

The mullahs' regime uses population growth as a tool for further suppression of women

DOUBLE PRESSURE

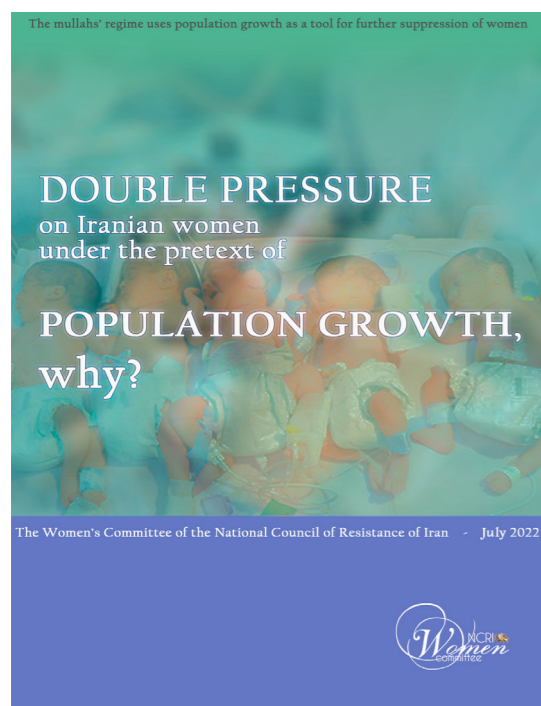
on Iranian women
under the pretext of

POPULATION GROWTH, why?

The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran - July 2022



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The Population Growth Plan, why?

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Double pressure on Iranian women under the pretext of population growth. Why?

When the lack of employment and inflation has taken away even bread from the Iranian people's food basket, Ali Khamenei, the clerical regime's Supreme Leader, has called yet again for population growth.

Khamenei emphasized in a message to the National Staff of Population, headed by Ebrahim Raisi, the need to stifle policies on women's rights to increase the population rate. Khamenei thanked the lobbies in Parliament and across government working towards this goal. He declared the "generation growth and rejuvenating the human force" as "a vital policy and a crucial task."

The mullahs' supreme leader went on to call the social harms caused by a population boost "bogus." (Khamenei's Official website of farsi. khamenei.ir – May 18, 2022)

Following the logic of the Absolute Rule of the Jurisprudence, the clerical regime officials allow themselves to intervene in the most private family affairs. They easily implement measures to preserve their illegitimate rule, regardless of the cost to people's lives.

The plan to grow Iran's population and increase the number of youth is an example of such policies. A law with a similar name attempts to institutionalize the suppression of Iranian women under a good guise.

In 2015 and the years before the clerical regime turned this policy into the country's formal law, Amnesty International wrote, "The proposed laws will entrench discriminatory practices and set the rights of women and girls in Iran back by decades. The authorities are promoting a dangerous culture in which women are stripped of key rights and viewed as baby-making machines rather than human beings with fundamental rights to make choices about their own bodies and lives."

In his latest report on human rights violations in Iran, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed concern about the potential impacts of Iran's policies to increase population growth, such as the Youthful Population and Protection of the Family law.

Earlier, when Ebrahim Raisi announced the enforcement of the "Population Growth and Family Support" law, UN human rights experts called for revocation of this law. They issued a statement in which they called the law "a direct breach of women's rights according to international laws."

UN human rights experts reiterated, "The consequences of this law will be crippling for women and girls' right to health and represents an alarming and regressive U-turn" for the regime.

The Human Rights Watch and other organizations said the adoption of this law undermined Iranian women's rights, dignity, and health and called for its annulment.

Women's rights activists also noted the impact of this law amounting to the reduction of women's employment, an increase in child marriages, and premature births. (Iran International, June 21, 2022)



