



MONTHLY REPORT  
NCRI WOMEN'S COMMITTEE  
**JULY 2023**



**IRAN**

Doubling down on  
**PUNISHMENTS  
AGAINST WOMEN**

defying the compulsory Hijab

## Doubling down on punishments against women defying the compulsory Hijab

The month of July saw the return of the notorious Guidance Patrols, albeit without their emblems, and a heated debate on the adoption of the bill on Chastity and Hijab.

This NCRI Women's Committee monthly report will focus on these two issues, discussing the underlying reasons and the ensuing reactions to those measures.

To put things into perspective, one should realize that these measures are the last resort of a dying regime after the 2022-2023 uprising. In each segment of the following report, we will explain why.

### Background on the recent round of crackdown on women

#### Surveillance of women resumed after Nowruz holidays

After the murder of Mahsa Amini on September 16, 2022, which sparked the latest round of nationwide uprisings in Iran, the morality police did not appear in the streets for a long time. The clerical regime, however, continued its repression of women and girls in various forms, including the poisoning of female students, because the mullahs' dictatorship cannot survive a day without repression, especially repression directed at women and girls.

Indeed, the removal of the mandatory Hijab is a form of opposition mocking the regime's authority, and the mullahs very well understand it.



Then on April 15, the commander of the State Security Force (SSF), Ahmadreza Radan, [announced](#) that the regime would step up its efforts to clamp down on women's freedom of choice. Having obtained the facial recognition technology from China, they created much ado about identifying women with closed circuit cameras and taking away their national social security cards.

They ordered banks, hospitals, metro stations, airports, movie theatres, and other public services to refrain from providing service to women not covering their hair. They also ordered all employers and business owners to order their female employees to cover their hair; otherwise, their companies and businesses would be closed.

The SSF also closed and sealed hundreds of restaurants, shops, libraries, parks, startups, and tourist attractions around the country for providing service to unveiled women.

They deprived university students from continuing their education and expelled them from school.

The Judiciary penalized women with heavy fines, imprisonment, flogging, dismissal from their jobs, and depriving them of various services, including the internet. And they even handed down contemptible verdicts, forcing defiant residents, and movie stars, to do janitorial work, wash corpses in the mortuaries for one month, or visit a psychologist for six months to cure their “mental disorder.”



### Official statistics on punishments for defying the compulsory Hijab

On June 14, 2023, the State Security Force spokesperson announced that since April 15, 2023, the police had sent almost one million SMS warning messages to women captured unveiled in their cars. The SSF issued 133,174 SMS messages requiring the immobilization of vehicles for a specific duration, confiscated 2,000 cars, and referred more than 4,000 repeat offenders to the Judiciary across the country. He added that 108,211 reports on the enforcement of compulsory veiling laws had been gathered about the commission of offenses within businesses and that 300 offenders had been identified and referred to the Judiciary.

The spokesperson of the Iranian Judiciary reported a concerning trend in the first four months of the Persian year (March 21 to July 22).

During this period, 2,251 cases were filed against women who removed their Hijabs. Out of these cases, 825 resulted in convictions, according to Massoud Setayeshi. (The state-run Fars news agency, August 2, 2023)

Setayeshi explained the consequences of such actions based on Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code. He stated that those who remove their headscarves would be directly taken to court. A first-time offense would lead to a fine of 15 million Rials, while repeat offenders would face additional punishments along with the fine. Notably, if the accused is a famous person or a celebrity, they may be subjected to supplementary penalties, which are also publicly reported through media channels.

According to the official IRNA news agency, on July 15, the Revolutionary and Public Prosecutor of [Qazvin](#) initiated legal proceedings against 173 women since the enactment of the [Hijab and Chastity Law](#). The identities of 50 individuals have been established thus far, with efforts underway to identify the remaining individuals, the prosecutor’s office said.

The clerical regime uses facial recognition technology to identify women who do not observe the veiling requirement for women.

In a separate development, the General Justice Department of Qazvin province revealed that 123 instances of people wearing hijabs were captured by intelligent surveillance systems and public reports in public thoroughfares. Additional identification documents, including images from citywide cameras or individual submissions, are currently with the IRGC Intelligence Organization.

After proper identification, the results will be made public, and court cases will be initiated for summons and potential criminal prosecution, as stated by the state-run ILNA news agency on August 2, 2023.

### Women faced harsh penalties for defying the compulsory Hijab

Iranian women received harsh penalties, including termination from their jobs, being assigned to wash corpses in the morgue, and being forced to do janitorial work for failing to adhere to the compulsory dress code.

