is currently being held at Qarchak Prison in Varamin.



**Roghiyeh Bigdeli**

Roghiyeh Bigdeli, a resident of Karaj city and one of the detainees of the nationwide protests in November 2019, was summoned to Zanjan to serve a two-year sentence in exile. Ms. Bigdeli was arrested and beaten by security forces on January 11, 2020, and was released shortly after from Kachuii Prison in Karaj. She was eventually sentenced by the Karaj Revolutionary Court to 5 years suspended imprisonment and 2 years of forced residence in Zanjan. The sentence was reduced to 2 years suspended imprisonment and 2 years in exile during the appeal phase.



**Maliheh Jaafari**

Maliheh Jaafari, a student at the University of Tehran who was arrested during the November 2019 uprising and sentenced to six months in prison, was summoned to Evin Court to serve her sentence. In addition to imprisonment, Maliheh Jaafari is also sentenced to copying religious books.

### **Roghiyeh Taherzadeh**

On October 22, 2020, the Behbahan city court sentenced Ms. Roghiyeh Taherzadeh, one of the protesters of the November 2019 uprising, to pay a fine of 3.3M Tomans to the state treasury instead of 3 months of imprisonment. She was charged with insulting on-duty state officials.



**Zari Tavakoli**

Zari Tavakoli was arrested by security forces in Kerman for taking part in the 2019 November uprising. She was transferred to the Central Prison of Kerman after interrogations. She remains imprisoned for not being able to pay a 300-million-Toman bail set for her release.

### **Arezoo Ghasemi**

Arezoo Ghasemi, 22, was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran to 2 years and 3 months in prison. She is currently serving her sentence in the women’s ward of Evin Prison.

### **Maryam Alishahi**

Maryam Alishahi, who is currently being held in Qarchak Prison in Varamin, has been sentenced to nine years in prison. Maryam Alishahi and her son, both of whom were arrested for participating in the November uprising, were both sentenced to a total of 15 years in prison.

## DETENTION AND INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALISTS

Iran under the regime of the mullahs is the largest prison for journalists in the world and the largest prison for women journalists. In recent years, many women journalists have been harassed or threatened by the regime or arrested and sent to prison. Information about some of them is given below:



### Alieh Motallebzadeh

Alieh Motallebzadeh, vice president of the Association for the Defense of Press Freedom, was transferred to Evin Prison on October 11, 2020 to serve her sentence. She defends women's rights and rights of victims of acid attacks.



### Moloud Hajizadeh

The Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced journalist and media activist Moloud Hajizadeh to one year in prison on January 19, 2021. The Tehran-based journalist posted on her Twitter page protesting the killing and repression of the government in the November 2019 nationwide uprising and the Revolutionary Guards downing of a Ukrainian plane.



### Kowsar Karimi

Kowsar Karimi, a journalist working for the state-run Mehr News Agency, was arrested on August 28, 2020, following a report on the demolition of houses in Abolfazl village, and was temporarily released on bail hours later.



### Negar Massoudi

Negar Massoudi, a female photographer and documentary filmmaker, was arrested by security forces in Tehran on October 29, 2020 and taken to an unknown location. She was released on bail on December 12 until final disposition of her case. Negar Massoudi was born in 1985 and holds a bachelor's degree in photography and a master's degree in art research.



### Shabnam Ashouri

Shabnam Ashouri, the managing director and licensee of Agahnameh, was arrested in Tehran on October 6, 2020. Security forces confiscated some of her personal belongings after searching her home. Ms. Ashouri was born in 1987 and is married. The topics covered in the Agahnameh Magazine address workers' issues and demands.



### Raha Askarizadeh

The Tehran Court of Appeals on January 7, 2021, upheld the conviction of Raha Askarizadeh, a journalist, photographer and women's rights activist. Raha Askarizadeh had been initially sentenced to 2 years in prison, 2 years banned from leaving the country, 2 years banned from working in cyberspace, and 2 years banned from working in political groups and the press. She was arrested on November 28, 2019 while leaving Iran and transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. She was released on December 31, 2019 on bail until the end of her trial.



### Mehrnoosh Tafian

Mehrnoosh Tafian, a journalist from Ahvaz, was arrested on October 29, 2020 and transferred to prison. Mehrnoosh Tafian is married and has a son. She is a freelance reporter on environmental issues, as well as the problems of workers and marginalized people. Some of her social reports were published in the state-run Mehr news agency and the Asr-e-Junub news website. Mrs. Tafian appeared before the Court but was unable to post bail. So, security officials transferred her to prison.



### Zeinab Rahimi

The dismissal of female environmental journalist Zeinab Rahimi, who worked for the ISNA state-run news agency, was reported on April 21, 2020. Zeinab Rahimi was fired for publishing a Twitter post and criticizing the director of public relations of the Environmental Protection Organization.

## INTIMIDATION OF JOURNALISTS



### Nada Sabouri

The Tehran Court of Appeals sentenced Nada Sabouri to 3.5 years in prison on charges of "conspiracy and collusion." She was transferred to the women's ward of Evin Prison on August 7, 2020 to serve her sentence. Nada Sabouri, along with the families of political prisoners, took part in a protest rally in front of the parliament, the prosecutor's office and the presidential office in April 2014 to protest the prison guards' attack on Ward 350 of Evin Prison. She was arrested along with six others. She was released from prison on November 10, 2020.

### Journalist prosecuted and intimidated for revealing corruption



### Elham Mousavi

On Monday, January 18, 2021, Branch 11 of the Gorgan Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office issued a written statement summoning Elham Mousavi, a journalist, to attend the interrogation session on charges of "spreading lies, slander and insulting officials." This journalist and media activist was summoned to Branch 16 of the Tehran Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office on December 27, 2020, following a complaint by the Director General of Environmental Protection of Golestan on similar charges.

Elham Mousavi is one of the

environmental activists in the northern provinces who has been repeatedly prosecuted for her revealing reports of "deforestation" and the indiscriminate harvesting of forest trees in the northern provinces by military and government institutions.

She wrote in a memo published in June 2019 entitled "Cost of revelation": "A gentleman who was acquainted with one of our distant relatives sent a message that he carries a message from a former official in the Gorgan Prosecutor's Office for me... When he said the message shamelessly and without the slightest embarrassment, I was embarrassed in front of the children and my mother and husband. My heart sank and I felt how much revelation costs in this country. I've heard of many ethical filing projects for many people before, but I couldn't believe that one day it would strike me. He said Haj Agha so-and-so said: "If you do not stop writing about the Museum of Sacred Defense, we will create a moral case for you! It's like a piece of cake for us ..." He said the last sentence emphatically.

## VICTIMS FOR THEIR FAITH

### Conditions of religious minorities in Iran

One of the grounds for discrimination and violation of women's free choice in Iran is adopting a religion or belonging to religious minorities. For more than four decades of religious dictatorship, ethnic and religious minorities have been the target of systematic repression and crackdowns. They have also been deprived of the freedom to engage in certain social activities.

The regime discriminates against Christians and Baha'is, as well as the Sunni minority. In Iran, Christians are forbidden from discussing or practicing their faith publicly. Christian ceremonies, conducted in home churches, are typically raided and participants arrested. The situation of the Baha'i community in Iran is also deteriorating. The government has subjected Baha'is to measures such as the destruction of cemeteries, arbitrary arrests, raids on homes and confiscation of property, dismissals, and denial of civil rights.

Baha'i professionals are prohibited from holding public office and discriminated against because of their beliefs about being hired by private companies.

- Over the past year, at least 26 women have been sentenced to prison terms simply for believing in the Baha'i faith. Most of the sentences are for more than 6 years.
- At least 26 women were summoned to security centers or courts for being Baha'is, and 17 Baha'i women were barred from education.
- In the case of Christian women, at least 15 were

summoned, detained, and imprisoned.

- This discrimination also applies to members of the Sunni minority. Sunnis are discriminated against to the extent that they are deprived of having a place of worship in Tehran; the regime destroys Sunni mosques.

### Examples of abuses against religious minorities

- An Iranian regime court issued an inhumane ruling to separate a 2-year-old toddler from her Christian parents, Maryam Fallahi and Sam Khosravi. The 2-year-old, named Lydia, was born Muslim but adopted by a Christian couple when she was only 10 weeks old. On September 23, 2020, the Revision Court of Bushehr ruled that since the little girl had been born Muslim, she could not be adopted by a Christian couple.
- On June 26, 2020, officers from the Karaj Bureau of Properties visited a Baha'i retirement home and tried to seize the property, a place of care for elderly Baha'i people with disabilities for the past 20 years. The retirement home had been operating with official approval of the Welfare Organization. However, in recent years, the license was not renewed because the owners are Baha'is.
- On January 25, 2020, Firoozeh Shafizadeh, living in the village of Khutbehsara in Gilan Province, was arrested at her home. Firoozeh, a Baha'i who has a doctorate in pharmacy, had many opportunities to work abroad, but 2 months ago, she moved to Karaj to work in the village and help the needy.

## THE SITUATION IN WOMEN'S WARDS OF IRANIAN PRISONS

**T**he situation of women's wards in prisons across Iran is particularly dire in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which most provinces are in the red. Prison health is reported to be very poor and the virus has spread uncontrollably in most prisons.

The regime also refused to take the slightest step to provide health and care facilities for prisoners and to grant them leave or furlough. The concentration of prisoners in prisons prevents social distancing and increases the possibility of disease transmission. And in most prisons, there is basically no separation between the infected persons and other prisoners.

A significant number of women political prisoners have been infected with Covid-19, including Zeinab Jalalian, Massoumeh Senobari, Nejat Anvar Hamidi, Forough Taghipour, Parastoo Mo'ini, and Yasaman Aryani, who have been denied medical treatment throughout their infections.

Amnesty International says it has seen copies of four letters written by officials from the prison organization under the auspices of the Judiciary to the Ministry of Health warning of severe shortages of personal protective equipment and disinfectants. and key medical equipment and supplies. But the Ministry

of Health has ignored these requests, and Iran's prisons are catastrophically lacking the necessary equipment in the face of the spread of infectious diseases.

In fact, the Corona virus crisis provided an opportunity for the mullahs' regime to physically eliminate its resilient opponents or torture them through denial of treatment in the midst of daily news of the virus' deaths around the world, without sensitizing public opinion and invoking international condemnation.

The Iranian resistance has repeatedly called for the release of prisoners, especially political prisoners, albeit temporarily until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, and stressed the need to send an international fact-finding mission to visit prisons and meet with prisoners, especially political prisoners.

This section is a brief review, albeit based on the information available, on the situation of women's wards in various prisons.

The Iranian Resistance has repeatedly called for the release of political prisoners, albeit temporarily until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, and stressed the need to send an international fact-finding mission to visit prisons and meet with prisoners

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### Evin Prison

**T**he women's ward of Evin Prison consists of two main halls, the first of which is basically a place for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and has three separate rooms. The principle of separation of crimes is not observed in the women's ward of Evin Prison. Individuals accused of public crimes, such as human trafficking or conflict, are transferred to the women's ward for several days to several months instead of being transferred to public prisons.

### Corona virus outbreak

With the outbreak of the Corona virus and the insistence of the inmates of Hall 1, Hall 2 was used as a temporary quarantine for women. The windows of this hall are covered with iron and plastic talc and this makes the sunlight not coming into the hall.

Prisoners are responsible for providing masks and gloves after the outbreak of the Coronavirus. In the prison shop, each mask or pair of gloves is sold to prisoners at a high price. Detergents and disinfectants, which are distributed by the prison in the form of rations, are also insufficient, and prisoners have to buy them from the store at many times the cost at their personal expenses. Alcohol and hand sanitizers are offered at high prices in the prison store, which is why a number of prisoners collectively buy these items.

The new convicts and defendants will be kept for 14 days in Hall 2 and one room in the administration office of quarantine. But the location of prison phones and shops is shared with other inmates.

### Food quality

Due to the poor quality of prison food, most prisoners are forced to buy food at several times the original price from the prison store. Some of the goods provided by the store at the request of the prisoners are sold to them at a price many times higher than the original price.

### Access to medical treatment

Prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus, authorities refused to send prisoners to hospitals and medical centers despite being at their own expense. Dispatches are very irregular and take place later than the prisoner needs medical treatment. Even sending patients from prison to medical facilities faced many obstacles. This process worsened after the outbreak of the Coronavirus, and if follow-up is continued, patients will be returned to prison quickly without completing medical treatment.