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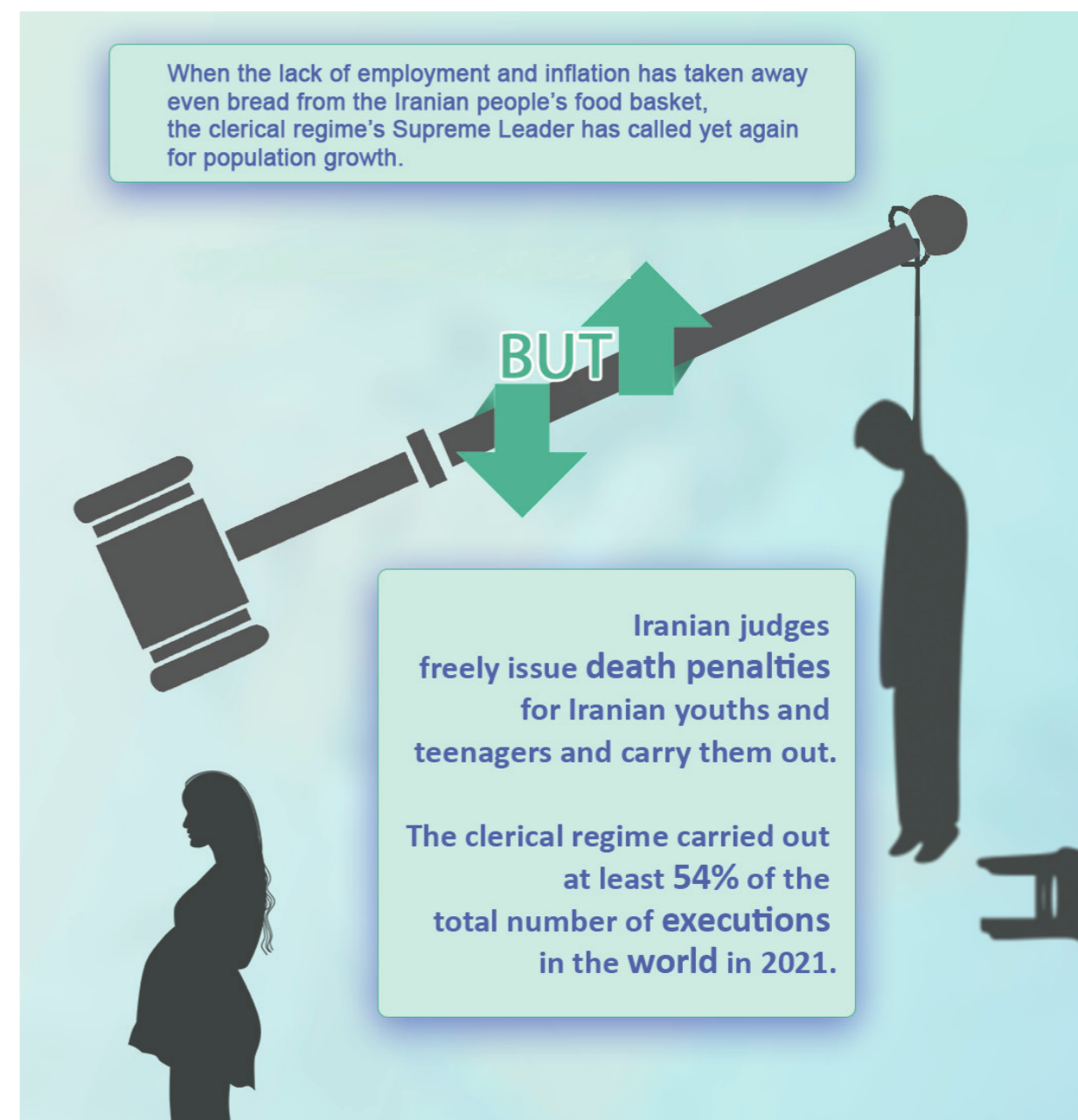
What is the Population Growth Law?

In a speech in 2013, Khamenei told the regime's Executive Bodies to give the highest priority to the Population Growth Plan. In September 2016, while introducing a 16-article decree, he announced the "general family policy" to government agencies and once again pressed for the promotion of women's housekeeping roles and childbearing. A state-run website revealed that, over the past ten years, Khamenei has emphasized more than 42 times the need to increase the population and rate of childbirth (The state-run Tasnim.ir - July 13, 2020). After Khamenei's orders, we witnessed coercive actions by a variety of government agencies. For example, the "Population and Family Excellence Headquarters" was established as a leading government bureau in October 2020.

Meanwhile, government officials announced the Law on Population Growth (The state-run IRNA News Agency – October 6, 2020). The country's executive systems, including the Budget and Planning Organization, the Labor Ministry, and the Health Ministry, are members of this head office. However, the mullahs' Parliament officially adopted the "Population Growth and Family Support" law on October 16, 2021. Then, on November 15, 2021, the Guardian Council approved and communicated it to the mullahs' President (The state-run shenasname.ir website). The law banned abortion and the distribution of contraceptives. Moreover, essential amniocentesis screening among pregnant women was outlawed. Amniocentesis screening had previously been performed to determine the presence or possibility of congenital disease in the fetus; detection could exempt low-income Iranian families from the resulting material and moral costs. In fact, before passing this law, abortion in Iran without a doctor's permission was prohibited, as was abortion after the 4th month of gestation. In such cases, the mother would be tried in court and ordered to pay blood money. According to the 2005 law, abortion was only possible under certain circumstances with a doctor's prescription. The cases included the presence of Down syndrome or other genetic or brain conditions, anencephaly, or spinal Bifida. However, according to the recent parliamentary resolution, under Article 56 of the Population Growth and Family Support Plan, no person, including a doctor, medical staff, laboratory, family counselor, or even parent, may decide on this matter. According to the resolution, two jurists, a judge, a coroner, and an expert committed to the Velayat-e Faqih must comment. In other words, if the mother or father says they cannot take care of a disabled child, it does not matter – ultimately, the government's misogynist judge must determine whether the

