

Women's Committee
The National Council
of Resistance of Iran

March
2021

REPORT TO CSW65

WOMEN IN IRAN



Effective Participation and Decision Making

Women kept far from
effective participation
and decision making

Elimination of Violence Against Women

New records of violence
against women in Iran

Empowerment of Women And Girls

Iranian women are pushed
in the opposite direction

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DECISION MAKING

Where does Iran stand on “Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life?”

“Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life” is the principal theme in [65th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women in United Nations](#) in March 2021. For this purpose, this subject would be assessed in Iran under the rule of current regime, knowing that the ruling religious fascism in Iran, since its inception, was founded on misogyny, marginalizing women, and turning Iranian women into second-class citizens. In the past 40 years, the Iranian regime, in law and in practice, has imposed an extreme suppression on Iranian women. In January 2021, according to Transparency International report, in regards to widespread

corruption, Iran was ranked 146th out of 180 countries in the world. The widespread corruption leads to more poverty, and in this case due to [discriminating rules](#) and policies women are again its first victims. The annual [report on gender gap](#) of the World Economic Forum ranked Iran 148th out of 153 countries in the world. According to this report Congo, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq, and Yemen are the only countries that have a deeper gender gap than Iran. Considering the Iranian women’s high spirit of courage and resistance and the high percentage of women among university students and graduates, it is only natural that they face more frustration and

pressure given their current situation. This report also ranks Iran 145th in terms of women’s political empowerment and 147th in terms of Iran’s economic participation opportunities. Considering the extent of governmental corruption, and the lack of transparency in governmental reports, the reality is certainly worse. In addition, it is important to point out that the inhuman management policies of the Iranian regime to fight the Coronavirus has resulted in a situation that 70% of the people unemployed are women workers. This is another factor that contributed to the decline of women in these fields.

Political Participation

According to Nahid Khodakarami, a member of Tehran city council “60% of students passed the universities entrance exams in Iran and most of the university graduates are women, but there is not even a single female minister in the cabinet. Given that the Ministry of Health has the largest population of women with different specialties, there is not even a single woman as a deputy minister.”¹ In Iran under the rule of “Velayat-e-Faqih” or absolute clerical rule, the first official of the country is a male cleric who has the absolute political, economic and military power. Velayat-e-Faqih is a life time appointment. This system has a 45-member Expediency Council and a 13-member Guardian Council as its arms which are entirely made of men and determine the country’s policy above the approach of the law.

In addition, every province and city has a mullah as the representative of the Supreme Leader and Friday prayers Imam who represents and applies the interests and policies of the Supreme Leader. This is a special kind of dictatorship that generally puts the law and the state in the second place in making political decisions. Therefore, the participation of women in these positions are even more meaningless. Keeping these factors into account, this report studies women’s participation in seemingly decision-making positions and in political decision-making responsibilities.

DECISION MAKING

Presidency: President and the Vice President are both men. According to Iranian regime’s constitution the “President must be a man”.

The Cabinet:

- In a 34-member cabinet only two women are participating in consultancy positions.
- The head of presidential office, chief of staff, Press Secretary, Secretary of the cabinet, and 19 ministers are all men which means women have no role in ministerial positions.

Deputy Ministers: Rouhani’s government publicizes that this government involves many women in deputies of ministers’ positions, but this participation does not exceed more than 5.5%. The number of officials in each ministry according to the provided information on their websites including deputies, consultants, and managers of subsidiaries are as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Managerial positions distribution in Iran's ministries

No	Ministry	No of Women	No of Men
1	Ministry of Education	2	26
2	Ministry of Communications and IT	4	28
3	Ministry of Intelligence		15 (unidentified)
4	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance	2	78
5	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	0	10
6	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare	0	17
7	Ministry of Agriculture	0	38
8	Ministry of Justice	0	10
9	Ministry of Defense	0	10
10	Ministry of Roads and Urban Development	0	26
11	Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Commerce	6	59
12	Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance	1	5
13	Ministry of Interior	0	6
14	Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology	1	17
15	Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism	6	60
16	Ministry of Oil	0	10
17	Ministry of Energy	0	5
18	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports	2	6
	Total	24	426

Table 2. Gender distribution of officials in Iran's provinces

No	Ministry	No of Women	No of Men
1	Eastern Azerbaijan	1	37
2	Western Azerbaijan	1	33
3	Ardabil	2	35
4	Isfahan	1	50
5	Alborz	1	28
6	Ilam	1	34
7	Bushehr	4	28
8	Tehran	4	50
9	Charmahal-O-Bakhtiari	3	28
10	Southern Khorasan	3	34
11	Khorasan Razavi	3	54
12	Northern Khorasan	2	28
13	Khuzestan	4	46
14	Zanjan	1	30
15	Semnan	2	27
16	Sistan-O-Baluchistan	4	41
17	Fars	3	53
18	Qazvin	5	20
19	Qom	3	29
20	Kurdistan	1	30
21	Kerman	2	45
22	Kermanshah	1	35
23	Kohgiluyeh-O-Boyerahmad	2	30
24	Golestan	7	31
25	Gilan	3	38
26	Lorestan	3	29
27	Mazandaran	2	43
28	Markazi	2	30
29	Hormozgan	1	33
30	Hamadan	2	33
31	Yazd	3	37
	Total	77	1099

Parliament:

The current [11th Parliament](#) of the Iranian regime has 276 members, 260 of whom are men and 16 women. Women comprise 5.7% of the members in the Parliament.

Provincial Government:

Thirty-one Iranian Governors are all men, which is equal to 0% women participation in Provincial governance.

Provincial Officials:

At the level of Provincial officials of the ruling religious fascism in Iran, out of 1,174 officials there are only 77 women; 31 of these women are the head of the Women and Family Offices of each province. Therefore, even including these ceremonial positions, women comprise less than 7% in the provincial administrative positions. It is important to point out that these women officials do not represents Iranian women at all. For instance, the governor of

Qods town in Tehran province is a criminal woman called Leila Vaseghi. On November 16, 2019, she personally commanded the police force to shoot peaceful protesters, she publicly claimed that she has personally given the orders to shoot the protesters in the November 2019 protests. The number of officials by gender in each province is listed in Table 2. This data is according to the information provided on their official websites.

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Municipalities:

The mayors of 31 cities in provincial capitals are all men. There are only 2 women as mayors out of 339 mayors in Iran. These 2 women run the 302nd and 319th towns in term of their population. In total, women have a share of 0.58%, or about half a percent, of the mayors in Iran.

City officials and governmental organizations in provincial capitals:

This report examines the municipal officials in the provincial capitals as well. In the review of the municipal officials in Iran, deputies, managers of organizations, subsidiaries, and regional managers are all included, based on the available information on the official websites of each city. Summarized information as presented below is obtained from 30 provincial capitals that their official websites were accessible. According to the official websites, out of 830 officials in these 30 cities only 25 were women. This figure is equivalent to 3.11% that indicates the marginal share of women participation in Iranian regime officials even in its fifth tier. It must be noted that even these 25 women work as assistants or consultant in women affairs.

Data is listed in Table 3.

City Councils:

Women participation in city councils that does not have executive power is slightly higher. This report concentrates on provincial capitals. The information is mainly obtained from the official websites of these cities. In summary, there are only 38 women out of 321 members of city councils. Therefore, women participation in this category of political officials is equivalent to 11.83%. Available data for provincial capitals is represented in Table 4.

Table 3. Gender distribution of officials in Iranian cities at provincial capital levels

No	Province	Capital	No of Women	No of Men
1	Eastern Azerbaijan	Tabriz	0	59
2	Western Azerbaijan	Urmia		
3	Ardabil	Ardebil	0	27
4	Isfahan	Isfahan	2	38
5	Alborz	Karaj	0	35
6	Ilam	Ilam	0	18
7	Bushehr	Bushehr	2	27
8	Tehran	Tehran	3	26
9	Charmahal-O-Bakhtiari	Shahr-e Kord	1	19
10	Southern Khorasan	Birjand	0	19
11	Khorasan Razavi	Mashhad	2	28
12	Northern Khorasan	Bojnourd	0	12
13	Khuzestan	Ahwaz	0	41
14	Zanjan	Zanjan	0	27
15	Semnan	Semnan	1	18
16	Sistan-O-Baluchistan	Zahedan	1	21
17	Fars	Shiraz	0	36
18	Qazvin	Qazvin	2	37
19	Qom	Qom		
20	Kurdistan	Sanandaj	4	27
21	Kerman	Kerman	1	20
22	Kermanshah	Kermanshah	1	32
23	Kohgiluyeh-O-Boyerahmad	Yasuj	0	35
24	Golestan	Gorgan	0	28
25	Gilan	Rasht	0	12
26	Lorestan	Khorramabad	1	22
27	Mazandaran	Sari	0	20
28	Markazi	Arak	4	39
29	Hormozgan	Bandarabbas	0	26
30	Hamadan	Hamadan	0	29
31	Yazd	Yazd	0	27
	Total		25	805

Table 4. Gender distribution of members of city council in provincial capitals in Iran

No	Province	Capital	No of Women	No of Men
1	Eastern Azerbaijan	Tabriz	1	12
2	Western Azerbaijan	Urmia	0	6
3	Ardabil	Ardabil	2	9
4	Isfahan	Isfahan	2	11
5	Alborz	Karaj	2	11
6	Ilam	Ilam	1	6
7	Bushehr	Bushehr	2	4
8	Tehran	Tehran	6	15
9	Charmahal-O-Bakhtiari	Shahr-e Kord	1	6
10	Southern Khorasan	Birjand	2	7
11	Khorasan Razavi	Mashad	2	13
12	Northern Khorasan	Bojnourd	1	8
13	Khuzestan	Ahvaz	0	13
14	Zanjan	Zanjan	1	8
15	Semnan	Semnan	0	7
16	Sistan-O-Baluchistan	Zahedan	1	10
17	Fars	Shiraz	2	12
18	Qazvin	Qazvin	3	6
19	Qom	Qom	0	13
20	Kurdistan	Sanandaj	0	9
21	Kerman	Kerman	1	9
22	Kermanshah	Kermanshah	0	11
23	Kohgiluyeh-O-Boyerahmad	Yasouj	0	7
24	Golestan	Gorgan	1	9
25	Gilan	Rasht	1	10
26	Lorestan	Khorramabad	1	8
27	Mazandaran	Sari	0	9
28	Markazi	Arak	1	10
29	Hormozgan	Bandarabbas	2	9
30	Hamadan	Hamadan	0	6
31	Yazd	Yazd	2	9
Total			38	283

Economic Participation

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In order to obtain an overview of the situation of women's participation in economic decision-making positions, we have focused on two axes: 1- the head of banks and 2- the head of state-owned companies. The names of the surveyed banks have been selected from the list of banks and financial institutions on the governmental website of Scientific Association of Urban Economics of Iran, and the information of each bank has been extracted from the official website of the same bank.²

Heads and Boards of Directors of Banks:

All 35 well-known banks in Iran are headed by men. Thus, the share of women in this position is 0%. There is only one woman out of 173 members of the boards of directors of banks. This is equal to 0.57% share for women.