On July 10, a woman was sentenced to two months in jail by Branch 1088 of Tehran's Criminal Court for not wearing the compulsory veil in public. Additionally, she received a two-year travel ban. Instead of imprisonment, she was required to attend two weekly sessions with a psychologist for six months to address her labeled "anti-social personality" until she obtained a certificate verifying her mental health.

The 104th Branch of Criminal Court 2 in Varamin sentenced a woman to wash the corpses of the deceased in Tehran's Morgue for a month as an additional punishment for driving without observing the mandatory Hijab. In addition to this, she was ordered to pay a fine of 31 million rials instead of serving a two-month prison sentence. (The state-run Hammihan Daily, July 13, 2023)

In another incident, a female intern who failed to cover her hair while driving was relieved of her duties and forced to perform janitorial work instead of serving jail time, as reported on July 12.

On June 18, 2023, a court in Tehran sentenced a woman to complete 270 hours of cleaning services for the Interior Ministry due to non-compliance with the compulsory veil requirement.

Furthermore, on July 15, the Reuters news agency released footage showing a woman in Tehran's Gisha district crying out for help after being harassed and assaulted by a woman agent of the state security force, attempting to violently arrest her and take her into a van.



Picture by Reuters

In the meantime, the arrest and imprisonment of women continue for defying the compulsory Hijab. Among them, [Leila Ziafar](#), a former radio presenter, who was violently arrested on July 19 for tweeting a picture of herself travelling unveiled on the Tehran metro. She wrote in that post, "It is impossible to reverse the course we have gone. For the removal of compulsory veiling and captivity, we have paid with the lives of martyrs. We will not allow the blood of our martyrs to be trampled upon."

On July 20, 2023, at 5.30 a.m., the guidance patrols in Bandar Abbas arrested several female athletes who were jogging along the beach in this southern port city. One of the athletes wrote in a post, "Every morning, when we go for jogging to the coastal boulevard, you can see all sorts of people. Some are still there from the night before with their hukas. Some drunk drivers pass by us

at high speed. Some motorcyclists drive on the pedestrian pavement. Addicts bend into the garbage bins looking for a piece of bread. Others are still high, their heads hitting the ground. And still, the police arrest the athletes who promote the culture of doing sports.” (Social media, July 30, 2023)

### Directives to hospitals, tourist attractions, and museums

Various ministries instructed their subordinate agencies to prevent admission of unveiled women.

On July 30, Parham Janfeshan, the general director of Tehran Province’s Department of Cultural Inheritance, Tourism, and Handicrafts, issued a directive to all tourism facilities obliging them to observe the regulations passed by the Headquarters of Hijab and Chastity. He urged his staff to “deal decisively with the crime of removing the Hijab.”

In a previous directive on April 25, Janfeshan urged all his subordinate staff to observe the veiling requirement and condition their services on the observance of the Hijab rules.

Additionally, all museums have been instructed to prevent entry of women who do not cover their hair. (The state-run Jamaran website, August 4, 2023)

Mohammad Taqi Najafzadeh, the managing director of the healthcare network in Lahijan, wrote a letter to the heads of the city’s hospitals, instructing them to condition medical services on the observance of Hijab in public and private medical centers, the state media reported on July 29.

Najafzadeh did not specify what the medical centers should do in emergency cases.



The banner posted at the entrance of a hospital in Lahijan: Entry of all individuals, who break the norms and are improperly veiled, is forbidden. The hospital is not allowed to provide services to improperly veiled individuals and those who break the norms.

And the latest news is that Tehran’s municipality has hired 400 individuals to be deployed in metro stations. They are called, Hijab-ban or Hijab guards. With a monthly salary of 12 million Tomans, they are obliged to give warnings to the passengers and prevent them from getting on the metro wagons without covering their hair. They will also hand over the women with improper veiling or no veil to the police.

Tehran’s municipality spends 5 billion Tomans per month on Hijab-bans, while the worn-out public transportation fleet and other urban facilities have caused widespread dissatisfaction. (The state-run Rouydad24.ir, August 6, 2023)

## Public services suspended, and managers arrested for serving women without veils

As mentioned above, the State Security Force sealed and closed hundreds of businesses for providing services to women who defy the compulsory Hijab. They also arrested the managers and owners of many of the businesses. Following are some examples.

