



# CLIMATE CHANGE IN IRAN

Women are  
the prime victims,  
The clerical regime is  
the main culprit



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Women's Committee  
The National Council of Resistance of Iran



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### Climate Change in Iran, Women are the prime victims, the clerical regime the main culprit

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## Introduction

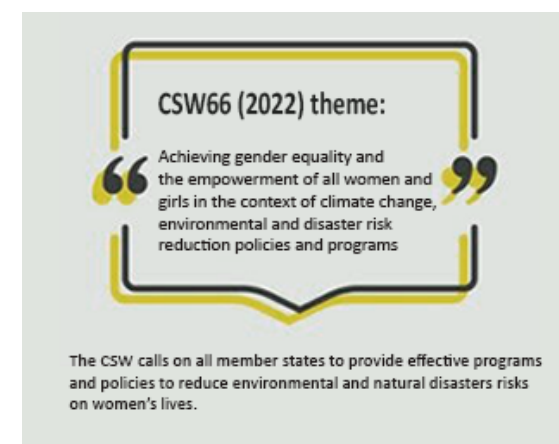
This year's theme of UN Commission on Women's status is defined as "Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering All Women and Girls in the Face of Climate Change." CSW calls on countries to provide effective programs and policies to reduce the effects of environmental risks and natural disasters on women's lives.

But the situation and the issue of Iranian women cannot be classified in international norms. Mullahs have ruled Iran for more than 40 years. A reactionary and totalitarian regime that continues its rule not by relying on serving the people through developing the country, at least in line with the other countries in the region, but by fully encroaching on the lives and property of the Iranian people and exporting terrorism to other countries.

The first problem and cause of climate change and natural disasters in Iran is neither greenhouse gases nor industrial activities, but a complete destruction of the environment through predatory policies and terrorist projects that exacerbate natural disasters.

Since 1992, Iran has been a member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, but despite declaring a critical climate situation in the region, Iran has depicted its lack of cooperation with its failure to provide information, insufficient scientific research, mismanagement of natural resources, and weakening bonds between human health and climate change.<sup>1</sup>

The Iranian regime also refused to attend the 26th World Climate Change Conference in October and November 2021 in Glasgow.





# Climate change in Iran

Iran is among the top ten polluting countries in the world in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and it annually emits more than six hundred million tons of greenhouse gases into the Earth's atmosphere.

In July 2018, the regime's interior minister warned that Iran was on the verge of a serious social crisis, namely climate migration, which could make a significant difference in the social essence of Iran over the next five years.<sup>2</sup>

According to Ahad Vazifeh, director of the National Center for Climate and Drought Crisis Management of the Meteorological Organization, the trend of temperature rise in Iran is above the global average. In the spring and the winter of 2021, the average temperature of the country was about 2 to 3 degrees Celsius higher than the long-term average, and in some areas, such as the northwest of the country, the temperature has increased between 3 to 6 degrees Celsius.<sup>3</sup>

Iran's metropolitan cities are disproportionately affected by these risks and in this regard, they do not have the appropriate institutional and infrastructural support.

In Tehran, there are no health infrastructures to deal with the injured and sick people due to climate crises. In times of crisis, there is no possibility of providing services for the city commensurate with its population. Climate change-related crises are rampant, engulfing the entire city and surrounding areas, thus they permanently destroy the city's social and economic capital in an erosive process. Examples of these effects can be found in the phenomenon of dust storms and power outages in Khuzestan and its effects in the fall of 2021.<sup>4</sup>

## Granting the right of overfishing for China

Through providing permission for Chinese fishermen in the waters of southern Iran, the clerical regime has destroyed Iranian fishery and has posed serious dangers to the marine ecosystem and biodiversity of the species in region's water.

The Chinese method of fishing is in the form of a trawling, which destabilizes the balance of marine life. Each Chinese ship in the Persian Gulf can carry 722 tons of fish.

With the advent of Chinese ships, more than 50 percent of local fishermen have lost their jobs and their families' livelihoods are at stake.

Trawling is one of the most obsolete and illegal fishing methods in the world. But according to marine ecologist Amir Rostamvand, "Iran is the only country that continues to either issue trawling permits or waive it as a crime."

However, according to Saeedi, the spokesperson of the agriculture commission, the governmental fisheries organization does not allow Iranian fishers to fish in these waters.<sup>5</sup>

## Burning mazut

Currently, about thirteen million liters of mazut are daily delivered to Iranian power plants. This number reaches thirty-five million liters during the cold seasons.

Metropolitan cities such as Tehran are very polluted due to the practice of burning mazut. E

ven in the year of the Corona outbreak, when traffic was reduced and many businesses were closed, air pollution in Iran was more severe due to the use of mazut.<sup>6</sup>

Nahid Khodakarami, a member of the Health and Environment



Commission of the Tehran's City Council, acknowledges that the amount of sulfur in Tehran's air has increased dramatically due to the use of mazut. Rajai and Montazer Al-Qaim power plants are among the power plants that burn mazut.

Dariush Gol Alizadeh, deputy director of the National Center for Air and Climate Change of the Environmental Protection Agency of Iran, has also announced that mazut is used in power plants in Mashhad, Ahvaz, Kerman, Iranshahr and Biston Kermanshah. Eleven steam power plants in Iran combine mazut with gas and diesel, he added.<sup>7</sup>

The concentration of sulfur in produced mazut in Iran is about 3.5 percent. The allowed concentration of sulfur even for ship fuel is less than half a percent, according to the law of the International Maritime Organization.

Despite the use of this type of mazut, Iranian power plants do not have a ventilation system, and government agencies are sacrificing people's health by not acquiring the proper equipment.

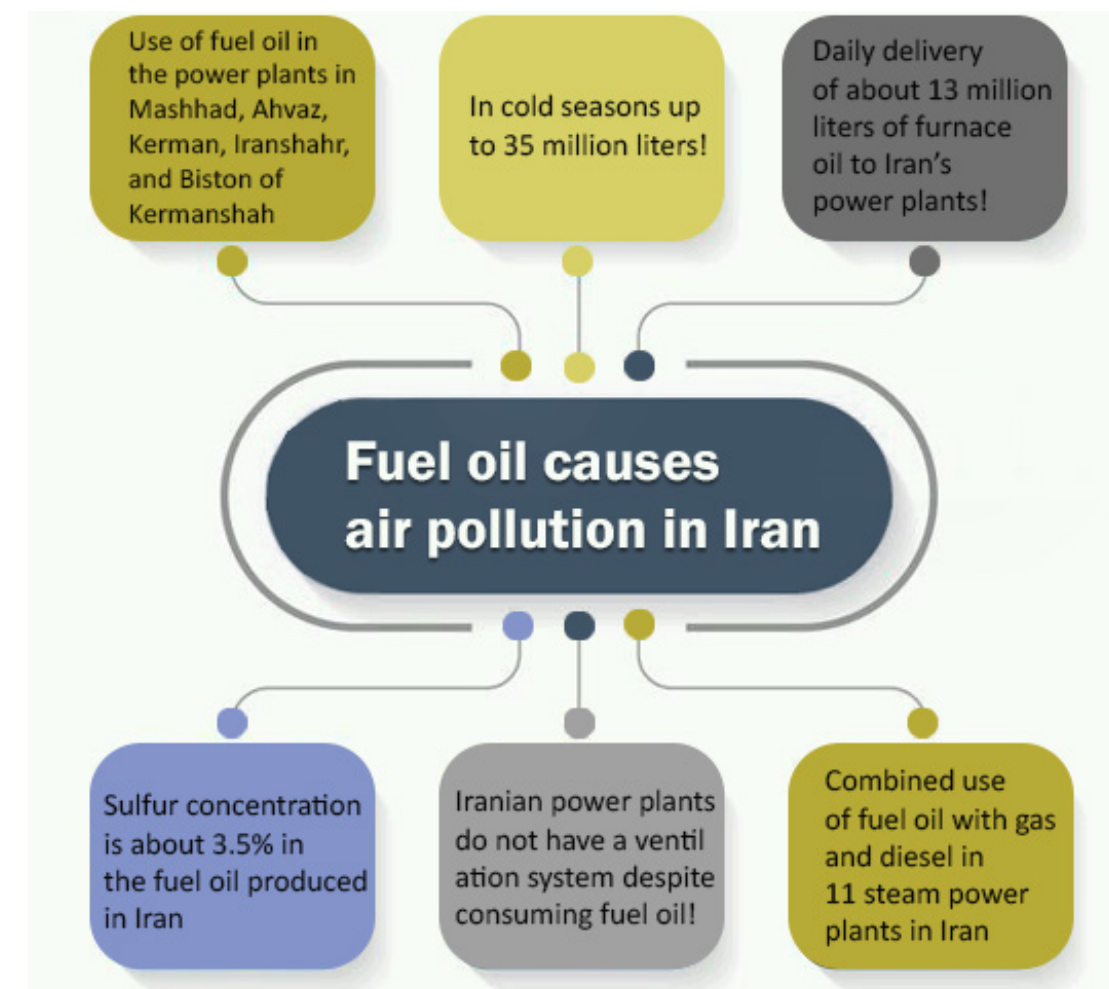
According to Nahid Khodakarami, Member of the Health and Environment Commission of Tehran City Council, sulfur particles in the air are especially harmful for pregnant women, children, patients with kidney and lung problems, and the elderly. Severe air pollution can also cause women to give preterm birth.<sup>8</sup>

### Oil pollution

More than half of the world's oil resources belong to Iran and this country annually produces an average of thirty million tons of petrochemical products.

The economy of Iran's ruling regime one-dimensionally relies on this industry, and without observing health standards, it takes the price of the oil industry from the health of the people. In November 2021, Abdolrasoul Khaleghpanah, head of the Deylam's Environmental Protection Department in Bushehr province, announced the occurrence of oil pollution in two areas of the city in just one week. These pollutions were caused by leaks in worn-out oil and gas exploitation lines.

Following the oil spill, significant amounts of it flowed into neighboring agricultural lands.<sup>9</sup>



Ardal city, located in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, has experienced eight separate oil leaks into farms and drinking water since 1974.

The most recent case was the fracture of Maroun's oil pipeline to Isfahan on December 13, 2020. This incident led to the entry of a significant amount of oil into the Sarkhon River and the surrounding lands polluting a 6 km patch of land along the river.

The gas emission of crude oil spills also led to fires in the area around the city.

Oil pollution caused about forty-six billion tomans of damage to agriculture, orchards, livestock, fisheries, nomadic affairs, water and sewage, roads, regional water, and the region's environment. However, according to the people of this region, no action has been taken to compensate the damages.<sup>10</sup>

## Nuclear power plants

Most of Iran's nuclear facilities, where more than 10,000 people are employed, are located near residential centers.

This dangerous technology, on which the clerical regime is trying to extort money from the world, targets the health of the Iranian people more than anything else.

Bushehr reactor is located 10 km away from this metropolis with a population of 250,000.

There are four sensitive nuclear facilities in Isfahan alone.

The atomic gases that are enriched at the Natanz and Fordow nuclear power plants are deadlier than the toxic chlorine gases used in World War II. Radioactive contaminated water is discharged into rivers around mines or stored in lakes with a substantial risk of infiltration into groundwater aquifers.<sup>11</sup>

Ventilation of uranium mines emits radioactive contaminants and radon gas into the air, increasing the risk of lung cancer in surrounding areas.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, uranium mining requires massive amounts of fresh water, for which the clerical regime builds dams, deep wells, and unscientific canals from rivers, this is a reason for the aridity of rivers and wetlands in Iran.

The produced waste by these power plants is another cause of environmental degradation. According to government experts, this waste is transferred to underground cavities where water may penetrate. "Also, due to the high probability of earthquakes and floods, these materials can come to the surface and pollute the entire environment." The Guardian Council has not ratified a parliamentary resolution on Iran's accession to the Joint Convention on Nuclear Waste Management and Security.<sup>13</sup>

Up to twenty tons of nuclear waste are just buried daily in Badrud, Natanz. These holes are now located near the village of Sar-e-Asiab, a short distance from the city, and pose a serious threat to the health of the locals.

- 1. The proximity of most of Iran's nuclear sites with more than 10,000 employees to residential centers pose a severe threat to the public's health**
- 2. Bushehr reactor is located only 10 km from Bushehr with a population of 250,000**



- 3. Four sensitive nuclear sites exist in Isfahan**
- 4. 20 tons of nuclear waste are buried every day only in Badrud of Natanz**



*Radioactive contaminated water is discharged into rivers around mines or stored in lakes with a substantial risk of infiltration into groundwater aquifers.*



## Drying up lakes in Iran

***With the destruction of Hamoon, 15,000 fishermen lost their jobs and women who used to produce handicrafts from the reeds lost their source of income.***

Most of Iranian lakes are drying up.<sup>14</sup>

The Caspian Sea, the largest lake in the world with four hundred aquatic species, is drying up completely.<sup>15</sup>

According to Dariush Yousefi Kobra, director of the National Center for Caspian Sea Studies and Research, "over the past 20 years, the water level of the Caspian Sea has decreased by 130 cm."<sup>16</sup>

Declining water levels have economic and social consequences for the coastal residents of this sea, and extensive construction on dry shores makes these damages much heavier.