The CEO's and boards of directors of most prominent Iranian companies:

For this purpose, a list of 104 companies that are introduced as top 100 companies in 2019-2020, have been considered according to the information provided on the state-run Asr-e-Eghtesad website. 103 out of 104 companies are headed by men which shows that less than 1% of companies are headed by women.³ The boards of directors of these companies are also entirely consists of men. Due to the lack

of uniformity and transparency of websites we are not going to explore this issue for the time being. Given the above facts, women's participation in economic decision-making positions is equal to 0.19% in total. The dire situation of women's economic participation in Iran is not just limited to senior management positions. According to reports in winter of 2020, only 3.9 million women out of 30.96 million, merely 12.6% of women over 15 years old were employed.⁴ This number dropped by 1.2 million in comparison to the previous year.⁵ By fall of 2020, this number had decreased by another million and twelve thousand individuals.⁶ 75% of the recently unemployed workers due to coronavirus epidemic are women.

Considering the percentage of graduated women in Iran, one expects to observe a different situation for women participation at least in scientific and academic fields. But with the misogynist laws and policies adopted by the mullah's regime women are deprived of all opportunities.

Women's participation in decision making positions in 123 public universities that are ranked on the reference site for Iranian Universities is marginal.⁷ Among 123 university presidents in Iran, there are only 2 women at this position. Only 1.62% of the university presidents are women.

Among 320 faculties of Universities that declared their managers on their official websites, 314 are men and 6 are women that is only 1.87% share for women.

The reference website for Universities introduces 1,568

men and 64 women as the important scientific people, women constitute a 4% share in this group.

Mansour Gholami, the minister of Science, Research, and Technology approximated women population in Iran's Universities to be around 50% in December 2020. "33% of faculty members are women", he claimed.⁸

This was merely a propaganda announcement. According to the posted information about professors on Rokh Nama website, e.g. for Tehran University there are only 30 women among 469 professors in various majors, which shows a share of 6.4% for women at these positions.⁹

Although not all University faculty professors are accessible, the following examples provides an overview on this issue. There are 50 professors in the faculty of law and political science in the same University, where women

occupy only 3 seats, i.e. 6%.¹⁰ Amir Kabir polytechnic University faculty includes 644 individuals, where women occupy only 38 seats which is equal to 5.9% share for women.

However, given that most technical, engineering, and military disciplines are banned for women, thus, this figure sharply drops in specific Universities that are devoted to these majors. Therefore, 33% women participation in faculty in different universities as the minister claims is dubious. In another example, the scientific board in Abadan Oil Industry University contains 74 members, 3 of whom are women, which is almost 4% share for women.¹¹ Another example is that the 64 faculty members of the University of Science of Technology in the field of electronics, bioelectronics, power, control, and telecommunication are all men.

1. Marginalization of women, the state-run Hamshahrionline.ir, December 27, 2020
2. Iran Urban Economics Scientific Association, iuea.ir
3. The state-run Asr-e Eghtesad website, January 20, 2020
4. Discrimination in employment has added to problems of working women, the state-run ILNA news agency, March 25, 2020
5. Appraisal of the Plan to Census the Workforce, Iran's National Statistics Center-Spring 2020, July 26, 2020
6. The Coronavirus cut the population of working women, the state-run Mizanonline.ir, January 30, 2021
7. Reference website for Iranian Universities, uniref.ir
8. Women make up 33% of Iran's faculty of science, the state-run Student News Network, snn.ir, December 26, 2020
9. Profile- A comprehensive picture of Tehran University's Scientific Activities, profile.ut.ac.ir
10. Tehran University's School of Political Law, profile of the faculty, lawpol.ut.ac.ir
11. Website of the Petroleum University of Technology, put.ac.ir

Violence against women in Iran becoming more violent and more widespread

The most common form of violence against Iranian women is perpetrated by the ruling regime in its efforts to enforce the mandatory Hijab on them. A report published in summer 2018 by the research center of the mullahs' parliament (Majlis) indicated that some 70% of Iranian women do not believe in the compulsory dress-code, namely the head-to-toe black veil or Chador. If according to experts, at least 66 percent of Iranian women experience domestic violence in their homes, one must say that virtually 100 percent of them experience the state-sponsored violence to enforce the veil everywhere, every day and round the clock on the streets of cities across the country.

A network of 27 agencies tasked with enforcing the veil

27 government ministries and institutions are tasked with enforcing the mandatory Hijab on Iranian women. The Commander of the State Security Force, Hossein Ashtari, once boasted that his forces arrest at least 2,000 women every day in cities across the country, for flouting the compulsory veil.¹

These arrests are accompanied by violence. One of the regime's female MPs once acknowledged that there are long-lasting psychological consequences for women who are dealt with by the Guidance Patrol. As an MP, I have seen cases when the girl's cover was not that bad but such unprincipled approaches have caused psychological problems for the person which has led to other ailments."²

Punishment for flouting the mandatory veil

The amendment to Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code stipulates that women who appear in public places without the veil are sentenced to imprisonment for a term of 10 days up to 2 months or are fined by 50,000 to 500,000 rials in cash. According to this article, even a strand of hair being out is a problem, and it should be applied to girls 9 years and older.³

Imposing the Mandatory Hijab

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

On the ground, however, the punishments are even harsher.

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

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

The clerical regime allocates enormous funds and resources to impose the mandatory veil.

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



Female agents of the State Security Force on drill

The most common forms of violence against women in Iran are carried out and supported by the state.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

4 plans were launched last year to harass women behind the wheels, in shopping malls, in recreation areas, and in social media.

Nazer 1-4 Hijab Campaigns

The “Nazer” Hijab Campaigns send thousands of security forces to the streets to harass and arrest Iranian women and girls. The regime justifies its campaigns under the pretext of “moral security” and dealing with “improper veiling.” Acting SSF commander Qassem Rezaii announced the enforcement of four Nazer Plans. Rezaii said: “The State Security Force has planned and executed four Hijab and Chastity plans. In Nazer 1 Plan, the SSF deals with individuals who violate the veiling code in their cars. The Nazer 2 Plan deals with women who remove their veil or do not properly observe it in shopping malls and major stores. Nazer 3 and 4 Plans focus on women who do not observe the veil in recreation areas, walks and in the cyber space.”⁴ Nazer 4 Plan, the latest of the four Hijab campaigns, expanded the control of the mullahs’ Cyber Police (FATA). They monitor social media accounts on modelling, photography and art. The charges leveled against users include dissemination of photos which “violate public chastity,” are “immoral” or “vulgar.” In a more recent measure, the State Security Force has been confiscating the [national identity cards](#) of women whom they deem as “improperly veiled.” Without the national identity card, these

women are deprived of all social services. (November 7, 2020)

In yet another measure to ramp up pressure on Iranian women, the clerical regime has set up a garrison in Qom to organize and coordinate all members of the Bassij force who are involved in “promoting virtue and forbidding evil.”⁵

In a related development, Vahid Amirian, social deputy for the IRGC in Tehran, told a gathering of Bassij paramilitary forces on January 27, 2021, that they had set up a group of 300 groups for promoting good and forbidding evil. In return for incentives, they will give verbal warnings to at least 12 people every day.

Making it unsafe for opponents of mandatory Hijab

Representatives of the mullahs’ Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, prioritized a new wave of suppression against Iranian women, justifying them by citing “social security” concerns. They said it was a [priority for the State Security Force](#).⁶ Habibollah Sha’bani, Khamenei’s representative in Hamadan Province and the Friday prayer leader of Hamadan, declared, “The State Security Force should not allow criminals to feel safe in society.”⁷ The [Friday Prayer Leader of Isfahan](#), central Iran, called for formation of special court branches to

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tackle “moral abnormalities.”

Yousef Tabatabaie-Nejad urged the authorities to grant greater powers to the State Security Force (SSF) to deal with Hijab offenders. His comments came in a meeting with a top Armed Forces’ security official and the SSF Commander of Isfahan Province. By “Hijab offenders” he meant women who oppose the mandatory Hijab and display their opposition in various forms.⁸ Tabatabaie-Nejad said: “The social atmosphere must be made unsafe for these people whose number is scarce. But they must not be allowed to be relaxed in streets and parks while breaking the norms.”