The public and revolutionary prosecutor of Damavand County announced the arrest of the manager and an employee of a bank in Damavand for providing service to an unveiled woman. Morteza Tahmasbi said they had filed legal cases against the two men, and are pursuing to identify the unveiled woman to address her charge. (The state-run Entekhab.ir, July 26, 2023)



The staff of Azki, whose company was suspended for this photo

The Iranian Judiciary filed a legal against the female employees of one of the departments of Iran's largest online store, Digi-Kala, for defying the compulsory Hijab code. The measure followed the circulation of a photo on social media showing the female staff at one of Digi-kala departments who did not cover their hair at the workplace. (The Iranian Judiciary news agency, Mizan, July 22, 2023)

Pursuant to the publication of a photo from the employees of Taqcheh Company, legal cases were filed for the women who appeared without the compulsory veil at the workplace. (The state-run Fars news agency, July 26, 2023) Taqcheh is a digital platform providing audio books and electronic copies of publications to their clients.

Digi-Kala, Azki, and Taqcheh returned to business after two weeks of suspension due to public outrage and criticism.



The photo of Taqcheh staff circulating on social media

The Robokids in Tehran's Velenjak County was sealed on August 3 until further notice, because some women did not observe the compulsory Hijab in this robotic amusement park. (Arman-e Melli daily, August 4, 2023)

An academy of three-dimensional art in Tehran was sealed on July 25 due to failure to observe the compulsory Hijab.

### Guidance Patrols (or the Morality Police) make a comeback

However, none of the above measures succeeded in forcing women to comply with the compulsory dress code. Therefore, on July 16, the SSF spokesman [announced](#) that the guidance patrols would be back to hunt down women who appear in public without covering their hair.

Saeed Montazer-ol Mahdi, the SSF spokesman, said: "Mobile and foot patrols will be stationed across the country to deal with those groups of people who insist on breaking the norms, unfortunately, without paying attention to the consequences of wearing dresses outside the norm. They will be dealt with legally and reported to the Judiciary starting today if they do not conform to the orders of the police." (The state-run Mehr news agency, July 16, 2023)

The NCRI President-elect, Maryam Rajavi, [called on Iranian women](#) to resist. "Reinstating the guidance patrols to suppress, terrorize, and kill, only reflect the regime's profound fear of the outbreak of yet another uprising led by Iranian women. No one can send Iran's brave women and girls back home, when thousands of them have laid down their lives for freedom over the past 40 years."

In reaction to the public's outrage over the return of the guidance patrols, SSF authorities subsequently clarified that the Social Norms Police would do the monitoring and the vans with Guidance Patrol written on them would not return.

Instead, they stationed big white vans in the streets to take away the women who insist on defying the compulsory Hijab code.

Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, [said in this regard](#), "The authorities are not fooling anyone by removing the insignia of the 'morality' police from uniforms and patrol vans, while emboldening the enforcers of the Islamic Republic's oppression and subjugation of women and girls to engage in the same violence that killed Mahsa Zhina Amini with impunity. Today's crackdown is intensified by mass surveillance technologies capable of identifying unveiled women in their cars and pedestrian spaces."



## Resilient Iranians fight back the guidance patrols

Angry reactions marked the first day of the return of guidance patrols.

In the capital city of Rasht, northern Iran, resilient Iranians fought back against the State Security forces who attempted to harass three women in Rasht's Municipality Square on Sunday night, July 16.

Tensions flared and led to clashes between people on the one hand and security forces and plainclothes agents on the other. Locals chanted "Death to Khamenei" during the ensuing protests. Plainclothes agents tried to disperse the crowd with tear gas.

On the same day, the head of the Information Center of the SSF in Isfahan Province, said two people who were enforcing the Hijab were attacked in the central Iranian province. (The state-run [farsnews.ir/Isfahan](https://farsnews.ir/Isfahan), July 16, 2023)

On July 18, 2023, the SSF violently arrested a woman in Gonbad Kavous, northern Iran, for openly protesting against the compulsory veil and insulting the mullahs' supreme leader in one of the city's squares.

The following days, however, saw no outbreak of significant protests as the State Security Force withdrew from assaulting women. Having realized that Iranian women were not afraid of standing up to repressive forces to defend their freedom of choice, the SSF only took films of women passing by without covering their hair.



