

Women's Economic Empowerment In Iran

Moving in the
opposite direction



A study by the Women's Committee
of the National Council of Resistance of Iran

September 2017





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Introduction

The international community has made an unprecedented commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In a bold measure, the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres announced his initiative to achieve parity at senior levels by 2021, and across the board by 2028. For his part, he appointed 17 women and 15 men to the senior management groups of the United Nations but stressed that “the changes needed are not just to recruitment systems and staff rules, but to our own attitudes and approaches.”

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) set this year's theme, “women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work,” and made specific recommendations¹ to all member states to take steps to fulfill their commitments towards planet 50-50 by 2030.

To contribute to these efforts and to defend the rights of Iranian women under the rule of a misogynist regime in Iran, the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran has prepared the present report in order to shed light on the grim situation of the female labor force in Iran and underline the fact that the Iranian regime, which is a member state of the CSW,² not only has not adopted any of the recommended measures to improve and realize women's economic empowerment but is indeed moving in the opposite direction.

A vivid example is the recent measure by the general board of the Court of Administrative Justice on September 15, 2017, rescinding a Labor Ministry directive³ banning expulsion of women during the two years they are on maternal leave and nursing their newborns. This is while the CSW has recommended that member states take action to “ensure that both women and men have access to maternity or parental leave

¹ In a report (E/CN.6/2017/3) distributed on December 30, 2016, the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW) outlined a series of conclusions and recommendations for achieving women's economic empowerment and realizing women's human and labour rights. The recommendations include among others “elimination of structural barriers and discriminatory laws and social norms to create equal economic opportunities and outcomes.” Economic and social policies should also “strengthen education, training and skills development to enable women to respond to new opportunities in the changing world of work.” (para. 47)

The report also reiterates, “All stakeholders must ensure that implementation, monitoring and accountability mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development systematically support women's economic empowerment and rights to and at work, and promote decent work and full and productive employment for women at the global, regional, national and local levels.” (para. 48) In para. 49, the CSW urges all governments and stakeholders to take effective measures to “strengthen normative and legal frameworks for full employment and decent work for all women.” Such measures include “universal ratification without reservations and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and relevant ILO conventions and recommendations”, “strengthen the capacity and funding for national gender equality mechanisms”, “strengthen laws and regulatory frameworks that prohibit discrimination against women regarding entry into the labour market and terms and conditions of employment”, “strengthen and enforce laws and workplace policies that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors”, “eliminate occupational segregation by addressing discriminatory social norms and promoting women's equal participation in labour markets, education and training, and encourage women to diversify their occupational choices and enter jobs in emerging fields and growing economic sectors”, “undertake legislative and administrative reforms to ensure women's equal access to and control over productive resources and assets” and “strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate violence and harassment against women in the workplace.”

The report also recommends among others, “support the creation of decent, good quality jobs for women in the care economy in the public and private sectors”, “implement and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for work of equal value”, “enact policies and special measures to ensure equal representation of women in economic decision-making structures and institutions”, “ensure access to social protection for all, including workers outside the formal economy”, “ensure that both women and men have access to maternity or parental leave allowances and are not discriminated against when availing themselves of such benefits”, and “establish and strengthen compliance mechanisms that hold the private sector accountable for advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment as articulated in the Women's Empowerment Principles.”

² Iran became a member of the CSW in 2010.

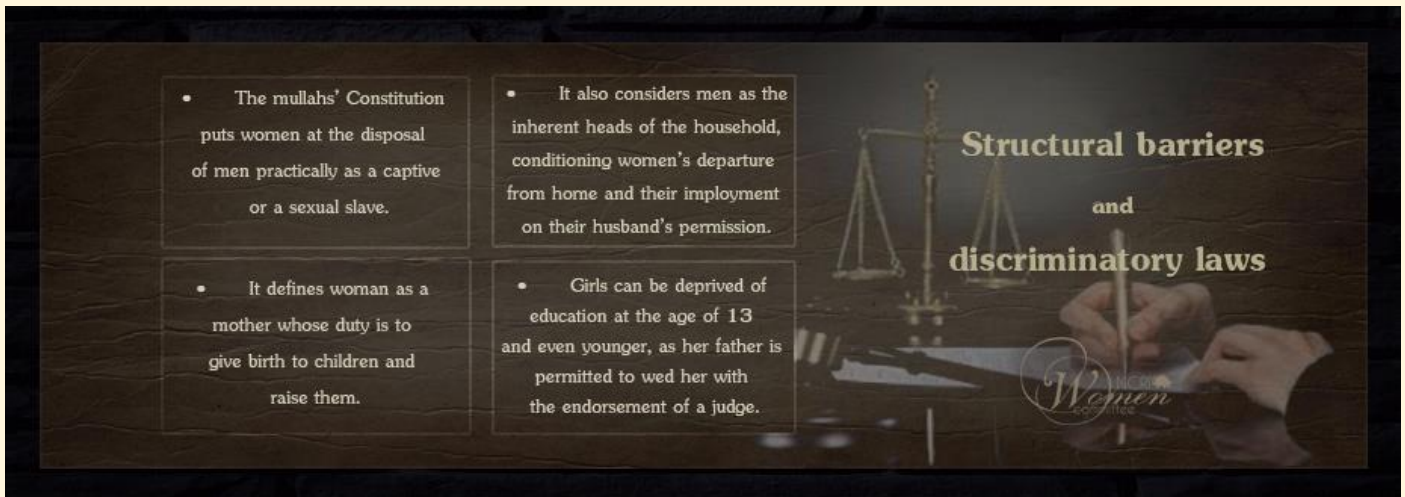
³ The state-run Tasnim news agency, September 15, 2017

<https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1396/06/24/1517716/%D9%85%D9%85%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B9%DB%8C%D8%A-%D8%A7%D8%AE%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AC-%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B1-%D9%84%D8%BA%D9%88-%D8%B4%D8%AF>

allowances.” (para. 49 of E/CN.6/2017/3 document) Even before repealing the directive, it had been reported that 74000 women had been fired during their maternal leaves.⁴

It must be stressed that the figures cited in this report have been compiled from public statements and official sources in Iran. Therefore, they should be considered as minimums due to lack of transparency and censorship on the part of the Iranian regime and the absence of free access to information under the tyrannical regime.

I. Structural barriers and discriminatory laws



In paragraph 47, in Section VII, “Conclusions and recommendations,” the CSW concludes, “Transforming the world of work for women requires the elimination of structural barriers and discriminatory laws and social norms to create equal economic opportunities and outcomes.”

Discrimination against women, their economic empowerment and their social participation is institutionalized in the Iranian regime’s Constitution and laws.

Instead of eliminating “structural barriers and discriminatory laws” and creating “equal economic opportunities,” the regime strengthens laws and regulatory frameworks that promote discrimination against women and increasingly marginalize them.

Ali Khamenei, the clerical regime’s Supreme Leader, has clearly stated the vision dominating all these laws. He has said, “God has created women for a special part of life... Employment is not one of the main issues concerning women.”⁵

Instead of a human being with specific social, political and civil rights, the Constitution defines woman as a mother whose duty is to give birth to children and raise them.⁶ As such a woman is not entitled to have a decent job as a basic right.

According to the Iranian Constitution women are not qualified to run for president or sit on the bench.⁷ The Constitution also considers men as the inherent heads of the household, conditioning women’s departure from home on their husband’s permission⁸ and allows men to deprive women of getting employed.⁹

⁴ The state-run Fars news agency, June 16, 2015: Fatemeh Sadeqi, Professor and member of faculty of Teachers’ Training University: “With a glance on the past ten years we can see that some 100,000 women have been fired from the job market every year. Also, according to official figures, 74,000 women have been expelled from their jobs after returning from maternal leaves.”

⁵ Website of Khamenei’s Office, April 19, 2014

⁶ Preamble of the Constitution, section on women

⁷ Principles 115 and 163 of the Constitution and the law on the requirements for appointment of judges

⁸ Article 1105 of the Civil Code: Heading the household is the inherent duty of the man and the woman cannot even leave home without his permission

⁹ Article 1117 of the Civil Code

The mullahs' Constitution also puts women at the disposal of men practically as a captive or a sexual slave. Girls can be deprived of education at the age of 13 and even younger, as her father is permitted to wed her with the endorsement of a judge, usually to a much older man.¹⁰ Girls are considered adults when they are 9 lunar years old (8 years and 9 months).¹¹

Theatrical attempts to reform the Civil Code on the age of marriage for girls were opposed as being "essentially wrong and useless."¹²

This is in direct contrast to the CSW's recommended policy "to leave no one behind" in paragraph 47 (E/CN.6/2017/3) of strengthening "education, training and skills development to enable women to respond to new opportunities in the changing world of work." Early marriage is the most common reason for girl children dropping out of school.¹³

Women are also banned from studying in more than 77 college fields¹⁴ which limits and undermines their economic participation and empowerment.

In 2013, the mullahs' parliament adopted a bill on increasing the population. The bill grants priority of employment in all public and private sectors to married men who have children. Next in line are married men who do not have children. Women who have children are the third in line while women who do not have any children do not even exist on the list.¹⁵

On the other hand, the government's adoption of a plan to extend women's maternal leave has caused added restrictions on employment of women. Employers have set conditions on the marital status of women they plan to employ and make them sign papers and agree to be fired if they get pregnant.¹⁶

Another legislation adopted in January 2016 stipulates that women's employment in any business must be limited to 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. and they should be confined to a segregated workplace.

Employment of women in government jobs faces a controversial issue every year. In the 2016 Government Employment Exam, 961 job titles had been designated as exclusively for men, and only 16 titles had been considered for recruiting women. Public protests to this quota arrangement forced Rouhani's government to retract the exam, but it was never announced how the government replaced this policy.