The mullah also [called on the courts to support](#) those who forbid evil and promote virtue. He refers to Bassij forces who target women in the streets, violently forcing them to observe their mandatory Hijab.



Female agents attack women on the streets of Tehran

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Tehran's State Security Force has pushed one woman to the ground and pushing another two into the SSF van



Hopeless Situation for VAW Bill

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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

Earlier on December 16, 2020, Mohsen Dehnavi, member of the board of directors of the mullahs' parliament, had acknowledged in an open session of the parliament receipt of a plan called "Protection, Dignity, and Provision of Security for Ladies against Violence."⁹

Nasrollah Pejmanfar, head of the Principle 90 Committee in the parliament, said: "The government had announced several times that it would present the bill on provision of security for women to the parliament, but it did not. So, we tabled it in the form of a plan."¹⁰

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

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

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

Ladies Against Violence" contained five chapters and 77 articles.

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

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

According to Shahindokht Molaverdi, Rouhani's former deputy for Women and Family Affairs, given the various other concerns and priorities of the parliament, it is a far-fetched expectation that the parliament would examine the bill by the end of Rouhani's term (in July), pass it to the Guardians' Council and return it to the government.¹¹

Is the bill really going to protect women against violence?

Both the government's bill and the parliament's plan have many deficiencies and problems which make it inefficient in achieving its goals. Rather than defending the oppressed women of Iranian society against violence, the bill addresses seemingly moral and cultural coercion, which is practically in defense of misogynistic religious rule. The clauses related to deterrent punishments considered in this bill simply repeat the provisions that existed in the regime's penal code and criminal procedure. Irrespective of the fact that these punishments promote violence in society, it should be noted that women seeking recourse

under the ruling cultural and judicial regime are subjected to danger, and the process of proving that a crime has been committed is onerous. In many cases, if a woman complains of violence, especially sexual violence, she becomes the main accused. After an unfair trial, she typically faces an inhumane fate.

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

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Bill's adoption would make things worse

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

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

Alireza Mafi, a lawyer, emphasizes, "this bill cannot eliminate violence against women, because there is no belief in violence in the text and it pays more attention to crime, while the scope of violence is much higher than victimization."

He emphasizes that the bill should not focus on women who live in dignity but rather on women who have been the target of violence in society. "The new bill legalizes gender segregation, which does not mean the elimination of violence; but also the segregation itself is an act of violence against women," he said.¹²

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

The bill's efficacy had been earlier questioned by Parvaneh Salahshouri, a former member of the mullahs' parliament. "Even if the bill is adopted,

Even if the bill is adopted and enforced, it cannot stop the cycle of violence, because the grounds for such crimes and murders still exist in the economic and legal sectors.

the conditions would only get worse for women. The present bill has removed the phrase 'violence against women', factoring out or somehow changing the parts on security of women. As a result, the bill has lost its goal... The bill has only played with words."¹³

Who is responsible for women's security?

The members of the National Committee for the Protection, Dignity and Women's Security include 22 well-known regime officials, all of whom are men, except for Massoumeh Ebtekar, presidential deputy for Women and Family Affairs.

In addition to the 22 officials, two religious scholars from the Qom seminary are on this committee, representing the most reactionary and misogynistic spectrum of religious dictatorship.

Soaring violence against women

While stating that a bill to ensure women's security against violence has not yet been approved, Sedigheh Rabii acknowledges that "Violence against women is on the rise every year, and official statistics show only overt violence." She added, "A review of forensic statistics on violence, as well as referrals and contacts with the 123 social emergency system, show the upward trend of this violence. If this bill fails to define the proper enforcement guarantee, this issue will not be resolved."

Rabii then admits, "The bill does not provide the necessary support for abused women, and such women are forced to continue living passively in the current circumstances."¹⁴

World Record in Domestic VAW

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

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

Among others, Reza Jafari, head of the regime's Social Emergencies, said: "Domestic violence against women in Iran saw a 20% rise from March 2017 to March 2018."¹⁵

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

Last year, the Borna.news website published a report on October 13, 2019, indicating, "In our country, from every 20 persons, one is exposed to domestic violence by her husband. But less than 35 percent of the cases of domestic violence are reported to the Police or Social Emergencies." Amanollah Qaraii Moghaddam, a sociologist, told Borna.news: "Some time ago, chair of the Social Aid Association, announced that 40% of domestic violence in the world is carried out in our country... Sexual domestic violence is the worst form of domestic violence."¹⁷

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Iran holds the world record on domestic violence

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

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

Mahboubfar blamed aggravation of domestic violence against women on government mismanagement and its failure to control the economic and social consequences of Coronavirus: "Increasing fight in the families has overflowed into society and is considered the most important social and security crisis these days. This has gravely concerned all sociologists and experts on social behavior."

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

The Judiciary does not have a criminalizing look to domestic violence. When a husband commits violence against his wife, the Iranian Justice Ministry's approach is to conclude the case in peace and safeguard the couple's married life. Neither is psychological violence recognized in Iran.

A Tehran lawyer, says: "Principally, psychological violence is not recognized in Iran. And so long as violence does not have obvious evidence and signs, the law would not examine it."¹⁸ According to the clerical regime's laws, domestic violence is considered the same as other forms of violence between two persons. The law only

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oversees physical violence and only if the woman has two witnesses.

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

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

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

Deputy for social affairs of the Welfare Organization, Mohammad Aligou, says that there are only 34 safe shelters in provincial capitals throughout the country for more than 40 million Iranian women.¹⁹

And even in these scarce centers, they are not able to provide protection and support for a woman who has been victim of domestic violence. This is because according to the law, married women are obliged to obey their husbands. So, when her husband goes to the center, they have to turn in the woman to him.²⁰

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

In a shocking revelation, Mahboubfar stressed, "Less than three months since the beginning of

the (Persian year) 1399 (i.e. from April to June 2020), the statistics on violence in the country has exceeded the total of all the past years."

Hassan Marvi, head of the Mashhad Welfare Department, announced a 15-fold increase in spousal abuse following the outbreak.²¹

Consequences of inaction by law enforcement agencies

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

Lying on her bed in a Tehran hospital, Ashraf could barely speak, but the horror of the day came through in her weak voice: "How can I return home where I have no security because of my husband? I've been lying on the bed for nearly two weeks, with an amputated hand, another paralyzed hand, a (blind) eye and a stitched face. How can I earn my living?"²²

Ashraf had complained to the police several times about her husband's brutal attacks during 27 years of married life. The previous time, Ashraf's husband hit her on the head with a heavy vase and broke her rib cage. However, the husband was released on bail. After his release, Ashraf went to the police station to protest but received this answer: "What should be done? He is your husband and there is nothing we can do!" And today, she is hospitalized with a serious handicap.

■ Another example is Mona who explains her experience as the following: "When he hit me for

the first time, I was shocked, but I immediately contacted 110 (emergency police). When the police came, they said 'we cannot enter your house. You must come down.' I told the police, that my husband would escape if I opened the door. But the police said: 'How should we know that you are telling the truth?'

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

"When I filed my complaint, I asked the police to sign as a witness, but he said, 'I have not seen him beat you.' The neighbors, too, they usually do not intervene either and do not testify. The police did not arrest my husband even temporarily. I was lucky that my brother came to my aid."²³

■ Sara, a manager of a computer programming company, after several years of enduring violence, contacted the police and told them about the type of treatment she had received. She says in this regard: "The Police told me that they would not intervene in family quarrels unless there is beating involved. I said yes, I was beaten. He battered me. Then they asked: 'Do you have the report of the Coroner's Office?' I did not. They said, 'we cannot follow up in this way.' I said this is not his first time. Couldn't you do something? They said, 'do you have any witnesses?' But I didn't."²⁴

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Ashraf Sadat Hosseini

In the absence of supportive laws, and the Judiciary's incriminating look, violence against women has seen a drastic rise in recent years.

Honor Killings

Oppressive and medieval policies and laws encourage and promote violence against women and girls, and facilitate their murder



Romina Ashrafi whose father beheaded her by a sickle and received a redeemable 2-year sentence

Defenseless victims of savage laws

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

Romina Ashrafi was a student in Talesh, northern Iran. She escaped home to get married with the man she loved after his father's opposition. Then she got caught by security forces.

In the court, the judge presiding the case did not heed the young woman's pleas not to be returned to her father. The state-run media revealed that the girl had cried during the court hearing and

repeatedly asked the judge not to send her home lest her father would kill her. The judge, however, decided for Romina to go back to her father.

On the night of May 21, 2020, when Romina was asleep, her father took a sickle and cut her head from the back of her neck.

Romina's mother revealed that after her boyfriend went to their home and asked her father to allow them to get married, her father encouraged Romina to commit suicide and threatened to kill her. It is also said that a couple of days before the murder, Romina's father had consulted a lawyer, making sure that according to the regime's laws he

would not be executed for killing his daughter. Having experienced such threats and sensing her imminent death, the least would have been for the Social Emergencies to give Romina support and take her to a safe shelter. But violence against women, domestic violence and honor killings have not been criminalized by the clerical regime. Nonetheless, they are institutionalized in the mullahs' misogynist laws.

A daily average of 8 honor killings

Experts in Iran acknowledge that the previous statistics on honor killings in Iran have never been comprehensive, transparent or accurate. The institutions and organizations dealing with these figures, such as the Social Emergencies and the Police, do not have access to the data and no official figures have been announced in this regard.

Estimates in 2019, however, showed that the average number of 375 to 450 cases of honor killings in Iran is between 375 and 450 per year. Honor killings account for about 20% of all murders. It also accounts for 50% of all homicides.²⁵

"Honor killings have been on the rise in a strange way in recent times," says Mostafa Eghlima, President of the Iranian Scientific Social Welfare Association.²⁶

Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar, a social ills expert, says: "Family murders top the country's crises. It is estimated that at least 8 murders take place in Iran every day."²⁷

Mahboubfar predicts that the continuation of this trend could increase the average of 450 honor killings per year to 2,736 cases in 2020.