Instead, the anti-vice patrols (the non-uniformed Basij agents who promote virtue and forbid vice) and plainclothes agents continued their harassment of Iranian women, frequently leading to violent clashes and arrests. Two latest examples:

A man and a woman attacked and beat a woman who warned the woman in Narenjestan-e Qavam in Shiraz, Fars province. The SSF arrested the assailants as well as the manager of Narenjestan, and filed legal cases against them. (The state-run Hamshahri daily, August 1, 2023) One of the assailants was imprisoned. (The state-run ILNA news agency, August 1, 2023)

The commander of the Public Intelligence and Security Police of Hamedan, western Iran, announced that the SSF had arrested five persons in the city's Sabadban district for assaulting a woman who had promoted virtue by warning a young woman to cover her hair on July 30. Four young men helped the young woman to fight back. (The official IRNA news agency, August 2, 2023)



## Who is responsible for the relaunch of guidance patrols?

The relaunch of guidance patrols, the anti-vice patrols and plainclothes agents whose task is to physically deal with the offenders on the streets, namely to arrest and take them away, raised much criticism within government circles.

Even the regime's president, Ebrahim Raisi, and the Judiciary denied their part in instructing the patrols' return despite the State Security Force's initial emphasis that they had orders from Raisi and the Judiciary to go ahead with the plan.

Although the Iranian people know that Raisi ordered last year's intensified violence against women in the streets, which led to Mahsa Amini's death. This year, too, no matter what the authorities say, everyone knows that the State Security Force is part of the Interior Ministry, which is part of Raisi's government.

The denials and retreats have turned into a popular joke, making headlines in the press and media calling to find the authorities responsible for the return of the guidance patrols. However, they must be seen as further proof of the regime's weakness.

On July 23, 2023, a member of the parliamentary national security and foreign policy committee, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi, said in an interview, "The fact that no one is willing to take responsibility for the Guidance Patrol indicates that this policy is not correct, as a correct policy garners support. Now, neither the government, the Judiciary, the police nor others are willing to accept [responsibility] and this means that the Guidance Patrol lacks a rational basis."

He confirmed reports about widespread deployment of SSF vans and troops in the streets, stating, "Yesterday [July 22] I went with my family to one of the squares in the city [Tehran]. There was such an extensive presence of police forces and cars that it caused difficulties for the movement of people and cars." (The state-run Setareh Sobh daily, July 24, 2023)



Guidance patrols stationed around the entrance to a shopping mall

## Critics warn against looming uprisings

Those who criticize the return of the guidance patrols fear the specter of looming uprisings awaiting just another spark.

Moineddin Saeedi, a member of the mullahs' parliament from Chabahar, said, "Considering that we went through September 2022 and its consequent events, such behavior is very strange. Many legal experts also believe that there is no standard legal basis for the activities of the guidance patrols. Therefore, relaunching them will have irreparable (adverse) impact."

He added, "In circumstances when people have economic problems, they expect us to pay attention to their livelihood and control the inflation." (The state-run donya-e-eqtasad.com, July 16, 2023)

Taghi Azad Armaki, professor of sociology at the University of Tehran, noted the danger of people's resistance, "If the previous violence concerning the guidance patrols was one-sided (i.e. only by the police), today the society is in danger of the outbreak of mutual violence. Today the situation has developed to a state where multi-dimensional violence is also likely. There is a conflict between the civil society and the official institutions." (The state-run etemadnewspaper.ir, July 17, 2023)

Azar Mansouri, the head of the so-called Reform Front, stated, "Not only, the gap between the government and the nation has not been repaired, but has further widened. How many more Mahsas need to give their lives, so the perpetrators of this bad defense accept that insisting on this procedure is counterproductive and that they should confront a society that is already volatile?" (The state-run etemadnewspaper.ir, July 17, 2023)

Hossein Alaei, one of the former IRGC commanders, also exclaimed, "The activities of the guidance patrols over these years not only did not reduce the level of improper veiling in the society, but also caused a strong reaction and the spread of improper veiling among women." (The state-run daily setaresobh.ir, July 17, 2023)

Such criticisms continue to this date.

## The Hijab and Chastity Bill

### Is removing the veil a crime or an offense?

The legal deputy of the Iranian Judiciary told a news conference on May 24, 2023, that judicial authorities had agreed to consider the removal of veil as an offense. Behzad Pour Seyyed said there was a consensus among authorities in the Judiciary that the removal of veil should not be considered a crime to be dealt with by the Judiciary. Since people have different motivations, and not all women who remove their veils are involved in an organized scheme. Eventually, it is better to avoid creating criminal record for them. (The state-run Mehr news agency, August 1, 2023)

On May 24, the Iranian state media published the text of the "Protection of Hijab and Chastity" Bill comprised of 15 articles. This was the bill proposed by the Iranian Judiciary and delivered to Raisi's government.

On June 8, the government finished making minor changes and passed the "Supporting Hijab and Chastity" bill to the parliament for double-priority adoption.