The government also ordered in 2014, to allocate only 16 of 2,700 job opportunities to women.¹⁷

A directive of the Ministry of Education was made public recently in summer 2017, which contained a long list of chronic and non-chronic diseases which could disqualify applicants for teaching positions. Section 17 of this directive had listed a long list of feminine illnesses including irregular menstrual cycle, extra facial hair, sterility, endometriosis, breast and ovarian cancers, etc. which could deprive women of getting a job.¹⁸

In response to public outrage over this directive, an Education Ministry official revealed that the ministry had been considering these matters for years in recruiting new teachers and that the directive was not something new.¹⁹

In 2014, Tehran's Municipality issued a directive instructing its managers and directors to hire only male employees and secretaries.²⁰ The situation prevails in many other public and semi-public offices under religious pretexts.

¹⁰ Amendment to Article 1041 of the Civil Code allows the father to wed his daughter even before 9 years of age after receiving endorsement of a judge.

¹¹ Article 1210 of the Civil Code sets the age of maturity and criminal accountability for a girl at 9 lunar years (8 years and 9 months). Also, Article 147 of the Punishment Law.

¹² Interview with Zahra Shojaii, secretary of the Islamic Revolution's Assembly of Educated Women, a state-backed agency promoting fundamentalist views on women and with opposition to any progress on women's rights, the state-run Fars news agency, December 18, 2016

¹³ The state-run Khabaronline.ir, July 11, 2016; the state-run Damadam.ir, September 9, 2017.

¹⁴ Source from Women's Committee document

¹⁵ The state-run Hamshahri Online website, April 9, 2014

¹⁶ The state-run Shaffaf website, August 2, 2015 <http://www.shafaf.ir/fa/news/335310>

¹⁷ The state-run Khabaronline.ir, July 27, 2016

¹⁸ The state-run Fars news agency, August 23, 2017


¹⁹ The state-run Asr-e Iran website, August 26, 2017 <http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/556533>

²⁰ The state-run Asr-e Iran website, July 9, 2014

In the same year, the State Security Force's (SSF) Chief of Police for Public Places announced that "women are banned from being hired in coffees shops."²¹

The Iranian regime's laws also deprive women from artistic activities as a source of income. Women are not allowed to sing in public nor are they allowed to play in orchestras and perform in concerts.

II. Labor force participation and unemployment



Economic participation

- Women's economic participation is **11.7** per cent.
- **74.3** per cent of employed women work in the private sector with 4.4 per cent of them having part-time employment

Unemployment

- Over **27** million Iranian women are absent in the workforce.
- The unemployment rate for young women under 30 years of age is **85.9** per cent.
- **100,000** women get laid off every year

Women's Committee

In paragraph 8, in Section II, "The changing world of work," the CSW reiterates, "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work is fundamentally dependent on the employment opportunities in the private and public sectors and the terms and conditions of their paid and unpaid work."

Gender gap in Iran's labor market remains persistent and pervasive. The World Economic Forum has ranked Iran 139th among 145 countries.²²

The regime's officials acknowledge that unemployment is the most significant challenge to Iran's economy and this situation is especially crucial when it gets to the employment of women, female university graduates, and female heads of household.²³

a. Economic participation

The National Statistics Center has announced women's economic participation in 2016 to be 14.3 per cent,²⁴ with 1.6 per cent drop. Although this participation rate is very low, but it does not indicate the reality. The NSC announced women's economic participation as 13.3 per cent in 2015.²⁵ If we consider the 1.6 per cent drop announced this year to be true, the economic participation rate for women should be around 11.7 per cent based on the figure announced the previous year.

The same report indicates the ratio of employment of women above 15 years of age as 12.5 per cent,²⁶ out of which 54.2 per cent work in the service sector and 21.3 per cent work in the agricultural sector. At the same time, 74.3 per cent of employed women work in the private sector with 4.4 per cent of them having part-time employment.

²¹ The state-run Fararu website, August 31, 2014

²² Global Gender Gap Report 2016 <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/rankings/>

²³ Shahindokht Molaverdi, former presidential deputy for women and family affairs, interview with the state-run ILNA news agency, September 6, 2014

²⁴ https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/Files/fulltext/1395/n_nank_95_3_v2.pdf

²⁵ https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/0/Files/abstract/1394/ch_ntank_94.pdf

²⁶ <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81749328/>

A government official has acknowledged that 2 million girls have graduated from Iran's universities in the past 20 years, comprising over 60 percent of college graduates, but unemployment rate among women has increased.²⁷

b. Unemployment

Unemployment is rampant among women. From the 30 million women in Iran over the age of 10, only three million are employed and over 27 million Iranian women are not present in the workforce.²⁸

Another study indicates that the number of working-age women is 32,252,090 people of whom only 4,289,528 are economically active and the rest have no economic role.²⁹

Shahindokht Molaverdi, former presidential deputy for women and family affairs, acknowledged in an interview that the unemployment rate of young women in 2015 had reached its highest level in 20 years.³⁰

The unemployment rate for young women under 30 years of age is 85.9 per cent.³¹

In summer 2016, the National Statistics Center of Iran declared that the average unemployment rate for young women in Iran reached 47.3 per cent in summer 2015.³²

Official statistics on unemployment of the 15-24 age group in 2014 shows that in some Iranian provinces this rate exceeds 50 per cent.³³ Women's unemployment rate in Ardebil Province is 51.2%, in Isfahan 53%, in Alborz 55.9%, in Ilam 86.4%, in Charmahal-o Bakhtiari 80.1%, in Khorassan Razavi 69.5%, in Northern Khorassan 55%, in Khuzistan 63.5%, in Fars 70%, in Qazvin 58.7%, in Kurdistan 55.1%, in Kermanshah 61.6%, in Kogilouyeh and Boyer-Ahmad 64.7%, in Golestan 69.7%, in Lorestan 81.7%, in Mazandaran 64.1%, in Central Province 62.5%, and in Hormozgan 73.1%.

Women's unemployment rate grows rapidly. Abol Hassan Firouzabadi, deputy Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, has acknowledged that 100,000 women get laid off every year.³⁴

Other sources indicate that at least 900,000 women have been fired from their jobs over the past ten years.³⁵

c. Official propaganda

To evade international accountability, the ruling regime has published false information and fabricated data to claim that the situation of Iranian women is not that bad.

In a recent report, it claimed 40 per cent of those entering the job market over the past three years have been women.³⁶

The claim was made on the basis of a "poll" taken from "100,000 working people in 28 different job groups." The original report indicates that its research had been done among job groups that traditionally recruit more women as secretaries, office work and translation.³⁷

In another whopping lie, the regime has claimed that 70 per cent of the jobs created in 2016 has gone to women.³⁸ The report, however, admits that the figure has been fabricated by taking into account the number of rural women engaged in unofficial jobs with few working hours, and the women who had to accept jobs that no one else is willing to accept due to long working hours and small wage. It also makes note of women who have accepted jobs that have no correlation with their education.

²⁷ Sussan Bastani, deputy for strategic studies in Rouhani's presidential directorate for Women and Family Affairs, interview with the state-run ISNA news agency, February 13, 2016

²⁸ The state-run Mehr news agency, June 8, 2016 <http://www.mehrnews.com/news/3680189/>

²⁹ The state-run T.News website, Fars news agency, August 16, 2015

³⁰ The state-run psychnews.ir, January 22, 2017 <http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/3632-iran-highest-unemployment-for-young-women-in-20-years>

³¹ The state-run Mehr news agency, January 5, 2016

³² <http://www.women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/3513-iran-young-women-s-unemployment-rate-exceeds-47-per-cent>

³³ The state-run Economists (Eghtesad-danan), August 13, 2015

³⁴ The official IRNA news agency, September 6, 2015

³⁵ Fatemeh Sadeqi, Professor and member of faculty of Teachers' Training University, interview with the state-run Fars news agency, June 16, 2015

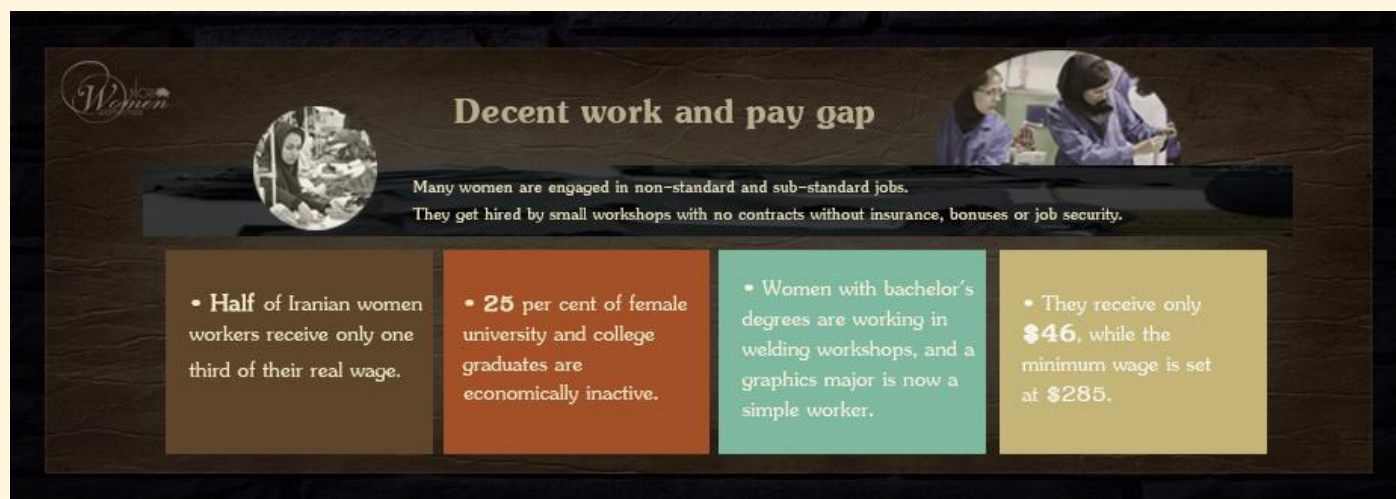
³⁶ The state-run Fars news agency, July 16, 2017, <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13960425000546>

³⁷ <http://www.irantalent.com/>

³⁸ The official IRNA news agency, March 23, 2017 <http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/82364350>

Another false data produced by the regime has been the claim on a 4.2 per cent increase in the rate of women's participation between 2013 and 2017. While Rouhani's deputy for women and family affairs admits that women's economic participation has increased only 1 per cent in the past four years, a state-run website claimed that "women's participation" had reached 16.4 per cent this summer from 12.4 per cent in 2013.³⁹ To make up this figure, they have apparently taken into account the number of women who have just applied for jobs.