Lake Urmia, the sixth largest saltwater lake in the world, is also struggling with aridity. If Lake Urmia dries up, the dust and sediments from the lakebed will move for kilometers with a breeze causing disease in surrounding communities. Between 6 and 20 million people in the region, who have become poorer in the absence of this vital resource, are forced to emigrate.<sup>17</sup>

Lake Hamoon was the third largest lake in Iran and played a key role in the lives of the people of Sistan and Baluchistan. It is now completely dry, and no traces of life can be found in it. With the destruction of Hamoon, 15,000 fishermen lost their jobs and women who used to produce handicrafts from the reeds lost their source of income. Livestock farmers have emigrated with 120,000 cows and eight hundred villages have been affected by the influx of moving sands.<sup>18</sup>

Likewise, Bakhtegan Lake, the largest lake in Fars province, has completely dried up and turned into a salt plain. The lake has all the conditions for creating a salt storm in the area. The state media acknowledges that one of the causes of Bakhtegan drought is the uncontrolled abstraction of water in the watershed.<sup>19</sup>

The construction of three dams, Doroudvand, Mulla Sadra and Sivand Dam, is another factor that aggravates the drought crisis of the lakes in Fars province. In addition to Bakhtegan, the lakes of Arjan and Tashk in this province have also dried up. The dryness of these lakes and the loss of plant life has caused the weather in province Fars to resemble desert condition.<sup>20</sup>



***Above, the water level of the Caspian Sea, the largest lake in the world with 400 aquatic species, has decreased by 130 cm over the past 20 years.***

***Left, Lake Urmia, the sixth largest saltwater lake in the world, is also struggling with aridity.***

Issa Kalantari, the head of the Environment Organization in 2018, admitted that "we did not know how to manage water resources. We built a dam upstream. We dragged the downstream into misery." The dryness of these lakes caused the migration of 60% of the villagers in the area.<sup>21</sup>



## Drying of wetlands and rivers

***The inappropriate interference and manipulation of nature is the main reason for the drought in the country's wetlands.***

There are three million hectares of wetlands in Iran, 1.5 million hectares of them are registered as international wetlands. But according to Ahmad Reza Lahijanzadeh, deputy director of the Marine Environment and Wetlands of the Environmental Protection Agency, over-harvesting of water resources has reduced the life of Iran's wetlands.<sup>22</sup>

In 2017, Hamid Zahrabi, Deputy Minister of Natural Environment and Biodiversity, estimated the dryness level of Iran's wetlands at 80%.<sup>23</sup>

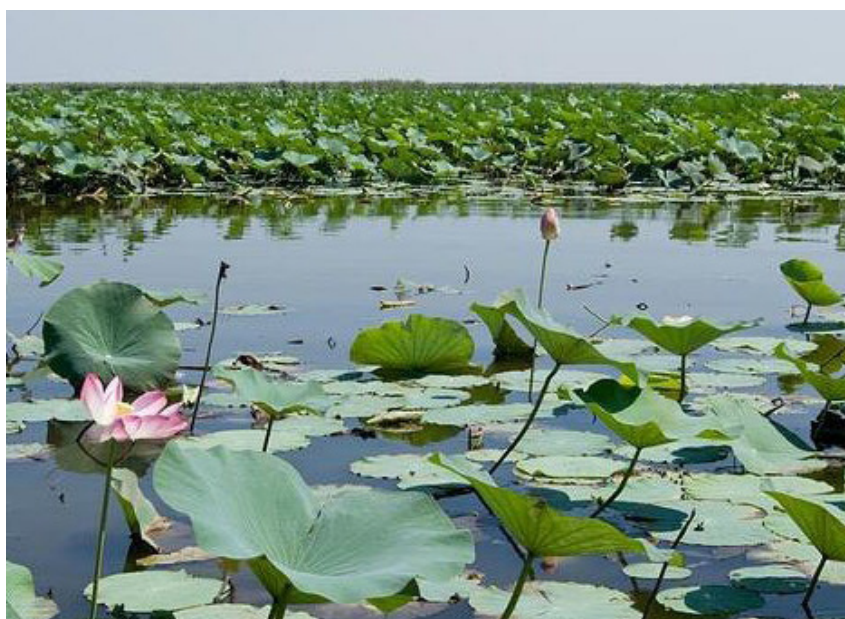
Environmental activist Mohammad Ali Yekta Nik confirms that "drought and mismanagement of water resources no longer have any mercy on any wetland."

He points out to the fact that "the drying up of wetlands will bring poverty, and people who are tired of empty tables will think of migrating, as we have witnessed in recent years with large-scale migration to large cities and the expansion of suburbanization."<sup>24</sup>

Abdul Hussein Mirmiran, an environmental activist in northern Iran, also called the "inappropriate interference and manipulation of nature" as the "main reason for the drought in the country's wetlands."

Now, about 95% of Anzali wetland in Gilan province, which is known for its more than fifty species of fish and plant organisms, especially its tulips and water lilies, has dried up.

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Ehsan Hadipour, head of the Bandar Anzali Department of Environmental Protection, also admits that "due to the extent of the existing demolition and seizures, as well as the presence of unauthorized structures on its outskirts, it requires a long time to compensate for damages and rehabilitate."

The depth of Anzali Wetland has decreased from nine meters to less than one meter due to the annual entry of 580 thousand tons of domestic and industrial sediments.<sup>25</sup>

Gavkhoni is another famous wetland that has dried up due to the corruption of the clerical government. Scattering of fine dust, contaminated with industrial and heavy materials at the bottom of this wetland, can move up to 500 km and cause strange diseases. Ignoring the Gavkhoni aquifer and closing the Zayandeh River, creating water-based industries, or building villas are the main reasons for the aridity of this wetland.<sup>26</sup>

The huge Hur al-Azim wetland on the Iran-Iraq border, with an Iranian section of 130,000 hectares, "does not exist anymore," said Hamid Reza Khodabakhshi, deputy director of the Khuzestan Water and Electricity Organization. It has now become one of the main sources of dust. Military operations during the Iran-Iraq war have played a key role in the drying up of this wetland.<sup>27</sup>

But the problem does not end only with the war. Ismail Kahrom, a government ecologist, blames the Karkheh Dam for accelerating the drying up of Hur al-Azim; "In fact, the number one defendant in the destruction of Hur al-Azim is the oil company and the Ministry of Oil. The ministry has closed the water to this wetland to get discount from Chinese contractors for oil extraction in this area," he explained.<sup>28</sup>

A member of the Khuzestan Provincial Assembly admitted that "the gradual death of Hur al-Azim was due to clear oppression resulting from sectional water-based policies, and mismanagement."<sup>29</sup>

***The number one defendant in the destruction of Hur al-Azim, with an Iranian section of 130,000 hectares, is the oil company and the Ministry of Oil. The ministry has closed the water to this wetland to get discount from Chinese contractors for oil extraction in this area.***



## Rivers

Some major rivers in Iran such as Karun, Zayandehrud and Kor, are drying up.

Koohrang 1, 2 and 3 dams and tunnel project with a total transfer of 765 million cubic meters of water to Isfahan, Beheshtabad dam and tunnel with a transfer of 770 million cubic meters to Isfahan, Kerman and Yazd, Cheshmeh Langan dam and tunnel with 195 million cubic meters to Isfahan and Kamal Saleh Dam in Arak with storage of 100 million cubic meters and Dez springs with transfer of 181 million cubic meters to Qom, Arak, Isfahan, Yazd, are parts of the predatory policies of the clerical regime that has led to the drying up of these rivers.<sup>30</sup>

According to Abdullah Izadpanah, chairperson of the provincial assembly, "Khuzestan pays the price for recklessness and wrong decisions. Khuzestan is being destroyed. The security of Khuzestan is in danger."<sup>31</sup>

Zayandehrud was one of the most important rivers in Iran, which dried up due to mismanagement and greed. Population density and the transfer of major industries such as Isfahan Steel, oil refinery, petrochemicals, chemical industries, Mobarakeh Steel, and Sepahan Oil Company are part of the destructive policies of the clerical government in this regard. Improper abstraction of water from this river and creation of unscientific wells from groundwater are another part of the actions leading to this tragedy. The drying of the Zayandeh River has left several hundred thousand people unemployed and forced them to migrate.<sup>32</sup>

The Kor River, the largest river in Fars province and the second largest waterway in Iran, is also being destroyed. The petrochemical complex dumps its sewage into this river.<sup>33</sup>

Mullah Mohseni Ejei, the head of the regime's judiciary, confessed: "Most of the infringements and encroachments to the rivers and illegal constructions take place by governmental agencies."<sup>34</sup>

*The transfer of major industries to Isfahan, the improper abstraction of water from this river, and creation of unscientific wells from groundwater are part of the actions leading to the drying of the Zayandeh River, which has left several hundred thousand people unemployed and forced them to migrate*



## Groundwaters Extraction

***Iran no longer has underground water.***

The incredible volume of groundwater extraction is another dimension of the clerical government's destructive policies. According to the state-run newspaper Entekhab, Iran no longer has underground water.<sup>35</sup>

The level of access to groundwater in the central plains, if it was e.g., 40 or 50 meters, has now reached to more than 250 or 300 meters. With this description, the subsidence of plains in Iran is about 20 cm per year.<sup>36</sup>

The highest subsidence rate in the world is 32 cm recorded in New Mexico, but in the last 18 years Iran has broken this record twice. With the increase of groundwater exploitation in recent years, this record has risen and will rise even higher.

### Shortage of water

The destructive policies of the clerical regime have exposed the people and women in Iran to severe water shortages. Former Agriculture Minister Issa Kalantari describes the water shortage situation in Iran as far greater than a foreign military attack, and Hedayat Fahmi, deputy director general of the Bureau of Macro-Water Planning, warns that "the water crisis in Iran is now turned into a social crisis."

Drought has a direct impact on the employment rate and income level of rural women, especially farmers. Declining food production has led to rising food prices.<sup>37</sup>

When there is no water for agriculture, farmers' livelihoods are destroyed. This year, in some areas, such as the south of Fars province, planted barley and wheat could not be harvested and they were given to sheep.<sup>38</sup>

According to the state media, at least two hundred villages in Hormozgan province, 350 villages in Khorasan Razavi, 120 villages in Lorestan, eight hundred villages in Kerman and 100% in the port city of Chabahar are irregularly supplied with worn-out and unsanitary tankers.<sup>39</sup>

In the absence of proper piping system, women, especially in the deprived and arid provinces of Khuzestan and Sistan and Baluchistan, are forced to carry water after long hours awaiting in long queues and walking long distances to home. This causes many physical problems for them.

Women and girls in Sistan and Baluchestan have no choice but to go to *hootags* (a pit dug to store water) and buy all kinds of dangers to get drinking water and other essential necessities. There have been instances of women and girls getting drowned or hunted by crocodiles while trying to fetch water from these pits.



***Women and girls in have no choice but to go to hootags (top) and buy all kinds of dangers to get drinking water. Sometimes they are drowned and sometimes hunted by crocodiles. The other two pictures show women in southwestern and northwestern Iran carrying water for the family.***





Deforestation

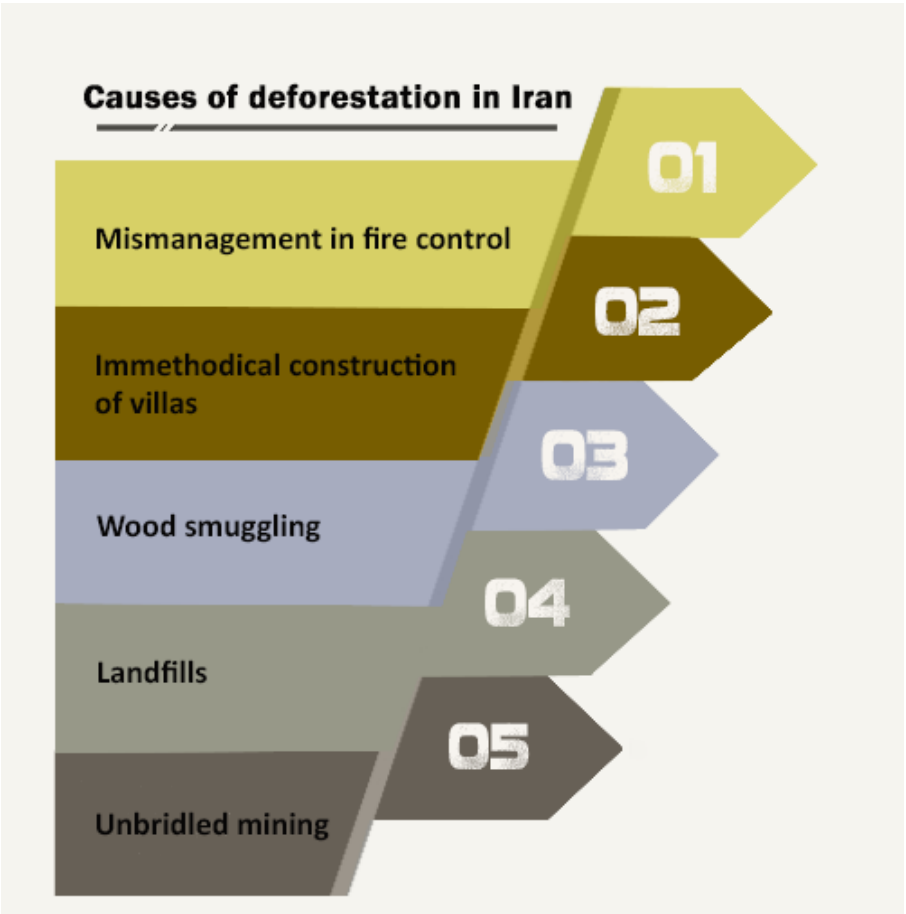
Iran is one of the six countries that destroy their forests. In a message to the FAO, Massoud Mansour, head of Iran’s Forests, Rangelands and Watershed Management Organization, stated that “the process of deforestation is continuing at an alarming level.”<sup>40</sup> According to Mohammad Ali Zare Chahouki, a professor at the Faculty of Natural Resources, University of Tehran, 360 square meters of Iran’s forests and pastures are destroyed every second. “If this trend continues, there will be no trace of modern-day forests in Iran until 2080.”<sup>41</sup> “In June 2016 alone, a seven-day fire in the Zagros forests in Fars province turned 15,000 hectares of several hundred-year-old oaks to ashes.”<sup>42</sup>

In 2010, 770,000 hectares of Iran’s forests were destroyed by fire. In forest fires, we witness the complete inaction of government officials, and it is only the local people go to stop the fire empty-handed. But deforestation in Iran is not limited to the mismanagement of controlling the forest fires. “Building villas, development projects, wood smuggling, landfilling and ‘unbridled mining’ have made the process of deforestation reach worrisome levels,” said Ali Banagar, president of the Iranian Forestry Scientific Association. “In principle, inappropriate policies play a key role in the destruction of natural resources and the environment,” he said. “For example, 150 hectares were destroyed for the construction of the Glouverd Dam in Behshahr.”<sup>43</sup>



In Karkheh National Park, eleven hectares of trees are to be cut down to create flood barrier. The project poured gravel in the path of cut down trees and hardened with a roller, while according to an environmental activist, “there is no guarantee that such a flood barrier will not be destroyed by floods. As a result, forests and agricultural lands will be buried underground.” Even the executor of the regime’s housing foundation project has emphasized that “if the flood rises above the 3-meter wall, it will destroy parts of the flood barrier.”<sup>44</sup> The head of the Scientific Forestry Association described the failed water transfer project between watersheds in northern Iran as another destructive action by the government,

which led to the destruction of 20,000 to 25,000 trees and seedlings.<sup>45</sup> Villa construction in the forests of northern Iran continues at an alarming rate. More than 20% of forest and agricultural lands in Gilan province and more than 33% of pastures and forests in Mazandaran have become residential areas.<sup>46</sup> Behzad Alizadeh, an environmental activist, states: “What is clear is that it is worthwhile to ignore the social and economic situation of the residents in Zagros suburbs and pay little attention to their income and the high unemployment rate of the inhabitants of this ecosystem.” “The top-bottom attitude of authorities boosts the cause.”<sup>47</sup>



Loss of dams and flooding

According to international statistics, Iran is the fourth largest country in the world in terms of inundations. Most of the floods that occur are the consequence of human intervention in the natural cycle than of natural origin.<sup>48</sup> Blocking the country’s rivers, destroying forests and pastures, and building unprincipled dams are among the sabotages of the clerical regime. The Iranian people are repeatedly confronted

with flood catastrophes. In the devastating floods of Golestan province that occurred on August 11, 2001, more than five hundred people died and went missing. The Golestan flood became the number one cause of death of its kind in the world. Following the flood, diseases like cholera spread rapidly among the victims. The 2019 flood in Khuzestan caused widespread flooding of villages and agricultural fields.