However, the parliament saw flaws in the bill as it only dealt with penalties. Therefore, they passed the bill to the Legal Commission of the parliament for examination. On July 27, the Iranian state media published the text of the bill finalized in 70 articles by the parliamentary commission. And August 6, the parliament announced receipt of the bill entitled, "Supporting the family through Promotion of the Culture of Chastity and Hijab," for deliberations.



Women at a gallery in Tehran

### What is the Hijab and Chastity bill?

Presently, the Judiciary penalizes women who remove their veils for the 8<sup>th</sup> degree crime by sentencing them to three months in prison, 10 million Tomans of fine, and up to 10 lashes of the whip.

According to the new bill, women who are improperly veiled (i.e., show strands of hair, referred to as partial nakedness) are fined 2 million Tomans. Those who remove the veil completely (referred to as complete nakedness) are fined 24 million Tomans. The fine could go up to 150 Tomans for removing the veil, 280 million Tomans for showing parts of their body (i.e. wearing sleeveless shirts or short sleeves), and imprisonment.

The amount of the fine is automatically deducted from the offender's bank account and deposited in the national treasury.

The SSF is also allowed to confiscate the offender's car.

The bill not only includes articles on penalizing women who defy the compulsory Hijab laws, but it also influences the country's system of employment and provisions of legal, cultural, medical, educational, recreational, and other services in the public and private sectors.

Javid Rehman, the UN Special Representative on human rights in Iran, called the regime's measures against Iranian women as "gender apartheid."

Some critics say, based on this bill, the majority of the populace would be considered "offenders," creating new political and social tensions. (The state-run *Asriran.ir*, July 30, 2023)

Other critics say the bill is designed to provide for the government's budget deficits, while legalizing extortion of businesses' revenues and preventing users' access to the internet. (The state-run *Entekhab.ir*, July 30, 2023)

At the same time, the obligations formulated for various ministries to enforce and protect the Hijab law require huge budgets.

The Commander of the State Security Force, Ahmadreza Radan, announced that they had installed 20,000 cameras on police uniforms, and another 8,000 will be installed. Still, they need another 80,000 cameras that need to be bought. (The state-run *Mehr* news agency, August 6, 2023)

## Forty ministries and government agencies tasked with Hijab control

The parliament's bill combines discrimination, punishment, promotion of the Hijab, social control, and expansion of the regime's ideological interferences in society and the country's bureaucracy.

The bill has specified the obligations of various ministries and institutions in some 50 articles.

The parliamentary bill, "Supporting the family through Promotion of the Culture of Chastity and Hijab," obliges the Ministry of Economy to provide banking facilities and consider the production and presentation expenses of Hijab products as "tax expenditures."

The bill also obliges the state Radio and Television to prepare TV serials focusing on "Islamic lifestyle revolving around the family."

It instructs the Ministry of Sciences and Higher Education to open universities and campuses restricted to women.

It requires the Ministry of Health to change its administrative arrangement, segregate the male and female staff, and condition the provision of medical services on the observance of the Hijab.

The Ministry of Communications must expedite the launching of the National Information Network.



The slogan on the wall reads, the Hijab is not the only question

## The clerical regime's paradox

The Iranian authorities have acknowledged the ineffectiveness of current laws in enforcing the Hijab as a religious obligation. Imposing penalties such as flogging and imprisonment for violators could potentially trigger widespread protests among discontented citizens. To address this, a decision has been made to reclassify the act of removing the Hijab as an offense rather than a crime, subject to fines.

However, this approach raises a critical issue. By removing the religious obligation associated with the veil, the authorities lose their rationale for imposing it on the public.

Experts within the regime hold differing opinions on the matter. Some argue against adopting the proposed bill, emphasizing that the existing law grants greater authority to entities like the State Security Force and covert agents.

Others reference statements from the regime's highest leader, Ali Khamenei, who has labeled unveiling as "politically unlawful." He contends that adversaries exploit this issue to undermine the country's foundations and distort its identity. This perspective underscores that the enforcement of compulsory veiling carries political significance beyond its religious aspect.

Highlighting this viewpoint, the acting commander of the State Security Force, IRGC Gen. Qassem Rezaei, has proclaimed the Hijab as a paramount element of national strength, targeted by external forces. He designates it as a regime "redline" that must not be crossed. (The state-run Tasnim news agency on July 23, 2023)

This paradox illuminates a pivotal moment for the regime. Yet, the Iranian people, especially women, remain steadfast in their determination to overthrow this antiquated system. Undeterred, they rally behind the slogan, "With or without the Hijab, onwards towards a Revolution," as demonstrated by the chants of Iranian women and girls during the uprising.