III. Decent, good-quality paid work and pay gap



Due to dire economic conditions in Iran, many women are engaged in non-standard and sub-standard jobs. They get hired by small workshops either with no contracts or with contracts lasting for only 3 or 6 months, earning a small salary, without insurance, bonuses or job security. Many of those working for the government and in the public sector, have unstable employment, earn less and have fewer entitlements to social security and pensions. For two years, women nurses and teachers have been staging frequent protests to demand formal and permanent employment, balanced salaries and past-due wages, among others.

A Rouhani advisor officially acknowledged, "half of Iranian women workers receive only one third of their real wage."⁴⁰

a. College graduates

Despite the fact that during the past few years the number of female college graduates has increased, their quota in employment across the country has been very insignificant. Officials say educated women are widely disappointed and that the unemployment rate for educated women has doubled.⁴¹

One study indicates that 52 per cent of female university and college graduates are "economically inactive", a euphemism used to refer to the unemployed.⁴²

Another report indicates 46.6% of college graduates are women, 34.5% of whom are economically active (70.1% employed and 29.9% unemployed), and 65.5% are considered economically inactive.⁴³

According to a survey done on the Iran's work force in the period spanning from 2005 to 2013, unemployment rate has had progressive increase among female university graduates as it rose from 65% in 2005 to 78% in 2013.⁴⁴

At the same time, women with higher education are regarded as a new sector who are either unemployed or have been forced to engage in menial jobs with low wages.

³⁹ The state-run Eghtesad Online, August 2, 2017

⁴⁰ The official IRNA news agency, April 21, 2015

⁴¹ Shahindokht Molaverdi, former presidential deputy for women and family affairs, interview with the state-run Fars news agency, January 4, 2016

⁴² The state-run Kayhan daily newspaper, June 20, 2017 <http://kayhan.ir/fa/news/106849>

⁴³ The state-run Aftab News website – January 2, 2016

⁴⁴ The state-run Dana news agency – July 2, 2016

Nearly 39% of educated women with higher education in Gilan are unemployed and have not been able to find jobs.⁴⁵

Women with bachelor's degrees are working in welding workshops, and a graphics major is now a simple worker. Of course, there are many more like them and their numbers are increasing by the day. Furthermore, all these individuals prefer to not mention their degrees in order to get hired by a certain organization or workshop," said Hossein Akbari, a member of the Workers Services Association.⁴⁶

The state-run Shahrvand newspaper, on June 28, 2017,⁴⁷ recounted the stories of educated women who had to work in jobs that are in no way related to their field of study and level of education. These women receive only 150,000 toumans a month (\$46) while the Supreme Labor Council has set the minimum wage for the year 2017 at 930,000 toumans (\$285).

Maryam with a BA in political sciences, has been working in a Falafel shop for six months from 3 p.m. until midnight. She earns 150,000 toumans (\$46) a month. Shahnaz, a graduate of computer engineering, works 9.5 hours a day in an insurance company and earns 300,000 toumans (\$92) a month. Shahnaz's friend with a B.S. in accounting works for 10.5 hours a day as an accountant in a shop and earns 200,000 toumans (\$61).⁴⁸

b. Nurses

THE MAJORITY OF NURSES IN IRAN DO NOT HAVE OFFICIAL EMPLOYMENT

Every nurse in Iran attends to 15 patients, while by international standards every nurse has to care for one or maximum of four patients.

Nurses have been constantly protesting to receive their salaries past due between 6 to 10 months.

16 educated nurses have died in the past 1.5 years due to pressure at work.

Despite their heavy duty involving a lot of work, pressure and harms, the majority of nurses in Iran do not have official employment. They work on temporary contracts. They are offered a small salary and even that small salary is not regularly paid.

After Rouhani took office, nurses faced remarkable drop in salaries and bonuses. The Ministry of Health has been evading payment of nurses' salaries according to a plan called, "payment based on conduct."

The latest protest by nurses was in Boushehr⁴⁹ on August 24, 2017, where they protested non-payment of eight months of their past due salaries. Women nurses in Semnan⁵⁰ also staged protests on July 16 and 17, 2017, outside the Governor's Office in this city to demand 11 months of past due salaries. The nurses and staff of one of the hospitals in Yasouj⁵¹ also staged a protest on May 30, 2017, demanding six months of non-paid salary. Similar protests have been staged all across the country throughout the year.

⁴⁵ Fatemeh Rafi'ie, director general of women and family affairs in Gilan Province, interview with the state-run Fars news agency – October 5, 2015

⁴⁶ The state-run Asr-e Iran daily, September 23, 2015

⁴⁷ <http://shahrvand-newspaper.ir/News:NoMobile/Main/104263>

⁴⁸ Iranian women with college degrees earn just \$40 a month <http://women.ncr-iran.org/articles/4148-iranian-women-with-college-degrees-earn-just-40-a-month>

⁴⁹ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/4229-iran-women-nurses-stage-protest-boushehr>

⁵⁰ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/4116-iran-women-nurses-stage-protest-in-semnan>

⁵¹ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/3974-iran-nurses-and-hospital-staff-stage-protest-in-yasouj>

The Vice-President of the Nursing Organization had to acknowledge that while nurses are forced to work overtime, their overtime fees had not been paid for between six to ten months.⁵²

Nurses are not paid while regime officials have admitted that in the past 1.5 years, at least 16 educated nurses between 25 and 45 years of age have died at their workplace due to pressure caused by working different shifts, leading to heart stroke and other fatal problems.⁵³

Five months earlier, the same official announced that 10 nurses had died at work.⁵⁴ This means that in only five months, six nurses have died at the workplace due to pressure at work. It should be noted that the figures officially announced by Iranian officials have to be considered to be the minimum.

One of the vice-presidents of the Nursing Organization, Dr. Jaleh Ezzati, admitted that there is a shortage of nurses in hospitals. She said, “In Iran, every 15 patients have one nurse, while by the international standards every nurse has to attend to one or maximum of four patients.”⁵⁵

Another official acknowledged shortage of 100,000 nurses in the country.⁵⁶

According to some reports, there are at least 11,000 unemployed nurses in Iran.⁵⁷ The President of the Nursing Organization has admitted that some 40,000 unemployed nurses⁵⁸ have registered at the organization’s website who are not willing to continue their work due to lack of job security. The official pointed out that there is an increasing absence of government support for nurses, and they have to endure tremendous pressure at work while receiving small salaries.

The Vice-President of the Nursing Organization has also indicated that there is a wide gap in the salaries of nurses and doctors. “The difference in the salaries of a nurse and a doctor in 99 per cent of countries, is three folds at most. In Iran, however, the difference is 100 folds. We have even had payrolls that are 500 times greater than those of nurses.”⁵⁹

At the same time, the number of graduates of nursing is not small, but there are many who do not get employment licenses after graduation. This is why many nurses decide to migrate despite rampant shortage of nurses in the country.⁶⁰

Instead of compensating for the shortage of nurses in hospitals, official employment of educated nurses, eliminating the wide gap between doctors and nurses’ salaries, paying benefits for harmful jobs, and issuing license for the employment of educated nurses, the Ministry of Health has offered a plan according to which hospitals with sufficient facilities are allowed to train nurses. The plan of the Ministry of Health for training nurses in the hospitals was first announced two years ago. On May 13, 2017, the ministry renewed the directive on this plan.

Instead of making nurses’ employment official to resolve the critical shortage of nurses in hospitals, the Health Ministry seeks to take advantage of untrained graduates as cheap labor forces, activists of the nursing community say. They say that thousands of nurses are working on unofficial contracts despite years of experience in this field and the Health Ministry plan will jeopardize their job security.

In addition, some experts believe that the plan will take back the nursing profession 50 years.

Iran’s nursing community staged nationwide protests⁶¹ on August 6, 2017, against the Health Ministry’s plan. The protesters in Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Ahwaz, Bojnourd, and Hormuzgan called for termination of the plan which pursues to train nurses in hospitals against all academic standards. They said they will continue their protests until they reach their demands.