“Hamid Reza Khodabakhshi”, a water expert in Khuzestan, said that the maintenance of dams is the most important reason for the damaging floods in Khuzestan.<sup>49</sup> A year later, Ali Sari, Ahvaz representative in the field of repairing flood barriers, said that there has been no progress and everything has remained at the same level as the initial work that was done during the flood stage.<sup>50</sup>



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## Women, the first victims of the loss of jobs in rural areas



The mullahs' anti-popular management of Iran and its natural resources has resulted in climate change and consecutive drought years, overwhelming Iranian women and children in thirst, poverty, unemployment, disease, and all kinds of painful problems.

The drying up of water resources has resulted in loss of jobs in rural areas leading to a sharp drop in household incomes. Since the predominant business in the villages is agriculture and livestock, due to the current droughts, whole families, especially the villagers and women in particular have been affected. Women must bear the main burden of the difficulties for the whole family, and despite all the pressure there are no education or employment opportunities.

In addition, as the family income declines, the food basket becomes smaller, and the burden of preparing food is still on women shoulders. For emotional and cultural reasons, women prefer to give a small portion of their food to the sick, elderly, and children, enduring malnutrition and its effects. These are on top of the difficult conditions that rural women have to endure on daily basis making their lives resembling the lives of slaves even when there is no drought.

Elham, who is 15 years old resides in Baghmalek in eastern Khuzestan, she is an example of millions of rural Iranians.

Elham was forced to marry two years ago, when she was not more than thirteen years old, settling to the official laws of the ruling regime in Iran. This marriage practically prevented her from continuing her studies.

Their village is in one of the regions in Iran that has been suffering from water shortages for several years. Elham has to wake up at 6:00 am every morning and she has up until 11:00 am to fill a plastic bucket from water taps so she can cook and clean the house and store enough water for her family until the next morning. The state-run Khabar Online news agency, which published the story, did not talk about a rural woman's life in the second half of the day.<sup>1</sup>

Many rural women start their work well before sunrise and are the last to go to bed. From the age of ten, they are forced to do things such as caring for their fathers, brothers and smaller kids in the house, along with cooking, laundry, milking sheep, preparing firewood, carrying water, feeding the livestock and creating handicrafts.

Regardless of the lack of access to educational facilities, the dominance of the misogynic culture of the clerical regime and the priority of men in all fields mount on the traditional culture of the villagers, leading to more deprivation of rural girls.

Meanwhile, women who are considered as heads of households are in a more complicated situation.

In Sistan and Baluchistan province 93,000 female-headed households are in dire economic conditions. They have no social support, and they have never been educated and empowered for a better life. In fact, there was no educational infrastructure for them, let alone training them to live in a crisis situation.<sup>2</sup>



## The effect of climatic conditions on employment and incapacitation of women

Climate change in Iran has already begun, especially if you are poor, woman, child, elderly, disabled, or a farmer. Climate crisis fuels female poverty, unemployment, and all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

Unlike children or the elderly, women have the physical and mental capacity to engage in economic activities. But, due to historical and institutionalized inequalities under the rule of clerics, unlike men, they have never acquired necessary skills and financial resources to adapt to climate change.

In Iran, from 1986 to 2016, female poverty had spread like wildfire. Iran's water resources crisis has already enhanced the rate of poverty, unemployment, addiction, social anomalies such as divorce, addiction and widespread migration, etc.

### Rural jobs

Mohammad Yousefnejad, head of the Gonabad Environment Department, told IRNA: "Severe lack of rainfall and lack of water resources have caused more than 80 percent damage to the city's environment and a 100 percent reduction in the amount of forage in pastures and environmental areas."

Nemat Ghafouri, director of Gonabad Agricultural Jihad also said: "So far, drought and severe lack of rainfall in 2020 has caused a 50% reduction in irrigated crops and a 90% decrease in rainfed crops, compared to the same period last year."

He also reported a 50 percent reduction in honey production in apiaries.<sup>3</sup>

These conditions, in all villages of Iran, especially in Sistan and Baluchestan and Khuzestan, have taken away the workplaces and income of most rural women. Naturally, they are not able to migrate due to their responsibility of caring for their children, or sick parents, or not having the necessary skills. Despite all these problems if they migrated that would start a whole new chain of problems.



### Nomads

Due to the mullahs induced drought that brought thirst to most cities in Iran, many nomadic areas have also become dry and grassless.

Drought and water shortage, in addition to reducing pasture forage production, has caused problems for hardworking people and nomadic women in Ilam province.

Zara Rahmani, a nomadic woman from Ilam province, says: "We have to fill a few waterskins and some large water container from a spring water that is located more than five kilometers away from our place of residence and bring them here on horses or donkeys."

Another woman, Reyhan Sharafi, added: "Every day we fill two to three waterskins, and if we do not have donkeys and horses available, we tie them with a long rope on our shoulders and carry them. "Our lives are very difficult."<sup>4</sup>

### Endnotes

1. The state-run Khabaronline, July 3, 2021
2. The state-run ILNA News Agency, January 1, 2022; the state-run Young Journalists Club website, June 19, 2017
3. The official IRNA News Agency, April 20, 2021
4. The official IRNA News Agency, May 22, 2021

**Climate crisis fuels female poverty, unemployment, and all forms of discrimination and violence against women.**

***In Iran, from 1986 to 2016, female poverty had spread like wildfire. Iran's water resources crisis has already enhanced the rate of poverty, unemployment, addiction, social anomalies such as divorce, addiction and widespread migration, etc.***



## Climate change and increasing migration of rural women

The National Statistics Center of Iran:

About **222,000** villagers left the labor market between the **fall of 2020 and 2021**.

*There has been so much migration and so little or a complete lack of rural support programs, that basically nothing is left from villages or the rural life.*

## Climate change and increasing migration of rural women

The anti-patriotic and anti-popular policies of the clerical regime have caused severe drought in thirty out of thirty-one provinces in the country. Drought has destroyed jobs and disrupted the lives of rural women, as well as increasing their migration to suburbs.

Many rural families in Iran were economically dependent on agriculture, and the consequences of water shortages are one of the main reasons for their migration, especially in the provinces of Sistan and Baluchestan, Khorasan, and Khuzestan. According to Iran's Statistics Center, just about 222,000 villagers left the labor market between the fall of 2020 and the fall of 2021.<sup>1</sup>

These migrants, both at the origin and at the destination, are confronted with numerous hardships due to the limited resources and facilities of urban communities such as unemployment, underemployment, lack of living and educational space, evacuation of villages, air pollution, environmental pollution, aging, and feminization of agricultural labor.

In fact, the main reason for the escalation of environmental problems and climate change in Iran is the wrong and destructive policies of the clerical government. Not only there is no attempt to prevent the adverse effects of climate change on people's lives, but their peaceful protests are answered with brutal violence.

Thirst and drought in this year led to widespread protests in Iran's major cities, including cities in Khuzestan province and in Isfahan. In July 2021, people took to the streets in different cities in Khuzestan for 14 days to protest water shortages. These protests were answered with bloody crackdown. At least 13 people were killed by repressive forces.

Similar large-scale protests took place in Isfahan in November 2021. The people and farmers of Isfahan staged a sit-in to protest the drying of the Zayandehrud. The mullahs' response was again a brutal suppression.

## Numerous disorders due to the pressure on the limited resources and facilities of urban communities:

01

Unemployment



Under-employment

02

03

Lack of living and educational space



Evacuation of villages

04

05

Air and environmental pollution



Aging

06

07

Feminization of agricultural labor force



### Climate Change in Iran

Women are the prime victims, the clerical regime the main culprit

27

Instead of taking the slightest step to solve the problem of farmers and people of Isfahan, the criminal and repressive clerical regime set fire to the protesters' tents, cut off the Internet, blocked the roads, and its repressive units fired pellets and live bullets into the protesters' eyes and bodies. Pictures of many of these crimes were posted on social media. Users reported a significant increase in the number of ruptured eye surgeries in the same days in some Isfahan hospitals. At least one of the people who were shot in the eye was a woman.

### A trend of migration to cities, a great challenge, and a serious social crisis

The continuation of the current migration trend will face a major challenge for Iran's 20-million rural community in the near future. In July 2018, the regime's interior minister warned that Iran is on the threshold of a serious social crisis caused by climate migration, which can make a dramatic change in the country's social essence by 2023.

During a regime's TV program called "Nabz-e-Keshavarzi," Assadollah Teymouri, president of Agriculture and Natural Resources department in Sari University, acknowledged the role of the government in destroying villages saying "There has been so much migration and so little or a complete lack of rural support programs, that basically nothing is left from villages or the rural life. All productive and principal labor forces that were our main assets are no longer in the villages. We stimulated migration for 50 years and did not pay attention to job creation and aging villagers, we did not observe a decrease in rural population, we did not care about the lack of services and infrastructure, and we did not think about business in rural areas, thus degrading our villages."<sup>2</sup>

In the same televised interview, Hojatullah Varmazyari, head of the agricultural development group at the Center of Research of the parliament, referred to the government's anti-rural laws, saying, "Migration from rural to urban areas is a big problem. Many of enacted laws in the country are against villages and must be amended."<sup>3</sup>

"The government has put farmers in a desperate situation," said Abdul Majeed Sheikhi, a university professor, referring to the clerical regime's wrong policies. "A farmer is in trouble and has no maneuvering power, so he migrates to cities to earn a living," he added.<sup>4</sup>



## Rural women, the most oppressed sector

In recent years, climate change and drought have led to an unconventional and high-risk migration. As a result, villagers are forced to live on the suburbs of large cities. Rural women in suburbs have been added to illiterate worker population who have trouble finding a job. Some of them work in service sector who are exploited with low paying jobs. While others may become involved in begging gangs, drug running gangs, or drug, and prostitution gangs. There is no social support for these women.

"This population is marginalized in the destination city and then suffers from a variety of social damages that challenge both themselves and the society. In Iran, urban dwellers even without the presence of marginalized people still suffer from extreme poverty and unemployment and lack of housing and they are deprived of proper urban facilities. In this situation, the lack of governmental planning and cultural development in origin cities must be added to the current conditions. Then, you can easily conclude what new challenges are posed because of conflict of interests. Unplanned migration also lowers the quality of life of people in the cities of origin." declared an Iranian demographer about migrant rural women.<sup>5</sup>

In this situation, the fate of many rural migrants ends in addiction, sleeping in cardboard boxes or graves, selling their organs, and even their babies.

## Endnotes

1. The state-run Eqtesad-e Iran website, January 12, 2022
2. The state TV program, Nabz-e-Keshavarzi, January 4, 2022
3. The state-run Iran website, January 5, 2022
4. The state-run Iran website, January 5, 2022
5. The state-run Shahrara News website, September 9, 2020

## Women's problems after migrating to cities:



# The Impact of Climate Change on Women's Health

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As briefly discussed earlier, the destructive impact of natural disasters and climate change in Iran are not the product of “greenhouse gases” but the by-product of the regime’s and their Revolutionary Guards Corps’ (IRGC) antagonistic policies and activities.

In this misogynistic dictatorship, not only there are no national or popular policies to ensure the reduction of harm and damages to climate and people, but also an increase in its misanthropic activities. All the activities of this illegitimate regime aim towards one goal, which is to continue spreading terrorism and expanding their repressive state. These activities are the main cause of many natural disasters and the vast damages witnessed in Iran’s environment.

Due to the lack of government support and institutions for women, especially in remote and suburban areas, as well as the lack of any real, effective, and sustainable plans for women’s empowerment, the burden and harms of climate change and natural disasters have befallen Iranian women. The clerical regime’s reaction, even in the face of peaceful protests, is to further repress women, including their dependents (children and spouses).

The regime’s mismanagement of environmental crises leading to climate change has a direct impact on the lives and health status of people, especially of the women and their children. The most dangerous crises people currently face in Iran is that of water.





## How has the water crisis occurred?

Water, much like oil, is also being vastly exploited by the mullahs. Following the collapse of the mullahs' war mongering policies and the final ceasefire in the eight-year war with Iraq, the Iranian regime pursued its plan of nuclear weapon acquisition in order to export extremism and terrorism to maintain and perpetuate its theocratic rule. Hence, water became among one of the most important sources of exploitation.

Firstly, water became urgently needed for the military and the nuclear industries. Second, because of the mullahs' greed for money, water became a commodity in order for them to gain foreign exchange currencies such that they can establish mercenaries and proxy militias as well as arming such groups. Surely, their income solely from oil could not meet such demands.