Law gives the green light to murder women

A quick look into the cases of honor killing clearly shows that many of the victims were killed as a result of forced or early marriages and other official laws of the country.

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

mullahs' parliament.

Article 1105 of the clerical regime's civil code considers the man – exclusively – to be the head of the family. Article 1108 emphasizes that if a woman refuses to perform her "duties" toward her husband, she will not receive alimony.

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

According to the same law, in order to file for divorce, a woman must be able to prove that living with that man is life-threatening, while the testimony of two women is equivalent to that of a man.

In many cases, a woman who has been beaten or stabbed is forced to return to live with the same perpetrator, even after complaining to legal authorities.

According to Mostafa Eghlima, President of the Iranian Scientific Social Welfare Association, "Unfortunately, specialists in this field are not present in social emergencies, safe houses and... the absence of such assistants makes judges hand over Romina to her father, or have hundreds of other girls return home without being monitored and cared for. As a result, these girls are killed by their fathers, husbands, and brothers."²⁸

One social ills expert says in this regard: "The enforcement of law against honor killings has been in a way that presently, men have a free hand in carrying out physical, verbal and psychological violence against girls and women in their families. By relying on existing male-dominated laws that grant them immunity against implementation of maximum punishment, they commit any crime and murder."²⁹

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Forced Child Marriages Lead to a Range of Violence

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

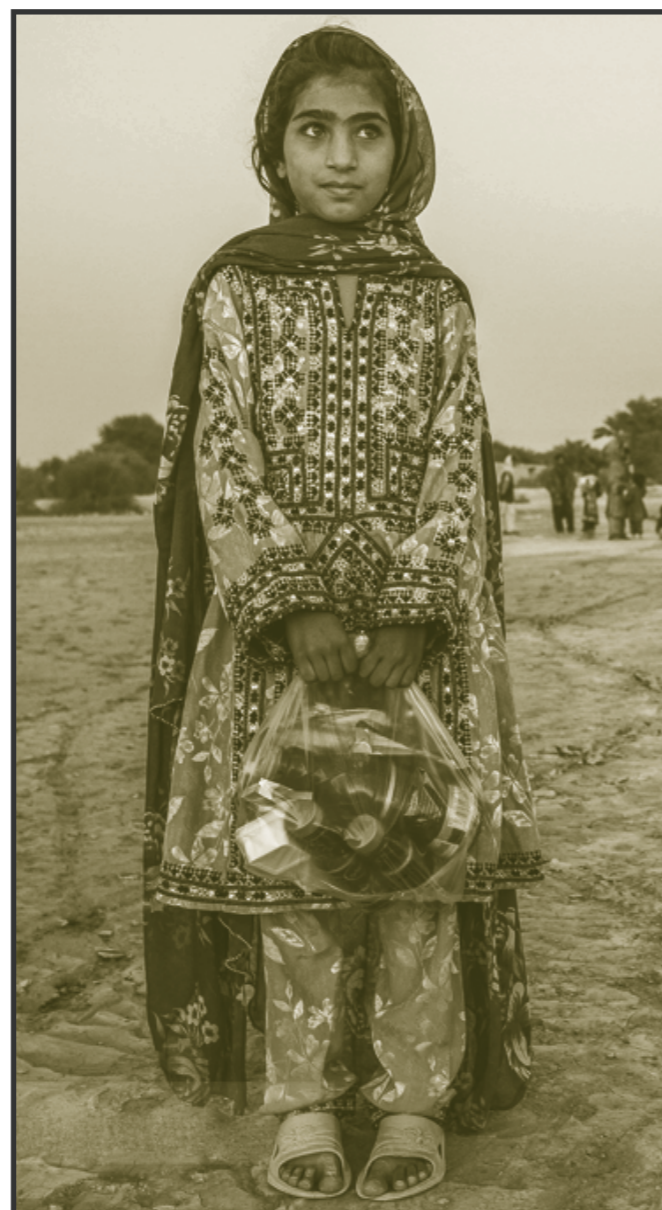
The minimum legal age for girls to marry in Iran is 13. A girl under the age of 13 can also sit at the wedding table with her father's permission, as well as that of a judge. These marriages are basically forced by the girl's father or family.

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

"The marriage of girls makes them domestic slaves who not only fall under the yoke of their husbands, but also, because they are still children and cannot manage life, they are dominated by the husband's relatives," commented a sociologist with regard to child marriage.³⁰

*100 under-15
marriages in
every 24 hours*

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



4-fold increase in child marriages in one year

Based on the figures released on January 31, 2021 by the National Statics Center of Iran, 7323 marriages of girls between 10-14 years of age were registered in spring 2020. Another 9058 marriages of the same age group were registered in summer 2020.³¹

The 16381 marriages of girls under 15 years registered in six months in 2020 shows a 23% increase from spring to summer and 2% increase compared to the same period last year. This means that 100 marriages of girls under 15 are registered in every 24 hours.³²

The NSC has also registered 364 child births to mothers under 15 years of age in summer 2020. Razavi Khorassan, East Azerbaijan, Sistan and Baluchestan, and Khuzestan are the top four provinces in Iran for children marriages under 13 years of age. Tehran Provinces sits on the eighth rank.

"There are statistics that children under the age of 15, especially girls under this age, have used this loan, and this number has quadrupled compared to last year," said Mohammad Mehdi Tondgooyan, Deputy Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs.³³

The increases in child marriages in Iran are directly related to the growing poverty of the Iranian people. The painful result for girls is that marriage loans are used to trade girls under 15! An 11-year-old girl in Bushehr was forced to marry a 90-year-old man in exchange for 21 million Tomans or \$458 paid to her family.³⁴

In March 2019, Ali Kazemi, Legal Advisor to the Judiciary, announced that between 500,000 and 600,000 children marry annually in Iran; these are officially registered statistics. The data does not include those who marry outside the formal process.³⁵

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

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The most serious consequences of child marriages

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

■ Widowed children are considered a great tragedy in Iran. Hassan Mousavi Chelek, President of the Relief Society, described the situation as "worrying," citing more than 24,000 widows under the age of 18. Child widows may commit crimes or suffer social harm in order to earn a living.³⁶

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

Golnar was an 11-year-old girl in Ahvaz. She committed suicide by eating rice pills when they tried to force her to sit at the wedding table. She wrote in a letter to her mother, who was in prison at the time, "I am being beaten a lot here, and now they want to marry me off..."³⁷

■ Prostitution is another one of the most serious social harms that results from early and forced marriage in Iran. Research shows that more than 43% of [prostitutes](#) are married before the age of 13.³⁸ A women's rights activist said that the age of girl sex workers has unfortunately reached as low as 12.³⁹

Child Abuse

The worst social ailment in Iran

Endnotes

Most domestic violence in Iran occurs against children and women. Reza Jafari, head of the Social Emergencies, said in March 2018: “Child abuse in Iran has increased fivefold and domestic violence against women has increased threefold.”⁴⁰ In June 2019, he had announced that child abuse was the most common domestic violence in Iran.⁴¹ In many cases, domestic violence leads to mild and severe beatings or eventually murder. Today, violence has become so widespread in Iran that one cannot draw a definite geographic line for it.⁴² An Iranian psychologist, Hashem Varzi, acknowledged, “The types of child abuse in Iran is changing. We are witnessing a rise in the number of child laborers, addicted children, child brides and many other phenomena that have not yet been included in our child abuse statistics.”⁴³ “Neglecting the basic needs and rights of a child such as nutrition, health, shelter, adequate clothing, security, love and education are also obvious examples of child abuse,” Varszi added.



The reasons for rising child abuse in Iran

More girls are victims of child abuse than boys. 52% of abused children are girls and 57% of perpetrators of violence are fathers.⁴⁴ In June 2020, Abbas Masjedi Arani, head of the National Coroner’s Office, announced a 12.5% increase in child abuse in Iran. He said, “The number of child abuse cases in Iran in 2019, showed a growth of 12.5% in this field.”⁴⁵ The clerical regime is not transparent in dissemination of data and it blocks public access to accurate statistics. So, to get a sense of what this 12.5% increase means, the figure from a 2018 report on just one province might prove beneficial. In August 2018, Mehrdad Motallebi, Welfare Organization’s social affairs deputy in West Azerbaijan Province, said: “More than 13,000 cases of child abuse were registered by the Social Emergencies of W. Azerbaijan Province from March 2017 to March 2018. This figure is only related to the cases reported to this center.”⁴⁶ Some sociologists believe that the increase in child abuse in Iran is due to economic problems and forced marriages. The main factor, however, is the absence of laws and policies to prevent and punish child abuse. Domestic violence is not considered a crime under the clerical regime’s laws. According to the regime’s laws, the punishment for killing a child by his/her father could be only 2 years in prison which could be redeemed. The same laws promote violation of children’s rights by legalizing child marriage, honor killings, etc.