⁵² The state-run ILNA news agency, October 31, 2016

⁵³ The state-run Roozplus.ir, July 16, 2017

⁵⁴ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/3686-iran-ten-nurses-died-last-year-due-to-hard-work>

⁵⁵ The state-run Alef website, June 11, 2017

⁵⁶ The state-run Fars news agency, TNews.ir, December 3, 2015

⁵⁷ The state-run ILNA news agency, January 23, 2016

⁵⁸ The state-run ILNA news agency, April 30, 2017

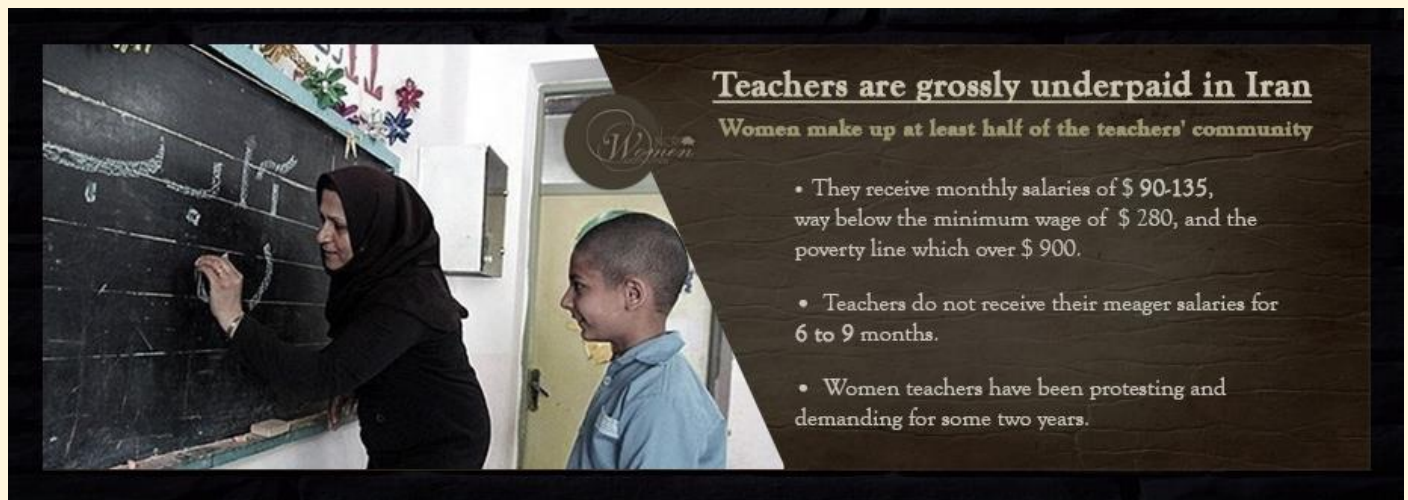
⁵⁹ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/4012-iran-harsh-conditions-of-nurses-15-died-at-work-last-year>

⁶⁰ State-run Mehr news agency, August 31, 2016

⁶¹ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/4173-iran-female-nurses-and-nursing-students-stage-nationwide-protests>

On the sideline of nurses' conditions, the employment of nurses' aides must also be noted. Presently, some 10,000 trained nurse's aides have not been recruited and their employment remains undecided.⁶² They have high school diplomas and have paid 4 million toumans to do the year-long training course.

c. Teachers



Women make up at least half of the teachers' community in Iran. They are greatly dissatisfied with their income. They have been expressing their protest for some two years by holding numerous demonstrations and gatherings.

The faculty of the Education Ministry and teachers have held gatherings always with a considerable number of women participating in Tehran, Karaj, Hamedan, Kerman, Shahriar, Qom, Mashhad, Bojnourd, Ferdows, Torbat Heydariyeh, Mazandaran, Sanandaj, Saqqez, Marivan, Qorveh, Tabriz, Ardebil, Zanjan, Shiraz, Boushehr, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Kangan, Dehgolan, Lordegan, Ahwaz, Aligoudarz, Kohgilouyeh and Boyerahmad, etc. Women teachers are usually brutalized and apprehended in these protests.

Teachers expressed their protest to low salaries, undetermined status of their employment, harsh working conditions, and lack of insurance, non-payment of their salaries for months. They have demanded release of imprisoned teachers' rights activists, insurance for teachers, balancing of retirement pensions, elimination of discrimination, full implementation of Article 41 of the Labor Act, and the immediate increase of the salaries of workers, working teachers and retired teachers according to the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB).

The monthly salary of teachers is between 300 to 450,000 toumans (\$90-135), way below the minimum wage of 930,000 toumans (\$280), and the poverty line standing at more than 3million toumans (\$900). The teachers' meager salaries are usually not paid for six to nine months.


⁶² The state-run Fars news agency, June 16, 2017

IV. Job security and insurance

Job security and insurance

With the government unable to create jobs, the presidential directorate on women and family affairs has been promoting women's employment in the unofficial and private sectors.

- 80 percent of uninsured job holders in Iran are women.
- 50 per cent of employed women work in the unofficial sector and without any social or legal support.



With the government unable to create jobs, the presidential directorate on women and family affairs has been promoting women's employment in the unofficial and private sectors.⁶³

In the absence of any compliance mechanisms that hold the private and unofficial sectors accountable for advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment, women end up with inadequate earnings, lacking job security or safe working conditions. The employers also have a free hand in easily laying them off. According to an official of the Interior Ministry's Social Security Organization Research Institute, 80 percent of uninsured job holders in Iran are women.⁶⁴

Vahideh Negin, Labor Minister's advisor, said the number of insured women was only 19 per cent of the total number of employed individuals in the country. She said the reason is women's unofficial employment.⁶⁵

Only 1.5 million of working women have insurances and practically 50 per cent of employed women work in the unofficial sector and without any social or legal support, the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare recently announced.⁶⁶

Women are known as educated people who work with salaries lower than the legal minimum wage without insurance or official contracts. A study done in June 2017 reveals that educated women with BA and BS degrees are hired without legal contracts and without insurance. At the same time, the employers sometimes get blank checks from these women so that they would not be able to file complaints against them.

One of the girls interviewed for this study said, "At the time of employment, they get blank checks from us so that we would not complain and if we complain, they would cash on these checks. Anyone who complains will destroy her chances of getting employed forever."⁶⁷

Maryam with a BA in political sciences who presently works at a Falafel shop in Dehdasht, a small city in the Kogilouyeh and Boyer Ahmad Province (southwest Iran), says she used to work as secretary at a doctor's building. "I worked as a secretary for two doctors, three years ago. I earned about the same amount as I do now. Of course, that job was a better and easier one. I don't exactly know why I was laid off. I stayed unemployed for several months and then I came here."⁶⁸

Until a year ago, Gelareh lived in a five-story doctors' building in Sanandaj, capital of Kurdistan Province. She says, "I worked as a secretary up to last July. My contract was not legal and I did not have any insurance...."

⁶³ Sussan Bastani, deputy for strategic studies in Rouhani's presidential directorate for Women and Family Affairs, interview with the state-run ISNA news agency, February 13, 2016

⁶⁴ The state-run Khabaronline news agency, November 24, 2016

⁶⁵ The state-run Tejarat-e Emrouz website, April 24, 2015 <http://tejaratemrouz.ir/fa/news/2988>

⁶⁶ <http://www.mehrnews.com/news/3680189>

⁶⁷ <http://shahrvand-newspaper.ir/News:NoMobile/Main/104263>

⁶⁸ Iranian women with college degrees earn just \$40 a month <http://women.ncr-iran.org/articles/4148-iranian-women-with-college-degrees-earn-just-40-a-month>

“According to the law, I must have received my unpaid salary and insurance for these years, but the Department of Labor in Sanandaj does not observe the minimum wage; they say their standard is what is paid by the job market and businesses in Sanandaj. The salary of most secretaries is about the same amount as I earn. I have not received any compensation so far by filing a complaint.”

Gelareh says filing a complaint has cost her too much. Despite having three years of experience in the medical branch, but she can no longer be employed in this section. Now she is working with her husband in different shifts of a library.⁶⁹

V. Violence against women and harassment at work



Violence against women and harassment at work

- The ruling regime is the source of systematic harassment of women.
- **26** government ministries and agencies in Iran are in charge of monitoring and terrorizing women to enforce mandatory veil and dress code.
- Security teams are dispatched to public and private offices to inspect observance of the veil by female employees.
- The Ministry of Education instructed universities to form committees to deal with mal-veiled girl students.

In paragraph 49, in Section VII, “Conclusions and recommendations,” the CSW urges all governments to “strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate violence and harassment against women in the workplace” and to “eliminate occupational segregation.”

In Iran, however, the ruling regime is itself the source of systematic harassment of women at the workplace and segregation of women's work and study areas.

In this study, we are concentrated on violence against women while at work. However, 26 government ministries and agencies in Iran are in charge of monitoring and terrorizing women to enforce the clerical regime's mandatory veil and dress code.⁷⁰

a. Workplace

On June 22, 2017, for example, the Central Headquarters in charge of the Protection of Public Security and Citizens' Rights began sending teams to all public and private sector offices, organizations and universities in all provinces and cities to inspect women employees' observation of the mandatory veil (Hijab). The directive said the offices would include executive agencies, universities, and banks in both the private and public sectors.⁷¹

According to the report of the website of the Parliamentary (Majlis) Research Center, the Plan to Protect the Sanctity of Veil and Chastity was proposed on October 8, 2014, and was ratified on July 21, 2015, under Ahmadinejad.