Here are the three ways in which the unprecedented plunder of water by the mullahs' regime is taking place:

- i: senseless dam constructions throughout Iran for the collection of water for IRGC's financial and military goals
- ii: needless expansion of deep wells and emptying majority of Iran's groundwater aquifers with the aim of military and financial gains
- iii: transfer of water through large canals to remote areas, including to Iraq, for military and financial purposes by organizations affiliated with the IRGC

According to an article published in February 2020 by Etemad newspaper, between the two Ministries of Energy and Agriculture, there are so far 647 dams built and 146 are under construction with Tehran Salt Lake accounting for 60 dams, Urmia Lake with 56 dams, Anzali Wetland, Bakhtegaan Lake, Jazmoyanm Hoor and Gaavkhooni Wetlands, etc. are at the point of drying and the occurrence of floods in the country has multiplied.

As per official statistics reported in the Jahan-e-San'at newspaper, the number of dams built, up until 1979, before the rule of the mullahs, were about 30. Today, in 2022, there are 1330 operating dams, all of which are at various stages of exploitation.



According to reports, 40 of these dams have been built in the catchment area of Lake Urmia. The Urmia Lake is supplied through some permanent and seasonal rivers, accounting for 55 billion cubic meters of water, meanwhile prevented by these dams from reaching this lake.

There are 24 dams just on the Karoun River, which has vanished the river and subsequently caused the drying of 3 million palm trees in the Shadegan region.

Further details on this issue are beyond the scope of this report as our goal was to only summarize and clarify how the Iranian regime and the IRGCs' policies have detrimental effects on Iran's environment, exacerbating the effects of climate change, particularly on the status of women and girls.

***Senseless dam constructions to collect water has led to the drying of many wetlands, including the Gavkhooni Wetland pictured above.***



## The Impact of Water Crisis on Women's Health

"Droughts and environmental crises, frequent water cuts, and lack of potable water disproportionately affect women, more than half of the society who have always been subject to oppression," wrote a government website, Didar, quoting an expert sociologist.<sup>1</sup>

Today, in the province of Sistan and Baluchestan, situated along the sea that leads directly to the ocean, and in Khuzestan province, another water-rich area, we are witnessing droughts and a thirsty population.

Lack of water increases financial and human losses. Women face many complications as they carry the burden that the society has placed on them while they must accomplish such responsibilities as cooking, cleaning, and carrying out family hygiene practices.

With rising temperatures in Iran, deaths related to heart, vascular, and respiratory problems have also risen. Climate change and global warming increase the incidence of gestational diabetes as well.<sup>2</sup>

Dehydration deprives women of all aspects of their physical and mental health and along with the lack of opportunities, the repercussions on women's personal growth and development are even greater.

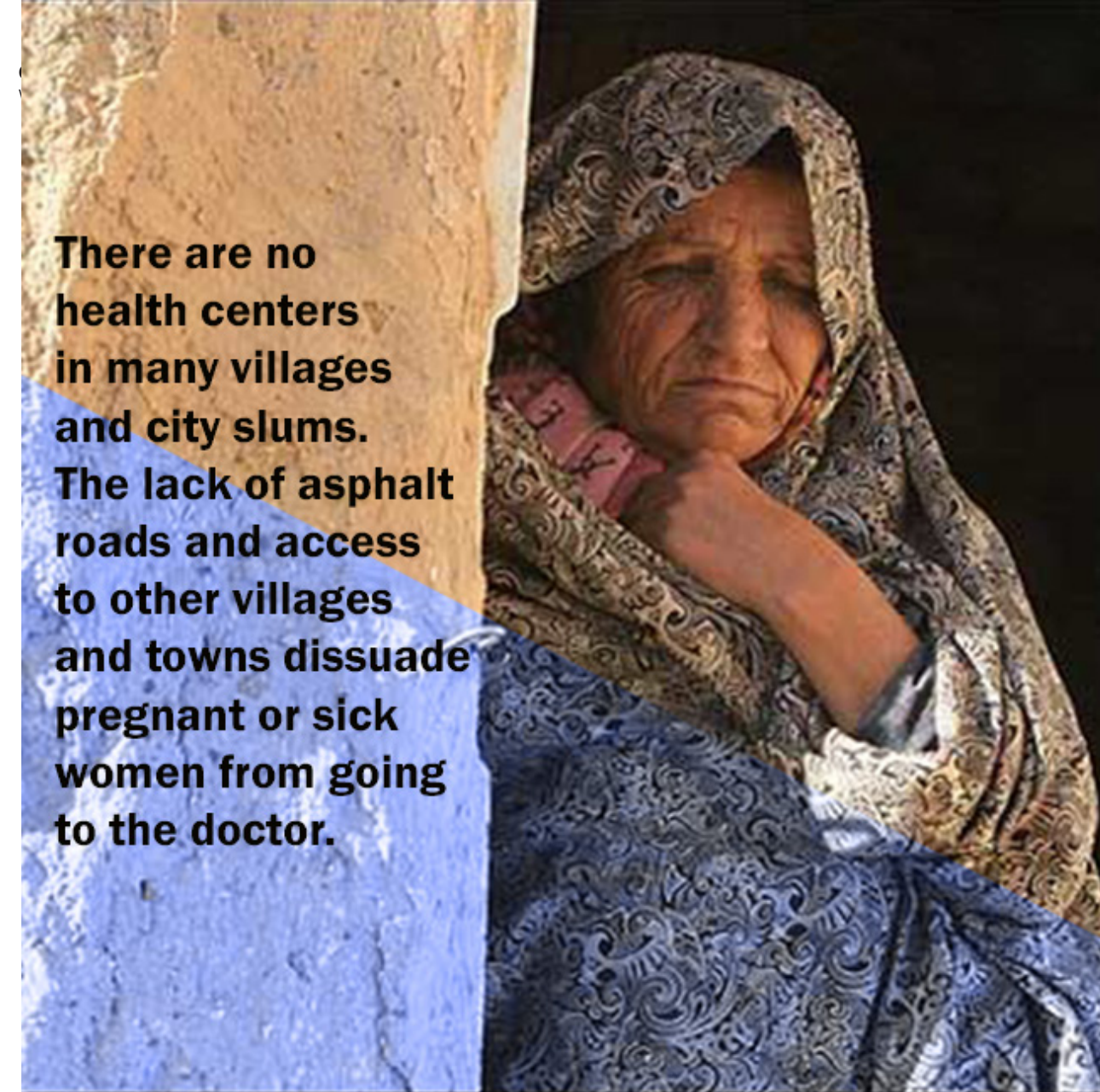
### Dehydration, Poor Hygiene, and Presence of Variety of Diseases

Women's care and support needs are pronounced during pregnancy and childbirth. Disadvantaged women and girls especially in poverty-stricken parts of Iran are unable to access and obtain necessary hygienic products and as a result suffer from a range of diseases and infection, which is worsened by the dehydration crisis.

It is noteworthy that female-related health concerns are still considered taboo in the traditional Iranian culture and are to this day not subjects of discussion.

As per a specialist in infectious diseases and internal medicine stated, "the people I examined during my stay in Sistan and Baluchestan are struggling with kidney infection. Even a small

**There are no health centers in many villages and city slums. The lack of asphalt roads and access to other villages and towns dissuade pregnant or sick women from going to the doctor.**



wound can quickly become a source of infection due to the exposure to contaminants. I have witnessed infection on all body parts of people here."<sup>3</sup>

Many villages and suburbs in Iran are not only deprived of medical centres, but also the lack of asphalted roads makes accessibility to other villages and cities a challenge, forcing patients and pregnant women to reconsider their choices of visiting doctors.

There are people who have never referred to a doctor as they do not have the financial means. Absence of identity cards and health insurance prevents people from seeking treatments.<sup>4</sup>

Skin diseases, internal complications, congenital disabilities, physical, motor and mental problems are all the ominous consequences of drought and poverty, which women either suffer directly from or indirectly as they provide care for affected family members.



## Drought, Air Pollution and Respiratory Diseases

The resurgence of dust in the past decade has affected more than 20 provinces. Thus, the health of millions of Iranians is at risk of developing diseases such as acute respiratory and cardiovascular issues.<sup>5</sup>

There are many Iranian cities affected by air pollution. Meanwhile, Ahvaz, the capital of Khuzestan province in southwestern Iran, has barely any days when pollution levels are low and tolerable and not a daily concern for its people.

In addition to respiratory difficulties, environmental pollutants during pregnancy lead to premature and low birth weight babies and in some cases congenital anomalies, the majority of which often die in the early stages. Exposure to air pollution in the first eight weeks of pregnancy increases the risk of heart failure and organ defects in the fetus.<sup>6</sup>

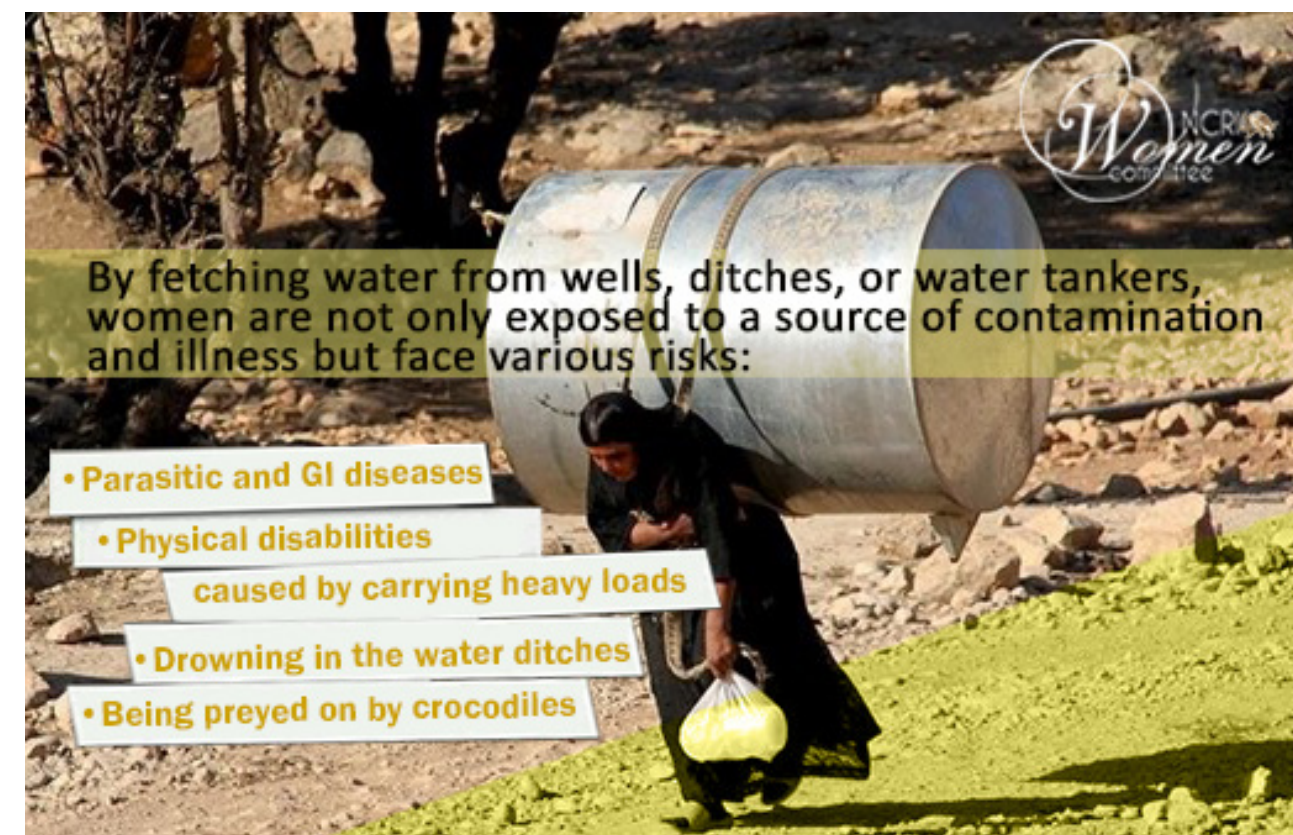
Air pollution also increases the risk of strokes by 35%. There are annually about 22,000 people in Khuzestan province reported to have respiratory complications caused by air pollution and dust.<sup>7</sup>

### 'Back Porters', Contaminated Water and Potential Dangers

Another situation women are faced with is carrying and using contaminated water, further increasing injuries and physical ailments especially as droughts persist. Since under the mullahs' patriarchy, men are seen as the heads of the household and women are responsible for all household affairs. According to these implicit rules, it is women's duty to provide water for their homes where tap water is non-existent.

Rural women and girls must refer to wells and water tankers for their water. These waters are polluted and the source of many diseases.

Parasitic and gastrointestinal diseases are some undesired circumstances of the villagers' use of polluted water; diseases which affect many infants and children in Sistan and Baluchestan province.<sup>8</sup>



Women and girls are forced to carry heavy containers of water, sometimes for miles, on their backs or on their heads. Carrying heavy loads for long distances results in physical injuries as they are unable to repeatedly withstand the weight over the years especially in horrid weather conditions. No one is even concerned about the age, body type, and physical condition of these unfortunate women.

These disadvantaged women of Sistan and Baluchestan are in addition exposed to the dangers of *hootags*.<sup>9</sup>

According to state news agencies, since majority of villages in this province have no access to drinking water, they rely on massive rainwater puddles (*hootag*), where the risks of drowning and/or the threat of becoming prey to crocodiles are real and great.