mother and the family will experience difficulty in raising the disabled child (The state-run IRNA News Agency – May 3, 2022). On June 21, 2022, Saber Jabbari, the head of the Population Growth Department of the Health Ministry, announced new restrictions. "The new law criminalizes every form of aid or assistance in abortion. Heavy sentences are considered for breach of law. Suppose the person involved in abortion is a physician. In that case, his medical license will be nullified the first time he engages in deliberate abortion," Jabbari said.

The official also underscored that "based on the said instruction, pregnant mothers below 35 years who do not have a record of giving birth to babies with genetic problems or down syndrome do not need to undergo amniocentesis." Jabbari explained that health insurance plans would no longer support amniocentesis expenses for pregnant women, who comprise most of the country's pregnant women. Jabbari also stressed, "Aside from this instruction, the expenses of such services should be paid (by the patient)" (The state-run ISNA.ir - June 21, 2022)



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Establishing the Family and Population Garrison!

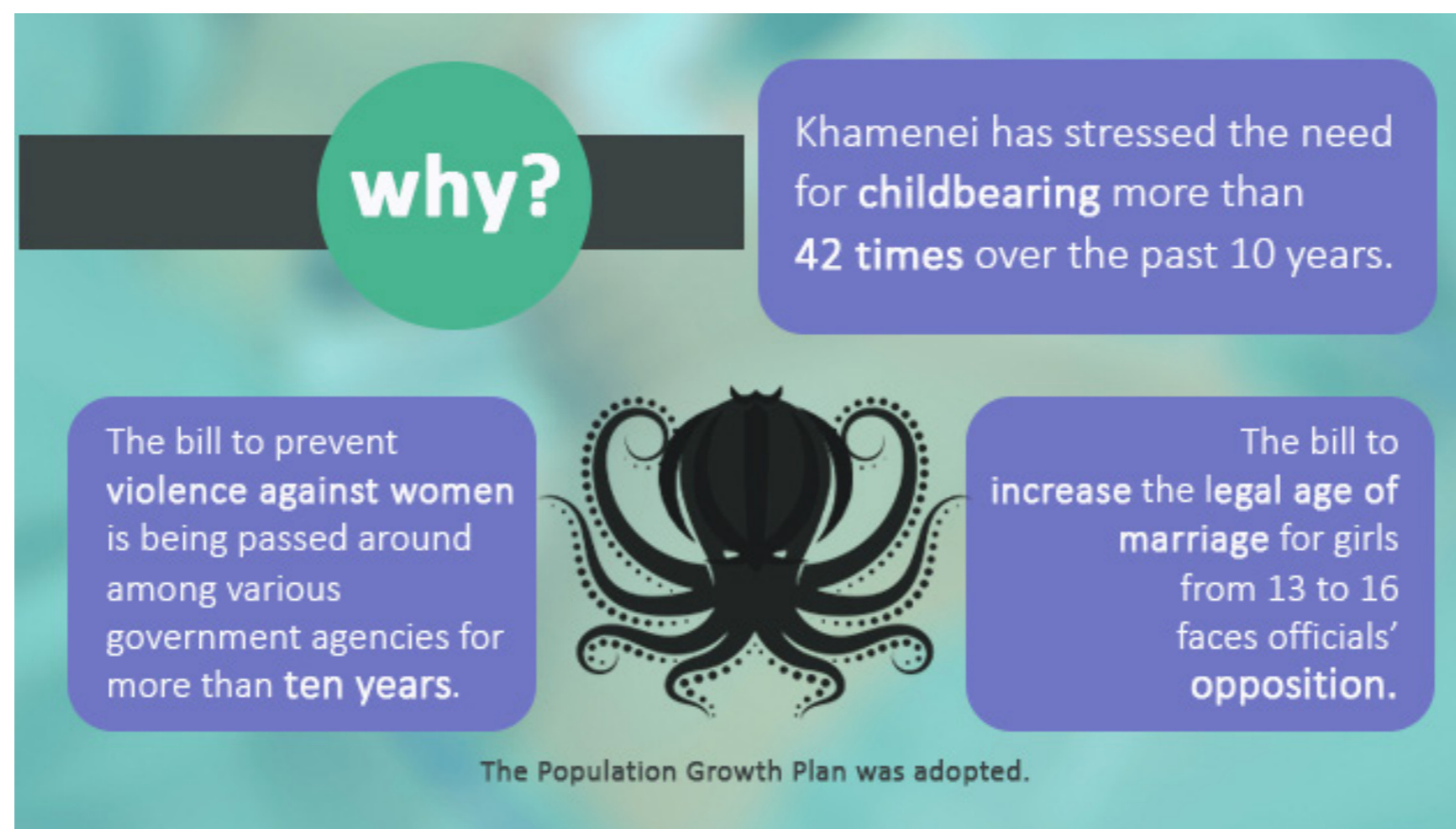
The religious dictatorship, which imposes its policies on the Iranian people by force and repression, also identified law enforcement and security solution to force women to have children at all costs. The regime established a garrison to advance the Population Growth and Family Support Plan. According to Saleh Qassemi, secretary of the Center for Strategic Studies of the Iranian Population, the fertility rate of women in Iran has dropped nine-fold. Qassemi made this announcement at the opening ceremony of Qazvin Province's Family