1. The state-run Tasnim news agency, September 29, 2016
2. The state-run Mehr news agency, November 28, 2017
3. The state-run ROKNA news agency, June 1, 2019
4. The state-run ROKNA news agency, September 20, 2020
5. The state-run Young Journalists’ Club, November 17, 2020
6. The state-run Mehr news agency, October 25, 2020
7. The state-run Fars news agency, October 22, 2020
8. The state-run Mehr news agency, October 2, 2020
9. The state-run IRNA news agency, December 16, 2020
10. The state-run Fararu news agency, December 20, 2020
11. The state-run Sharq daily, January 18, 2021
12. The official IRNA news agency, January 4, 2020
13. The state-run khabaronline.ir, December 16, 2019
14. The official IRNA news agency, January 4, 2020
15. The official IRNA news agency, July 18, 2018
16. The state-run ISNA news agency, November 16, 2018
17. Borna.news, October 13, 2019
18. Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020
19. The state-run Shahrvand daily, June 20, 2020
20. Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020
21. The state-run ISNA News Agency, July 9, 2020
22. The state-run ROKNA news agency, December 28, 2020
23. Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020
24. Aasoo.org, June 30, 2020
25. The state-run ISNA news agency, December 7, 2019
26. The state-run Khabarfori.ir, June 20, 2020
27. The state-run Jahanesanat.ir, November 19, 2020
28. The state-run Khabarfori.ir, June 20, 2020
29. The state-run Jahanesanat.ir, November 19, 2020
30. The official IRNA news agency, September 4, 2019
31. The state-run Tabnak website, February 5, 2021
32. The state-run ISNA news agency, February 5, 2021
33. The state-run ISNA News Agency, December 10, 2019
34. The state-run Hamshahronline.ir, June 16, 2020
35. The state-run Entekhab Daily, March 4, 2019
36. The state-run Salamatnews.com, July 24, 2018
37. The Aasoo.org, July 2017
38. The state-run Didarnews.com, April 4, 2020
39. The state-run Salamatnews.com, December 29, 2019
40. The state-run jahanesanat.ir, November 19, 2020
41. The state-run asreiran.ir, June 20, 2019
42. The state-run Jahanesanat.ir, November 19, 2020
43. The state-run IRNA news agency, November 22, 2020
44. The state-run salamatnews.ir, October 4, 2018
45. The state-run Hamshahronline.ir, June 20, 2020
46. The state-run Uromnews.ir, August 7, 2018

Iranian women struggle with serious inequality in employment and are being increasingly marginalized

Considering the fact that the [UN Committee on the Status of Women](#) places the economic empowerment of women and girls at the core of achieving women's rights and equality, and sees this as a key lever for moving towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan, this section of the report focuses on this issue. The information, statistics and figures collected are all extracted from the comments and confessions of government officials and experts that have been published in the state media. This information does not indicate the depth of the tragedy that Iranian women are struggling with, and it is very likely that it is far from the reality. Despite this fact, based on this information, it can be well understood that women's rights in Iran have been systematically violated and the ruling religious fascism is working to reduce their economic power as much as possible.

The statistics of employment of women in Iran

Iranian women struggle with serious inequality in employment. The number of women over the age of 15 who are eligible for employment according to the standards of the Statistics Center of Iran is 30.9 million.¹

According to the official statistics of the Statistics Center of Iran in the winter of 2020, of this figure,

4.7 million women were registered as economically active population, which is equivalent to 15.3%. According to the center's indicators, an economic activist is a person employed or looking for a job. That is, it also includes unemployed women. The center estimates the working population of women in the winter of 2020, 3.9 million people (equivalent to 12.7 percent).² This statistic has decreased by 1.2 million people compared to the previous year, 2019.³ In the fall of 2020, the number of employed women decreased by 1,012,000 again.⁴ Accordingly, women make up 70% of those who have lost their jobs in Coronavirus situation to date. Another report from the Statistics Center of Iran compares the employment situation in the fall of 2020 and the fall of 2019.⁵ According to the report, employed women in the fall of 2019 were close to 4.5 million people, or 14.5 percent, while in 2020, they reached nearly 3.8 million people, or 11.8 percent. Regardless of statistical differences and inconsistent measurements and time, which is observed even in the most credible centers of the regime, this report shows a 2.7 percent decrease in the number of employed women in the last year and the total statistics show a decline in the number of employed women.



EMPOWERING WOMEN

Unemployment statistics for women

The report of the Statistics Center of Iran estimates that the unemployed population of Iran is 2.8 million, of which 1.98 million were men and 813 thousand were women.⁶

Javad Hosseinzadeh, head of the Statistics Center of Iran said about the [effects of the Coronavirus pandemic](#) in the summer of 2020 on increasing female unemployment, that, compared to the same period last year, about 2 million people left the labor market, of which more than one million and two thousand people are women.⁷

The economic consequences of the coronavirus show that women were affected by coronavirus more than men.

This trend will make women face a critical situation with an ongoing pandemic throughout the world and with the inaction and inhumane policies of the clerical regime, in Iran in particular, because women in Iran have less income, savings and job support.

Women also have a larger share of unsustainable jobs. Studies show that more women than men work in the service sector, and this has caused them to suffer more during the coronavirus.

Women hairdressers, women working in catering establishments, hotels, forums, or women working in schools and kindergartens are some of the women who become unemployed due to the spread of the coronavirus and its economic consequences.

Unemployment of female university graduates

According to official statistics of the Statistics Center of Iran, the [unemployment rate](#) for women with a Master's degree, PhD or higher is higher than the general unemployment rate among women.

From 2009 to 2016, the unemployment rate of women with postgraduate education and above has increased rapidly from 12% to 26%.⁸

According to the Statistics Center, in the fall 2020, the unemployed population of higher education graduates out of the total unemployed was 40.2 percent. This share was higher among women than men and in urban areas than in rural areas.⁹

According to the winter 2020 statistics of the Statistics Center of Iran, the unemployment rate for men graduating from higher education centers was 11.2 percent and for women it was 24.7 percent.¹⁰

A comparison of the statistics of this group of women in the fall of 2020 with the fall of 2019 shows that their ratio has increased from 68.7% of the total unemployed to 70.3% of them and faced a growth rate of 1.6% within a year.¹¹

In the case of educated women, we also encounter statistical contradictions in the clerical regime. In 2015, the state media reported an unemployment rate of 85.9 percent for educated women, and since then, according to all reports, their [employment situation](#) has not only not improved, but has been deteriorating.

Another noteworthy observation about Iranian educated women is that these women, despite years of studying and trying to get a degree, when

Unemployment of female university graduates

they reach the labor market full of discrimination and in the face of Iran's economic crisis, even if they can find a job, it is mostly in fields not related to their field and at levels much lower than their level of education.

"About 80 percent of the labor force demand is from university graduates," admits Reza Taziki, director of the Ministry of Labor's National Business Development and Sustainable Employment Plan. Speaking about the ministry's assessment of five provinces, Taziki estimates that, in the most optimistic sense, only "30 percent of employees, mostly in medicine, health, security and the military, work in jobs related to their education" and "more than 70 percent of employees in these areas are employed in jobs unrelated to their education."¹²

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Women were more affected by the economic consequences of the coronavirus. They face a critical situation, as they have less income, savings and job support.



EMPOWERING WOMEN

More than one million women have left the labor market since the outbreak of the pandemic

The majority of working women are engaged in informal employment

According to statistics recorded in government news agencies, 60% of employment in Iran is informal employment. This figure is over 70% in many provinces of the country. Lack of insurance, exploitation of employers, taking promissory notes and unsigned checks by employers are the most important problems of those who inevitably prefer this type of employment to unemployment. Informal occupations are more vulnerable to Coronavirus consequences than formal occupations.¹³ These women are among [the most vulnerable workers](#) in the Iranian labor market. According to information published by the Higher Research Center of the Social Security Organization, in 2017, women accounted for 80% of uninsured employees in the industry and services sector. Now, if we use the statistics of 10 million informal workers presented by Ali Rabiei, the Minister of Labor, Cooperation and Social Welfare in May 2017, as the only statistics provided about informal workers, we will find that 5 million people in Iran, are not self-employed and work for others in the industry and services sectors.

From this data, it can be easily concluded that more than 3 million women are employed in informal employment in the industrial and service sectors, without insurance and social and legal protections! So the number of women working in the informal economy, by any estimate, is much more than 3 million!¹⁴

Three general categories of women working in the informal economy

But in general, women's employment in the informal economy or the underground economy, whose employees operate outside the umbrella of employment and protection laws, is divided into several general categories:

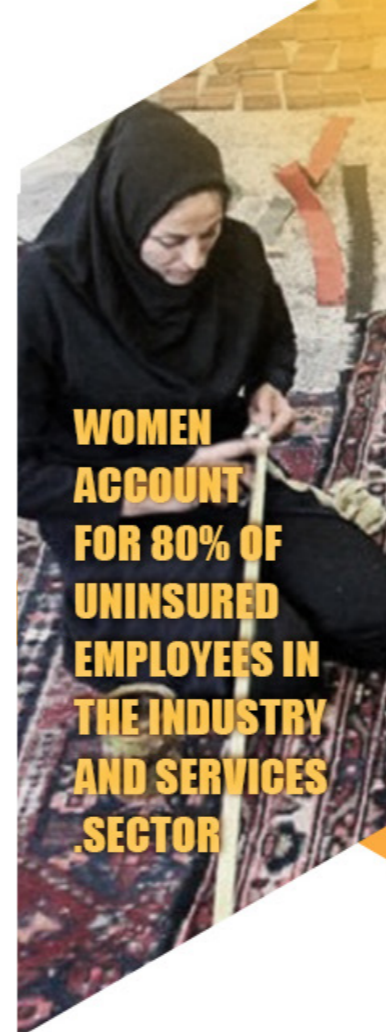
The first group of women are self-employed and work for themselves, such as peddlers, small retailers, women who produce household and food products such as pickles and jams at home, women who provide health, food or art services by using cyberspace and communication networks, and in general, all the women who somehow market their own products and services on their own.

The second group are women who work in family businesses for a home-based employer, usually with a father, spouse, brother or close relative. And the third group are women who work in the general economic sector (industry, services or agriculture) as substandard without insurance, social protection and without a contract subject to labor law.