Two views from Evin Prison



# THE SITUATION IN WOMEN'S WARDS OF IRANIAN PRISONS

## Qarchak Prison of Varamin

**Q**archak Women's Prison is a prison for about 2,000 women prisoners. There is no segregation of crime in this prison and political prisoners are kept among ordinary criminals and dangerous prisoners.

Many of the women arrested during the November 2019 and January 2020 uprisings are being held in this prison, and none of them have been allowed to go on leave.

### Conditions after the outbreak

According to reports from Qarchak Prison in Varamin, at least 130 prisoners in the prison contracted Covid-19. Prisoners with Covid-19 are left without any medical or health care in a place called the Prison Club, which is an unsanitary environment without proper ventilation.

In early April 2020, two prisoners infected with the Coronavirus died in solitary confinement in Qarchak Prison due to lack of medical care. In July and August, reports of prisoners' suicides due to Covid-19 were leaked from the prison.

Lack of basic amenities, problems with the sewage system, salty water, constant water shortages in the summer, as well as lack of medical and health facilities and high density of prisoners and unsanitary use of card phones can be added to the reasons for the spread of virus in this prison.

### Lack of care for sick prisoners

The deteriorating health of Qarchak Prison even found its way to the state-run media.

On April 15, 2020, the state-run Khabar Online news agency quoted a prisoner who had just been released from Qarchak Prison as saying that Covid-19 patients were being held in sharia meeting rooms without any special facilities. There are no medicines, doctors, facilities or respiratory devices in these rooms, while many of them have respiratory problems. Sick and non-sick prisoners are all held together.

*2,000 women are detained in Qarchak Prison with no segregation of crimes, no isolation for the sick, and no sanitation. A large number of children under the age of two are kept with their mothers in the Mothers' Ward*



Three views from Qarchak Prison in Varamin

186 people are detained in a prison ward that is compartmentalized by beds, and even in one of the wards called the mothers ward, a large number of children under the age of two and breastfeeding mothers are kept.

### Health care and facilities

In-prison health care clinic has few facilities that have exacerbated the problems after the Covid-19 outbreak.

There are no masks or gloves in prison, and prisoners who go to prison staff with symptoms of fever are told to go to their beds and use your scarf as a mask!

The prison store provides only one bar of soap and one laundry detergent per month for each prisoner, which under normal circumstances does not meet the needs of a female prisoner. Given that the regime has also banned visits, it is obvious that a prisoner without a visit does not have the money to buy her necessities, and unfortunately this has further reduced the level of health in the prison.

### Overcrowding of the wards

In Qarchak, some prisoners sleep on the floor of the prison, which is one of the reasons for the spread of the Coronavirus. The number of prisoners in the halls and cells is high, and this causes a dangerous situation in the prison if someone is infected. Even addicts who are more susceptible to infection are not separated from other prisoners.

### Rape of prisoners in Qarchak

Another reported issue of Qarchak prison is the rape of prisoners. The security cameras of the toilets and bathrooms have been broken by prisoners with violent crimes, and this space is used to beat and rape prisoners. Despite being aware of this situation, the prison authorities not only do not repair or install new cameras, but the prison staff also ignores the phenomenon of rape in the prison.



## Sepidar Prison of Ahvaz

**A**hvaz Sepidar Prison was established in 2009. The prison area is 700 square meters.

In summer and the high temperature in Ahvaz (50 oC), the air conditioning system was broken. Prisoners were even deprived of a fan. Continuous water cuts also add to these problems.

According to a prisoner released from this ward, there is a problem with sewage and sanitation. The cells are full of lice, insects and beetles. Many days of the week, the Women's Health Center has no doctors or nurses.

Suicide attempts are on the rise among women prisoners because they hope to be taken to medical centers after suicide so that they can spend a few days in better conditions or eventually die.

### 50 Covid-19 cases among inmates

Due to the spread of the Coronavirus in this prison, women are kept in crowded wards. At least 50 women prisoners became infected after the Covid-19 outbreak. The infected prisoners were kept in the quarantine ward for only a short time and then returned to the public ward.

There is no doctor to treat these patients and no medical care is given to them. Prison authorities do not even deliver the medicines brought to them by the prisoners' families. The room where women with Covid-19 are quarantined is separated from the other wards by just a few bars.

## THE SITUATION IN WOMEN'S WARDS OF IRANIAN PRISONS



### Central Prison of Shiraz (Adelabad)

Corona virus has spread rapidly in this prison. Instead of releasing the prisoners, the prison authorities put more pressure on them to cause the gradual death of the prisoners.

One of these mental and physical pressures is not delivering special drugs to patients who have to take special and vital drugs. Prison officials also make empty promises to the prisoners after they protest and come to get their medicines. The lack of medicine for a number of prisoners poses problems and threatens their lives.

#### Jammers inside ward rooms

Also, jammers inside the ward rooms have seriously affected the physical and mental health of the prisoners. They suffer from constant headaches and nausea. The continued operation of these devices will cause serious damage to political prisoners.

On November 8, 2020, it was reported that prison officials prevented a female prisoner with Covid-19, who was suffering from severe headache and nausea and was in critical condition, from being sent to medical facilities.



### Central Prison of Urmia

The Central Prison of Urmia, also known as Darya Prison, is located on the road from Urmia to Tabriz, 15 km from the center of Urmia. This prison has 17 wards. Ward 15 is a women's ward and has a large hall with about 120 beds. In this prison, the accused and the political and security convicts and the people accused of ordinary crimes are kept and the principle of separation of crimes is not observed.

#### High death rate

The death rate due to illness is high in Urmia Prison and is one of the prisons where many cases of Covid-19 have been reported among prisoners. In April 2020, at least one female Covid-19 prisoner died in the prison.

On August 18, 2020, 140 women prisoners went on a hunger strike to protest the lack of health facilities in the prison, the negligence of the authorities to prevent the spread of Corona virus, and the opposition of prison officials to their temporary release.

#### Overcrowding and lack of sanitation

According to reports, on October 23, 2020, about 300 women prisoners were transferred from prisons throughout Western Azerbaijan to Urmia Central Prison.

Prior to that, 200 women prisoners were detained in Ward 15.

This place is divided into 8 rooms in the form of cubicles with short walls. Each room consists of 16 beds with about 30 women prisoners. As a result, half of the population in each room has no place to rest and sleeps on the floor. And if they can not afford it, they will be deprived of blankets and clothes for a long time.

There are only 5 toilets and 3 showers for all the inmates. Most of the time, toilets are broken and unusable. Hot water for bathing is normally cut off and prisoners are forced to bathe with cold water. In this ward, the children are also in prison with their mothers. Due to the crowded and dirty situation of this ward, children are exposed to various diseases, including gastrointestinal diseases, skin diseases, etc.

#### Poor quality of food and water

Prison food is very inadequate and of poor quality, and prisoners have often found mice and beetles in their food. Inadequate prison water also causes kidney disease in prisoners. Meat has been completely removed from the prisoners' diet. Due to the low quality of prison food, prisoners are now forced to prepare food at their own expense and with limited prison facilities. Due to the lack of necessary facilities and unsanitary cooking environment in the prison, a number of prisoners have become ill.

#### Access to medical facilities

Sending patients to hospitals and outpatient treatment centers is done only in special circumstances and with judicial permission. However, prison officials prevent the patients from leaving even after the permit is issued. Contrary to prison regulations, the cost of a doctor's visit and treatment outside the prison is borne by the prisoner.

*Half of the population in each room has no place to rest and sleeps on the floor. Contrary to prison regulations, the cost of a doctor's visit and treatment outside the prison is borne by the prisoner*

### Birjand Women's Prison

The quarantine ward of Birjand Women's Prison is an old gymnasium where about 120 prisoners are being held together. Due to lack of space, it is not possible to observe the social distance between the prisoners at all.

The ward had only two usable toilets and four showers for all inmates, and each inmate had to stand in line for a long time to use them.

In addition to personal hygiene, women prisoners wash their children's pampers and dishes in the toilets. There is no disinfectant in the hall except liquid soap.

After the corona outbreak and with the follow ups of the families of the prisoners, three more toilets were added for the use of the prisoners and a number of masks and gloves were distributed among them.

In June 2020, a number of women prisoners suffered from fever and chills, sore throats and body aches. But this problem was ignored by the prison authorities. As the number of patients increased, a doctor examined about 80 patients on an outpatient basis and gave them all cold medicines and cough syrup. It was later reported that a large number of prisoners lost their sense of smell and taste.

# THE SITUATION IN WOMEN'S WARDS OF IRANIAN PRISONS

## Central Prison of Tabriz

More than 150 prisoners in the women's ward of Tabriz Prison are deprived of their minimum rights and facilities.

The medical condition of Tabriz Prison is very unsatisfactory and there is no care for prisoners. There is only one nurse in this prison and the doctor only comes once a week, but they do nothing for the prisoners.

### Conditions of Covid patients

Prison officials did not separate and quarantine patients from the beginning. This caused a large number of them to contract Covid-19. In the last week of September, at least nine women prisoners contracted Covid-19.

Soap bar is not given to women for use in the bathroom. There is no response to the protests of inmates in this regard. Women prisoners are forced to use washing powder to wash their hands. In a situation where a number of prisoners in this ward have been infected with Covid-19, they were given only one extra meal of prison food and 45,000 Tomans were deducted from their card account.

### Low quality of food and theft of rations

Prison food is very bad and store goods are very expensive and of poor quality. These women are not allowed to have a kitchen or a flame. In an illegal act and blatant theft of the prisoners' meager rations, the Tabriz Prison authorities twice in the third week of November forced the prisoners to buy the oil needed to cook food from the store and give it to the prison official.



Entrance of the Central Prison of Tabriz

According to reports from this prison, a 60-year-old prisoner named Shahin Solhjoo contracted shingles, but instead of being treated and cared for, she was transferred to solitary confinement and then returned to a public ward. And then, in an inhumane act, she was put to sleep in the cold night of autumn in the yard, suffering from the great pain of shingles.

### Forced labor

Tabriz prison officials also forced women prisoners to collect blankets and carpets and wash them in the yard in sub-zero temperatures in Tabriz. They also forced the suffering women to take the prison beds to the prison yard, paint them and return them to the prison.

Many of these women became very ill from the cold these days. One of the prisoners, 28-year-old Massoumeh Bahrami, committed suicide by cutting her hand's vein in the cold.

## Mashhad Central Prison (Vakilabad)

The women's ward of Vakilabad Prison in Mashhad has seven wards, and about 700 prisoners are being held in this prison on various charges, including financial crimes, robbery and murder, in addition to political and security prisoners. Prisoners face problems such as the poor quality of prison food, the scarcity and high cost of needed goods in the prison store, and the inability to visit medical facilities.

The ward rooms do not have separate toilets, and only at the end of the corridor there is a toilet that is shared by all prisoners.

### The Corona outbreak

During the Corona outbreak, dispatch to the prosecutor's office and the court continued even more than before.

Prisoners have not been provided with hygienic and disinfectant materials since the outbreak of the Corona virus.

Prisoners are deprived of gloves and alcohol and can only buy and use cloth masks sewn in the prison sewing workshop at a price of 4,500 tomans each. But these masks, which are not made in hygienic and standard environments, can be a conduit for the spread of the disease.

The prison environment is cleaned twice a week by inmates using a capsule provided by the authorities.

### Medical care

There is only one general practitioner and one gynecologist in the health center, and if prisoners request to be transferred to out-of-prison medical centers, their request will be answered within 7 to 10 days. Contrary to the rules of the Prisons Organization, the cost of treatment is borne by the prisoners.

### The punishment ward

The general ward of this prison, which is used as a punishment ward, has no beds and is very unsanitary. This section has only two small windows that are always completely closed. The door of this ward is completely closed and when prisoners have a request they knock the door, which is generally ignored by the guards.

So far, several prisoners have committed suicide in this ward. It is said that once in one case, the prison authorities did not remove the headscarf of one of the prisoners who had committed suicide by using it, so that other prisoners could learn a lesson.



Entrance of the Central Prison of Mashhad

## Zanjan Prison

Out of a total of 18 women prisoners in Zanjan Prison, at least 12 were infected with Covid-19. Symptoms included extreme fatigue and abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting, and loss of sense of smell.

They were left on the beds without medication and proper treatment and nutrition. Lack of access to medical facilities, lack of adequate space for quarantine and maintenance of new entrances and lack of health control caused the spread of coronavirus in the women's ward of Zanjan Prison.