and Population Headquarters on May 19, 2022. "In 1986, an average of 5.6 children per woman were born, which is a fertility rate of 9.3 times the reduction now to 0.6 children per woman," he explained. Qassemi called abortion an illegal act to pave the way for sweeping arrests of women and violations of their rights in this regard. At the ceremony, the Director-General of Women and Family Affairs for Qazvin Province's Governor, Kobra Alikhani, also criticized the lack of seriousness related to the activities of the Council of Population Strategy. In condoning the regime's repressive laws against women, she said, "Despite the council's important launch, we witnessed the slow implementation of population policies and therefore established a population and family headquarters to quickly pursue the implementation of the Population Growth law" (The state-run Tasnim.ir - May 19, 2022). Nearly at the same time as the formation of this headquarters, the regime's Budget and Planning Organization allocated a budget of 1,070 billion Tomans (more than \$32.5 million) on May 21, 2022, to implement the misogynistic Population Growth law (The state-run eghtesadnews.com website – May 21, 2022).

Women are stripped of key rights and viewed as baby-making machines rather than human beings with fundamental rights to make choices about their own bodies and lives



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Other measures to impose the Population Growth Plan

Rassoul Sauki, secretary for the Seminaries' Strategic Council of Population and Family Affairs, emphasized the need to send women back to the home under the pretext of increasing the population. At a conference for "A Young Iran," he said, "The absence of women at home has reduced women's fertility. In the 1980s, 64 children were born per 10 women. In 2011, the fertility rate reached one-half." He reiterated, "We need to get in on the population issue," and enumerated the types of organizations and meetings of the Seminary agencies in this regard (The state-run Rokna.ir - May 23, 2022). In 2021, the Director-General of Drug and Substances Affairs (which falls under the Food and Drug Organization) issued a directive

to support the implementation of Article 51 of the Protection of Family and Population Growth Law. The order, disseminated to deputies, banned free or subsidized distribution of contraceptive-related items without a doctor's prescription. The directive prohibits contraceptive commodities or even encourages their use in medical university-affiliated health networks. Pharmacies across the country are banned from providing contraceptives. Before the passing of this law, contraceptive items were provided free of charge to the impoverished, such as the homeless. These items were provided by health homes or NGOs operating in the field of social harm (The state-run afkarnews.com - May 29, 2022). Given the widespread ignorance, poverty, and lack of family preparedness in Iran, it is widespread for babies to grow up under low socioeconomic conditions without a clear future. Adding the ban on contraceptives can only exacerbate the situation. Women who do not want to have babies in unsafe or uncertain economic and social

conditions have no choice but to seek illegal, unhealthy, and dangerous measures. This results in additional risks to women's lives and health. Ironically, the regime is announcing incentives for fathers as leverage against women, all while enforcing their repressive population growth scheme, which forces women and mothers to pay the main price. According to a plan approved in an open session of Parliament on Monday, March 7, 2022, males over the age of 30 will be exempted from military service without penalty on the condition that they have two children (The independentpersian.com - March 7, 2022).