The plan has 9 articles indicating that street women, women who drop their veil inside their cars or in public places, and employees who do not properly cover their hair will be dealt with according to this plan.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ A Network of 26 Agencies Charged with Clamping Down on Women in Iran, Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, September 2016, <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/3123-a-network-of-26-agencies-charged-with-clamping-down-on-women-in-iran>

⁷¹ The state-run Tabnak website, May 30, 2017

Another calendar issued on May 27, 2017, to Governor Offices across the country, the Interior Ministry teams also started inspecting hospitals to monitor observation of the compulsory Hijab by women employees. The inspections took place according to the 9 plans of the Citizens' Rights program and the 10 programs dealing with chastity and the veil, and violators were to be dealt with.⁷² In the meantime, the secretary of the parliamentary Health Commission, Bashir Khaleghi, said that hospitals must have stricter rules on the veiling (Hijab) of nurses.⁷³

b. Universities

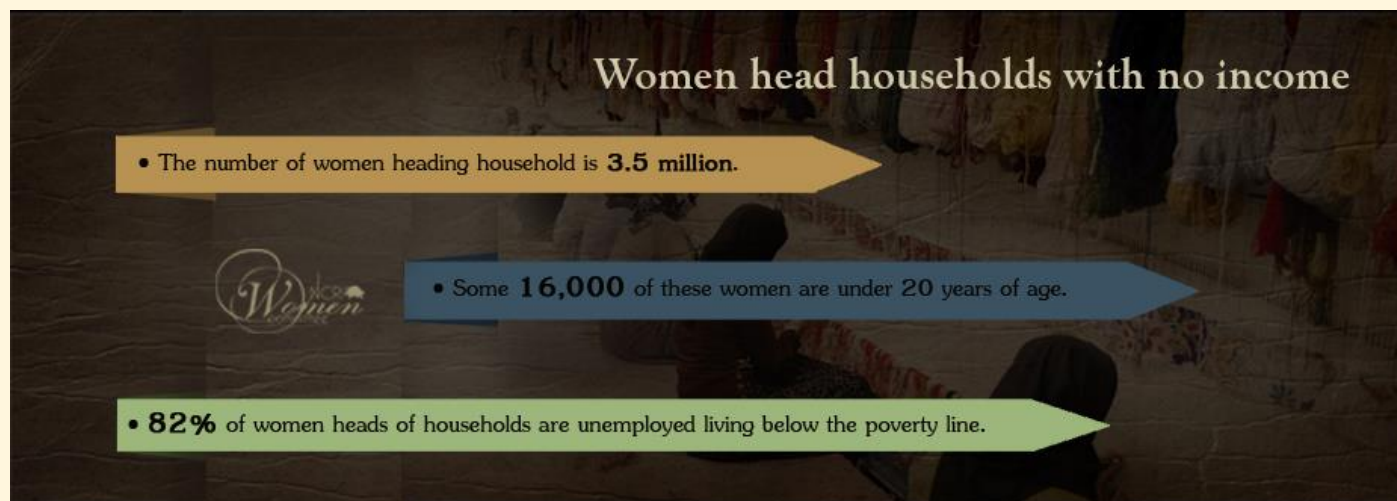
The new school year in 2016 started with sex-segregation and oppressive plans against young women in universities. Some 40 per cent of B.S. courses and a number of M.S. courses at Tehran's University of Allameh were held separately for male and female students.⁷⁴

Also, the Ministry of Education and Sciences obliged universities to form committees to handle women's veiling.

In a directive entitled, "Protection of veiling and virtue," the ministry instructed all universities to prepare their plans focusing on three fields of education, guidance and dealing with the violators and report every three months on their measures to the Secretariat of Protection of Virtue and Veiling in Universities, in the Ministry of Education and Sciences.⁷⁵

The President of the University of Tabriz announced that they were using a new software which could control girl students who do not properly observe their hijab and covering. Mohammad Reza Pour Mohammadi said, "This software will introduce to the professors, those students who have problems with virtue and veil. If these students continue to fail in this respect, the issue will be brought up with their parents and subsequently with the university's disciplinary committee."⁷⁶

In October 2016, the Ministry of Education issued a circular to all universities, instructing them to form committees to deal with mal-veiled girl students. The cultural dean of Tehran's Khajeh Nassir Tousi University pointed out that if a student fails to act according to the Plan on Virtue and the Veil, the committee will deal with her.⁷⁷



c. In the streets

Many women who cannot overcome the obstacles of employment, have to resort to peddling in the streets which is generally not considered a decent job. Millions of these women are heads of household who have to support not only themselves, but a family. They do not enjoy any government support of any kind.

⁷² The state-run Mashregh website, June 1, 2017

⁷³ The state-run Fanous News Agency, July 23, 2017

⁷⁴ The state-run Khabaronline website, September 21, 2016

⁷⁵ The state-run Mehr news agency, August 7, 2016

⁷⁶ The state-run Mehr news agency, September 21, 2016

⁷⁷ The state-run Mizan website – October 1, 2016

Parvaneh Mafi, deputy from Tehran and member of the Women's faction in the mullahs' parliament (Majlis), set the number of women heads of household at 3.5 million households.⁷⁸ Some 16,000 of these women are under 20 years of age.⁷⁹

An example is Khadijeh, 32, the wife of a construction worker who had to retire from work 12 years ago due to bone tuberculosis. Now she has to pay for the treatment of her husband, and her two children, 10 and 4. Their family has no insurance.⁸⁰

Parigol is 63 years old. Her husband is ill and needs to undergo kidney dialysis which is a very expensive treatment. Parigol, herself, suffers from arthritis and osteoporosis. She broke her shoulder blade a long time ago, but she neither has the opportunity nor the money for physiotherapy. So, she is spending her life with this pain as she peddles on the streets.⁸¹

Instead of creating decent employment for these women, municipality agents crack down on and brutalize them as a routine practice. The report of such oppressive approaches appeared in the media in spring 2017 and the state-run press wrote about the male guards dealing violently with peddler women and confiscating their property.

Mobina, 30, who has been abandoned by her husband, has been repeatedly caught by municipality agents and her property confiscated. Every time, she is released after a few hours but without giving back her limited belongings.⁸²

One such incident on November 17, 2016, aroused public outrage all across the country when its video footage went viral on the internet, showing a municipality agent in the northern Iranian city of Fouman slapping a destitute woman selling vegetables in the street to earn her family's living.⁸³ After removing her stuff, the municipality agent engaged in a verbal confrontation with the defiant woman and beat her in the head.

The woman's teenage son uploaded an audio clip on the internet appealing to the public to support his mother who did not deserve to be slapped!

VI. Education and skill-training

CSW recommends that economic and social policies should "strengthen education, training and skills development to enable women to respond to new opportunities in the changing world of work." (paragraph 47, E/CN.6/2017/3)

The Iranian regime, however, has been moving in the opposite direction and systematically restricted women's educational opportunities since taking power.

Although Iranian girls have overcome the obstacles and pushed their way through the universities and made up more than 50 per cent of university and college graduates over the past ten years, the Iranian regime has

⁷⁸ The state-run Bornanews.ir, January 1, 2017 <http://www.bornanews.ir/%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%B4-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B3%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%B5%D8%A7%D8%AF%DB%8C-3/500845-%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%81%DB%8C-%D8%AC%D8%B2%D8%A6%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%87-%D9%81%D8%B1%D8%A7%DA%A9%D8%B3%DB%8C%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%88%D8%B2%DB%8C%D8%B1-%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%82%D8%B1-%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%B4%D8%AF%D9%87-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA>

⁷⁹ <http://www.salamatnews.com/news/152313/>

⁸⁰ The state-run ILNA news agency, April 28, 2017

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ <http://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/3351-iran-violence-against-woman-peddler-outrages-the-public>

also made its utmost effort to limit and eliminate their opportunities for education, something that is crucial to women's economic empowerment.⁸⁴

The prevailing economic crisis and high unemployment in Iran makes it even more vital for women to have jobs to be economically independent or help support their families. In the face of numerous obstacles, Iranian women become victims of tragic social harms which will be studied in future sections.

a. Illiteracy and school drop-outs



Illiteracy rates among girls and women in Iran have become a cause for concern, with the situation being grave in over 40 cities.⁸⁵

According to the National Statistics Centre, there were 9,483,028 illiterates in Iran in 2011, 6,250,965 of whom being women, which is approximately two-thirds of the total population of illiterates.

Drop-out of girls older than 6 years of age is widespread in three provinces of Sistan-Baluchistan, Western Azerbaijan, and Eastern Azerbaijan and comprises the country's highest rate of illiteracy alone.

In a meeting at the Iranian Parliament on December 16, 2015, Zahedan's deputy announced that 156,000 girls in Sistan-Baluchistan have been excluded from receiving any form of education. The head of Sistan-Baluchistan's Board of Education said, "Each year, many students in the remote areas drop out of school due to lack of access or adequate schools. For example, in the village of Espakeh, 319 girls in their first year of high-school were forced to drop out because of shortage of schools for these girls. The nearest high-school is located 40 km from their village."⁸⁶

Saravan's deputy reported to a meeting in Parliament on December 5, 2015 that "coed high-school classrooms and poverty" were among the main causes of girls dropping out in this region.⁸⁷

Statistics show that the rate of female drop-outs in the western part of Khuzistan and cities along the Iran-Iraq border are alarming.

Hormuzgan Province in southern Iran has 14,000 school drop-outs.

In addition, girls' educational status is quite unfavorable in Eastern and Western Azerbaijan provinces, Kurdistan, and North Khorassan.

Some of the girls are prevented from continuing their education as a result of early marriage. An administrative clerk in a village in Khuzistan Province said, "About 50% of boys and almost all girls have no choice but to drop out of school because there are no middle schools here." There are currently no girls' high school in the city of Hovayzeh. Amongst the 40 villages in this region, there are no schools dedicated for girls, as a result of which the majority of girls have been compelled to leave their education.

⁸⁴ Countless Obstacles Before Women's Education And Employment, Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, February 2016, <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/2267-countless-obstacles-before-women-s-education-and-employment>

⁸⁵ The official website of the Iranian Majlis, www.icana.ir, December 7, 2015

⁸⁶ The state-run Mehr news agency, December 6, 2015

⁸⁷ The official website of the Iranian Majlis, www.icana.ir, December 5, 2015

Dezful's Director of Education described the situation of girls' education as "disturbing" and said, "Girls make up 60% of the 500 students who have been deprived of education over the past three years."