## THE SITUATION IN WOMEN'S WARDS OF IRANIAN PRISONS

### Attacks on political prisoners in Qarchak Prison

**T**he clerical regime systematically violates the principle of separation of crimes, by detaining political prisoners and prisoners of conscience among common and dangerous criminals. This is a deliberate decision and a routine policy of the regime intended to facilitate murder of these prisoners at the hands of dangerous criminals. Prison authorities can easily entice and hire dangerous convicts to attack, injure and kill the regime's political opponents. Following is a chronology, albeit incomplete, of the attacks on political prisoners only in Qarchak Prison over the course of the past year.

■ **June 3, 2020** - Political prisoner Zahra Safaei was attacked by several prisoners hired by the Ministry of Intelligence and threatened with death.

■ **August 27, 2020** - Two prisoners hired by the head of the prison attacked Zahra Safaei and beat her on the head and face. The attack was stopped with meddling of other prisoners.

■ **September 14, 2020** - Two mercenary prisoners attacked Parastoo Mo'ini and Forough Taghipour in a pre-planned attack with a boiling water flask and tried to burn them, but with meddling of other prisoners did not succeed.

■ **Mid October 2020** - Qarchak Prison authorities collected signatures against political prisoners to prevent them from attending the workshop and informing ordinary prisoners, and locked the gates on these prisoners.

■ **November 2, 2020** - Zahra Safaei and Golrokh Iraee were attacked by a mercenary prisoner and threatened with death.

*Lives of political prisoners are in serious danger in Qarchak Prison*



■ **December 13, 2020** - The head of Qarchak prison, Soghra Khodadadi, along with 20 male and female prison guards, attacked ward 8 and beat political prisoners in this ward with shocker and baton.

During the attack on Ward 8, prisoners in other wards knocked on walls and chanted "Death to the dictator" in solidarity with women in Ward 8.

Political prisoner **Zahra Safaei** was hit in the head with a baton. Her arms were all bruised from wrist to elbow.

**Parastoo Mo'ini**, who had gone to help Golrokh Iraee and her mother, Zahra Safaei, was taken from her hair and dragged to the ground. The prison guard was about to take her out of the ward but other prisoners intervened and rescued her. Both legs of Parastoo Mo'ini were bruised. She also had chest pain from being hit with shocker. The prison guards also severely beat **Forough Taghipour**, grabbed her by the arms and legs, and threw her from one side of the cell to the other.

**Marzieh Farsi**, who is ill and under the care of a doctor, was beaten and injured in the chest.

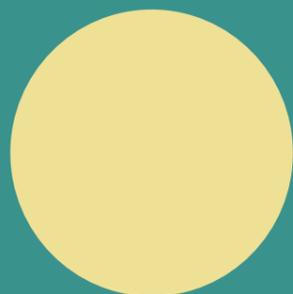
**Saba Kord Afshari** was also injured in the tooth area and her shoulders and back were bruised.

**Maryam Ebrahimvand** was injured in the leg and back and bruised.

Several guards grabbed **Golrokh Iraee's** hair and dragged her to the ground, taking her away, stating that she should be transferred to the IRGC's intelligence detention center, Ward 2A Evin.

None of the women who were seriously injured were treated after the brutal attack.

## Violence Against Women in Iran



# 02

**T**he most prevalent form of violence against Iranian women is perpetrated by the ruling regime in its efforts to enforce the mandatory Hijab on them.

A report published in summer 2018 by the research center of the mullahs' parliament (Majlis) indicated that some 70% of Iranian women do not believe in the compulsory dress-code, namely the head-to-toe black veil or Chador.

If at least 66 percent of Iranian women experience domestic violence in their homes, one must say that virtually 100 percent of them experience the state-sponsored violence to enforce the veil everywhere, every day and round the clock on the streets of cities across the country.

While the clerical regime spends hugely on campaigns and forces who enforce the compulsory veil, it did not provide the needy any assistance to protect themselves from the Coronavirus as they grapple with unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

## Imposing the Veil

*The most common form of violence against women*

### **A network of 27 suppressive agencies in charge of enforcing the veil**

27 government ministries and institutions are tasked with enforcing the mandatory Hijab on Iranian women. The Commander of the State Security Force, Hossein Ashtari, once boasted that his forces arrest at least 2,000 women every day in cities across the country, for flouting the compulsory veil (The state-run Tasnim news agency, September 29, 2016).

These arrests are accompanied by violence. In very few occasions where a bystander manages to film the state security forces or morality patrols' treatment of women in the streets, the video clips are truly heart-rending and horrifying. They bring to life the pain and horror of Iranian women who are routinely denied their freedom to choose their clothing.

One of the regime's female MPs once acknowledged that there are long-lasting psychological consequences for women who are dealt with by the Guidance Patrol.

### **Punishment for flouting the mandatory veil**

The amendment to Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code stipulates that women who appear in public places without the veil are sentenced to imprisonment for a term of 10 days up to 2 months or are fined by 50,000 to 500,000 rials in cash. According to this article, even a strand of hair being out is a problem, and it should be applied to girls 9 years and older. (The state-run ROKNA news agency - June 1, 2019)

The Tehran police also announced in a statement on February 23, 2018: "Encouraging women to shun the veil... is punishable by one to ten-year prison sentence and cannot be replaced by alternative forms of punishment." On the ground, however, the punishments are even harsher.

Three female activists, Monireh Arabshahi, her daughter Yasman Aryani, and Mojgan Keshavarz, were sentenced to a total of 55 years in prison for celebrating the International Women's Day in a metro wagon while they had removed their head coverings.

Another opponent of the compulsory veil, Saba Kord Afshari, was also sentenced to 24 years of imprisonment for removing her veil.

The clerical regime allocates enormous funds and resources to impose the mandatory veil. While the regime's Judiciary has not yet adopted a VAW bill to criminalize violence against women in Iran, it has criminalized women's wearing of attires that do not comply with the regime's standard dress code even outside office hours. It carries out inspections of government and private sector offices as well as hospitals to monitor women's proper observance of the veil.



## HIJAB CAMPAIGNS NAZER 1 TO 4

The “Nazer” Hijab Campaigns send thousands of security forces to the streets to harass and arrest Iranian women and girls. The regime justifies its campaigns under the pretext of “moral security” and dealing with “improper veiling.”

Acting SSF commander Qassem Rezaii announced the enforcement of 4 Nazer Plans. Rezaii said: “The State Security Force has planned and executed 4 Hijab and Chastity plans. In **Nazer 1 Plan**, the SSF deals with individuals who violate the veiling code in their cars. The **Nazer 2 Plan** deals with women who remove their veil or do not properly observe it in shopping malls and major stores. **Nazer 3 and 4 Plans** focus on women who do not observe the veil in recreation areas, walks and in the cyber space” (The state-run ROKNA news agency – September 20, 2020).

**Nazer 4 Plan**, the latest of the four Hijab campaigns, expanded the control of the mullahs’ Cyber Police (FATA). They monitor social media accounts on modelling, photography and art.

The charges leveled against users include dissemination of photos which “violate public chastity,” and are “immoral” or “vulgar.” In a more recent measure, the State Security Force has been confiscating the national identity cards of women whom they deem as “improperly veiled.” Without the national identity card, these women are deprived of all social services. In yet another measure to ramp up pressure on Iranian women, the clerical regime has set up a garrison in Qom to organize and coordinate all members of the Bassij force who are involved in “promoting virtue and forbidding evil.” (The state-run Young Journalists’ Club – November 17, 2020) In a related development, Vahid Amirian, social deputy for the IRGC in Tehran, told a gathering of Bassij paramilitary forces on January 27, 2021, that they had set up 300 groups for promoting good and forbidding evil. In return for incentives, they will give verbal warnings to at least 12 people every day.

### Call to make society unsafe for opponents of mandatory Hijab

Representatives of the mullahs’ Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, prioritized a new wave of suppression against Iranian women, justifying them by citing “social security” concerns. They said it was a priority for the State Security Force (The state-run Mehr news agency – October 25, 2020). Habibollah Sha’bani, Khamenei’s representative in Hamadan Province and the Friday prayer leader of Hamadan, declared, “The State Security Force should not allow criminals to feel safe in society.” (The state-run Fars news agency – October 22, 2020).

The Friday Prayer Leader of Isfahan, central Iran, called for formation of special court branches to tackle “moral abnormalities.”

Yousef Tabatabaie-Nejad urged the authorities to grant greater powers to the State Security Force (SSF) to deal with Hijab offenders. His comments came in a meeting with a top Armed Forces’ security official and the SSF Commander of Isfahan Province.

By “Hijab offenders” he meant women who oppose the mandatory Hijab and display their opposition in various forms.

Tabatabaie-Nejad said: “The social atmosphere must be made unsafe for these people whose number is scarce. But they must not be allowed to be relaxed in streets

and parks while breaking the norms.” (The state-run Mehr news agency – October 2, 2020)

The mullah also called on the courts to support those who forbid evil and promote virtue, referring to Bassij forces who target women in the streets, violently forcing them to observe their mandatory Hijab.

- **Nazer 1** deals with women who drop their veils while driving
- **Nazer 2** deals with women who do not properly observe the veil in shopping malls and stores
- **Nazer 3** deals with women who do not observe the veil in recreation areas
- **Nazer 4** deals with women who post photos showing them without the veil
- A new garrison and 300 groups to enforce the veil are among the regime’s latest measures
- Calls to make society unsafe for women by Khamenei’s representatives



# VAW Bill in Hopeless Situation

*Violence against women has yet to be criminalized in Iran*

The Protection of Dignity and Support for Women Against Violence bill was adopted by the government on January 3, 2021, the state media in Iran reported. The government took another 11 days to present the bill to the parliament on January 14 for final examination. The parliament, however, has yet to announce the receipt of the bill.

Earlier on December 16, 2020, Mohsen Dehnavi, member of the board of directors of the mullahs' parliament, had acknowledged in an open session of the parliament receipt of a plan called "Protection, Dignity, and Provision of Security for Ladies against Violence." (The state-run IRNA news agency – December 16, 2020)

Nasrollah Pejmanfar, head of the Principle 90 Committee in the parliament, said: "The government had announced several times that it would present the bill on provision of security for women to the parliament, but it did not. So, we tabled it in the form of a plan." (The state-run Fararu news agency – December 20, 2020) So, the MPs have once again tabled the old plan approved by the Judiciary while the government has made changes to the Judiciary's plan and passed it to the parliament to turn it into a law.

## The prospects for the adoption of the bill

After 9 years of anticipation, the competition between the government and the parliament has turned into another obstacle in the way of the adoption of a bill to protect women against violence.

The bill entitled "Provision of Security for Women against Violence" was proposed to the clerical regime's parliament in 2011. It contained five chapters and 81 articles.

By 2013, its articles had been increased to 92. Eight years later, after making numerous changes to the bill including changing its name, the Judiciary passed the bill to Rouhani's government on September 17, 2019. The bill renamed as "Protection, Dignity and Provision of Security for Ladies Against Violence" contained five chapters and 77 articles.

Still, it took 16 months for the government to ratify the bill only after the 14-year-old Romina Ashrafi was beheaded with a sickle by her father while asleep.

Finally, the government renamed bill as "Protection of Dignity and Support for Women Against Violence" and presented it to the parliament in five chapters and 58 articles.

According to Shahindokht Molaverdi, Rouhani's former deputy for Women and Family Affairs, given the various other concerns and priorities of the parliament, it is a far-fetched expectation that the parliament would examine the bill by the end of Rouhani's term (in July), pass it to the Guardians' Council and return it to the government. (The state-run Sharq daily – January 18, 2021)



*Will the bill really protect women against violence?*

Both the government's bill and the parliament's plan have many deficiencies which make them inefficient in achieving its goals. Rather than defending the oppressed women of Iranian society against violence, the bill addresses seemingly moral and cultural coercion, which is practically in defense of misogynistic religious rule.

- The clauses related to deterrent punishments considered in this bill simply repeat the provisions that existed in the regime's penal code and criminal procedure. Irrespective of the fact that these punishments promote violence in society, it should be noted that women seeking recourse under the ruling cultural and judicial regime are subjected to danger, and the process of proving that a crime has been committed is onerous.

- In many cases, if a woman complains of violence, especially sexual violence, she becomes the main accused. After an unfair trial, she typically faces an inhumane fate.

- Failure to define and criminalize "violence against women", lacking the necessary

transparency and precision in various paragraphs, failure to ban early marriages, failure to address sexual exploitation, formation of brothels and sex trade all of which are organized and modern forms of violence against women, failure to consider the necessary measures to support battered women, are among serious deficiencies in this bill.

- For example, it is stated in this bill that the Judiciary and the State Security Force agencies are obliged to immediately take action and open a case for women who are victims of violence and complain to them. But if the woman was complaining from her husband or father, then "the case must initially be referred to the Council for Resolving Differences to achieve peace and reconciliation" and "if reconciliation was not achieved, then it must be referred to a court to be processed through legal stages within one month."