In fact, to date, no accurate, disaggregated and codified statistics on the distribution of employment of more than three million women working in the informal economy have been provided.¹⁵

But all of these women face common problems. They are not insured, they are deprived of medical services and medical records, they have no benefit from pensions and unemployment insurance, and finally, they are not covered by protection laws and safety and labor laws.

Majority of women engaged in informal employment



WOMEN ACCOUNT FOR 80% OF UNINSURED EMPLOYEES IN THE INDUSTRY AND SERVICES SECTOR

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Somayeh Golpour, chairwoman of the Women's Committee of the Supreme Council of the Trade Union Association, says that uninsured women working in the workshops suffer from white-collar checks and promissory notes that employers take without their consent and suffer from exploitation by employers.

Self-employed women, including peddlers in public and subway spaces, suffer from social and occupational insecurity, such as occasional arrests, and the tightening of employment space. Women who work in family businesses can easily be exploited by their male relatives and are forced to submit to any kind of exploitation.¹⁶

All of these problems have multiplied since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Declining demand in the service sector has led to the widespread disappearance of these jobs.¹⁷ Since no government agency cares about the safety and health of these women, these women have always been alone and fought alone, and now they are alone in the Coronavirus crisis!¹⁸

Fatemeh Ghafouri, head of the Women Entrepreneurs Association in Qazvin province, says of the clerical regime's approach to women's work: "Women advocacy bodies have only focused on family issues and even if they pay attention to the economy, they see everything in household businesses, while this type of job is unsustainable and cannot lead to the empowerment of women in a desirable way."¹⁹

EMPOWERING WOMEN

What is the income of women in informal employment?

Mahnaz Ghadirzadeh, a labor relations expert, says: "Unfair labor market conditions have led to women being employed in informal jobs. This type of employment affects the living conditions of women both at work and in the future. Not only the peddlers we see every day on the subway or on the sidewalks of the city, but also a significant number of working women are unemployed and can not get unemployment insurance. We know that there are many women who work by agreement. Secretaries of doctors, service workers, employees of private offices, etc., in many cases were paid less than one million tomans (\$41) and were not insured."²⁰

Tayebeh Siavoshi, a member of the regime's parliament, said: "Unfortunately, many working women are willing to work in an environment even for 400,000 to 500,000 tomans (\$16.5 to \$20.5) a month due to severe financial needs. It is not subject to any law and in addition to not receiving any benefits and facilities, the employer can terminate these workers whenever he wants for any reason ... For example, the married status benefit is one of the benefits that in many cases female workers are deprived from."²¹


Misleading reports and criteria on women's empowerment

Following the news of the Iranian media, we find a percentage of deception and contradiction between the officials and bodies of the clerical regime. However, sometimes these same media outlets acknowledge facts that can clarify our view of the reality of life in Iran.

On October 11, 2020, the state-run Borna news agency wrote about the latest comparative statistics of the Statistics Center of Iran: "Over this summer, the number of employed people increased compared to the spring, which shows somewhat balancing the Covid-19 effects on Iran's labor market... This situation, i.e. the reduction of unemployment rate should be pleasant in appearance, but comparing the unemployment situation in Iran with some selected countries, we have explained that the decrease in unemployment rate in our country is mainly due to unorganized market and high level of informal and uninsured employees and low level of social security, because in economies where the labor market is more organized and most workers have insurance, in times of recession such as the coronavirus, unemployed people unemployment insurance. They do not leave the labor market and are still among the unemployed looking for work. But in Iran, where, according to the Parliamentary Research Center, an average of 60% of the country's employees (59% men and 62% women) work in the informal sector, in this situation, due to lack of social support and the continuation of

the recession, the individual losing job, leaves the labor market with discouragement. And this situation has been the cause of reducing the unemployment rate in the current situation of the country ...

"These conditions can be seen well in this summer's statistics; Because in the summer of this year, the unemployment rate in the country has reached 9.5 percent, while the number of active population in the country has decreased by more than 1.6 million compared to last summer and the number of inactive population has increased by 2.3 million."²²



Many women are willing to work even for \$16.5 to \$20.5 a month due to severe financial needs.

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One of the criteria for evaluating countries in terms of development is the presence and participation of women in social and economic activities, including the number of women entrepreneurs. Iranian women entrepreneurs, however, are few and far between, and the presence of women in management and macro-decision-making levels is zero. “Women disappear in top management positions,” said Massoumeh Ebtekar, Rouhani’s deputy for women and family affairs, in November 2017.²³ Regarding senior management levels, everything that needs to be said is stated in the first chapter of this report. But perhaps a brief study of the situation of women in the management of smaller businesses will make the picture more objective.

Fatemeh Farhadi:

Price fluctuations are very high and it is not easy to have facilities, and this is the biggest concern of producers along with the smuggling of foreign goods

Women’s management in factories and companies

The Iranian regime, with its discriminatory policies, is doing its best to drive women home. However, it faces the widespread demands of brave Iranian women who cannot be contained within the backward culture of the mullahs.

Hence, without any financial or legal support, it tries to satisfy women in small-scale home-based businesses or, at most, in small workshops. All the incentive policies of the government and the women’s deputy of this regime are working in this direction.

In June 2020, the state-run ISNA news agency estimated that the share of male managers in various management levels was 4.38 times higher than that of women. According to a report published by the office of the presidential deputy for Women and Family Affairs, the number of female managers in 2019 in the whole country was 12,850.

According to this claim, out of this figure there were 10,859 low level managers, 1,924 middle managers are only 67 senior managers.²⁴

Three months after this report, in early September 2020, the official IRNA news agency claimed a 76 percent increase in women’s management in government.²⁵

Zahra Javaherian, the deputy of Planning and Coordination for the office of the deputy for Women and Family Affairs, stated that the number of female managers in 2020 was 19,597.

Meanwhile, according to the state-run ISNA news agency, out of 3,823 managers whose gender was registered as the managing directors of cooperatives registered in 2018, only 587 were women.

Regardless of the fact that such a dramatic increase in 3 months in 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and at a time when the Iranian

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economy is on the verge of collapse, and at a time when the regime has even withheld the purchase of vaccines from the Iranian people, it should be asked that if this number of female managers has been added to government officials, then why their names are not found in the official websites of these government agencies?

Next, what exactly is the profession and background of the management of these women that you register as a manager?

As far as the same deputy for women and family affairs of Rouhani is concerned, she prescribes home employment for Iranian women all the time and on every occasion.

Zahra Yaghoubjad, Director General of Women’s Affairs of Gilan, among the honors of her performance in the first phase of the economic empowerment project for women heads of households, announced the identification of 340 women from Gilan who work in the form of domestic jobs. She then said that one of the problems of women heads of households in the home business sector is bringing an employee guarantor to receive bank facilities and expressed hope that this problem will be solved!²⁶

The women who are brought to the media as successful women by the clerical regime are mainly deprived women who, under a lot of pressure, have started small businesses without banking facilities and support, and have been able to expand their work to 20 to 40 people hired in their own small workshop. Most of these workshops have struggled to survive if they had not already failed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Legal discrimination

A case in point

An example is Fatemeh Farhadi, a woman entrepreneur who was introduced as one of the top 20 women in this field in the fifth round of selection of women entrepreneurs in July 2020 by Rouhani's Deputy for Women and Family Affairs. In 2010, she and her husband started a home bag-embroidering workshop and to date has been able to provide employment for 33 women heads of households or those in need of work. Her workshop started producing masks and gowns with the start of the Coronavirus. But from the very beginning, it faced the non-standard market of Iran and the lack of government support. "It is very difficult to get raw materials such as cloth to make a mask ... Despite joining the production line of masks and gowns from the first days of the outbreak, I did not receive any Covid-19 facilities; At the same time, all city officials are aware of the extent of our activities," she said.

Referring to the ruling regime's anti-Iranian policies, Farhadi said, "The biggest problem for any producer is the unregulated import of foreign goods. ... Poor quality foreign goods have ruined the market. ... Domestic investors need a window of hope to create jobs. Unemployment poisons thoughts and frustrates society."

"Price fluctuations are very high and it is not easy to have facilities, and this is the biggest concern of producers along with the smuggling of foreign goods," she added.²⁷

Legal discrimination against women

The laws, directives and all policies of religious fascism, including on the subject of empowerment and employment, are designed to exclude and marginalize women, and in line with the misogynist ideology, which is one of the main pillars of this regime.

According to Article 1105 of the mullahs' Civil Code, the head of the family is the husband.

Article 1117 of the same law adds that a husband can forbid his wife from a profession or industry that is contrary to the interests of the family or the dignity of himself or the woman.

In addition to the upstream laws, in all financial and economic organs, various laws impede the movement and advancement of women.

Fatemeh Ghafouri, head of the Women Entrepreneurs Association in Qazvin province, points to one of these laws and says: "Lack of permission of husband or father for exiting the country, lack of economic and tax incentives, and lack of economic knowledge of some officials have led to not taking proper measures in proportion to the dignity and ability of women in the past 40 years."

Nasrin Yousefi, a female entrepreneur and industrial activist in Khorasan, said: "There are many disruptive laws in the way of women's work, and if a woman wants to start a small workshop, these regulatory barriers will prevent her from working."²⁸

In September 2020, a female physician was banned from practicing by a Tehran Court of Appeals due to her husband's complaint.²⁹ The female doctor examined 180 to 200 patients with Covid-19 disease daily.

Mullahs' civil law:

Article 1105:
The family is headed by the husband and the woman may not leave home without the husband's permission.

Article 1117:
The husband can prevent his wife from engagement in any profession or industry.

- In February 2021, the head coach of the national women's ski team was banned from accompanying her team to the World Championships in Italy due to her husband's disagreement.
- In October 2020, a female emergency physician was banned from practicing medicine due to her husband's complaint.