## Dehydration and Corona Propagation

The water shortage crisis further increases complications for patients with corona as well as contributes to the propagation of the virus. The long and populated queues by hootags have been a breeding ground for the virus and its spread amongst women.<sup>10</sup>

### Dehydration and Social Trauma

Plenty of villagers, especially children and women in drought-stricken villages, suffer from severe physical pain. As their health insurance is neither sufficient nor credible to provide adequate care and treatment, majority of people turn to opium use for pain relief. Many suffer from toothaches and serious dental problems and with insurmountable dental costs, the use of opium as painkillers over the long run presents its own complications and disadvantages.<sup>11</sup>

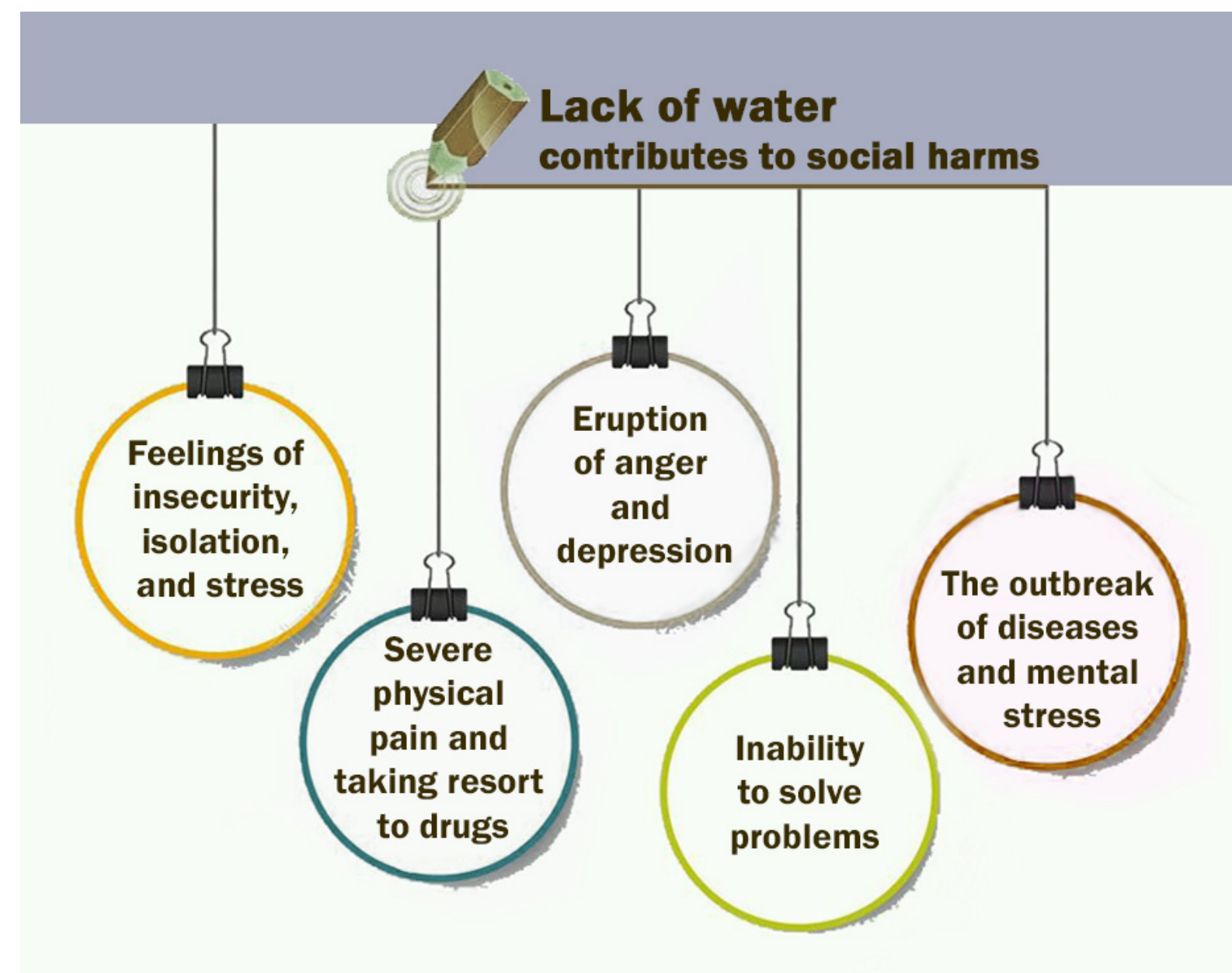
Mental illnesses posed by the droughts and dehydration increases social traumas. Observing lost capital and the inability to problem solve and meet one's basic daily needs and demands amplifies anger and depression. Stress disorders are extremely common in these regions and once again women and children become targets and victims of violence, while for many, resorting to addictive substances drives these desperate people deeper in to the destructive downward spiral.

As stated by a witness, there are about 3,500 female sex workers in the city of Ahvaz.

According to a social researcher, now director of a women's harm reduction centre and formerly the head of the Ahvaz Governor's Women's Commission, the prostitution that these women are involved in presents multidimensional damage.

Her research exposes how these women are often caught in human and drug trafficking and as the number of prostitutes increases so will the number of children born without identity cards.

According to this researcher, "since 2018, the unemployment rate due to water scarcity, poverty and inflation has plagued families. In Khuzestan, we see that when families are unable to make ends meet, it's the daughters of these families who are first evicted and subsequently suffer all kinds of impairments. You may not believe it, but I had a seventeen-year-old girl at my centre who used to sell herself in the summers so that she could be in an airconditioned room for just 2 hours."





## Dehydration Leads to Mental Health Problems

The repercussions of dehydration not only affect women and children's physical health, but has also devastating consequences on their mental health.

"Water scarcity and drought are directly related to psychological issues in many of our provinces," says a psychologist and continues, "poverty and alienation from urban and rural development have discouraged people from leading normal lives. Their self-confidence is often deteriorated and there are no training or support for them."

Rural women are more vulnerable than men as restrictions imposed by the clerical regime have isolated women and deprived them of opportunities to connect and socialize with others, stripped of leading meaningful lives. The psychologist adds, "in addition to mental and nervous problems, dehydration also causes insecurity for these people."<sup>12</sup>

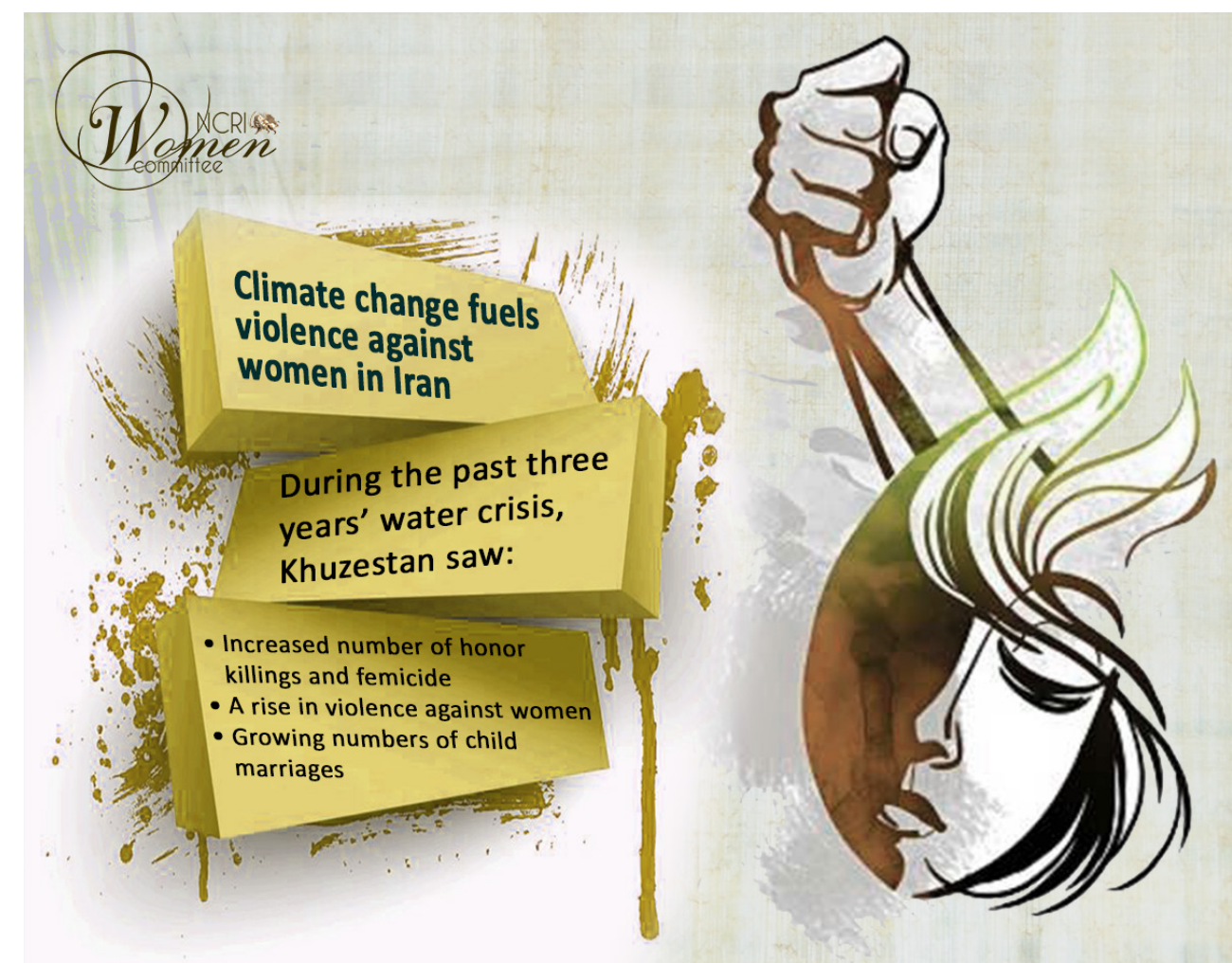
Women, on the other hand, endure more stress in dehydration despite gender-based roles and stereotypes. Women's responsibilities such as childbirth, breastfeeding, childrearing and caring for the elderly, preparing food and carrying out tasks of daily living puts them under tremendous amount of stress while experiencing dehydration.<sup>13</sup>

## Climate Change and Soaring Violence Against Women

The series of disasters imposed by the clerical regime on the Iranian people falls heavily on women. Research conducted in Bushehr and Fars provinces reveals, "as droughts and global warming intensify, and as wetlands disappear and groundwater levels decline, violence against women also intensifies. The adversity that women experience in life is exacerbated by the gross gender discrimination in society."<sup>14</sup>

As a result of the water crisis in Khuzestan, we are witnessing an increase in honor killings and female genocide.

According to an Arab social activist, obsolete customs and practices that were changing in Arab society have reversed due to the economic and climatic conditions. Poverty and violence against women are directly related and child marriages as well



as "honor" crimes have intensified significantly in this province. In the past three years, one out of every three marriages registered daily are girls under the age of 15. Despite all these consequences, there are no specific programs targeted for women.<sup>15</sup>

From 2018 until summer of 2021, 60 women have been murdered in Khuzestan on the pretext of "honor." These murders that have been recorded by social activists are from various cities in the south of the country, including Shush, Ahvaz, Abadan, Karun, etc. The women killed were between the ages of 11–15.<sup>16</sup>

## No will to alleviate the impact of climate change on women

The illegitimate clerical regime literally uses the misery of the people in order to prolong its life!

Antipopular policies such as banning vaccines and sending people to die in droves in the corona battlefields, as well as leaving people affected by floods and earthquakes who are still living in shelters and tents after many years, are examples that are repeated in all-natural disasters without exception.

The reactionary and misogynistic nature of the clerical regime is on full display when it comes to women and girls. This regime is not in line with any of the goals of the 17 UN SDGs and is exactly on the opposite side of empowering women and girls. This misogynist nature, which is institutionalized in all the laws of the regime, is reflected in the comprehensive repression and exclusion of most Iranian women and girls from all social and economic spheres.

Such a regime does not pay the slightest attention to the effects and consequences of climate change on Iranian women, especially on female-headed households, stay-at-home spouses, and agricultural and rural women. Women who are driven to suburbs of cities because of floods, earthquakes or by migration due to climate change are left in a series of calamities so that they are practically unable to rise up and be effective in society. Contrary to seeking to empower women and girls, the Iranian regime imposes its rule by sending patrols or law enforcement for arresting protesting women or demolishing their modest homes that slum dwellers manage to build for themselves.

With such policies, the regime has not done anything, and it will not perform any actions to reduce damages of climate change. On the other hand, it is accelerating climate challenges such as drought and natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and earthquakes.





The various sectors of the government, including agriculture, industry, energy, oil, etc., have tried to make more profit, regardless of the costs and possible damages and the consequences of their activities. The multiplicity of different institutions and organizations for decision-making and management, and the overlap and interference of tasks of various agencies in this field have led to the absence of systematic policies and programs, thus have left no possibility of supervision in these areas.<sup>17</sup>

Former Iranian Agriculture Minister, Issa Kalantari, has said that the current trend of water crisis in Iran has put the country on the brink of a far greater threat than a foreign military strike.

Meanwhile the study of Iran's industrial investments in the last two decades shows a huge volume of investment in the nuclear industry. The economic viability of Iran's nuclear program has rarely been studied along with its environmental impact from a national point of view.

In 2007, the World Bank estimated the minimum cost of environmental degradation in Iran at \$10 billion a year, equivalent to 8.8 percent of the country's gross domestic product. While the ratio of the cost of environmental degradation to GDP even in other countries in the Middle East and North Africa has been up to one-third less than in Iran.<sup>18</sup>

This regime spends all its energy and resources on the survival of its illegitimate government. In the budget program for 2022, we again observe a significant increase in the budget of the Revolutionary Guards, the body that is clearly responsible for the survival of the regime.

Last year, the IRGC budget had increased by 58%, from twenty-four thousand and 335

billion tomans to thirty-eight thousand and 564 billion tomans.

According to what is mentioned in the budget bill of 2022, this amount has reached ninety-three thousand billion tomans, which is 2.4 times higher than the previous year.

The bill also allocates 4.5 billion euros to reinforce defense and strategic defense research, including the regime's missile industry.<sup>19</sup>

In this budget, the Guardian Council receives funding to monitor the elections, despite the fact that there are no elections in this year. 11,000 billion tomans (\$430,000) have been allocated for the misogynist Population Growth Plan, while the environmental budget is 21,570,699 tomans (\$842).<sup>20</sup>

In the 2021 budget bill, less than 0.2% of the budget had been allocated for environmental affairs by the clerical regime. In the 2022 budget bill, environmental affairs' budget is less than 2% of the regime's budget.<sup>21</sup>

We cannot expect this regime to address the environmental issues and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Iranian regime not only has nothing in common with the goals of the United Nations, especially the Commission on the Status of Women but, it is actively against the rights of Iranian women in all areas.