Clearly, such lengthy processes disappoint women from receiving any support or protection against violence.

## Bill's adoption would only make conditions worse for women

The regime's experts say that even if the bill to provide security for women is adopted and enforced, it is incapable of stopping the cycle of violence in the country, because the grounds for such crimes and murders still exist in the country's economic and legal sectors.

■ Sedigheh Rabii, Director General of Women and Family Affairs in Qazvin, admits, "There is no detailed and precise clarity in the various clauses of the bill."

■ Alireza Mafi, a lawyer, emphasizes, "this bill cannot eliminate violence against women, because there is no belief in violence in the text and it pays more attention to crime, while the scope of violence is much higher than victimization" (The official IRNA news agency – January 4, 2020).

■ He emphasizes that the bill should not focus on women who live in dignity but rather on women who have been the target of violence in society.

■ "The new bill legalizes gender segregation, which does not mean the elimination of violence; but also the segregation itself is an act of violence against women," he said.

■ Also noteworthy is that the bill tasks the Ministry of Interior "to identify individuals and groups who actively damage women's role in family and society, and counter their impact in cooperation with the Ministry of Intelligence and the State Security Force." So, instead

of criminalizing violence against women, the bill criminalizes the activities of defenders of women's rights, in advance.

■ The bill's efficacy had been earlier questioned by Parvaneh Salahshouri, a former member of the mullahs' parliament. "Even if the bill is adopted, the conditions would only get worse for women. The present bill has removed the phrase 'violence against women', factoring out or somehow changing the parts on security of women. As a result, the bill has lost its goal... The bill has only played with words." (The state-run khabaronline.ir – December 16, 2019)

■ While stating that a bill to ensure women's security against violence has not yet been approved, Sedigheh Rabii acknowledges that "Violence against women is on the rise every year, and official statistics show only overt violence."

■ She added, "A review of forensic statistics on violence, as well as referrals and contacts with the 123 social emergency system, show the upward trend of this violence. If this bill fails to define the proper enforcement guarantee, this issue will not be resolved."

■ Rabii then admits, "The bill does not provide the necessary support for abused women, and such women are forced to continue living passively in the current circumstances" (The official IRNA news agency – January 4, 2020).

- *Instead of criminalizing violence against women, the bill criminalizes the activities of defenders of women's rights*
- *The bill does not provide the necessary support for abused women, and such women are forced to continue living passively in the current circumstances*

## World Record in Domestic Violence

The Iranian regime's 9 years of foot dragging on the adoption of the bill to stop violence against women in Iran, has finally created disaster. Iran holds world record in domestic violence against women, the regime's experts and media have recently revealed.

### Recalling records of previous years

The regime's token admissions to rise in violence against women in Iran began in 2018.

■ Among others, Reza Jafari, head of the regime's Social Emergencies, said: "Domestic violence against women in Iran saw a 20% rise from March 2017 to March 2018" (The official IRNA news agency, July 18, 2018).

■ Subsequently, Fatemeh Ghassempour, head of the Research Center on Women and Family in Tehran, announced: "66% of Iranian women experience domestic violence in their lifetime" (The state-run ISNA news agency, November 16, 2018). Although the given figure is double the world average of one-in-every-three women (or 33%), it was obviously a mitigation of the reality.

■ Last year, the Borna.news website published a report on October 13, 2019, indicating, "In our country, from every 20 persons, one is exposed to domestic violence by her husband. But less than 35 percent of the cases of domestic violence are reported to the Police or Social Emergencies."

■ Amanollah Qaraii Moghaddam, a sociologist, told Borna.news: "Some time ago, chair of the Social Aid Association, announced that 40% of domestic violence in the world is carried out in our country... Sexual domestic violence is the worst form of domestic violence."

### Iran holds the world record on domestic violence against women

Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar, one of the regime's experts on social ailments, recently published an article announcing: "Iran holds the world record on domestic violence (against women)."

■ The article published by Jahanesanat.ir on November 19, 2020, said: "Today, the country is engulfed in social ailments and no house is safe in Iran."

■ Mahboubfar blamed aggravation of domestic violence against women on government mismanagement and its failure to control the economic and social consequences of Coronavirus.

"Increasing fight in the families has overflowed into society and is considered the most important social and security crisis these days. This has gravely concerned all sociologists and experts on social behavior."

## 15-fold rise in domestic violence in the absence of supportive laws

The Judiciary does not have a criminalizing look to domestic violence.

■ When a husband commits violence against his wife, the Iranian Justice Ministry's approach is to conclude the case in peace and safeguard the couple's married life. Neither is psychological violence recognized in Iran.

■ A Tehran lawyer, says: "Principally, psychological violence is not recognized in Iran. And so long as violence does not have obvious evidence and signs, the law would not examine it." (Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020)

■ According to the clerical regime's laws, domestic violence is considered the same as other forms of violence between two persons. The law only oversees physical violence and only if the woman has two witnesses.

■ Iran's judicial authorities do not consider reports by the Coroner's Office, the police, or even documents and photographs as valid evidence for examining complaints of battered women. The only report which is counted as evidence is the report by the Social Emergencies, otherwise when the woman files a complaint, because she does not have two male witnesses, the assailant gets exonerated.

■ In addition, the law enforcement agencies are prohibited by the law to enter into one's house to intervene in a "family difference."

In Iran, battered women do not enjoy any legal or social support.

■ Deputy for social affairs of the Welfare Organization, Mohammad Aligou, says that there are only 34 safe shelters in provincial capitals throughout the country for more than 40 million Iranian women (The state-run Shahrvand daily, June 20, 2020).

And even in these scarce centers, they are not able to provide protection and support for a woman who has been victim of domestic violence. This is because according to the law, married women

are obliged to obey their husbands. So, when her husband goes to the center, they have to turn in the woman to him. (Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020)

In the absence of laws which incriminate violence against women and in the absence of institutions to provide support for battered women, the statistics on domestic violence in the form of physical beating and murder of women and girls in Iran has seen a drastic rise.

■ In a shocking revelation, Mahboubfar stressed, "Less than three months since the beginning of the (Persian year) 1399 (i.e. from April to June 2020), the statistics on violence in the country has exceeded the total of all the past years."

■ Hassan Marvi, head of the Mashhad Welfare Department, announced a 15-fold increase in spousal abuse following the outbreak (The state-run ISNA News Agency – July 9, 2020).

### Consequences of inaction by law enforcement agencies

■ Ashraf Sadat Hosseini, 56, was attacked by her husband on December 18, 2020. Using a machete, he stabbed her to death. When her son arrived home to her aid, she did not have a pulse and her body was drenched in blood. Locals helped take her to a hospital.

Lying on her bed in a Tehran hospital, Ashraf could barely speak, but the horror of the day came through in her weak voice: "How can I return home where I have no security because of my husband? I've been lying on the bed for nearly two weeks, with an amputated hand, another paralyzed hand, a (blind) eye and a stitched face. How can I earn my living?" (The state-run ROKNA news agency – December 28, 2020)

Ashraf had complained to the police several times about her husband's brutal attacks during 27 years of married life. The previous time, Ashraf's husband hit her on the head with a heavy vase and broke her rib cage. However, the husband was released on bail. After his release, Ashraf



Ashraf Sadat Hosseini in hospital

went to the police station to protest but received this answer: "What should be done? He is your husband and there is nothing we can do!" And today, she is hospitalized with a serious handicap.

■ Another example is Mona who explains her experience as the following: "When he hit me for the first time, I was shocked, but I immediately contacted 110 (emergency police). When the police came, they said 'we cannot enter your house. You must come down.' I told the police, that my husband would escape if I opened the door. But the police said: 'How should we know that you are telling the truth?'

"My husband had broken my arm, fractured my finger and it was bleeding. My head had swollen, and my lip was torn and bleeding. There was also a scratch near my eye. I told the police to come and see my situation and the wall that he banged my head against. They said 'No, we are not allowed to enter the house and to your floor. You must come down.'

"When I filed my complaint, I asked the police to

*The Judiciary does not have a criminalizing look to domestic violence. When a husband commits violence against his wife, the Justice Ministry's approach is to conclude the case in peace and sends the woman back home to her abusive husband.*



Romina Ashrafi

## Defenseless Victims of Savage Laws

*The clerical regime is the prime suspect in the murder of women in Iran*

In the last week of May, the harrowing murder of Romina Ashrafi, 14, by her father enraged the public opinion across Iran and abroad.

The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) declared in a statement that Iran's ruling mullahs are responsible for the murder of this young woman, as their oppressive and medieval policies and laws encourage and promote violence against women and girls, and facilitate such crimes.

Romina Ashrafi was a 14-year-old student in Talesh, northern Iran. She escaped home to get married with the man she loved after his father's opposition. Then she got caught by security forces. In the court, the judge presiding the case did not heed the young woman's pleas not to be returned

to her father. The state-run media revealed that the girl had cried during the court hearing and repeatedly asked the judge not to send her home lest her father would kill her. The merciless criminal occupying the judge's seat, however, ruled based on the clerical regime's inhuman and anti-Islamic laws and decided for Romina to go back to her father, and therefore, sending her to her death. On the night of May 21, 2020, when Romina was asleep, her father took a sickle and cut her head from the back of her neck.

Romina's mother revealed that after her boyfriend went to their home and asked her father to allow them to get married, her father encouraged Romina to commit suicide and threatened to kill her. It is also said that a couple of days before the

murder, Romina's father had consulted a lawyer, making sure that according to the regime's laws he would not be executed for killing his daughter. Having experienced such threats and sensing her imminent death, the least would have been for the Social Emergencies to give Romina support and take her to a safe shelter. But violence against women, domestic violence and honor killings have not been criminalized by the clerical regime. Nonetheless, they are institutionalized in the mullahs' misogynist laws. As a result, Iranian women do not enjoy any support against all the various forms of brutalities inflicted upon them.

### Average of at least 8 honor killings per day

■ Experts in Iran acknowledge that the previous statistics on honor killings in Iran have never been comprehensive, transparent or accurate. The institutions and organizations dealing with these figures, such as the Social Emergencies and the Police, do not have access to the data and no official figures have been announced in this regard. ■ Estimates in 2019, however, showed that the average number of honor killings in Iran is between 375 and 450 per year. Honor killings account for about 20% of all murders. It also accounts for 50% of all homicides (The state-run ISNA news agency – December 7, 2019).

■ "Honor killings have been on the rise in a strange way in recent times," says Mostafa Eghlima, President of the Iranian Scientific Social Welfare Association (The state-run Khabarfori.ir – June 20, 2020).

■ Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar, a social ills expert, says: "Family murders top the country's crises. It is estimated that at least 8 murders take place in Iran every day." (The state-run Jahanesanat.ir - November 19, 2020) Mahboubfar predicts that the continuation of this trend could increase the average of 450 honor killings per year to 2,736 cases in 2020. A quick look at the cases of honor killing clearly shows that many of the victims were killed as a result of forced or early marriages and other official laws of the country.

- *The average number of honor killings per year could rise from 450 to 2,736 cases in 2020.*
- *The lack of protective laws promote more violence against women and girls.*
- *In many cases, a woman who has been beaten or stabbed is forced to return to live with the same perpetrator, even after complaining to legal authorities.*
- *Many victims were killed as a result of forced or early marriages and other official laws of the country.*

## Law gives the green light to murder of women in Iran

The proposed bill to increase the legal age of marriage from 13 to 16 was rejected by the mullahs' parliament.

- Article 1105 of the clerical regime's civil code considers the man – exclusively – to be the head of the family.

- Article 1108 emphasizes that if a woman refuses to perform her "duties" toward her husband, she will not receive alimony.

- Article 1114 of the civil code stipulates that a woman must live in a house designated by her husband.

- According to the same law, in order to file for divorce, a woman must be able to prove that living with that man is life-threatening, while the testimony of two women is equivalent to that of a man. In many cases, a woman who has been beaten or stabbed is forced to return to live with the same perpetrator, even after complaining to legal authorities.

- According to Mostafa Eghlima, President of the Iranian Scientific Social Welfare Association, "Unfortunately, specialists in this field are not present in social emergencies, safe houses and... the absence of such assistants makes judges hand over Romina to her father, or have hundreds of other girls return home without being monitored and cared for. As a result, these girls are killed by their fathers, husbands, and brothers" (The state-run Khabarfori.ir– June 20, 2020).