The Director of Education in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province has similarly announced, "Of those students who drop out, many are girls, who do so as a result of financial problems."⁸⁸

In spring of 2015, the Director of Education in Western Azerbaijan reported of 1500 cases of school drop-outs. On January 7, 2016, he indicated that there has been a 6-fold increase in the number of drop-outs since last year.⁸⁹

Surprisingly, reports have shown that not only girls are dropping out of school in Iran's disadvantaged provinces, but that Tehran and its surrounding cities are also experiencing an increased rate of female drop-outs.

In October 2015, the director-general of Tehran's Department of Education disclosed that 25,000 school-aged children in this city are working instead of attending school. According to a report by the state-run ANA news agency, the girls in Tehran's Herandi district are unable to pursue their education or even leave home because of the detrimental atmosphere in this region, namely the large number of homeless and addicted people sleeping in the parks and the streets.⁹⁰

The phenomenon of girls dropping out of school is spreading while Iran with some 9.5 million illiterates already ranks 120th on the world's literacy scale.

Gender gap is particularly obvious in economically retarded areas, where low incomes and poverty lead to children's participation in earning the family's revenue and prevent them from continuing their education. Such reasons become more legitimate when it comes to girls.

b. Restrictions on college education

Young women of Iran have resisted and defied the state-sponsored misogyny and discrimination against women. As a result of their intensive efforts, the number of female college students surpassed the number of male students in 1998. In 2003, women made up 65% of student admissions to universities.

Iranian officials reacted by imposing gender-based quotas to limit the number of women entering universities. In a meeting on October 18, 2005, the Supreme Revolutionary Council adopted a bill entitled, "Promotion of women's participation in higher education." In chapter 7 of the bill, the government is ordered to "take the necessary measures to guide young women in choosing their educational fields as would suit their responsibilities in the family."⁹¹

In February 2007, a bill was proposed to the Iranian Parliament to reduce the number of women entering universities, indicating that the increasing number of women in colleges was "dangerous" for the country and "inappropriate" for the families.⁹²

In 2012, women were officially banned from studying in 77 majors. An extensive plan was also carried out to subject women's college admissions to gender-based quotas.⁹³

Majors where women's participation is either banned or restricted include political sciences, English language and literature, paleontology, restoration of historical buildings, counseling, general psychology, social work, geography and urban planning, geography and rural planning, tourism, geomorphology, government management, industrial management, business management, tourism management, hotel management, accounting, applied statistics, applied mathematics, theoretical physics, nuclear physics, electrical engineering, civil engineering, computer engineering, mechanical engineering, agricultural engineering, chemistry, chemical engineering, industrial engineering, railroad engineering, metallurgical engineering, engineering of natural resources-pastures and water resources, mining engineering, naval engineering-ship manufacturing, naval electronic communications, material engineering-industrial metallurgical engineering, mechanized agriculture

⁸⁸ The state-run Fars and Mehr news agencies, December 28, 2015

⁸⁹ Uromnews.ir, August 26, 2015

⁹⁰ The state-run ANA news agency, December 6, 2015

⁹¹ Official website of the Iranian parliament (rc.majlis.ir), October 18, 2005

⁹² The state-run khabaronline website, May 28, 2012

⁹³ The state-run Tabnak website, August 9, 2012

and water, technology of vegetable production, technology of pastures and water, biology and botany , educational sciences-education technology, handicrafts and carpet specialist.⁹⁴

This process continued onto the next year, 2013. Women were deprived of most of mathematical and technical sciences in 36 fields. The situation for women became even worse when on the order of the Minister of Education, gender segregation was intensified and the number of universities with only male or female students increased to 29.⁹⁵

In 2014, some 47 universities rejected female students in various fields. Gender-based quotas strongly favored male students. The number of gender-based majors reached 215.⁹⁶

In December 2015, the Parliament passed Article 5 of the bill on Evaluation and Admission of Students for Complementary Education, emphasizing that the quotas ratified by the Supreme Revolutionary Council and the parliament to limit the number of women and the majors they can study in the higher education system were still valid.⁹⁷

VII. Social harms

The state-sponsored discrimination and policies against women have led to increased poverty among Iranian women.

In the words of the former presidential deputy for women and family affairs, “Today, many of the country's educated girls are prepared to take on jobs and engage in occupation, but it seems that due to lack of job opportunities, their only option is to continue their education.”⁹⁸

“Today we see that girls are depressed for various reasons, the most important reason being unemployment which drives girls towards drugs... The average age for drug consumption has dropped to 13 and most addicts use industrial amphetamines, a situation that is very alarming for our country's women,” she added.⁹⁹

Another official in the directorate for women and family affairs acknowledged that women's economic partnership had dropped over 12.5 per cent despite the fact that over 2 million girls have graduated from universities over the past 20 years.¹⁰⁰

Presently, a considerable number of the homeless, addicts and beggars in Iran are female, and prostitution rate is unprecedented. Women also resort to selling their body parts in order to earn their living.

a. Sale of body organs by women heads of households

82% of women heads of households are unemployed, living below the poverty line. Only a small number of them are covered by the Iranian Welfare Organization, receiving 70,000 toumans which is about \$20 per month,¹⁰¹ less than 10% of the minimum wage of \$285 or 930,000 toumans while the poverty line stands at 3 million toumans or \$810.

An official in Kermanshah admitted: “Often we witness women heads of household taking desperate measures and resorting to unconventional methods to provide the needs of their families including selling their kidneys!”¹⁰²

In a video clip posted on the internet, a young woman who is going through the administrative stages for selling her kidney, says, “I work from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m. but my salary is not sufficient. I have to pay for the

⁹⁴ The state-run khabaronline website, August 7, 2012

⁹⁵ The state-run khabaronline website, August 14, 2012; the state-run Tasnim news agency, April 16, 2013

⁹⁶ Daneshjoo.com and the state-run Tabnak website, August 6, 2014

⁹⁷ The official website of the Iranian parliament ICANA, February 18, 2016

⁹⁸ Shahindokht Molaverdi, at a gathering of women in Western Azerbaijan province on November 6, 2015, the official IRNA news agency, November 7, 2015

⁹⁹ Ibid.

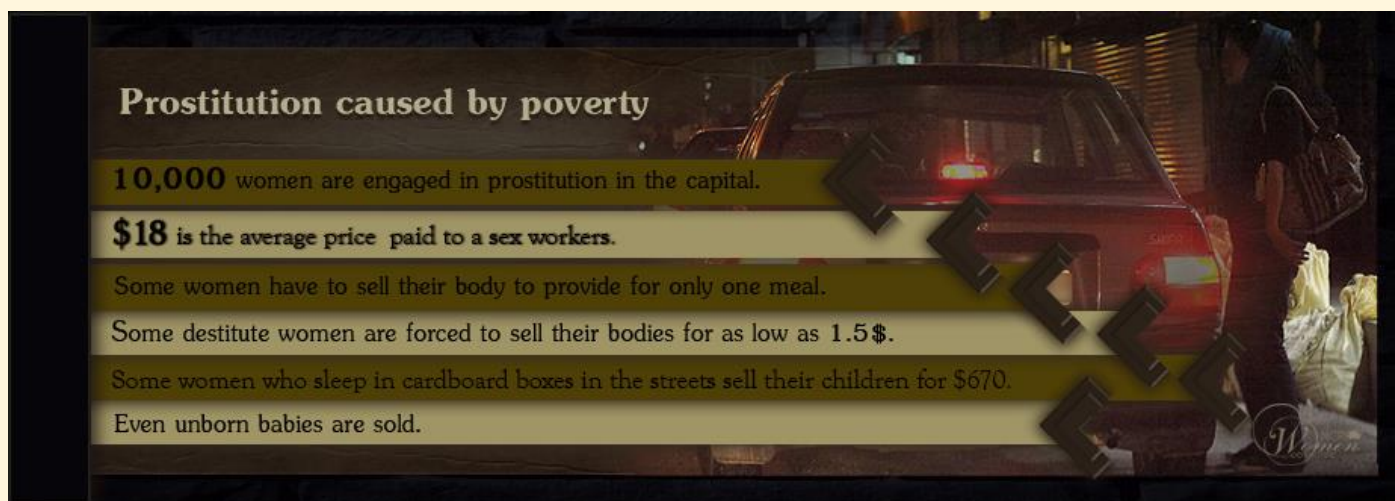
¹⁰⁰ Sussan Bastani, deputy for strategic studies in Rouhani's presidential directorate for Women and Family Affairs, interview with the state-run ISNA news agency, February 13, 2016

¹⁰¹ The official IRNA news agency, November 22, 2015

¹⁰² The state-run Mehr news agency, October 8, 2015

expenses of my two sisters. I have referred to different places to get loans or any form of assistance, but their answers were negative. Those who responded positively, intended to take (sexual) advantage (of me). People in some government places told me that I do not need help. I can pay all my debts in one month with my looks. If I don't pay my debts in two weeks, I will be taken to jail."¹⁰³

b. Prostitution



According to a member of the faculty of science at Tehran's Melli (Beheshti) University, 80 per cent of women resort to prostitution to earn their living.¹⁰⁴

In another incident, a married woman who had not been able to buy meat to feed her sick child, while shivering offered her body to the butcher in exchange for some meat.¹⁰⁵

A woman who has to provide for her three children but has no jobs and has already sold one of her kidneys, has no way but to sell her body.¹⁰⁶

Some girls have to sell their body to buy a pair of shoes or a manteaux.¹⁰⁷

A report by the National Welfare Organization indicated that the average age of prostitution had fallen to 16, while the average age for runaway girls has dropped to 9. The same report revealed that 12 per cent of prostitutes are married women.¹⁰⁸

A senior expert in psychology, Farahnaz Salimi, had this to say about prostitution in Tehran:

"Some 10,000 women are engaged in prostitution in the capital. There are women who have to sell their body to provide for only one meal. The average price for these sex workers is 60,000 toumans (\$18). Sixty per cent of these women are addicted or have some precedence of addiction. 30 per cent of them are women whose husbands are in jail and 15 per cent have been in jail, themselves. 30 per cent of these prostitutes have high school diplomas or higher education. Many of these women who get pregnant either sell their infants, turn them in to welfare organizations or have abortions."¹⁰⁹

According to some reports, there are cases when women have to sell their bodies for only 5000 toumans (\$1.5).¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Aparat.com, December 20, 2016 <http://www.aparat.com/v/nSvxE>

¹⁰⁴ The state-run Fararu website, October 29, 2016 <http://fararu.com/fa/news/293951>

¹⁰⁵ Shocking testimonies published on Aparat.com, October 19, 2016, http://www.aparat.com/v/izSL6/%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%85%2F%D8%B5%D8%AD%D8%A8%D8%AA_%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C_%D8%AA%DA%A9%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%AF%D9%87%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87_%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%87_%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%A7%D8%B2_%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B4%DB%8C_...