Thus, the only way to prevent the regime from harming Iran's environment and, by its very nature, the environment of the entire world, is to completely boycott the regime and expel it from the international community and cancel its membership in the UN Committee on the Status of Women.

It is only then, that the people and women of Iran can build their own destiny and future.

## Endnotes

1. The state-run Didarnews.ir, July 31, 2021
2. The state-run Mehr news agency, May 17, 2021
3. Nahid Abdollahian, the state-run Shahrvandonline.ir, August 28, 2021
4. Nahid Abdollahian, the state-run Shahrvandonline.ir, August 28, 2021
5. The state-run Young Journalists Club, April 8, 2017
6. The state-run dana.ir, January 8, 2017
7. The state-run dana.ir, May 18, 2017
8. The state-run Shahrvandonline.ir, August 28, 2021
9. Hootags are naturally or artificially created water reservoirs where rainwater is directed and collected and used for agricultural and drinking purposes by humans as well as domestic and wild animals throughout the year.
10. The state-run Didarnews.ir, July 31, 2021
11. Journal of Rural and Nomadic Women; Etemad newspaper no. 4149, page 13 – 27, July 2018
12. The state-run Shahrvandonline.ir, August 28, 2021
13. The state-run Jaame'eh 24, July 31, 2021
14. Mohammad Darvish, Secretary of Environmental Policy, the state-run BORNA news agency, March 3, 2019
15. The state-run khabaronline.ir, January 2, 2022
16. The state-run khabaronline.ir, January 2, 2022
17. The official IRNA News Agency, November 23, 2021
18. BBC Persian, February 9, 2014
19. Radio Farda, December 12, 2021
20. Wikipedia, last modified: February 7, 2022
21. The official IRNA News Agency, November 23, 2021; the state-run Tasnim News Agency, December 18, 2021



## Disempowerment of Women

The mullahs' regime is moving toward women's disempowerment. This is a fact that the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran has repeatedly emphasized over the years.

In Iran, there is no trace of reinforcing the protection and respect of human rights and women's fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, which are universal, inviolable, interdependent, and interconnected. Additional rights that have been suppressed include ensuring that everyone has the right to equal participation and assistance; enjoys economic, social, cultural, and political development; is granted first rights to promotion and protection; and can fully realize their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights as individuals.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, poverty is at odds with economic development and hence, poverty reduction is essential for economic development. The reality, however, is that because of the Iranian regime's inhumane policies, imprudence and mismanagement, and systematic looting and corruption, the Iranian people have become increasingly poor over the years. The middle class has completely disappeared. Experts are unanimous that the face of poverty in Iran is feminine.

In addition to the Coronavirus crisis, which has overwhelmed the global economy, the regime's erroneous policies and the ensuing international sanctions have exacerbated unemployment and recession in Iran. The prospects for overcoming the situation are bleak at best.

According to the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Welfare of the clerical regime, the economic situation in Iran is at its most deplorable in the past 8 decades.<sup>2</sup>

Last year, when we prepared the Women's Empowerment Report for the UN Women's Commission, the poverty line in Iran was 10 million Tomans per month.<sup>3</sup>







At the beginning of March 2021, the poverty line increased to 12 million Tomans and had reached 14 million Tomans by the summer of the same year. Within 4 months, the price of housing and basic goods in Iran increased between 10% - 15%, leading to an increase in the poverty line.<sup>4</sup>

According to official statistics, the population below the absolute poverty line, which reached 15% from 2014 - 2018, increased to 30% between 2018 – 2020, and doubled.<sup>5</sup> Available statistics from 2020 show that approximately 32% of Iranian households (estimated at 9.5 million households or 38 million people) were below the poverty line.

The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Welfare published an official report of the poverty line for the first time, indicating that poverty line grew by 38% in 2021 compared to 2020. This concludes that 36 million Iranians live below the poverty line.<sup>6</sup> This statistic is from 2021, when inflation was reported at 36.4%. Notably, in 2021, the inflation rate exceeded 44% in June. According to this source, one in three Iranians lives below the poverty line.

## Common malnutrition

According to the report, “the most important factor in the increase in the poverty line in 2021 was high inflation in both the food and housing sectors.”<sup>7</sup>

Due to inflation in the food sector, people no longer have food safety and cannot purchase standard staples to fulfill their daily caloric needs. A report in July 2021 compared prices to those of the previous year and found that prices of staples had increased: grains above 50%; rice almost 42%; pasta over 20%; and bread more than 50%. All these were, therefore, excluded from the family nutrition basket.<sup>8</sup>

A regime official stated on state-run television, “About 40 million people of the country’s population need immediate and instant assistance.”<sup>9</sup> The conditions are such that families cannot even provide one piece of bread and eggs on their table.<sup>10</sup>

The emergence of a new trend called “ditch hunters” suggests that many people, particularly women, the homeless, and drug addicts, dig into trash bins and city ditches to find food.<sup>11</sup>

Last year, 2.4 million Iranians, or 612,000 families, dropped

below the poverty line due to high medical costs, as reported by the Iranian regime’s Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Welfare.<sup>12</sup> The Coronavirus outbreak has congested the queue of

women heads of household who require pensions.<sup>13</sup> The welfare authorities have acknowledged that at least 51,000 children lost their parents during the pandemic.<sup>14</sup>



**About 40 million people in Iran need immediate aid.**

**Malnutrition is spreading rapidly in Iran**

The prices of some items such as beans, rice, pasta, and bread

have risen by more than 50%, 42%, 20%, and 50%, respectively. They have therefore been removed from families’ food baskets



## The Iranian regime's misogynous measures over the past year

As poverty rages across society, the face of poverty becomes feminine. Thousands of women and children survive by eating garbage while the regime's parliament and other state institutions seek to limit women's job opportunities, minimize their sources of income, and marginalize them more than any other time.

With the appointment of Ensieh Khazali<sup>15</sup> as the Deputy Minister of Women and Family Affairs in Raisi's government, even previous hollow promises with regard to women were completely silenced. Khazali has no specific executive or operational plan to address the status of women.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, Khazali defended women's teleworking in her first press conference, saying, "women's teleworking is in the interest of both women and the government."

To the contrary, some experts and activists believe that "the implementation of any plan to force women to work remotely can be considered a kind of gender segregation."<sup>17</sup>

Women's teleworking increasingly pushes them into the corners of their homes and isolates them socially.

Over the past year, instead of addressing the people's livelihood and economic problems, lawmakers have passed plans that close even the smallest loopholes in women's business and further deprive them of their rights.<sup>18</sup>

Among the approved plans was the "Bill for the Protection of the Rights of Cyberspace Users," which was approved in a closed session of the

parliament on July 28, 2021. The bill violates the rights of Instagram and WhatsApp users by restricting free access to the Internet.<sup>19</sup>

The "Bill for the Protection of the Rights of Cyberspace Users," which was utterly lacking in transparency, was passed quickly and secretly in Parliament. This bill will deal an irreparable blow to Iranian women's small and informal businesses.

The bill can also prevent entrepreneurial groups from operating in the form of cooperatives, urban and rural micro-agricultural funds, or female-headed households.<sup>20</sup>

Due to the clerical regime's discriminatory policies regarding women's employment, many women and women heads of household have remote and Internet-based jobs.

The number of self-employed increased after the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Another plan passed against women's rights in the regime's parliament was the Population Growth Plan.

On March 16, 2021, the regime's parliament approved the "Comprehensive Plan of Population and Upgrading of Families" by 161 votes in favor. In just one month, the commissions reviewing the plan held 19 meetings in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

Compare this to the bill to prevent violence against women. After 10 years of foot-dragging, the deficient bill has stagnated in Parliament for 10 months, despite the harrowingly increased rate of violence against and murder of women.<sup>22</sup>

With its false economic promises, such as loans for young couples and subsidized pregnancy costs, the Population Growth Plan promotes the violation of women's rights in society.

The plan's terms, which will soon be enforced as law, have severely restricted abortion and pregnancy screenings. The terms also trample on women's right to reproduce, choose to bear children, determine the number of children they have and the time between births, have access to information, and use contraceptives and sexual health medications – all rights recognized by the United Nations.<sup>23</sup>

United Nations human rights experts said the population growth plan adopted by the clerical regime in early November was in "clear contravention of international law."

The same human rights experts called on the Iranian regime to repeal the new law, stating that it "severely restricts access to abortion, contraception, voluntary sterilization services and related information, in direct violation of women's human rights under international law."<sup>24</sup>

In addition, as of August 2020, the Armed Forces Social Security Organization has reduced the share that daughters receive from the pensions of their deceased fathers. Some of these women say that their father's pension has decreased by a third, which has made their lives more difficult.<sup>25</sup>





## Gender gap and discrimination against women

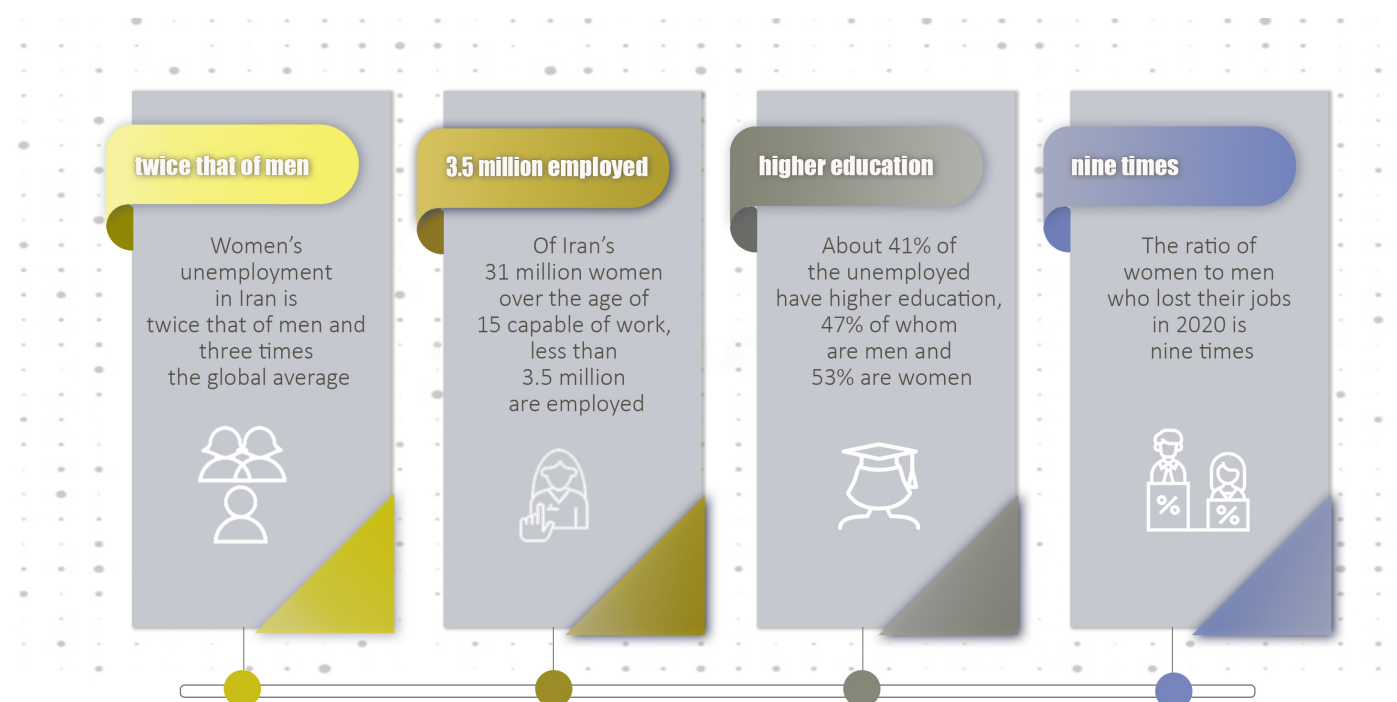
The 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) highlighted that achieving equality by 2030 requires that women be fully integrated into the formal economy, including through effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels such as political, economic, and public life. In Iran, however, the gender gap is massive, and women do not have access to equal opportunities and prospects. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, Iran ranks 150th and has an index of 0.582 under the mullah's dictatorship.

In Iran, women's rights are not guaranteed in any field, including in the economy. Statistics show that in the winter of 2021, out of 31 million women over the age of 15 who are capable of working, fewer than 3.5 million were employed or had the opportunity to work. This is the lowest rate in the last 5 years.<sup>26</sup> Between Winter 2020 and Summer 2021, more than one million women lost their jobs after the Covid-19 outbreak in Iran. These women represent over 70% of the total number of people who lost their jobs during this period.<sup>27</sup>

Iranian women face a male-dominated labor market, which poses multiple legal and structural barriers to employment. According to the Global Gender Gap Report in 2021, the average participation rate of women in the Middle East and North Africa countries is 31%. Although the percentage of employed Iranian women is very low, even compared to the Middle East and North Africa, the reality is that the percentage is far lower because the Iranian regime manipulates official statistics.

The Statistics Center of Iran reported that the unemployment rate of women aged 18 to 35 was 27.8 percent in March 2021. The rate reached 31% in the summer of the same year. However, a comparison to the unemployment rate among men, also aged 18 to 35, shows 14.9% in March 2021 and 14.6% in the summer.<sup>28</sup> About 41% of the unemployed across Iran are classified as holding higher education degrees; of these, 47% are men and 53% are women.<sup>29</sup>

The regime's Deputy for Women and Families has asserted that female unemployment in Iran is twice that of men and



### Relieving women of their jobs vs. empowerment

three times the global average. The report states that in 2021, more than 15% of working women lost their jobs, while this rate was 1.7% for men. Out of 20 million employed men in 2019, about 1.7% lost their jobs in 2020. But out of approximately 4.3 million women employed in 2019, about 15.3% lost their jobs in 2020. This shows that the percentage of women to men who lost their jobs in 2020 is about 9 times higher.<sup>30</sup>

Referencing the same report, between 2005 and 2020, despite the significant increase in the number of women entering higher education, only 300,000 new jobs for women were created and 71% of the total unemployed are women with university degrees.