- Ali Bagheri, a lawyer, points to the father's and paternal grandfather's legal immunity from retaliation. He says, "There is no correlation between the crime and the amount of punishment imposed on Romina's father. Romina Ashrafi's father thought he was the owner of this child and that he could kill her with a sickle. When the judge asked Romina's father why he did not kill Bahman Khavari, the man with whom Romina had fled, he answered, 'If I had killed Bahman Khavari, they would have retaliated against me. But this did not happen with my daughter,'" he added (The state-run Ensaf News website – September 11, 2020).

- The lawyer emphasizes, "Judgments are not deterrents, and such cases cause us to witness even more murders of girls. The lack of protective laws makes the offender more likely to re-offend and exposes the victim to double the fear" (The state-run Ensaf News website – September 11, 2020).

- One social ills expert says in this regard: "The enforcement of law against honor killings has been in a way that presently, men have a free hand in carrying out physical, verbal and psychological violence against girls and women in their families. By relying on existing male-dominated laws that grant them immunity against implementation of maximum punishment, they commit any crime and murder." (The state-run Jahanesanat.ir - November 19, 2020)

## Child Abuse

### The worst social ailment in Iran

Most domestic violence in Iran occurs against children and women. Reza Jafari, head of the Social Emergencies, said in March 2018: "Child abuse in Iran has increased fivefold and domestic violence against women has increased threefold" (The state-run jahanesanat.ir – November 19, 2020).

- In June 2019, he had announced that child abuse was the most common domestic violence in Iran (The state-run asreiran.ir – June 20, 2019).

- In many cases, domestic violence leads to mild and severe beatings or eventually murder. (The state-run Jahanesanat.ir – November 19, 2020).

- An Iranian psychologist, Hashem Varzi, acknowledged, "The types of child abuse in Iran is changing. We are witnessing a rise in the number of child laborers, addicted children, child brides and many other phenomena that have not yet been included in our child abuse statistics" (The state-run IRNA news agency – November 22, 2020). "Neglecting the basic needs and rights of a child such as nutrition, health, shelter, adequate clothing, security, love and education are also obvious examples of child abuse," Varszi added.

#### Reasons for soaring child abuse in Iran

- More girls are victims of child abuse than boys. 52% of abused children are girls and 57% of perpetrators of violence are fathers (The state-run salamatnews.ir– October 4, 2018).

- In June 2020, Abbas Masjedi Arani, head of the National Coroner's Office, announced a 12.5% increase in child abuse in Iran. He said, "The number of child abuse cases in Iran in 2019, showed a growth of 12.5% in this field" (The state-run Hamshahrionline.ir – June 20, 2020). The clerical regime is not transparent in dissemination of data and it blocks public access to accurate statistics. So, to get a sense of what



52% of abused children are girls

this 12.5% increase means, the figure from a 2018 report on just one province might prove beneficial.

- In August 2018, Mehrdad Motallebi, Welfare Organization's social affairs deputy in West Azerbaijan Province, said: "More than 13,000 cases of child abuse were registered by the Social Emergencies of W. Azerbaijan Province from March 2017 to March 2018. This figure is only related to the cases reported to this center" (The state-run Uromnews.ir – August 7, 2018)

- Some sociologists believe that the increase in child abuse in Iran is due to economic problems and forced marriages. The main factor, however, is the absence of laws and policies to prevent and punish child abuse.

- Domestic violence is not considered a crime under the clerical regime's laws. According to the regime's laws, the punishment for killing a child by his/her father could be only 2 years in prison which could be redeemed. The same laws promote violation of children's rights by legalizing child marriage, honor killings, etc.

# 100 Under-15 Marriages in Every 24 Hours

*Early and child marriages are violence against women*

**E**arly and child marriages are a clear example of violence against women. Iran is one of the countries with the lowest age of marriage for girls.

The minimum legal age for girls to marry in Iran is 13. A girl under the age of 13 can also sit at the wedding table with her father's permission, as well as that of a judge. These marriages are basically forced by the girl's father or family.

Early marriages in Iran take place while a girl under the age of 18 is not permitted to make any decision or have a savings account, a driver's license, or sign any contract. With marriage, however, she trades all her life and future.

"The marriage of girls makes them domestic slaves who not only fall under the yoke of their husbands, but also, because they are still children and cannot manage life, they are dominated by the husband's relatives," commented a sociologist with regard to child marriage (The official IRNA News Agency – September 4, 2019).

## 4-fold increase in child marriages in one year

■ Based on the figures released on January 31, 2021 by the National Statics Center of Iran, 7,323 marriages of girls between 10-14 years of age were registered in spring 2020. Another 9,058 marriages of the same age group were registered in summer 2020. (The state-run Tabnak website, February 5, 2021)

■ The 16,381 marriages of girls under 15 years registered in 6 months in 2020 shows a 23% increase from spring to summer and 2% increase compared to the same period last year. This means that 100 marriages of girls under 15 are registered in every 24 hours. (The state-run ISNA news agency – February 5, 2021)

■ The NSC has also registered 364 child births to mothers under 15 years of age in summer 2020.

■ Razavi Khorassan, East Azerbaijan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Khuzestan are the top four provinces in Iran for children marriages under 13 years of age. Tehran Provinces sits on the eighth rank.

■ "There are statistics that children under the age of 15, especially girls under this age, have used this loan, and this number has quadrupled compared to last year," said Mohammad Mehdi Tondgooyan, Deputy Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs (The state-run ISNA News Agency – December 10, 2019).

■ The increases in child marriages in Iran are directly related to the growing poverty of the Iranian people. The painful result for girls is that marriage loans are used to trade girls under 15!

■ An 11-year-old girl in Bushehr was forced to marry a 90-year-old man in exchange for 21 million Tomans or \$458 paid to her family (The state-run Hamshahronline.ir, June 16, 2020).

■ In March 2019, Ali Kazemi, Legal Advisor to the Judiciary, announced that between 500,000 and 600,000 children marry annually in Iran; these are officially registered statistics. The data does not include those who marry outside the formal process (The state-run Entekhab Daily, March 4, 2019).

■ In 2017, the regime's civil registration organization announced 234,000 marriages of girls under the age of 15; of these marriages, 194 involved girls under the age of 10.

## The most serious consequences of child marriages

■ Being a spouse prevents girls from continuing their education. Child marriages expose girls to harms like domestic violence and sexual harassment by the husband. These innocent girls also risk dying during childbirth.

■ Widowed children are considered a great tragedy in Iran. Hassan Mousavi Chelek, President of the Relief Society, described the situation as "worrying," citing more than 24,000 widows under the age of 18. Child widows may commit crimes or suffer social harm in order to earn a living (The state-run Salamatnews.com, July 24, 2018).

■ Another harm and consequence of child marriage is suicide. Early marriages, exacerbated by poverty, pave the way for women to commit suicide. In some of these cases, girls under the age of 13 are forced to marry men as old as 50. In these forced situations, many girls feel they have no alternative but to commit suicide.

Golnar was an 11-year-old girl in Ahvaz. She committed suicide by eating rice pills when they tried to force her to sit at the wedding table. She wrote in a letter to her mother, who was in prison at the time, "I am being beaten a lot here, and now they want to marry me off..." (The aasoo.org, July 2017).

■ Prostitution is another one of the most serious social harms that results from early and forced marriage in Iran. Research shows that more than 43% of prostitutes are married before the age of 13 (The state-run Didar News, April 4, 2020). A women's rights activist said that the age of girl sex workers has unfortunately reached as low as 12 (The state-run Salamatnews.com, December 29, 2019).



*Four-fold increase in child marriages in one year*

# World's Top Executioner of Women

114 women have been executed in Iran under Rouhani

**T**he Iranian regime is the world's top record holder of the execution of women. According to the list compiled by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, at least 114 women have been executed in Iran since August 2013,

when the mullahs' president, Hassan Rouhani, took office.

That's an average of 15 women every year.

The actual figures must be considered to be higher, as most executions in Iran are carried out secretly without anyone knowing except those who carry them out.

Many of the women executed by the mullahs' regime are themselves victims of domestic violence and acted in self-defense. The latest example of which was the execution of Zahra Esma'ili on February 17, 2021, in Gohardasht Prison (a.k.a. Rajaiishahr) in Karaj.

## Innocent woman died of heart stroke before reaching the gallows

Zahra Esma'ili, 42 with two children, was the 114th woman executed during Rouhani's tenure.

She had already suffered a fatal heart stroke before reaching the gallows. Nevertheless, the mullahs' henchmen tied the noose around her neck and hanged her lifeless body.

"Today, I saw the death certificate of Zahra Esma'ili. The reason written for her death was heart stroke," Omid Moradi, her lawyer, posted on Facebook on February 19, 2021.

According to her lawyer, she saw 16 prisoners hanged before her eyes. So, she had a heart attack before being taken to the gallows.

Zahra Esma'ili was an innocent woman. She claimed responsibility for the murder of her husband to save her teenage daughter who had shot him in the head.

Alireza Zamani, her husband, was one of the director generals of the mullahs' Ministry of Intelligence. He routinely mistreated and battered his wife and children.

He used to take different women home before the eyes of his own family. Alireza Zamani had even threatened to kill his wife and attempted to



sexually assault his own teenage daughter. As a result of such brutalities, his daughter killed him with the help of her brother. Zahra Esma'ili's execution was an inhumane revenge by Intelligence agents. In 2014, Reyhaneh Jabbari was hanged at the age of 26 after enduring seven years in prison for defending herself against an official of the Intelligence Ministry who had tried to assault her. The clerical regime uses the death penalty openly and in a discriminatory manner this punishment is carried out against the religious and ethnic minorities, political dissidents, and women.

## A Summary of Violence Against Women in Iran



9

After 9 years, no bill has been turned into law.



2K

70% of women oppose the mandatory Hijab  
27 government agencies enforce the veil  
At least 2,000 women are arrested every day  
Women are sentenced from 15 to 24 years in prison for removing their veils

27



X15

15-fold increase in spousal abuse  
Battered women have no legal or social support  
Only 34 safe shelters for 40 million women  
Judges send back women to abusive husbands  
Law enforcement agencies cannot intervene



2.7K

At least 8 murders take place in Iran every day  
Annual average of honor killings is 375 - 450  
The average expected to rise to 2,763 in 2020  
Enforcement of law encouraged men in committing violence against women



16K  
364

Child marriages using loans increased 4-folds  
16,381 marriages registered in 6 months  
100 child marriages per day  
364 child births to U-15 mothers in summer 2020



52%

52% of abused children are girls  
12.5% increase in child abuse in 2019  
Increase in child abuse directly correlated to absence of protective laws



114

114 women have been executed during Rouhani's tenure  
That is an average of 15 women per year

## 03

## Gender gap and lack of access to equal opportunities

# Gender Discrimination

**A**ccording to the annual report of the Gender Gap of the World Economic Forum 2020, Iran is ranked 148 out of 153 countries with an index of 0.584. Thus, Iran is only higher than Congo, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen.

*It should be noted that the World Economic Forum ranking is based on official statistics of countries and due to the non-transparency of the mullahs' regime in publishing real statistics, even this category does not reflect the real situation of women in Iran and their deprivation of equal opportunities and participation. However, the situation of the gender gap in Iran in 2020 had weakened by 6 steps compared to the previous year.*

*At the time of writing, the 2021 annual report of the World Economic Forum has not yet been published. But given the global outbreak of the Covid-19 since the beginning of 2020, and the growing poverty and unemployment of most working women in Iran, one can guess how wide the gender gap in Iran has become.*

### Pre-Covid participation of women in the labor market

Iranian women face a male-dominated labor market that poses many legal and structural barriers to their employment.

- The regime's policy is to marginalize women. But in 2013, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei described the most important role of a woman to be housekeeping and the greatest struggle of women to be "having children". (Khamenei website - May 1, 2013 and the state-run newspaper Resalat - May 2, 2013)
- Until last year, only 3 million out of 27 million women labor force were employed, and the female participation rate was below 15 percent. And in terms of income, women earn about one-fifth of men.
- 65% of unemployed women have higher education and the unemployment rate of educated women in most parts of the country is 3 to 4 times higher than men.
- As a result, most Iranian women are employed in informal occupations with wages much lower than they deserve and without any insurance or benefits. Informal occupations are more vulnerable to Covid-19 related consequences than formal occupations. (The state-run ISNA News Agency - June 17, 2020)
- In Iran, 80% of uninsured employees in 2017 were women, often in informal occupations. In fact, the majority of people who cannot benefit from sick pay compensation in the event of Covid-19 contraction are women. (The state-run ILNA News Agency - April 5, 2020)

### 70% of laid off employees in the Corona virus crisis are women

Following the outbreak of the Corona virus in Iran under a corrupt, predatory regime, the people became increasingly poor. In an already bankrupt economy, the few remaining production units were shut down and workers laid off.