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The state-run TNews.ir, November 15, 2016, <http://www.saat24.com/news/214767/>

¹⁰⁹ The state-run Aftab news, June 11, 2016 <http://aftabnews.ir/fa/news/374016/>

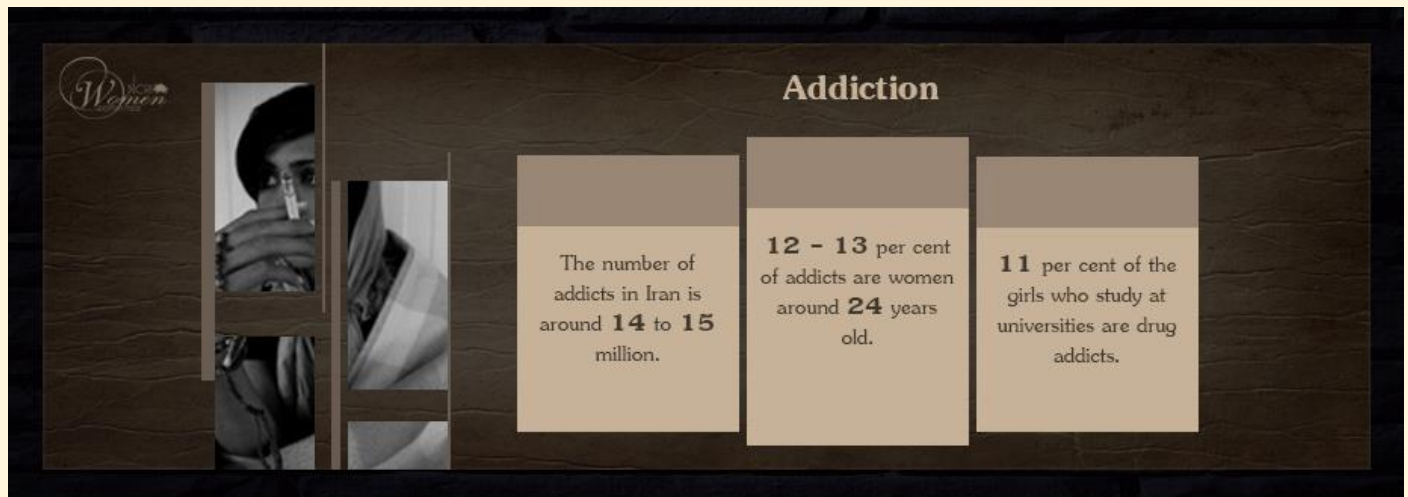
¹¹⁰ The state-run tebyan.net, June 15, 2016

Women who sleep in cardboard boxes in the streets rent their children for 15000 toumans (\$5) a day for begging. Or they sell them for 2 million toumans (\$610).¹¹¹

Again, Rouhani's deputy for women's affairs, Shahindokht Molaverdi said, "Today, we witness sale of unborn infants in their mothers' uterus and before they are born. We do not know the exact numbers but their numbers is large enough to make news."¹¹²

It should be noted that the actual figures are higher because in contrast to violence against women which is not considered a crime in Iran, prostitution is.

c. Addiction



Another consequence of depriving women of job opportunities and social activities is addiction and drug trafficking.

Noting the concealment of the actual figures of drug addicts in Iran, one of the regime's officials attested that the phenomenon of addiction is in front of everyone and before their eyes. He estimated the number of addicts to be around 14 to 15 million in the families.¹¹³

Col. Alireza Faizi, deputy secretary of the Coordination Council for Combatting Drugs, in Western Azerbaijan, declared that "50 per cent of women addicted to drugs are under 35 years old and mostly educated," adding that "26 per cent of Iranian society are addicted to drugs and one-fourth of them are women."¹¹⁴

Another official from the National Welfare Organization said, "In the previous years, on the average, between 9 to 10 per cent of the population of addicts in the country were women over 30 years of age. But now, the average is between 12 and 13 per cent and the women are around 23 or 24 years old."¹¹⁵

The presidential deputy for women and family affairs admitted that drug addiction has extended from the city's margins to the sports centers and hairdressers. She also said that 9 per cent of the boys and 11 per cent of the girls who study at universities are drug addicts, adding that 50 per cent of addicted women turn to drugs at 15 years of age.¹¹⁶

d. Homelessness

¹¹¹ Farahnaz Rafii, head of the Red Crescent Volunteers Organization, Young Journalists Club, February 29, 2016

¹¹² Shahindokht Molaverdi, the state-run ILNA news agency, June 22, 2016

¹¹³ Ali Hashemi, president of the independent committee combatting drugs in the State Expediency Assembly, the state-run ISNA news agency, August 11, 2015 <http://www.isna.ir/news/94040200904>

¹¹⁴ The state-run ISNA news agency, October 26, 2015

¹¹⁵ Farid Barati Sadeh, head of the prevention center and drug rehabilitation, the state-run Salamat Online, July 9, 2017 <http://www.salamatonline.ir/news/16444>

¹¹⁶ Shahindokht Molaverdi, the state-run Tabnak website, June 22, 2016 <http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/599739>

Shahindokht Molaverdi, former presidential deputy on women's affairs, stated in an interview that at least 5,000 women in Tehran sleep in cardboard boxes on the streets.¹¹⁷ There are other accounts that indicate the number as being around 15,000.¹¹⁸

Deputy for social services in the Organization of Social Cooperation and Well-being, Jahangirifar, said that the average age of women who sleep in the streets is around 17 and 18.¹¹⁹

A city official estimated the number of homeless women in Tehran to have grown 100 per cent.¹²⁰ It was also reported that some 200 women including pregnant women, disabled women, elderly women, and child girls lived in 100 tents in south Tehran in the severe cold.¹²¹

In the cold of winter, some of these homeless women sleep in graves in the cemeteries. In December 2016, simultaneous with the discovery of dozens of homeless people who were sleeping in graves, it was reported that a woman was living in a grave along with her 18-year-old son and 16-year-old twins.¹²²

These homeless women have to sell their bodies to provide for very simple needs.¹²³ Many of them are turned into sex slaves and receive only one-third of the money they are paid and the rest is plundered by a pimp.¹²⁴

e. Suicide

Another unfortunate and tragic consequence of women's unemployment in Iran is a high suicide rate among women. Iran ranks first in the Middle East and third in the world in women's suicide.

Women are under constant pressure for the way they dress or cover their hair; they are subjected to inequality and discriminated against; they are humiliated in various forms and they are deprived of job opportunities. The most common method of suicide among Iranian women is setting themselves on fire which is the most painful way of killing oneself.

The remarks made by Fahimeh Farahmandpour, Interior Ministry's advisor on women's affairs, are illuminating in this regard. She said depression, which is the most common cause for suicide among Iranian women, is on the rise among young educated women. "In the more under-developed cities, where girls lack athletic, cultural, educational and recreational facilities, they have no way but to enter college to express themselves and improve their lives, capabilities and talents... Today, girls comprise 60% of university admissions. This postpones the problem four years for girls graduating from high schools but turns it into a problem for unemployed, aimless, university-graduate girls."¹²⁵

VIII. Political participation

Despite women's brilliant record in universities and on college level, women's political and decision-making participation is almost non-existent in Iran.

In 2015, deputy for women's affairs said, "The percentage and presence of women in management and political posts across Iran is under 3%."¹²⁶

We have fresh figures for 2017.

¹¹⁷ The state-run ILNA news agency, July 11, 2015

¹¹⁸ The state-run Arya news agency, May 30, 2015: "There are 15,000 women sleeping in the streets of Tehran every night."