Moreover, there is evidence that there has been widespread discrimination against women applying for mortgages. In June 2021, a clause was added to the loan terms for rent deposits stating that women over the age of 35 who are "self-employed" can use rental facilities if they do not live with a family. However, current reports indicate that "self-employed" women who applied for these loans were denied access to these minimum facilities, even though they were supposed to be on equal terms with men.<sup>31</sup>

It should be noted that female-headed households make up about 45% of the lowest income decile in Iranian society.<sup>32</sup>

## Miserable livelihoods of working women

### Teachers

More than 50% of Iranian teachers are women. Most of the teachers of the literacy movement are women heads of household who have been engaged in education and pedagogy for years under the most difficult conditions and in the most remote areas of the country and have pursued literacy work despite the nearly insurmountable obstacles they face.<sup>33</sup> Teachers staged more than 600 protests last year, including dozens of sit-ins and nationwide demonstrations, as 99 percent of Iran's teachers live below the poverty line.<sup>34</sup> According to Article 125 of the Civil Service Law, the salaries of government employees, including teachers, must increase each year based on the inflation rate. However,

government employees' salaries have risen by 25 percent, 15 percent, and 10 percent over the past 3 years, for 50 percent. Meanwhile, inflation has risen by several hundred percent.<sup>35</sup> The poverty line is 14 million Tomans per month, but the salaries of formal teachers are, on average, 3 million Tomans and more than 3 times below the poverty line.<sup>36</sup> This is the situation of teachers who are formally employed by the government. However, the jobs of 97% of men and women in Iran are temporary and teachers are no exception to this rule.<sup>37</sup> Contracted teachers, teachers in the literacy movement, and other educators who work under a variety of temporary contracts earn, at most, 2 million Tomans.

### Teachers staged more than 600 protests last year

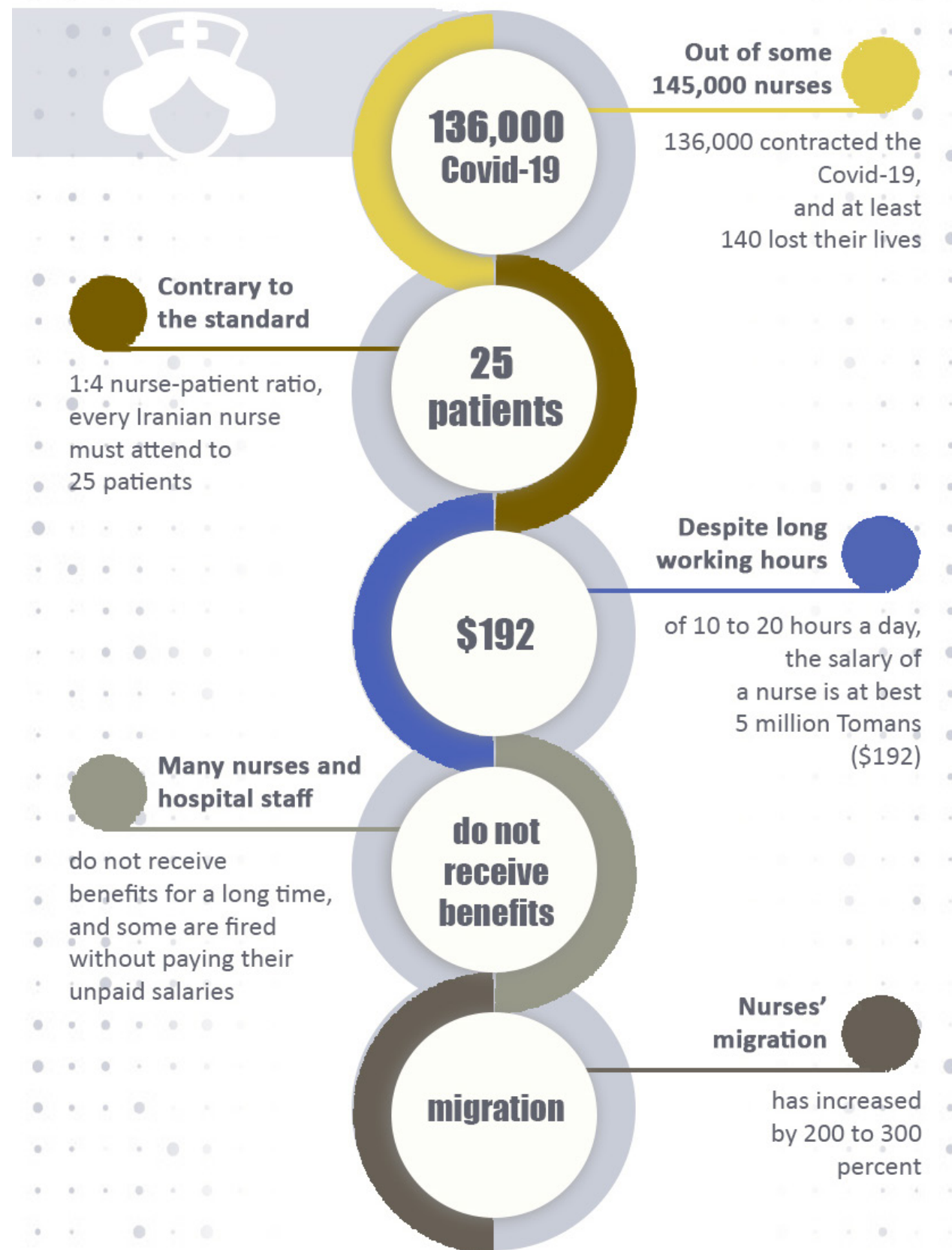


### Nurses

More than 80% of nurses in Iran are women. Of the approximately 145,000 nurses working in in Bed Management, 136,000 were infected with COVID-19. About 140 lost their lives.<sup>38</sup> The current global standard is four nurses per bed. But in some provinces and cities, reports indicate that a single nurse manages up to 25 patients.<sup>39</sup> Nurses in Iran earn 5 million Tomans (\$ 195.114) at best, even though they work an average of 10 to 12 hours per day. Sometimes they are required to work as many as 20 hours in a single shift.<sup>40</sup> The Iranian regime refuses to hire nurses on an official basis as a means of avoiding paying full salaries. Most Iranian nurses receive 89-day temporary contracts, for which the monthly compensation is 2 million and 4 million Tomans (\$78 -156) – less than the minimum official salary. These contract nurses lack benefits, insurance, and job security.<sup>41</sup> Adding to these miserable conditions is the fact that even these low salaries are not paid on a regular basis.

Moreover, back pay is not repaid on time, and monthly receipts do not comply with legal requirements. For example, if a nurse's monthly merit pay is 800 Tomans (\$ 0.031), the nurse actually receives only 50 to 100 Tomans (\$0.001 - 0.003) per month. Nurses are among those across society who are protesting. They object to being denied the right to job security and protest the inequality of wages and benefits. In some cases, nurses are terminated with no regard to their length of service or the work they have done. There is often no financial settlement, including salary payments.<sup>42</sup> Many nurses and hospital staff go for long periods of time without receiving their salaries. Many female nurses have canceled their contracts due to excessive pressure, separation from children and family, and the resulting stress. Low wages and long working hours are among the factors that cause nurses to emigrate. Nurses' migration has increased by 200 percent to 300 percent compared to past years.<sup>43</sup>





The main reasons for nurses' migration are the lack of timely remuneration for work during the Coronavirus pandemic, carelessness in the field of human resource retention, and lack of recruitment of 89-day staff.<sup>44</sup> Statistics published by government officials in the spring of 2021 showed that 500 nurses leave the country every month due to low salaries in Iran.<sup>45</sup> This migration has occurred over the past "one to one and a half years" and the reasons have been "Coronavirus conditions, livelihood issues, and economic problems."<sup>46</sup>

### Female workers

At least 3 million women in Iran have informal employment in underground workshops.<sup>47</sup> Working women are the most vulnerable segment of the Iranian labor market. In the event of an economic crisis, they are the first to be downsized. One million women lost their jobs within the first 9 months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The situation of female workers in Iran is not comparable to other groups.

They work for meager salaries with no benefits or insurance under harsh, substandard conditions. About 80% of uninsured employees are women.<sup>48</sup>

Nobody oversees the work of underground female workers in Iran. Most of them have a salary of 700 or 800 thousand Tomans per month (\$27.3 - \$31.2), which is less than the minimum wage set by the regime's labor laws.<sup>49</sup> These salaries do not cover even a tenth of their livelihoods. If they do not work a single day, they will have nothing to eat.

In Kurdish areas, women are forced to carry heavy equipment or work in construction to support themselves and their families.

It has become common for women to carry heavy equipment in the border provinces of Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, and Kermanshah.<sup>50</sup>

Women heads of household, even those who are elderly, are forced to carry heavy equipment as a means of supporting their families. Even the educated are forced to carry equipment because of the lack of jobs. In this profession, as with others, women are paid less because they are generally less physically strong than their male counterparts.

Another arduous task that women take on to earn a living is to work in kilns. These kilns lack safety standards; moreover, the female employees have no contracts, only loosely defined agreements. Workers' salaries are between 100,000 (\$3.902) and 150,000 (\$5.853) Tomans per day, and they are not paid on holidays.

Shifts are from 7 am until sunset. Despite the long working hours, the women cannot support themselves and their families. They must pay transportation costs, which are extremely high given the commuting distances from the city to factories. "There are no jobs in our area," said a female worker in a brick factory.

"I had to work here. I have a lumbar disc myself now. We stay in the workshop dormitories for 6 months of the year. We are deprived of safe drinking water, baths, and sanitary facilities. This has made our children sick," she added.<sup>51</sup> Labor laws do not apply to female workers. The prohibition on women working in difficult and dangerous jobs, staffing night shifts, and carrying heavy loads is one of the laws that is being ignored.

In a heartbreaking accident in November 2021, a female textile worker, Marzieh Taherian, lost her life when a spinning machine sucked in her head. The day before the tragic incident, Marzieh complained about the hardships of working at night. "We have to take a night shift once a week, but we do not dare say anything," said one female worker.<sup>52</sup>





### Women heads of household

Of the 5 million women heads household in Iran,<sup>53</sup> only 1.3 million receive meager support services, while “all of them have no income. The number of these women is increasing daily and they cannot sustain their occupations.”<sup>54</sup> On an annual basis, 120,000 households are added to the women heads of household.<sup>55</sup> Many women heads of household do not have fixed government salaries, and more than half are partially or fully illiterate.<sup>56</sup> One-third of literate women heads of household only have primary education.<sup>57</sup> According to official statistics, which reflect only a percentage of the reality, 52% of the 5 million women heads of household lack insurance and pensions, and 38% of them are among the three lowest groups in society. According to Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of the mullahs’ parliament, the 5 million women heads of household live in a harsh economic situation!<sup>58</sup> In media propaganda, officials representing the clerical regime claim that some 13 agencies, all with specific duties, are responsible for

the affairs of women heads of household. However, the reality is that women heads of household have been left without the slightest social support. One example of government “support” is food baskets of 100,000 Tomans to alleviate malnutrition among nursing mothers. However, given inflation and current prices, this meager allowance does little to improve the lives of women heads of household. Another example is the tiny pensions (700,000 Tomans) that government agencies, such as the Committee for Relief and the Welfare Organization, offer this vulnerable and oppressed group. Yet the organization is in no way accountable for the women’s living expenses.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, most women heads of household are tenants and must pay rent. The discrimination against women in the job sector adds pressure on women heads of household, who must cover their families’ expenses. As a result, most of them are forced to take on menial jobs that barely qualify as paid work – peddling, porter-carrying, cleaning houses, among others.

As a result of these difficult and harmful jobs, which do not cover their cost of living, the women sustain significant physical injuries and encounter premature aging and burnout. According to a published report, at least 30,659 women heads of household have an incurable disease.<sup>60</sup> Another report reveals that 7,818 women heads of household have physical disabilities.<sup>61</sup> Under these catastrophic circumstances, the children of women heads of household are also forced to work to help the family survive. As a result, the number of child laborers is multiplying. This situation is magnified in deprived provinces. For example, Sistan and Baluchestan has 93,000 women heads of household – the highest percentage (20%) in Iran. Given that the province is among the top four in Iran for child marriage, it stands to reason that many girls under the age of 20 add to the number of

women heads of household each year.<sup>62</sup> Many women who live in villages or informal settlements (slums) lack financial security. With no university degree or marketable skills, they have difficulty finding suitable jobs and thus cannot provide for their families’ primary necessities.

Domestic work is one of the lowest categorized jobs and usually comes with the lowest salaries and benefits for women. In these occupations, basic rights are neglected (forced labor, long work hours, carrying heavy equipment at home, hefty cleaning such as 700 stairs a day). Domestic workers are also neglected of survival rights (insufficient income), security rights (arbitrary dismissal), and civil rights (freedom of expression, social dialogue).<sup>63</sup>

However, in light of the corrupt regime’s destructive and anti-populist policies, as well as its predatory nature and misogyny, social damage has spread further in society due to poverty.

Moreover, the regime is destroying the homes of the poor who live in slums, rendering women heads of household homeless. Two examples from a dozen are mentioned below. A woman head of household in Qasem Abad, Zahedan, was beaten after her house was destroyed. When asked if she had visited the municipality, Hajar responded, “I am the only breadwinner for the family and I have a 20-year-old son. My husband is unemployed. How could we possibly get there? The rent to Zahedan municipality is 20,000-30,000 Tomans and we do not have it. We cannot pay for electricity. There is not even a school near our house for our children.”<sup>64</sup>

In another example, an elderly Baluch woman suffered a heart attack when municipal authorities and police forces in Zahedan, under the pretext of illegal construction, destroyed her home.<sup>65</sup>





## The housing crisis and its effects on women

Official statistics indicate that the price of the food basket for people's daily needs has exceeded 9.1 million Tomans (\$355). The minimum wage is about 4 million Tomans (\$156), including any wage benefits. The 4 million Tomans do not cover the cost of renting a house and monthly transportation for the family.<sup>66</sup> The number of tenants in Iran has more than tripled over the past three decades.