Meanwhile, women make up the majority of those who lost their jobs in the Corona virus crisis.

- According to the quarterly report of the Statistics Center of Iran, by the summer of 2020, women make up 70% of those who became unemployed due to the Covid-19 crisis.
- Issa Mansouri, Deputy Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare, acknowledged that women are the main victims of the unemployment crisis in Iran ruled by mullahs. (The state-run Contemporary Strategy Website - December 26, 2020)
- Aladdin Azvaji, Director General of the Employment Policy and Development Office of the Ministry of Labor, said in this regard: In the spring of this year (2020) compared to the spring of last year, about 749,000 women have lost employment and during the spring to summer 2020 about 120,000 more women lost employment, indicating the widespread impact of Covid-19 on women's employment. (The state-run Arman newspaper - January 30, 2021)
- In addition, it was previously reported that in the winter of 2019, about 145,000 women became unemployed. (The state-run ILNA News Agency - April 11, 2020)



# Gender Gap in Iran

Iranian women face a male-dominated labor market that poses many legal and structural barriers to their employment.

## 15%

**Female participation in the labor force = 15%**  
**Women earn about one-fifth of men**  
**Most women are employed in the informal sector with low wages, and no insurance or benefits**

## 65%

**Only 3 million out of 27 million women are employed**  
**65% of unemployed women have higher education**  
**Women's unemployment is 3 to 4 times higher than men**

## 70%

**By summer 2020, 70% of laid off employees in the Coronavirus crisis were women**  
**145,000 women lost employment in winter 2020**  
**749,000 women lost employment in spring 2020**  
**120,000 more lost employment in summer 2020**

## Priority of the appointment of women to managerial positions **REVOKED**

A few years ago, Massoumeh Ebtekar, the deputy for women and family affairs, admitted that in Iran, "women are disappearing in top management positions." (The state-run Asriran website – October 31, 2017)

In the same year, on August 21, 2017, in response to criticism of Rouhani that his government was masculine, the Administrative Justice Council approved the "Age ceiling and the priority of appointing women and youth to managerial positions." According to this directive, 30% of managerial positions should have been allocated to women and youth.

But three years later, on October 20, 2020, the Court of Administrative Justice annulled this directive due to "unjustified discrimination against other employees in holding managerial positions, especially basic management." While this directive concerned women and youth, it is interesting to note that the Supreme Administrative Court has been sensitive to women. (The state-run Sharq newspaper - November 20, 2020)

## Problems of Women Entrepreneurs

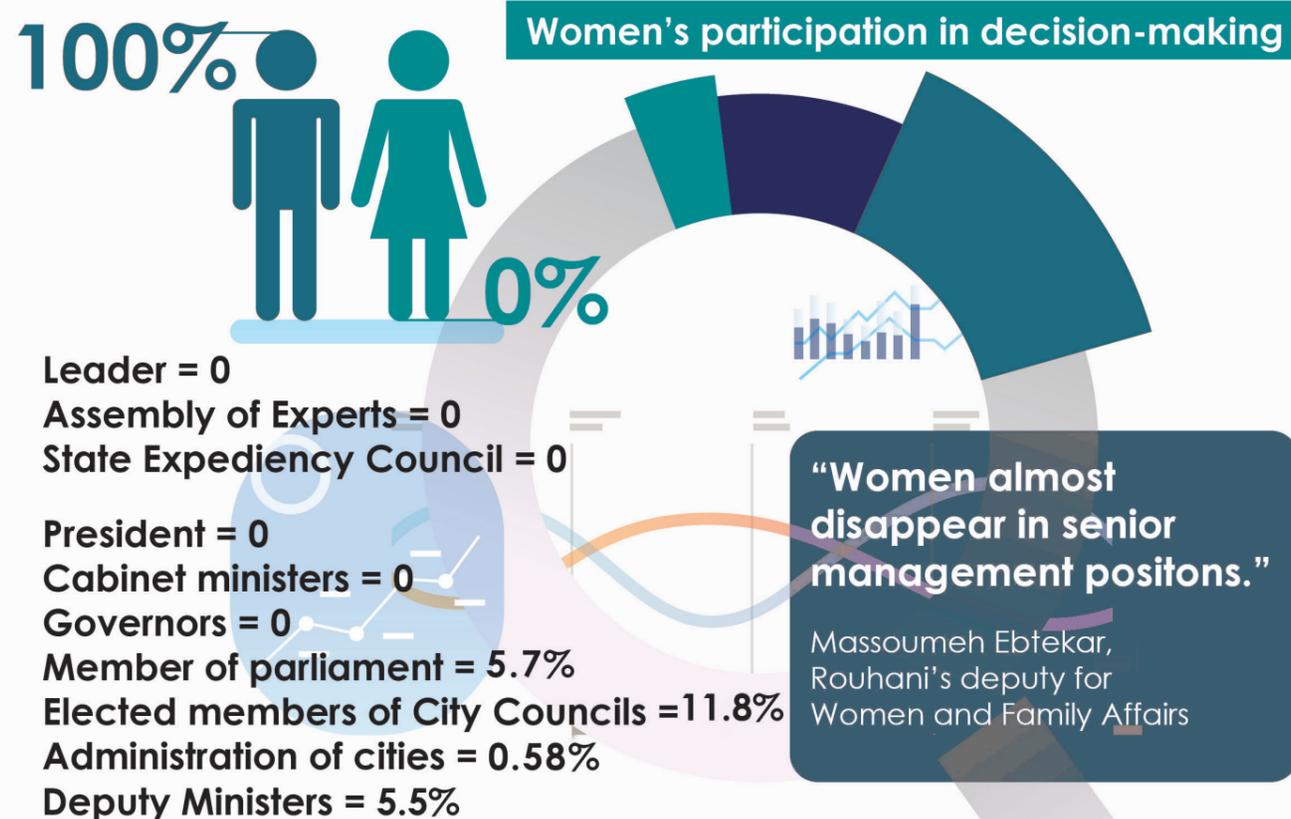
Women entrepreneurs are few in Iran. Finding adequate financial resources, access to information, gaining the trust of banks, markets and partners, and creating a balance between work and family (when, under the regime's civil law, a man can keep his wife out of work), are some of the obstacles and problems for women in starting a business.

"Financial institutions consider women to be high-risk clients and give them less facilities," said Fatemeh Ghafouri, head of the Qazvin Businesswomen's Association, referring to women's restrictions on access to financial resources. (The official IRNA News Agency - July 13, 2020)

Regarding government laws and policies, she continues: "The lack of permission of husbands and fathers to leave the country, the lack of tax and economic incentives and support, and the lack of economic literacy of some officials have led to measures commensurate with women's dignity and empowerment over the past 40 years not being done."

She also said about women being pushed into domestic work: "Women's institutions are focused only on family issues and if they pay attention to the economy, they will look for everything in domestic jobs, while these types of jobs are unsustainable and cannot lead to the empowerment of women in a desirable way."





## Parliamentary and political participation

During the past year, the elections of the regime's parliament were held and the 11th parliament officially started its work on May 27, 2020. Among the members of the new parliament, only 16 women entered the parliament, which constitutes 5.7% of the total 276 members of parliament. This percentage of parliamentary participation has not changed compared to the tenth parliament.

It should be emphasized that the women who have passed the scrutiny of the Guardian Council and are eligible to participate in the regime's elections are all promoters of the mullahs' misogynistic views and facilitate the advancement of the regime's goals of imposing more and more restrictions on women.

In terms of political participation, it should be said that major decisions and policies in Iran are the prerogative of men. The position of Velayat-e-Faqih (Supreme Leader), the Guardian Council, the Expediency Council, the heads of the three branches, the cabinet ministers, the governors, the mayors of the provincial capitals, are all men. The participation of women in the deputy ministerial roles is 5.5 percent, in the management of the provinces 7 percent (77 women among 1174 provincial officials), in the municipalities of all cities 0.58 percent (2 out of 339 mayors), and in the city councils 11.8 percent (38 women among the 321 members of city councils).

## Husband entitled to prevent his wife's employment, travel

With the ruling of the Tehran Court of Appeals, a female emergency physician in Imam Hossein and Baqiyatollah hospitals in Tehran was banned from practicing medicine due to her husband's complaint. The doctor examined 180 to 200 patients daily for Covid-19. (The state-run Khabar Fori website - October 12, 2020)

Also, from now on, married women who want to take the dental residency exam are required to obtain their husbands' consent. It is mandatory to have this commitment entered and signed in the text of the test. According to this commitment, the husband agrees to allow his wife to serve after the end of the training period in any place designated by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. (The state-run Etemad newspaper - May 11, 2020)

Moreover, it was reported that



Samira Zargari who could not travel with her team to Italy

Samira Zargari, the head coach of the national alpine skiing team, was banned from leaving the country due to her husband's objection. She could not go to Italy with her team for the competition. A source in the Ski Federation said that the efforts of the federation officials to lift the exit ban and to send her to the Italian competitions did not succeed. (The state-run Sharq newspaper - February 17, 2021)

According to Article 1117

of the mullahs' Civil Code, a husband can forbid his wife from a profession or industry that is contrary to the interests of the family or the dignity of the man or woman. Paragraph 3 of Article 18 of the Passport Law also explicitly conditions the issuance of passports for married women to the written consent of the husband. But before marriage, the exit permit for the woman is given to the father or paternal grandfather.

## PROHIBITION OF WOMEN FROM MUSIC ACTIVITIES

Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the mullahs, reiterated a ban on female singing in a new fatwa last year. In response to the question whether listening to the voice of a female singer who sings solo is forbidden for non-mahram men, he replied: "Avoid listening to what is usually corrupt." (The state-run Tasnim News Agency - July 14, 2020)

On January 16, 2021, two soloists of a women's music group in Kermanshah named Glaris were summoned and arrested by the security police for participating in the production of a promotional

video for a furniture store. (The state-run Khabar Online News Agency - January 17, 2021)

Mahdis Ebrahimian, a two-string guitar solo teenager, cannot play the string because of her gender. She said that many times there was coordination with her before performing in a program, and that she had spent a few days practicing, but before the program she was informed that her performance had been canceled and that she was not allowed to perform because she was a girl. (The state-run ILNA News Agency - July 4, 2020)

# COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS LIVES OF 4M Women Heads of Households

## A statistical look

The increase in the number of women heads of household in Iran has reached alarming proportions. This situation can lead to widespread problems and represents a wake-up call to the community.

- Statistics show that women head 14% of Iranian households (The state-run Jahan-e Sanat newspaper – September 21, 2020).
- Annually, the number of women heads of household increases by 6%.
- The number of single women who head their households has increased by 58% over the past 10 years, compared to male-headed households (The state-run Jahan-e Sanat newspaper – September 21, 2020).

■ Mahmoud Abbasi, Deputy Minister of Justice for Human Rights and International Affairs, declared, "Despite their capabilities, women heads of household face many employment problems. Only 10 percent of them have access to employment, although 30 percent are qualified in at least one profession" (The state-run salamatnews.ir – January 20, 2021).

One aspect of the feminization of poverty is evident in the situation of women heads of household. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, women heads of household represent one of the most impoverished components of society. These women have far less than they did pre-COVID. Under normal circumstances, they had many anxieties, including financial distress and psychological problems.

■ Today, in the Coronavirus-related economic crisis, women's primary concern is employment – which is no longer possible. About 68% of unemployed persons were women heads of household (The state-run ILNA news agency – October 11, 2020).

■ Maryam Sadat Mirmalek Thani, Director-General of the Office of Support and Empowerment of the Labor Ministry, commented on the increase in the number of single women heads of household over the past decade, calls this crisis "a social issue." "In 2018, 33.4% of women heads of household in urban areas became the poorest," she declared (The state-run ILNA news agency – October 11, 2020).

## An alarming number

■ Yet another societal problem has emerged as part of the economic crisis: there are 14-year-old girls among the women heads of households. Factors such as early marriage, the declining age of divorce, and the fact that many divorces occur in the first year of marriage, are leading causes for the increase in the number of women heads of household.

■ The Statistics Center of Iran reported that approximately 5.1 million women are widowed or divorced.

■ In the 2019 budget, 230 billion Tomans was set for insurance for women heads of household. However, this budget was eliminated in the 2020 budget (BBC – April 5, 2020).

■ In 2020, the regime announced that despite an increase of one million women-headed households over 4 years, plans to support them had not yet reached a definite conclusion (The state-run Khorassan Daily- September 16, 2020). Under the mullahs' regime, the phenomenon of women heads of household has led to severe social problems and harm. Thus far, no sustainable policy has been implemented, and women continue to face significant challenges, from economic issues to difficulties in empowering and educating their children.