¹¹⁹ The state-run Alef website, May 9, 2016 <http://alef.ir/vdca06new49nm01.k5k4.html?351770>

¹²⁰ Fatemeh Daneshvar, member of Tehran's City Council, the state-run Tasnim news agency, December 5, 2016

¹²¹ The head of the Social Committee of Tehran's City Council, the state-run Mizan news agency, January 3, 2017

¹²² The state-run Tabnak website, December 27, 2016

¹²³ The state-run Vagheye Ettefaghieh daily, July 4, 2016, <http://vaghayedaily.ir/fa/News/76102>

¹²⁴ Aparat.com, April 12, 2017 <http://www.aparat.com/v/P3NoR#>

¹²⁵ The state-run Fars news agency, August 19, 2014

¹²⁶ Shahindokht Molaverdi, the state-run ISNA news agency, March 22, 2015

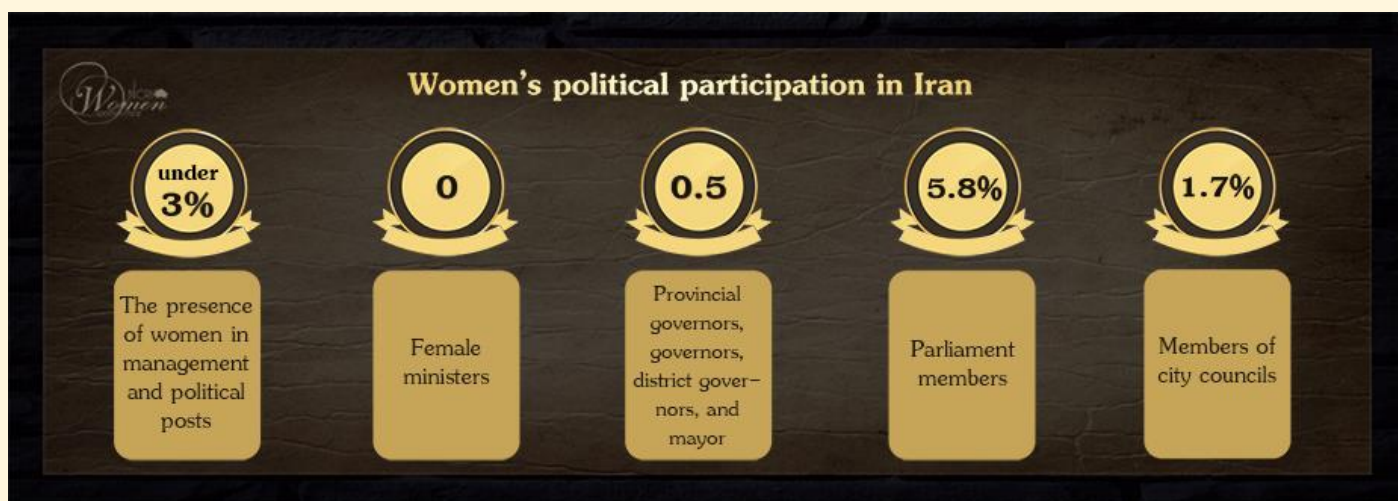
a. Ministers

On August 20, 2017, the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) approved an all-male cabinet for the second term of the mullahs' President, Hassan Rouhani. Despite his campaign promises, Rouhani failed to appoint a single woman minister.

Parvaneh Salahshouri, heading the so-called women's faction in the mullahs' parliament, criticized Rouhani for overlooking half of the Iranian society. In an open session at the parliament on August 9, 2017, Salahshouri emphasized, "Iran is among the few countries in the world whose women do not enjoy any prominent position as major political directors... Today, more than half of (the country's) university graduates are women. Women are present in various economic, political, social and cultural realms. However, when there is talk of appointment of women as ministers, the excuse is their not having a resume. And this vicious cycles goes on."¹²⁷

Rouhani had claimed that his administration "does not accept gender discrimination and injustice." He also promised to appoint at least one woman to his Cabinet. But when the day came, it was announced that Rouhani's staff had not been able to come up with a list of qualified women. He appointed only three women to non-minister posts to act as his own deputies and advisor on women's affairs, legal affairs, and citizens' rights.

As for the decision-making power of these women, Shahindokht Molaverdi, who headed the presidential directorate for women and family affairs during Rouhani's first term, repeatedly admitted during her tenure that she did not enjoy "any executive powers" to advance her directorate's projects. Whenever she attempted to take any superficial step in women's favor that Rouhani's government badly needed for its foreign relations, she had to back down under pressure.¹²⁸



b. Parliament

In the current Iranian parliament, there are only 17 women among 290 members of parliament, making up a mere 5.8% participation for women.

c. City councils

In the administration of Iranian cities and provinces, women hold only 13 out of 2653 positions as provincial governors, governors, district governors, and mayor.¹²⁹

Despite being strongly criticized for excluding women again from his second-term cabinet, Hassan Rouhani did not include any women among the new governors he appointed on September 13, 2017.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ The state-run ISNA news agency, August 9, 2017

¹²⁸ Shahindokht Molaverdi: "Since we do not have an executive status, we have not yet found any desirable, effective relationship with other systems and provinces, and have faced serious obstacles from the beginning." The state-run Tnews.ir, August 24, 2015

¹²⁹ A study on women's participation as governors, mayors and members of city councils, The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, June 2017 <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/4048-a-study-on-iranian-women-s-participation-as-governors-mayors-and-members-of-city-councils-2>

¹³⁰ The state-run ISNA news agency, September 14, 2017

A report published by the Iranian regime's parliament on the city councils' elections accounts only for the main cities and claims that women constitute some 12% of the city councils.

Another state-run news outlet studied the decrease in women's participation only in provincial centers, setting the current number of women at 42.¹³¹

However, a study done by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran found out that in a total of 500 big and small cities, only 64 women were elected as members of City Councils compared to 3724 male members. That amounts to a meager 1.7% participation for women in the City Councils.¹³²

IX. Implementation of CEDAW and other UN agenda

The CSW urges all governments and stakeholders to take effective measures, including “universal ratification without reservations and full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.”

a. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The Iranian regime has refused to join the CEDAW since 1992. According to a report by the Iranian regime's National TV and Radio, CEDAW is against Sharia laws in 40 cases and against national laws in 70 cases.¹³³ Article 1 of CEDAW, alone, contradicts in 90 cases the articles of the Constitution, the Civil Code, the Islamic Penal Code, etc.

According to the letter of the Guardians Council to the speaker of the parliament, CEDAW contradicts the Sharia and the Iranian regime's Constitution in so many cases that making reservations to them would not be acceptable according to paragraph 2 of Article 28 of CEDAW. In the meantime, since the IRI reservations would not be compatible with the original goals of the Convention, it would be anti-Islamic to recommend joining the convention, since it contradicts articles 2, 3 (paragraphs 1 and 5), 4, 10, 20, 21, 72, 115 and 153 of the IRI Constitution.

b. Education 2030 Framework for Action (SDG4)

More recently, in May 2017, the implementation of the 2030 Document on Education (SDG4) turned into a major controversy and an issue of wrangling among the regime's internal factions. Tehran officials expressed their opposition to the agenda, one after the other, with the mullahs' supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, weighing in.¹³⁴

The Iranian regime's officials viewed the Education 2030 document as a “disgraceful” document “bearing a colonialist content” which manifests “one of the most bitter examples of infiltration” and promotes “educational transformation”, “elimination of sexual stereotypes”, “gender equality”, and “global citizenship”, causing grave “security” concerns.

On June 13, 2017, the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (SCCR) meeting presided by the mullahs' president Hassan Rouhani decided to stop implementation of the agenda in education and instead consider the Fundamental Reform Document of Education (FRDE) adopted under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in December 2011, as the benchmark for all educational affairs in the country.

After all, this is a regime that deprives girls from studying in some 80 fields of education in universities. Every month, dozens of Bahai's are expelled from universities for adhering to their faith. Many girls are forced to quit school due to the laws allowing parents to forcibly wed their daughters as young as 9 and 10.

¹³¹ The state-run Iran newspaper, May 29, 2017

¹³² A study on women's participation as governors, mayors and members of city councils, June 2017 <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/4048-a-study-on-iranian-women-s-participation-as-governors-mayors-and-members-of-city-councils-2>

¹³³ Why the Iranian regime does not join the CEDAW? A study by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, March 2016, <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/2336-why-the-iranian-regime-does-not-join-the-cedaw>

¹³⁴ Education 2030 Framework for Action (SDG4) and Iranian officials' hysteric reactions to it, a study by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, June 2017 <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/4058-education-2030-framework-for-action-sdg4-and-iranian-officials-hysteric-reactions-to-it>

X. Conclusion

As suggested by the evidence and data presented in this brief report and within the limits of information that is censored by the repressive regime ruling Iran, it appears that women's economic empowerment is not going to be feasible under the current regime.

Since the mullahs' religious dictatorship relies on misogyny as a pillar, all the appointed governments, including Rouhani's, need to defend and adhere to the same principles.

The theatrical appointment of a few women to non-minister cabinet posts with no real executive powers or other cosmetic appointments to a few CEO positions do not change the huge reality of Iranian women's absence in the "changing world of work," since the regime's laws and policies are inherently set to discriminate against women.

To resolve women's issues and realize their economic empowerment, the regime needs to remove the numerous obstacles that presently exist and are built into Iran's ultra-male-dominated political system and laws. They need to remove the numerous obstacles placed before women's employment, occupation and education. They need to abide by the 2030 Agenda "to leave no one behind," and facilitate education of girl children and admission of female students to any field of their choice at any university.

But as it has been proven so far, the Iranian regime cannot tolerate any symbolic gesture in recognition of women's rights, including the approval of a non-binding UN document such as the 2030 Education Document, let alone the economic empowerment or political participation of women.

The international community, however, must not accept this situation. The Iranian regime must be held accountable for the deplorable conditions of human rights, including women's rights in Iran.

The international community and specifically the United Nations must demand that Tehran improves the situation of human rights, including the laws concerning women's employment and education, and release female political prisoners¹³⁵ who have been incarcerated for defending human, children and women's rights. As the UN and its member states are striving for the planet 50-50 until 2030, it is unacceptable to let the Iranian regime take back the country for decades and impose inhuman pressures, and restrictions on the talented and brave women of Iran.

The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran urges the UN Secretary General and the UN Women to pay particular attention to the situation of Iranian women and take effective measures to improve their conditions.

¹³⁵ Women in Pursuit of Justice, a study by the Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, March 2017, <http://women.ncr-iran.org/documents/3760-women-in-pursuit-of-justice-4>

Women's Economic Empowerment In Iran
Moving in the opposite direction



A study by the Women's Committee
of the National Council of Resistance of Iran

September 2017