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In August of this year, the doctor's husband filed a lawsuit in court calling for a ban on her employment because "his wife's presence in the hospitals has disturbed his peace and has shaken their lives."

An appeals court ruling barred the female doctor from working in hospitals. However, this woman had even chosen the field of emergency medicine from the beginning with the consent of her husband.³⁰

In 2015, Niloufar Ardalan, the captain of the Iranian women's national futsal team, was barred from participating in the Asian Games because her passport had been confiscated due to her husband's complaint.

Also in February 2021, Samira Zargari, the head coach of the national alpine skiing team, was banned from leaving the country due to her husband's objection. She could not go to Italy with her team for the competition. A source in the Ski Federation said that the efforts of the federation officials to lift the exit ban and send her to the Italian competitions did not succeed.³¹

In addition, the laws do not even recognize women as guardians of their own children, and they do not have the right to open a bank account for their children.³² In this regard, there is a bill entitled "Amendment of the law allowing the opening of savings accounts for children." But like all women's rights bills, including the Non-Violence Bill, it has been passed by government agencies and no practical action has been taken to recognize women's rights in law.

A breadwinner for a family of four cannot meet over 70% of the family's needs even if they get the base wage.

Wage Discrimination

In May 2020, the Iranian regime's Supreme Labor Council pegged the base average wage for a worker with one child at 2,902,000 tomans per month.³³

Even under the assumption that working women can actually receive this base level, it would still be considerably lower than the poverty line (or a basic minimum of subsistence) for a family of four, which is estimated to be around 12million tomans.³⁴

This means that a breadwinner for a family of four cannot meet over 70% of the family's needs even if they get the base wage.

Additionally, the reality of women's working conditions in Iran can only be compared to the conditions akin to modern slavery.

Women's wages are much lower than their male counterparts despite the fact that they do the same or even more work. They often engage in lower paying occupations despite having higher qualifications, knowledge and expertise. Additionally, lack of job security is also a significant challenge for working women.

According to the state-run ISNA news agency in August 2019, a study showed that women work in abysmal conditions while living on an income of 300,000 or 400,000 tomans per month.³⁵

Wage Discrimination

POVERTY LINE:

\$ 400
dollars

SALARY OF MOST
WOMEN:

\$12 - \$16
dollars

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Mahnaz Ghadirzadeh, a labor relations expert and women's rights activist, told the state-run ILNA news agency: "Women earn less than men systematically and within the framework of some laws. Women do not get benefits like child support, but apart from that, in some cases we see women being employed in jobs that in many ways do not get the minimum wages. Many female secretaries in offices and most female counter staff suffer from wage discrimination ... In traditional jobs or small workshops we find plenty of women who are paid less than men for the same work. As mentioned, this is customary but it becomes even more worrying when we see women being discriminated against when it comes to wages within new work environments."³⁶

This situation can be seen in all jobs. A young woman who works in a kindergarten in Tehran says that low wages are her first problem and adds that in order to compensate for the lack of sufficient wages, she has to do things like chopping vegetables, cook food and the like at home for the children's mothers.³⁷



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Women earn wages that are one-third of men's.

Discrimination against rural women

Qassem Sookhteh-sarai, head of the Golestan province's agricultural union, said, "Iranian [female farmers](#) are paid less than men, work without insurance and are not given loans. The share of women in the agricultural sector in Iran is 11%. Women day laborers have more problems and are struggling to get paid and insurance. The wages paid to these women are lower than male farmers, and on average, women farmers earn 60 percent compared to male wages, whether in the paddy fields, summer crops or market gardening products."³⁸

Production costs have risen in the agricultural sector and men do not accept lower wages and refuse to work, but women are in dire need of jobs for a variety of reasons, including poverty, so they accept to work for much lower wages. These workers' wages are [one-third of men's](#). Zahra Darvishi, head of the Shiraz Women's Workers' Union, has said: "In the province's workplaces and companies located in the industrial town, women are not paid the same as men, and employers cut women's salaries by one-third on the pretext that men are responsible for paying their household expenses. This is an injustice to female breadwinners and vulnerable women." Deputy Minister of Sports Mahin Farhadizad also exposed discrimination between women and men athletes, saying, "Our female coaches are still not paid as much as male coaches, and this discrimination must be addressed."³⁹ This is while the majority of female workers in Iran are [women heads of households](#) who work on daily rate basis without any insurance.⁴⁰ These people will not be able to receive benefits for any sick days off if they contract COVID-19.

Women's lack of access to financial aid and bank resources

According to various state-run media outlets, finding the right financial aid, access to information, gaining the trust of banks, the market, or partners, and balancing work and family life are some of the obstacles and problems women face when trying to earn money.

"Financial institutions consider women to be high-risk clients and provide them with less resource," said Fatemeh Ghafouri, head of the Women Entrepreneurs Association in Qazvin province.⁴¹ Nasrin Yousefi, an entrepreneur and industrial activist in Khorasan province, says: "When a man becomes economically active, he quickly learns about the market situation, government aid and marketing through his circle of friends. But women's access to such networks that pave the way for them is extremely limited."⁴² The same source added: "Industrial consulting institutions are functional for men, but women with ideas in various fields do not know where to go to hone and implement their ideas."⁴³

Lack of access to financial and social aid

Women's lack of access to social aid

According to the state-run ILNA news agency in 2019, despite the fact that according to Article 29 of the Constitution of the regime, citizens have the right to social security, at least 1.9 million women in Iran are completely deprived of this right.⁴⁴ According to statistics released by financial institutions of the Social Security Research Organization, women accounted for 80% of uninsured employees in 2017.⁴⁵ Optional insured persons who enjoy the above benefits also emphasize that the amount of premiums they pay is high relative to their income. The over 70% reduction in purchasing power, which stems from an increase in subsistence costs, has made it impossible to pay premiums of 400,000 tomans or over 500,000 tomans to the Social Security Organization. Meanwhile, since July 2020, the insurance premium suddenly increased by 42,322 tomans.⁴⁶ One of the people insured told the state-run ILNA news agency: "The per capita optional insurance is high and there has been a significant increase this year as well. Even with the high premiums we pay, we cannot benefit from quality medical services. Social Security has a number of low quality clinics that I prefer not to visit. Personally, I pay the premium only in the hope of receiving a pension. But the Social Security Administration is adopting measures so we forgo even this pension."⁴⁷ In recent years, following a decline in purchasing power and the devaluation of the national currency rial, the composition of the consumer basket of

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the middle and low-income deciles of society has changed. Among the items in the consumer basket, the share of housing compared to other expenses is very high and has reached more than 60% of the total. This means that renters spend more than 60% of their income on housing expenses. Another 40 percent of people's income is spent on health care, transportation and groceries. As a result, those heads of households who do not benefit from obligatory insurance have lost the ability to set aside a percentage of their income to pay for optional insurance.⁴⁸ So, in addition to becoming poorer each year due to rising consumer staple costs, they also lose their ability to pay for insurance, which deprives them of a pension for their remaining years, and forces them to pay all medical costs out of their own empty pockets.⁴⁹ According to the regime's social security laws, those who work informally will not be able to use unemployment insurance if they lose their jobs. Field studies show that the amount of unemployment insurance payments for those who contracted the coronavirus were as low as 70,000 tomans.⁵⁰ All women working in temporary contract or part-time jobs are denied the minimum wage of a worker, and sometimes work for as little as 10 percent of the minimum wage. Naturally, such an employer would not transfer 12 to 18 percent of the amount of the worker's base salary to the Social Security Organization.

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Regarding housewives, Hossein Amiri Ganjeh, head of the General Department of Social Security in West Tehran, has said: “62% of women in the country are housewives and make up a population of about 20 million, and more than 75% of them do not have independent insurance. They are covered by their spouse’s health insurance.”⁵¹

In 2020, the Iranian regime advertised the possibility of insuring housewives. This is while the monthly insurance premium of the Social Security Organization is 22,000 tomans for pension services and death after retirement, and housewives, who do not have their own income, naturally cannot pay this amount.

In addition, if the applicant is more than 50 years old at the time of applying, acceptance of the application is subject to having a previous insurance premium equivalent to the additional years of age.⁵²

Among [women farmers](#), only those who are dependent on their husbands are covered by rural insurance. There is no separate insurance for these women.

While all people in Iran suffer from deep class divisions as well as poverty and economic mismanagement by the clerical regime, women face a double discrimination.

Female breadwinners, who have to provide for multiple children, and sometimes a sick spouse or an elderly person, are forced into a whirlpool of hardship and enormous difficulties.

According to the Fars state-run news agency in September 2020, the number of female heads of households in Iran has increased by 1 million over the past four years to a total of at least 4 million women.⁵³

Massoumeh Ebtekar, the women and family affairs advisor to the regime’s president Hassan Rouhani, stated the figure of 4 million women two years ago. If we take into account the statistics provided by Mrs. Ebtekar at that time, today with an increase of 1 million women heads of household, that number will be at least 5 million.⁵⁴

Sara Fallahi, a member of the parliamentary women’s faction, also estimates that the field numbers of these women are about 5 million. Sociologist Amanollah Bateni says: “About 48.7% of female heads of households are 60 years of age or older. Old age makes it difficult for them to make a living, and this doubles the economic problem for this group of women.”⁵⁵

Since supporting the people is neither compatible with the ruling dictatorial structure nor its policies, according to the regime’s own media, instead of resolving social ills, the regime tries to remove or hide the problem itself.