ONE DAY  
WITHOUT  
WORK  
MEANS A DAY  
WITHOUT  
FOOD



10%

Women head 14% of Iranian households, but only 10% of them have access to employment

68%

68% of unemployed persons are women heads of household

33%

33.4% of women heads of household in urban areas became the poorest

61%

More than 61% of women have informal jobs.

## Informal jobs

In recent decades, the working-class community has suffered irreparable damage due to the escalation of government corruption. Workers are deprived of the minimum necessities of life.

- Working women have strenuous, unofficial jobs that pay meager wages. Among working women, most are forced to work without a contract. Many of them, along with their children, have not been able to eat meat for a long time. These women must spend most of their wages on rent; thus, their salaries do not cover even one-tenth of their necessities. One day without work means a day without food.
- Based on data registered in state-run news agencies, informal jobs constitute 60% of all jobs in Iran. This figure is over 70% in many provinces. Informal jobs are more vulnerable to economic crises and the Coronavirus pandemic's consequences (The state-run ISNA news agency – June 17, 2020).
- According to the Research Center of the Parliament of the Regime, in 2018, more than 61% of women had informal jobs.
- Moreover, in 2017, the Social Security Organization's financial institution announced that about 80% of employees who lacked insurance were women – many with disabilities – whose jobs included home jobs and workshops.
- The clerical regime claims that from 2015 to 2019, the population of working people has increased by 3 million. But what is the truth? The truth is that this new population of working people is the most vulnerable to the lower demand amid the Coronavirus pandemic. New jobs are neither in the government sector nor in private companies or factories. The new jobs are concentrated retail and wholesale, repairs, transportation, brokering, and food services. This group of jobholders usually does not work full-time, has no job security, and has no insurance. These jobs are largely disappearing due to plummeting demand between March 2019 and May 2019 (The state-run Egtesadonline.ir, June 17, 2020).

## Female workers

The biggest employers in Iran are large economic institutions controlled by Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards. Yet, the regime violates even its own minimum wage laws to ensure maximum profitability.

- Female workers in Iran are the most vulnerable in society. Working women, most of whom are women heads of household, have suffered even more in the current situation. These women, considered cheap labor, are at the forefront of labor adjustments in any economic crisis. Many of the women who worked in underground workshops were fired or laid off during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- In one example, Soheila Jelodarzadeh, a member of the regime's parliament, confessed, "I was in a meeting in Tehransar with 200 women workers. None of them had received livelihood support subsidies" (The state-run ILNA news agency – February 1, 2020).
- Last year, the regime set the workers' livelihood fund at 4.9 million Tomans (The state-run Tasnim news agency, December 28, 2020). However, the minimum wage was set at 1,835,426 Tomans, about one-third of the same incomplete livelihood fund (Mohammad Shariatmadar, Minister of Labor, Rouhani Government - April 9, 2020).
- Working women's wages have always been significantly lower than those of men, and in economic terms, women face systematic double oppression.
- The poverty line for a family of 4 is 12 million Tomans. Workers, more than 70% of whom are below the middle class, are no longer able to buy red meat or even white meat (The state-run ILNA news agency – November 24, 2020).

## Majority of working women are heads of households

- The majority of them are hired in informal sectors
- Most of them are hired on temporary three-month contracts
- They are laid off for the slightest flaw
- They face longer working hours, unsafe conditions and smaller wages



They receive 20% of men's wage for equal work

20%

They make up 80% of uninsured job holders

80%

Half of them receive one third of their real wage

50%

## Women Peddlers

Peddling has become a main or second job due to the unemployment crisis and low wages among employed people.

- Many women peddlers must take high-risk routes in the face of the Coronavirus outbreak. They expose themselves and their children to the virus by peddling in crowded places such as the Tehran metro.
- There are no exact statistics on the number of peddlers and, consequently, female peddlers in Iran. It can be said that the tendency towards this false job has increased, and more women than before have had to make do with peddling in the subway, in buses, and on sidewalks (The state-run ILNA news agency, May 19, 2020).

■ The government has ignored these deprived women, who are often heads of household. The municipality could have set up a special sanitized safe zone for these women to sell their wares until after the pandemic. Instead, regime forces and municipal officials harass these women, often treating them harshly and confiscating their goods.

## Women 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. Official statistics estimate the number of porters in Iran to be between 80,000 and 170,000.

- Working as a porter is among the main sources of revenue for villagers in the provinces of Kermanshah and Kurdistan in western Iran. 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 (The state-run Hamshahrionline.ir, September 14, 2020).

- Many of the 18,000 female heads of households in Kurdistan Province have no choice but to work as porters because of poverty and lack of other jobs (The state-run ISNA news agency, February 8, 2021).

- It was more recently reported that 110 female porters have been identified in just 7 villages in Kermanshah. (The state-run Dowlat-e Bahar website, February 23, 2021)

- Most of the female porters are widows and head their own households. Even those who are educated have been forced to turn to serving as porters. They wear men's clothes and take strong tranquilizers to be able to carry heavy loads and pass through difficult mountainous paths. They do not talk to anyone lest passers-by find out that they are women.

- Women carry lighter weights because physically, they are not able to carry heavier loads. So they earn less money. They often must carry their loads at night to avoid detection or worse – border patrols are known to shoot porters.

- Last year, a female porter froze to death while carrying her loads through the mountains.



- Sherafat is 60 years old and suffers from diabetes. Her husband died, and she is the sole caretaker of her five children. Sherafat's knees hurt badly. She rubs some ointment on them and says, "These legs will no longer be legs for me, I have to work all summer long. I have neither a pension nor insurance. I work as a porter all summer long, along with my sister, cousin, and the rest of the women in the family. We work in the summer to save for our expenses during the winter."

- Women porters face two critical issues: enduring the pain and suffering caused by carrying heavy loads in crippling heat on impassable roads and risking being shot by security and border guards. Every year, dozens of porters die. Many more become wounded and disabled because of the shootings.

## Housing

- "Some women heads of household are homeless; they take shelter in ruins, dilapidated buildings, pits, or canals. Clearly, those who live in slums or tents have inadequate housing," according to Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar, a social expert appointed by the regime.

- "Many of these women, who are forced to flee to the suburbs, face harms such as violence against women, addiction, and selling babies. They are deprived of social support from state institutions. Some women heads of households are doing a decent job, but they are below the poverty line and deprived of the minimum standard of living," he added (The state-run Etemadonline.ir – June 22, 2020).

- Many of these poor and deprived women live on the outskirts of cities. Some are unable to work due to advanced age and physical weakness and consequently cannot earn an income or make a living. Their children are forced to drop out of school early. This crushing poverty will inevitably lead their children to harms such as addiction.

Most female porters are widows. They wear men's clothes and take strong tranquilizers to be able to carry heavy loads and pass through difficult mountainous paths. Many of the **18,000** female heads of households in Kurdistan Province have no choice but to work as porters. Some **110** female porters have been identified in just **7** villages in Kermanshah.

*Many women heads of households spend most of their wages on rent; they and their children have not been able to eat meat for a long time.*

## DEFENSELESS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE Fight on COVID-19

In Iran, 80% of nurses are women. They are suffering more during the coronavirus crisis than any period before, and a significant number have died in the service of public health.

Mostafa Mo'in, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Medical System and former regime Minister of Science and Health, has said: "The lack of basic safety and protection facilities for doctors, nurses and medical staff, has led to the loss of the best medical and specialized staff." (The state-run Mostaghel newspaper, April 4, 2020)

With the decision to lift quarantine and start economic and administrative activities in Iran, and the ever-growing number of patients, the pressure has increased even more on nurses who work a number of shifts and sleep on the floor of hospitals most nights. Many of them have not seen their children for months.

### Infection and mortality rates among nurses

- Hossein Kermanpour, director of the Emergency Room of Tehran's Sina Hospital, wrote on his Twitter account: "We are collecting accurate statistics from all over the country to find out exactly how many medical staff have contracted the virus or sacrificed their lives fighting COVID-19. So far, 107 of my dear colleagues have gone to Heaven." (The state-run Salamnews.com - May 19, 2020)

- In an open letter to the authorities, the Nursing System Organization revealed that out of a total of 110,000 nurses, about 20,000 have contracted coronavirus. 5,000 people have left the service. Fifty of the best nurses have died. (The state-run Mehr news agency - September 30, 2020)

- Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, the speaker of the regime's parliament, announced: 30,000 of our nurses have contracted coronavirus. (The state-run Salamnews.com - October 8, 2020)

- Mirzabeigi, head of the Nursing System Organization, said: "Out of about 145,000 nurses working near patients' beds, 60,000 were infected with coronavirus, 6,000 are in quarantine and about 100 have died." (The official IRNA news agency - December 17, 2020)

- Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, Secretary General of Nurse's Home, also announced: "So far, 60 nurses have died due to coronavirus. Another 6,000 nurses are on sick leave. Many nurses are also unable to work due to the long-term effects of coronavirus on their lungs and other organs." (The state-run ILNA news agency - October 31, 2020)

- In September, a member of the national coronavirus task force reported the death toll of 164 doctors and nurses. (The state-run Mehr news agency - September 23, 2020)

- The lack of transparency in publicizing statistics is very clear in the officials' comments and the above figures should be considered the bare minimum casualties.

- The Association of Nursing Activists wrote in a strongly-worded statement that, "a nurse provides services to ten critically ill patients at the same time. Are the officials waiting for all the nurses to die of coronavirus before they bring in new hires?" (The state-run salamnews.com - November 15, 2020)



### A COVER-UP at the cost of nurses' lives

A shocking report from inside Iran revealed that hospital nurses were banned from talking about coronavirus patients and that they had been instructed to register the disease as "acute respiratory syndrome" instead of coronavirus. According to an eyewitness report from Milad Hospital in Tehran, two nurses at Milad Hospital were expelled from the hospital because they had told the patient and his companion that he had coronavirus. In a shocking and inhumane act, hospital authorities removed protective clothes from the nurses and, under the pretext that the person accompanying the patient was growing fearful and scared, they ordered the nurses to go back to work without their protective equipment.



### Shortages and burnout

The shortage of nurses was a serious issue in Iran even before the outbreak of COVID-19. But after the epidemic, the situation has become much worse. Female nurses are the main victims of this tragedy in a medical system that has been ruined by the mullahs' regime.

- Referring to the shortage of nurses in Iran, Mirzabeigi, head of the Nurses Organization, said: "The most important problem of the nursing community is the severe shortage of staff. For about 170,000 hospital beds, there are only 145,000 nurses and the ratio of nurses to beds is about 0.08, while it should be 2.5 nurses per bed. So the number of employed nurses should be 2.5 times what it is now in order to comply with the standard conditions. If the trend of increasing the number of beds and retirement of nurses continues, the shortage will increase every day and patients will suffer the most." (The official IRNA news agency - December 17, 2020)

- "Our work shifts are 12 hours, but due to the increase in calls, a number of nurses are working more shifts, even up to 24 hours," said one of the nurses in Unit 115 of the Tehran Emergency Department, who responds to people's calls into the system. (The state-run Mizan news agency - November 5, 2020)

## 89-day long and temporary contracts

While the coronavirus has become a national catastrophe in Iran, the regime exploits nurses more than ever, instead of even paying their salaries or offering special benefits to those who are at the forefront of the struggle.

- Nurses' 89-day contracts are one such case. These contracts fall in the category of corporate contracts and are even enacted in public hospitals.

- At least 35% of the workforce under the supervision of medical universities is employed under these temporary contracts.

- "The policy of the Ministry of Health over the past seven to eight years has been based on two things," said Mohammad Sharifi Moghaddam, secretary general of the Nurse's Home. "One is to increase supply, meaning the number of nursing graduates, and the second is to eliminate job security for nurses. All this is an effort by the Ministry of Health to make the nursing workforce cheaper." (The state-run ILNA News Agency - May 11, 2020)

"In the past, the number of nursing graduates was 5,000 a year, and in recent years we have 12,000 nursing graduates a year," he added.

"In fact, 60,000 people graduated in the last five years, and in the most optimistic case, the Ministry of Health has hired only 10,000 of them. Thus, 50,000 graduated nurses are unemployed and are looking for work, and because they are unemployed, they will become obedient workers who follow the employer's orders and even endure the burden of exploitative contracts such as the 89-day contracts. In this way, we have tens of thousands of nurses working without any job security."