In 2021, with a population of 83 million, the number of renter households is estimated to be 40%.<sup>67</sup>

In Iran, the average time it takes for a couple to own their house about 33 years. It takes twice as in Tehran.<sup>68</sup>

In November 2019, official experts stated that 40% of Iranians in Tehran lived under the housing poverty line. That number has increased to 70%.<sup>69</sup>

Amid inflation and rising prices and rents in the housing sector, the marginalization rate in Iran has reached 45%. Therefore, compared to the population of 85 million people in Iran, today more than 38 million people are marginalized and living in slums.

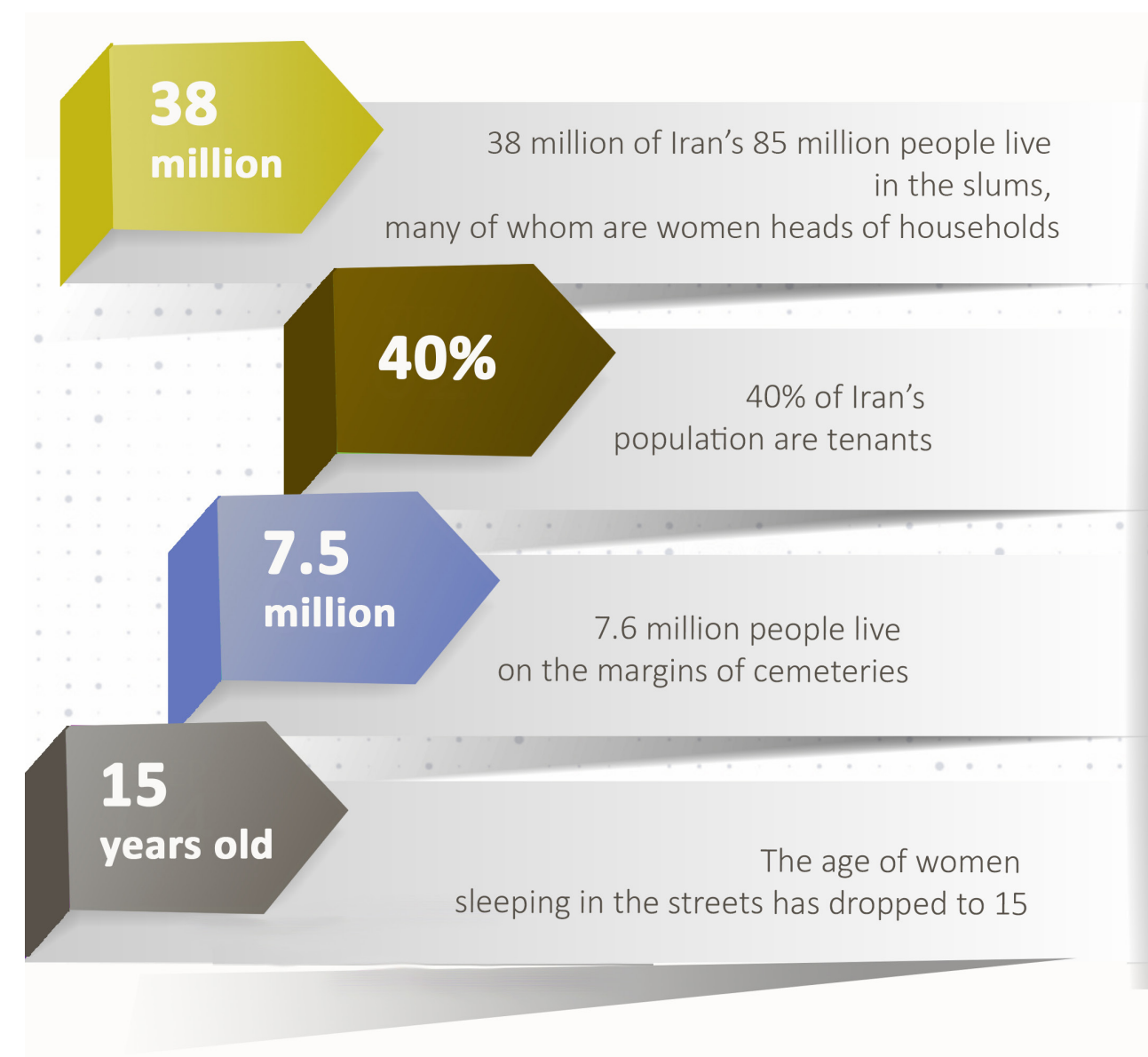
The marked increase in marginalization in Iran is due to erroneous policies and economic problems.<sup>70</sup>

A significant proportion of slum dwellers are women - heads of household who are unable to pay rent or have become homeless and marginalized.

Marginalization has resulted in shanty towns first formed in Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, and other industrial cities. Today, shanty towns have spread to Urmia, Bukan, Piranshahr, Mahabad, Miandoab, Sardasht, Khoy, Karaj, and Zahedan. West Azerbaijan, with a population of about 600,000, is one of the leading provinces for informal settlements.<sup>71</sup>

The spread of poverty and economic problems for the people of Iran; and the mismanagement, corruption, and looting by the mullahs' regime have caused more families to lose everything they have and wander the city streets.

A director of the Harm Reduction Center describes the situation of families as follows: "During this time, we had many families who have become homeless. The reasons for their homelessness are often financial poverty and poverty-related issues such as unemployment."



According to him, in these care centers, the wife and child are forced to separate from the father.<sup>72</sup>

But if the boy is 16-17 years old, he can no longer be kept in women's centers, and because he is under the age of 18, he cannot be admitted to men's centers. Welfare centers also accept mothers and daughters, but separate mothers and sons.

Another report states that 40% of women who go to the warm shelters are not addicted, only homeless.<sup>73</sup>

It should be noted that this statistic is related to only 4 women's shelters out of a total of 20 in Tehran. The widespread problem of housing poverty and lack of support and social services for such families has led to the formation of new phenomena, including 7.6 million people living on the outskirts of cemeteries.<sup>74</sup>

The homelessness of women and girls has also become a news item in state newspapers.

The age of homelessness among Iranian women has reached 15.<sup>75</sup> The number of homeless girls aged 16-18 has increased so dramatically that even the state media writes about them.<sup>76</sup> Homeless women over the age of 60 are also seen in Tehran.<sup>77</sup> A state-run website reported that there are 2,700 homeless women in the city of Ahvaz, the capital of the oil-rich Khuzestan province.<sup>78</sup>

Being homeless makes Iranian women and girls the first target for all kinds of dangers. Addiction and other social ills become inevitable for them, but there are other lurking dangers to their lives.

In January 2021, a 45-year-old homeless woman in Kerman, who had been forced to take refuge in one of the limekilns due to the lack of a shelter, died in a fire.<sup>79</sup>

In the same month, a 15-year-old homeless girl was beheaded in Sirjan, a city in the southern Iranian province of Kerman. While emptying a garbage tank, Sirjan Municipality workers noticed an abnormal-looking heavy plastic bag. It contained the teenage girl's head.<sup>80</sup>

The mullahs' misogynistic and unpopular regime not only has no solution for the homeless women and girls; with its predatory policies, it is actually increasing their number every day. Videos of the demolition of people's homes across the country and the displacement of women and children are broadcast on social media every week.

In addition to slum-dwelling and cardboard-sleeping, newly emerged phenomena such as taking refuge on roofs, bus stations, and even empty graves and underground holes, has raised the alarm over the housing crisis in Iran's capital and other cities.

This winter, photos of men, women, and children sleeping on night buses went viral on social media.

The plight of the "bus sleepers" was first reported by state-run media. Unable to afford rent, the bus sleepers purchase tickets to the end of a bus line.<sup>81</sup>

These impoverished women ride a bus to have a few hours of sleep in a warm place, but they must change their bus at every end station. Homeless mothers and their young children are among these bus sleepers.



A mother and her child sleep the night in a moving bus

### Widespread poverty behind Iran's social harms

Concluding its 61st session, the UN Commission on the Status of Women expressed concern over the continuing feminization of poverty and stressed that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is an integral part of sustainable development. The Commission acknowledged the interaction between achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and eradicating poverty, and the need to ensure an acceptable standard of living for women and girls throughout their lives, including through social protection systems.

In contrast to such a goal, the spread of poverty and the feminization of poverty in Iran have had far-reaching consequences in society. Iranian women have been forced to resort to fake (informal) jobs such as street peddling, harmful jobs such as garbage collection and border couriers, homelessness and sleeping in boxes, buses and graves, selling body organs, leaving infants on the street or selling them, prostitution, addiction, and suicide, among others.



## Selling infants and renting wombs

Buying and selling infants is also a phenomenon that has found a lucrative market in Iran due to poverty. The high costs of infertility treatment and the corrupt bureaucracy in the welfare organization, which prolongs the process of adoption, also contribute to this phenomenon. Child traders are now selling children via social media platforms. In one case, the Deputy Prosecutor of Mashhad announced the arrest of six people who had confessed to buying and selling 25 infants.<sup>82</sup>

Renting wombs was not common in Iran, but today, due to the spread of poverty, there are women in most provinces who are willing to rent their wombs. Most of these women are in dire financial need. The price of a rented womb, once close to 20 million Tomans (\$780), has quadrupled in the last 2 years and is now 80 million Tomans (\$3,121).<sup>83</sup>

## Child workers

There are more than seven million child workers in Iran.<sup>84</sup> The number of children working in the capital and on the streets is lower than the number of children in the city's workshops and factories.<sup>85</sup>

Most of these children have either lost their families, or their families are in prison. Some of the children have drug-addicted or unemployed fathers.

While child labor is prohibited under international law, one-third of Tehran's 14,000 garbage collectors are children.<sup>86</sup> Child garbage collectors earn 2 trillion Tomans (78 million) a day for the garbage mafia, and the Tehran Municipality earns 200 billion Tomans (\$7.8 million) a day from the garbage collectors' work.<sup>87</sup>

On May 15, 2021, a teenage girl who worked in a bakery in Dar-e Shahr, in the western province of Ilam, got trapped under a bread

machine. She sustained severe injuries to her neck and spinal cord. Due to the lack of proper infrastructure for transporting emergency cases to hospitals or medical centers, the 13-year-old was transferred to a medical center after a long delay. State-run media did not report on what happened to the girl after she was taken to the medical center.<sup>88</sup>

## Prostitution

Prostitution is a direct consequence of poverty. With the spread of poverty, the rampant employment discrimination for women and girls, and the lack of women's empowerment, this trend has become widespread in Iran under the mullahs' rule.

In recent years, prostitution networks have expanded. Networks that are illegal have nonetheless proliferated by exploiting cheap sex workers via cyberspace and messaging apps.<sup>89</sup>

In 2017, the number of sex workers in the south of Tehran was estimated at 10,000.<sup>90</sup> In 2019, social harm experts announced the existence of 8,000 prostitution gangs in Tehran. According to these reports, in 7 years, the average age of prostitution has decreased from 28 to 20 years. Currently, children as young as 13 also work as prostitutes, which means that prostitution is becoming more widespread among adolescents. Due to Iran's economic crisis, married women are also forced into prostitution.<sup>91</sup>



## Suicide

According to the Deputy Head of Social Affairs at Iran's Welfare Organization, 41,000 people die due to suicide every year. "Many people may be hospitalized after attempting suicide and these cases will never be registered," he added.<sup>92</sup>

These figures only include those who lost their lives after committing suicide. Usually, we can calculate the total number of suicides by multiplying the number of suicides that lead to death by 30. According to these figures, the shocking number of suicides in Iran is equivalent to 1.2 million annually. Unsuccessful suicide statistics are usually not widely reported, and the real statistics are higher than what is officially announced.<sup>93</sup>

The existence of "seven million employed people without job security and unemployment" and the "lowering of the tolerance threshold" of the people has caused more people to commit suicide due to utter despair.<sup>94</sup>

Over the past few years, Iran's suicide rate has been increasing by 4 to 5 percent each year. Last year, suicide increased for children

under the age of 18 and the elderly over the age of 60.<sup>95</sup> Every day, 15 girls on average die after throwing themselves out of elevators or off bridges and rooftops. Most suicides occur among those aged 12 to 18. More girls commit suicide than boys.<sup>96</sup>

These suicides are mostly due to economic poverty and social harms. A shocking example of poverty-related suicides was the suicide of a young woman who could not afford to buy school stationery for her children due to poverty. The woman's husband was a municipal worker with 15 years of work experience who had not been paid for 5 months. On September 22, 2021, after an argument with her husband, the young woman set herself on fire and died. She had two sons and a daughter.<sup>97</sup>

According to official statistics, about 11 residents died by suicide in 2021.<sup>98</sup>

Hospital residents, like medical assistants who work in Iranian hospitals, are mostly under the supervision of medical sciences universities. The mental and physical problems of these young doctors increase due to severe lack of manpower, high work pressure, working consecutive shifts, going several days without sleep, 89-day contracts, low salaries (which amount to 2 million Tomans) lack of insurance, non-payment of minimum wages, being away from their family and children, the influx of people to hospitals, and the death of patients.<sup>99</sup> According to Amanollah Qaraii Moghaddam, a sociologist and university professor, one of the main reasons for the increase in suicides in Iran is the people's distrust of officials.

"The social climate is conducive to suicide. Melancholy practically rains down on the people in Iran and emanates from the clothes they wear and the music they play. The problems in society are many. Some 30% of the country's graduates are unemployed. People do not work in their fields of specialty. There is no happiness or hope in society," he said.<sup>100</sup>

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15.

Ensieh Khazali is affiliated with the regime’s most misogynistic faction and represents its interests. She studied at the Seminary School of Qom and is closely associated with Ruhollah Khomeini, and Assadollah Lajevardi. She personally received a house as a gift from the regime’s president, Ebrahim Raisi. She promotes early marriage and high fertility for families.

16.

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# CLIMATE CHANGE IN IRAN

Women are  
the prime victims,  
The clerical regime  
is the main culprit

Women's Committee  
The National Council of Resistance of Iran



March 2022