



Ramping up social pressure
on women
in Iran

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In addition to the continued arbitrary arrests of human rights and civil activists, the Iranian regime has also been ramping up pressure on Iranian women under various other pretexts since mid-April and throughout the month of May.

Our report this month focuses on the social aspects of the regime's crackdown on women despite various international, economic and natural disaster crises which demand full attention, resources and energy from all state agencies.

May started off with widespread arrests of labor activists during the International Labor Day protests in Tehran, including at least 15 women activists. The month continued with the arrests and imprisonment of more female activists.

As political prisoner Atena Daemi wrote from prison in an open letter published on May 25, 2019, "The Islamic Republic regime is not feeling well... The recent apprehensions of civil and political activists advocating the rights of workers, teachers, women, students, writers, etc. are cause of concern. Of course, the only party that really needs to be concerned is the ruling regime! They are concerned and their actions reveal their weakness and disability, and that they do not find any other way to preserve their rule."



Beset by numerous crises and unable to resolve the problems prevailing the country, the regime has been imposing more restrictions on women, tightening up the rules enforcing the compulsory veil and further cracking down on religious minorities.

Following are examples of the regime's measures in this regard:



Tightening up dress rules for female students

In the beginning of May, Tehran University students witnessed female Bassij agents being stationed all across the campus along with other security forces to enforce the compulsory veil through harassing female students over their clothing and head coverings.

So, on May 13, 2019, hundreds of students of Tehran University held a major protest against such renewed efforts to enforce strict compulsory veiling rules on female students. Female students of Tehran University extensively and actively participated. They carried placards which read, "Freedom of choice is our inalienable right."

Moral Security Police warns drivers against removing the veil

Earlier, the Moral Security Police of Tehran had sent thousands of text messages to warn commuters against flouting the compulsory veil behind the wheels.

Hossein Rahimi, the commander of Tehran's police, stressed, "The police will identify and deal with vehicles whose passengers remove their veils." (The state-run IRNA news agency - April 25, 2019) Rahimi said regardless of who takes off the veil in a car, the Moral Security Police holds the car owners accountable who have to commit themselves in writing not to repeat the offense. Should the offense be repeated, they will be charged and referred to a court of law.

Hossein Ashtari, the Commander of the State Security Force (SSF), later declared that the SSF will step up our moral security plans and enforce them as strongly as in previous years.

Tehran Police brandishes punishment for flouting the veil

Tehran Police Chief Hossein Rahimi recently reiterated the need for Iranian women to observe the compulsory veil, saying, "Removing the veil and improper veiling are considered among obvious social crimes." (The state-run ROKNA news agency – June 1, 2019)

Rahimi implicitly acknowledged that the majority of Iranian women show their opposition to the compulsory veil by saying, "Today, the State Security Force (SSF) deals not with improper veiling but with those who remove the veil."

SSF officials have also reiterated the punishment for women appearing in public without covering their hair who have sentenced to imprisonment from 10 days to two months and fined between 50 to 500 thousand Rials."

Calling for removal of anchorwomen from TV

[Ahmad Alam-ol Hoda](#), Khamenei's representative in Razavi Khorasan Province, called for removal of female anchorwomen from television programs. He noted, "It is unlawful for a veiled woman to speak and laugh with a strange man... It is better to use men instead of women in some television and radio programs. There is no need to have female moderators and anchors." (The official IRNA news agency – May 30, 2019)

In an attempt to stress the significance of the compulsory veil in the regime's policies, Alam-ol Hoda declared, "Removing the veil and improper veiling are examples of corruption which promote sin" describing them as "a mockery of Islam and the Quran."

He also revealed how badly the regime is isolated with regards to the compulsory veil by saying, "Unfortunately, even in religious families you see that Hijab and the veil are not properly observed." According to a [survey](#) done by the Research Center of the mullahs' parliament more than 70% of Iranian women oppose the compulsory veil.

Female footballers attacked by male security guards

During the football match between Zagros of Shiraz and Gas Refinery of Ilam which took place in the Pars stadium of Shiraz on May 25, 2019, one of the female footballers of the team from Ilam, was verbally assailed and subsequently punched in the stomach by a male security guard as she was entering the locker room. Sarina Farajollahi was hurt so much that she had to be taken to hospital.