Female breadwinners, the most vulnerable sector

⇒ **At least 5 million women in Iran are heads of households.**

⇒ **80% of female-headed households are unemployed.**

⇒ **Only 250,000 women are covered by welfare.**



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Zahra Bonyanian, the director of a charity, revealed that “information about women heads of household is kept confidential.”⁵⁶

“There are no exact statistics on the number of women heads of household in the province, because some of them are not supported by a specific institution,” said Somayyeh Ghasemi Tusi, director general of women and family affairs at the Mazandaran provincial governor’s office.⁵⁷

In order to escape social protests and international criticism, the clerical regime occasionally introduces an array of colorful programs in its propaganda, but none of them are implemented or their overall impact is so low that none of the serious problems are dealt with.

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Pursuant to Paragraph T, Article 80 of the Sixth Development Plan, Rouhani's deputy for Women and Family Affairs was tasked with empowering women heads of households. This program was set for 2017 to 2021.

But in spring 2021, there is still no evidence of its implementation and protection of women.

The Welfare Organization has set many conditions for the protection of women. For example, if they are employed, their salary should be 40% less than the basic salary announced by the Ministry of Labor, otherwise they are considered capable and are not subject to receive the services of this body. In total, the assistance of the state Welfare Organization covers only 250,000 women.⁵⁸ Assuming that all of these 250,000 women are heads of households, at least 3,750,000 of the remaining women heads of households are deprived of even this meagre aid and face deadly poverty.

Regarding the employment status of these women, Zahra Bonyanian has said, "Most women heads of households have a low level of education and professional skills, and work in the informal sector of the economy. Their jobs are mostly part-time, uninsured and with lower benefits, and they will be among the first group to be fired during economic crises."⁵⁹

Porters, collecting garbage and peddling

Poverty and hardship have forced Iranian women to engage in activities which not only tarnish their human dignity but also exceed their physical capacity and pose a serious threat to their health. They engage in these activities simply so that their families and themselves could survive.

Some Iranian women have turned to garbage collection due to extreme poverty and destitution. Instead of supporting and empowering these women, the Iranian regime has recognized these types of activities as official employment.

In the western city of Ahvaz, about 120 laborers work at a [waste separation site](#) called Safireh.⁶⁰ The majority of the site's workers are female heads of households and are threatened by many diseases.

The women working on this site are all homeless or abused and have [difficult lives](#). These women heads of household work 8 hours a day among garbage in order to earn a living. They receive a monthly salary of 2 million tomans, which is below the minimum wage in the regime's own laws, and significantly lower than the current 10 million toman poverty line in Iran. Such meager income provides for only 20% of their family needs. Still, even by these low standards, the workers of this site have not been paid since March 2020, roughly since the time that the coronavirus pandemic broke out in Iran.⁶¹

Another type of these "jobs" is street peddling, which threatens the lives of these women during the pandemic at a time when COVID-19 has taken hundreds of thousands of lives in Iran.

Women's difficult road to survive

Hassan Khalilabadi, a member of the Tehran City Council, announced an increase in peddling in the capital due to the coronavirus pandemic and the resulting unemployment, stating: "Due to the coronavirus situation, many people in the capital have lost their permanent jobs and are making a living only through street peddling."⁶²

In September 2020, the CEO of the Tehran Organization and Employment Company, Seyed Ali Mafakherian, put the number of Tehran street peddlers who have registered in the system of this organization alone at 10,000.⁶³

Another life-threatening "job" forced upon Iranian women by poverty has been delivery of commodities. These women are called "[porters](#)." Poverty, unemployment, lack of prospects for the future, the hungry bellies of children, injured bodies of wives, are among other [reasons that force women to give in to this extremely arduous work](#). Most female porters in Iran are single women whose husbands have either been disabled or have died. Female porters often wear [men's clothes](#) without telling anyone. They use heavy painkillers to cross difficult passages and to endure the extreme physical hardships on the road.

These oppressed women typically walk up to 8 to 10 hours, and after delivering the cargo on their backs, they have to walk this long way back home. Most of the time, women have to do this work during nights. The night prevents them from being seen by regime agents who would shoot

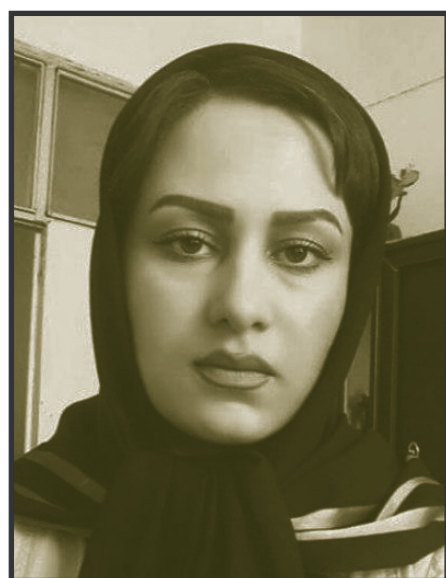
EMPOWERING WOMEN

porters. But even if the female porters survive the bullets fired by the regime's guards, the cliffs and valleys of the arduous path may still kill them. The slightest mistake, error in vision, or slip would cause them to fall down while walking in the mountains.

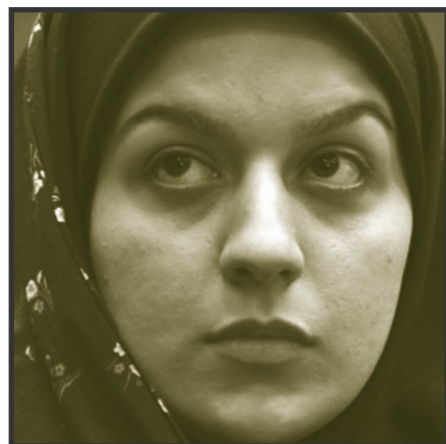
A female porter froze to death in the cold last year. These women avoid talking to anyone along the path in order to avoid being identified as women. Unfortunately, there are no credible statistics about the number of women working as porters.



Female porters: Another life-threatening job forced upon women by poverty has been delivery of commodities.



Zahra Navidpour was victim of sexual assault by a member of parliament while looking for a job. She was found dead after filing a lawsuit.



Reyhaneh Jabbari defended herself against rape. She was executed after seven years of imprisonment.

When the laws and policies of a state are based on the humiliation and oppression of women, the extent of the damage to the overall culture is relatively clear. Unfortunately, the reactionary and misogynistic culture that the regime has imposed over the past 40 years has even affected the rich culture of the Iranian people.

There is no comprehensive national research in Iran on this issue, but evidence of “widespread” harassment is rampant.

A limited study of 82 working women in Tehran shows a 75% prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace. Working women, especially those who are employed in small workshops with less than ten people, are more likely to be sexually harassed.⁶⁴

Victims, especially women, often remain silent for fear of losing their jobs, being publicly disgraced or wrongly accused, but the psychological effects last for years and sometimes for the rest of their lives. The head of the Iranian Sociological Association, in a special meeting dedicated to sexual harassment in the public arena held in October 2019, called sexual harassment in the workplace as “a prevalent phenomenon.”⁶⁵

In 2018, [Zahra Navidpour](#), 28, a resident of Malekan in East Azerbaijan province, was looking for a job after the death of her father. Salman

Workplace violence and harassment

Khodadadi, the then-deputy of Malekan city in the clerical regime’s parliament, took her to his office in Tehran under the pretext of giving her a job, but he raped her there.

Zahra Navidpour had lots of evidence, including an audio file and clear evidence of threats made against her life. She filed a lawsuit against Khodadadi, but due to corruption and backroom deals, her complaint did not go anywhere and the judge sought to convict Zahra herself.

The young woman was repeatedly threatened with death by the parliament deputy and others around him. Zahra had written in a letter to the judge that she was not safe, and she had also said in a handwritten note that she was requesting security. In the end, however, on the night of January 6, 2019, Zahra Navidpour’s body was found in her mother’s house. Khodadadi was acquitted of the rape charge and convicted for having an illicit affair. But even this sentence went nowhere after Khodadadi complained about his diabetes.

In Iran, we have witnessed the punishment of rape victims instead of the rapist.

One example is 26-year-old interior designer named [Reyhaneh Jabbari](#), who was executed in 2014 after spending seven years in Gohardasht prison in Karaj for defending herself against an aggressor from the Ministry of Intelligence. [Farinaz Khosravani](#), a 26-year-old hotel employee, was forced to throw herself off the top floor of a hotel in April 2015 after facing harassment by another Ministry of Intelligence official.

In addition to the special cases that have been leaked to the press due to the victims’ resistance, a large numbers of women are being persecuted and raped due to poverty and unemployment. Since a few years ago, the Tehran Women’s Affairs Counseling Center has received reports of female heads of household being raped and sexually harassed by municipal staff in at least three districts, 3, 8, and 13. [Municipal officials sexually abused women](#) under the auspices of the municipality and abusing their position.

In one example, a female head of household was expressing her grievances during meetings with Soleimani, the former mayor of District 3. Instead of addressing the woman’s issues through his chief of staff, he personally contacted the woman, invited her to his office, and sexually abused her. Another example is a woman whose husband had a disability and needed physiotherapy. The physiotherapist, who had come to her house on behalf of the Welfare Organization, locked the door on the woman’s husband and raped her in another room.

The next example is of a widow who was sexually harassed by a municipal repairman who had come to repair the roof of her house. He then threatened to sue her if the matter was exposed. The harassment by this municipal repairman continued for up to two months.

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“Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life” is the principal theme in 65th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2021. For this purpose, this subject would be assessed in Iran under the rule of the ruling religious fascism in Iran, knowing that since its inception, it was founded on misogyny, marginalizing women, and turning Iranian women into second-class citizens. Nevertheless, Iranian women have never succumbed to the regime’s repression. For the last four decades, they bravely challenged the regime through organizing and standing at the forefront of widespread protests and uprisings, joining the ranks, and accepting a leadership role in the Iranian Resistance movement.

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