A nurse holds up a sign during a protest: No to 89-day contracts

“The policy of the Health Ministry has been based on two things: 1- to increase the number of nursing graduates, and 2- to eliminate job security for nurses, in an effort to make the nursing workforce cheaper... In fact, **60,000** people graduated in the last five years, and the Ministry of Health has hired only **10,000** of them.

### Dismissal of nurses during the pandemic

- At the height of the coronavirus crisis, many nurses and staff have been laid off without any supervision or justification. (The state-run ILNA news agency - April 13, 2020)

- The population of private sector nurses is about 7,000 to 8,000 individuals. 3,000 nurses also work on a contract basis and do not have any job security.

- Just as the nurses were expecting to find greater job security, their jobs were either put on hold or they were expelled in the context of plans implemented in March 2020.

In one example alone, 30 medical staff (operating room and anesthesia experts) of Abu Ali Sina Hospital in Shiraz were fired. (The state-run Salamatnews.com - May 2, 2020)

### Salaries and wages

Nurses face many difficulties while making a simple living.

- Nurses' pay across Iran is delayed by about 8 to 14 months. According to promises made to nurses, their delayed wages were to be reduced to zero by March 2020, but no payments were made during the final months of the Persian calendar year. Nurses are still at the forefront of the crisis, struggling with the challenges and problems of the overall health system. (The state-run Salamatnews.com - February 1, 2020)

- A nurse said about the extremely low salaries: "For two months, I did not see my child or my mother. We have been working for a while and sometimes we sleep on the floor at night. Our salary is low; they gave us the equivalent of a dollar for our work."

### Nurses protest

As their challenges continue to mount, in terms of low salaries, delayed wages, layoffs, and contract and non-permanent work, nurses have turned to protests in various parts of the year. But each time, not only did they not receive an answer, but in some cases, they were beaten and imprisoned.

- Private nurses have several months of unpaid wage claims.

- On July 1, 2020, a group of 99 nurses in Mashhad protested in front of the judiciary. Ten female nurses were arrested during the rally. Repressive forces tried to attack them with batons and electric shockers, and tore up their banners and placards. Mashhad University of Medical Sciences did not address their demands.

- Protesting nurses at various rallies said that their wages have been reduced during the pandemic.

- At the same time, many nurses have not yet received related benefits.

*Instead of being paid or offered special benefits, nurses get fired.*

*Low salaries, delayed wages, layoffs, contract and non-permanent work, and shortage of workforce are among their mounting challenges.*



## Young Girls Deprived of Education

*Lack of access to smartphones has led to students committing suicide*

After the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in Iran, schooling and education conditions have declined significantly. The regime's education officials have not taken any effective actions to address these shortcomings, or to provide accessible and free education, or to address the country's growing education chasm.

The launch of virtual methods of education through the so-called "Shad" network has made it even more difficult for underprivileged students to continue their education.

Some rent their smartphones from others in order to access online classes, while others travel miles to access the Internet.

The regime's Minister of Education had promised that all students would have access to the Internet and smartphones. The fulfillment of this promise, however, was later handed over to kind-hearted charity "donors" in the hopes of someone giving a smartphone to poor students.

The expansion of Internet signal coverage was also delayed into the future.

This is while the Ministry of Education had the chance to address the problem of the Internet and online education for an entire year, starting in February 2020 when the coronavirus spread in Iran. Statements by regime officials provide a clearer picture.

"According to statistics, almost 3 million students across the country are deprived of smart educational equipment," said Javad Hosseini, the deputy minister of education. He added that there are over 5 million deprived children in Iran. "Apart from these 3 million people, there are also 2 million people whose educational tools are essentially borrowed or rented." (The state-run ILNA news agency - February 7, 2021)

In another example, Rezvan Hakimzadeh, deputy director of primary education at the Ministry of Education, said that 89,000 first-graders have been forced to drop out of school this year. (The state-run Aftab-e Yazd newspaper - January 14, 2021)

The lack of access to the Internet and smartphones has multiplied the withdrawal rate compared to previous years, in addition to creating many difficulties for teachers.

The regime has moved classes to a virtual space without providing the necessary infrastructure, and thus many teachers and students are suffering from double deprivation and additional difficulties.

In recent months, statistics have been constantly published about the abysmal state of education in various cities.

According to these statistics, 3,225,000 students do not have access to a smartphone or the Internet. Accordingly, dropout rates are higher among girls than boys.

The Statistics Center of Iran officially confirmed in a report on December 22, 2020 that the school dropout rate has almost doubled.

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi, the regime's Minister of Communications and Information Technology, announced that out of 763,000 students in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, 100,000 are not covered by the virtual network and 300,000 are deprived of access to the necessary equipment. (The state-run PANA news agency - January 4, 2021)



**3M**

More than 3 million students are deprived of smart educational equipment

**2M**

Another 2 million people borrow or rent their educational tools

**89K**

89,000 first-graders have been forced to drop out of school

**X2**

The school dropout rate almost doubled in 2020

The governor of Hormozgan province, Fereydoun Emati, also said in an interview that 22,000 students in Hormozgan are deprived of access to virtual classes. (The state-run Passin Hormozgan website - December 30, 2020)

Hassan Ali Asghari, director general of education in Qazvin Province, announced that 2,000 students have dropped out of school since the beginning of the current academic year. (The official IRNA news agency - November 27, 2020)

According to the Education Department in Khuzestan Province, 4,500 students have dropped out of school in this province.

Khorasan Razavi province has registered a record number of students dropping out of school. 40,000 students in this province have been forced to drop out of school since the beginning of the current academic year.

*The regime moved classes to a virtual space without providing the necessary infrastructure, making it even more difficult for underprivileged students to continue their education.*



## Coronavirus causes great losses and damages to Iranian students

The coronavirus crisis has exacted a heavy toll from millions of Iranian students.

In addition to school dropout rates, there have been painful reports of student suicides. Several Iranian students have committed suicide because they could not afford a smartphone.

- In October 2020, Parastoo Jalili Azar, a 13-year-old student from the village of Talatapeh in the Nazlu district of Urmia, ended her own life because she could not have a phone to continue her education.

- Seyed Mohammad Mousavizadeh, an 11-year-old boy in Bushehr province, who could not attend his school's online classes due to the lack of a mobile phone, killed himself on October 12, 2020.

- In another incident, Mani Hashemi almost lost his life while walking through a mountain. He was working as a porter delivering products in order to help out his mother to raise money to buy a cell phone so that he could continue his education.

- At the same time, the horrific death toll from the coronavirus in Iran includes many students. According to Hossein Kermanpour, director of the emergency clinic at Tehran's Sina Hospital, 30,000 students under the age of 18 have been infected and nearly 300 have died. (The state-run Etemadonline.ir - October 2, 2020)

- Minoo Mohraz, a member of the scientific committee of the regime's coronavirus task force, stated that "the reopening of schools on September 5 was a mistake. This was a decision by the Education Ministry when the situation in most of Iran was red." (The state-run Entekhab daily - September 30, 2020)

- In addition to the deaths and suicides of children in Iran, other painful examples of poverty have emerged in society. On December 30, 2020, an advertisement for the sale of a 9-year-old girl's hair appeared in social media platforms. The reason for this painful action was "a mother's financial need to provide a mobile phone for her child." (The state-run Khabarforionline.ir - December 30, 2020)



Tomb of Parastoo Jalili Azar, 13, who took her own life



The ad offering to sell the good quality hair of a 9-year-old to provide for the expense of a mobile phone



## The 4th peak and reopening of schools

Simultaneous with the regime Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's ban on the purchase of vaccines and the beginning of the fourth wave of COVID-19 in Iran, the regime's Minister of Education announced that schools will reopen on February 22. (The official IRNA news agency - January 11, 2021)

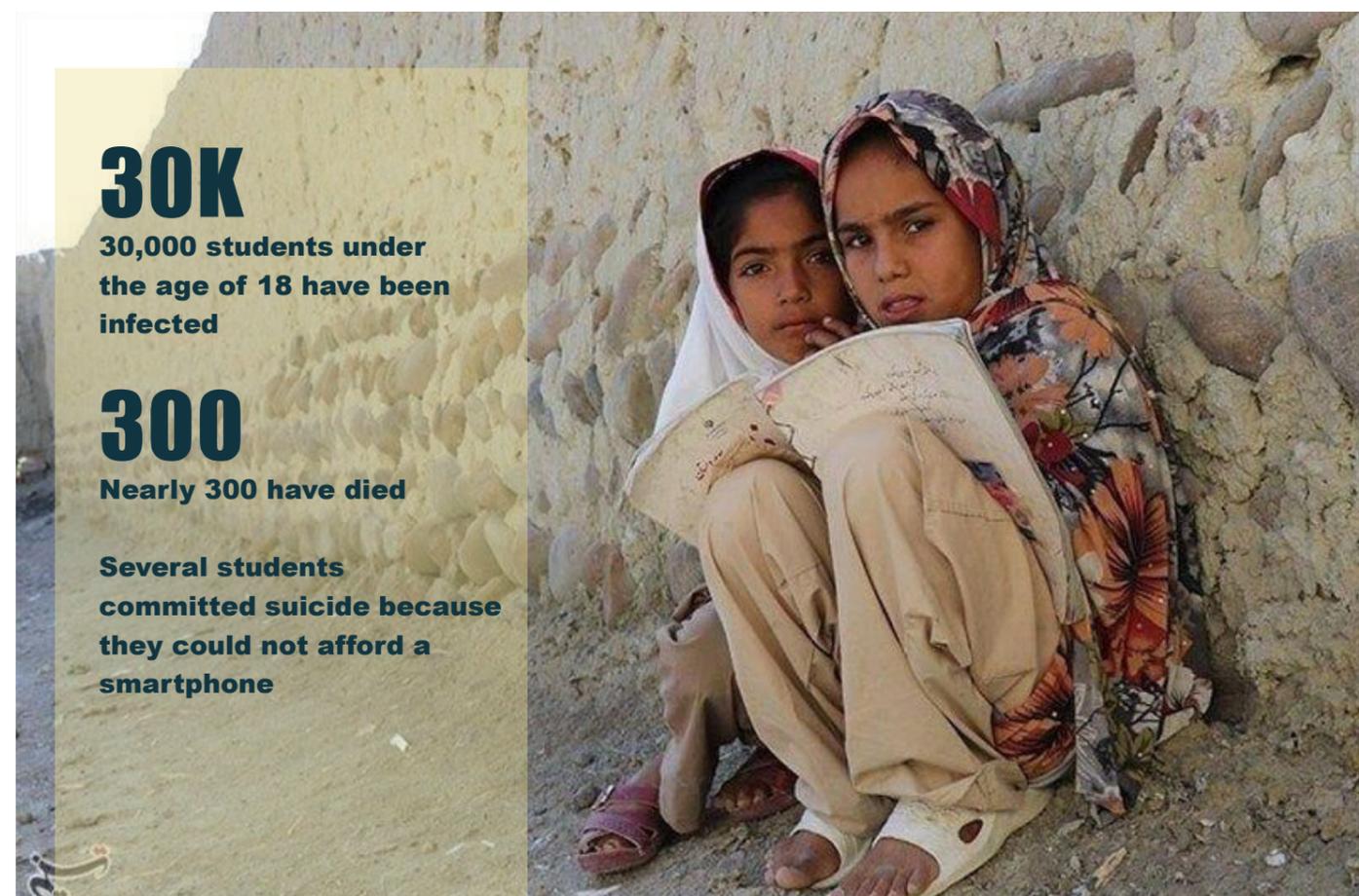
- The head of the Mashhad city Medical Organization warned against such a move, saying: "The reopening of schools will lead to the spread of the British variant of the coronavirus... (which)

“ The reopening of schools will lead to the spread of the British variant of the coronavirus which is more common in people under the age of 20

is more common in people under the age of 20, especially children, than the original virus." (The state-run Young Journalists' Club website - January 16, 2021)

- "It is dangerous to rush the reopening," said Massoud Mardani, a member of the science committee of the Coronavirus Task Force. "We experienced this once in May and witnessed that they quickly reopened educational centers, restaurants, shopping malls, etc., and the death toll climbed to 500 people a day." (The state-run ISNA news agency - January 16, 2021)

- The deputy head of the Coronavirus Task Force in Qazvin province said: "Accelerating the reopening of schools and guilds is considered an invitation to the coronavirus." He added: "The emergence of a new peak will unleash a tsunami of the virus, which would lead to an extremely terrifying and worrying situation. Recklessness will throw us into the valley." He added: "The issue of reopening schools is in general a cause for concern."

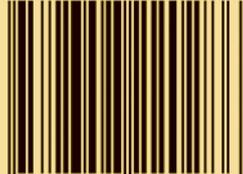




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