The head coach and acting director of Ilam's football team were also beaten and shoved around. (The state-run ISNA news agency – May 28, 2019)

No one has accounted on why the male security guards had entered the locker room, while even the fathers and husbands of female footballers are not allowed in the stadium.

Moto-crosser champion deprived of sports activities

Shahrzad Nazifi, a champion of women's motocross in Iran, was deprived along with her family of participating in any competition, after being arrested in November 2018. She is also banned from training others in this field. Her daughter, Nora Naraghi, also a top moto-crosser, has been deprived of any athletic activities.

Ms. Nazifi and her family are Baha'i citizens who have been deprived of their sports activities for their faith and without any judicial warrant.

Ban on women's bicycling further emphasized

The website of the municipality of Isfahan posted an announcement on May 15, 2019, saying: "We are unable to provide bicycles to the honorable ladies and to youths under 15."

The website published a document according to which the Prosecutor of Isfahan had addressed the police, instructing them to, "stop women bicyclists and confiscate their identification papers. If they do not have ID papers, impound their bicycles and take them to the parking lot."

The Isfahan municipality website published the news after the Friday Prayer leader of Isfahan, Abol-Hassan Mahdavi, slammed the municipality, by saying, "A group of people have made people sinful by promoting happiness. People are encouraging women to ride bicycles in Isfahan's Charbagh." Charbagh is one of the top tourist sites in Isfahan.

There is no law in Iran which bans women's bicycling, but the judiciary and police deprive Iranian women from their natural right to suppress, harass and pressure them in the streets.

Female singer prosecuted for singing solo in a village

A female singer has been legally sued for solo singing during a sightseeing tour.

Negar Moazzam had travelled to Abyaneh on May 17, 2019, with a sightseeing tour. She sang solo in this village, a video clip of which was circulated on the social media.



On May 21, 2019, the Prosecutor of Isfahan announced that upon the report of "the intelligence police for public security" a case had been filed against the singer and the tour company and the Prosecutor of Natanz was following up on the case.

The Friday prayer leader of Natanz also reacted to the news, calling the woman's singing as "a shameless measure" which should be accounted for by the Judiciary, the Department of Intelligence, and the State Security Force. (The state-run Fararu news agency – May 21, 2019)

Under the misogynous laws of the Iranian regime, [women are banned from singing](#), and female singers are always censored. Female singers have been forced to stay home since the mullahs took power in 1979.

Female musicians banned from playing in charity concert

Three female musicians were banned from playing in a charity concert in Qazvin.

One of the largest annual charity programs in Qazvin Province was staged on May 22, 2019. A traditional music band was supposed to perform at the auditorium of the Azad University of Qazvin. But on the order of the university's president, the female musicians of the band were prevented from entering the hall. They were not even allowed to sit among the audience and watch the concert. (The state-run ILNA news agency – May 23, 2019)



Women arrested for taking part in Yoga course

A judiciary official announced on May 23, 2019, that 30 women and men had been arrested in a private Yoga class in Gorgan. A Justice Department official said the reason for these arbitrary arrests was "improper clothing of women and men in this house." (The state-run Asr-Iran website – May 23, 2019)

Acid remains available to terrorize Iranian women

The clerical regime has also taken advantage of acid victims to further terrorize women and the entire society. The mullahs' parliament adopted the bill on punishment for perpetrators of acid attacks and their accomplice on May 13 and 20, 2019, but stopped short of limiting the sale and purchase of acid. (The official IRNA news agency – May 20, 2019)

Like cold arms and weapons, acid is able to destroy and burn. According to experts, restrictions on sale and purchase of acid must be included in this act. (The state-run Salamatnews.com - May 20, 2019)

The bill was adopted after years of pressure by NGOs trying to assist acid victims, but as long as acid is freely available for sale, women remain subject to violent [acid attacks](#) which destroy their health and life for good without the perpetrators getting arrested and punished.

In October 2014, a wave of acid attacks was carried out against women in Tehran and Isfahan upon incitements by Friday prayer leaders and took toll on dozens of women. The assailants were never arrested and punished, and acid attack became a common practice for personal revenge. According to Sigal Mandelker, the Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence at the U.S. Treasury Department, the Ansar-e Hezbollah, a state-backed institute, has been linked to the acid attacks against women in Isfahan. ([USAdarFarsi](#), June 7, 2018)