Consequences of the Protection of Family and Population Growth Law

Adopters of the Population Growth law seek to increase childbearing by government order and offering financial incentives. However, the Population Growth Plan has not facilitated marriage for young people nor improved the quality of people's lives. People's welfare and economic levels must first be brought to an acceptable point to facilitate marriage and childbearing. Currently, however, people bearing children hoping to receive incentives will have to carry the burden of birth expenses and raising the child on their own. Many are forced to abort their fetuses. A government expert and sociologist, Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar, stressed that the situation is worrying: "According to the Ministry of Health, 1,000 fetuses are aborted and die legally or illegally every day in the country. Unofficial and unregistered statistics on abortion should be added to the official statistics, as well as babies born and abandoned. Just like what we witnessed in recent days." Mahboubfar then estimated that "between 2,000 and 2,500 fetuses are aborted, or newborns abandoned, every day as a result of the adoption of these policies" (The state-run afkarnews.com - May 29, 2022). Mahboubfar underscored that the Population Growth law had become a double crisis, causing social harms, such as increasing numbers of abortions and abandoned newborns. Given this law, the cost of contraceptive supplies is out of reach for 40 million people who require economic support and counseling (The state-run afkarnews.com - May 29, 2022). Massoud Mardani, a member of the Committee to Fight AIDs, also commented on the content of the Population Growth Plan and restrictions imposed on the use of contraceptive methods. He said the plan would contribute to unwanted pregnancies and venereal diseases. It would further create waves of AIDs patients by imposing restrictions on contraceptive items. (Iran International, June 21, 2022)

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The Population Growth Law and abandoned babies

Following the spread of poverty in Iran, we face the painful phenomenon of selling children or abandoning babies in the streets. With family planning becoming even more difficult for mothers, we witness a significant rise in such examples. Deprived mothers or cardboard-box sleepers and mothers forced to give birth under severe repression by a patriarchal rule prefer to be separated from their baby rather than raising it without basic childcare facilities for years.

The images and videos of these scenes are so widely disseminated on social media that even government experts are forced to express

their opinions. Mohammad Nasiri, social deputy of the Welfare Organization, confirmed the authenticity of footage of a days-old infant abandoned near Vanak Street in front of Ameneh's nursery on May 26, 2022 (The state-run hamshahrionline.ir– May 28, 2022). Nasiri confirmed that a child had been found next to a trash bin in Nazi Abad, Tehran, on May 25, 2022. He stated that the newborn was given to the Welfare Organization (The state-run IMNA.ir– May 25, 2022). Sadly, these situations occur too often. Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar revealed, "Based on the statistics from health centers, social workers, etc., in the last 10 days, about 5,000 babies have been abandoned across the country. That is 500 newborn infants a day" (The state-run Rouydad24.com– May 28, 2022). The critical point is that a mother who nurtures a fetus in her uterus for months and then gives birth must be too poor and suffering from abandoning her baby, with the umbilical cord still attached, in the street. Like all other social harms, this occurrence directly results from the government's mismanagement and corruption.

The Population Growth Law and security measures

In the wake of widespread opposition to the Population Growth Plan, even in the regime's Health Ministry, the clerical regime decided to use its all-time repressive levers to enforce its misogynistic policies. On May 28, 2022, the state-run media announced that Mohammad Reza Mahboubfar had been charged with "spreading lies" and that a judicial case had been filed against him (The state-run ANA News Agency - May 28, 2022). Criminalizing and prosecuting its appointed officials are the regime's way of dealing with matters concerning officials who reveal data contrary to Khamenei's policies and maneuvers. Previously, Parvaneh Salahshuri, a former Member of Parliament, and Shahindokht Molaverdi, head of the Women and Family Affairs directorate, faced similar charges for spreading shocking news about women.

Defying religious dictatorship is the Iranian people and women's top priority

One of the regime's primary goals in implementing the Population Growth Plan is to get people preoccupied with livelihood issues. The regime deflects with this new plan to prevent mass protests and delay its overthrow as much as possible. The clerical regime is the number one killer of the Iranian people. The awful examples of the regime's inhumane crimes will never be erased from the memory of the Iranian people. Examples include:

- The policy of abandoning the Iranian people during the Coronavirus pandemic, leaving them without healthcare – a measure that led to a still-growing death toll of 530,000. Khamenei personally banned the vaccine from entering the country.
- The killing of 176 innocent passengers on the Ukrainian passenger plane when it was downed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' missiles in 2020.
- The killing of 1,500 people protesting the gasoline price hike during a nationwide uprising in 2019.
- The massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in the summer of 1988 and 120,000 political prisoners in the 1980s.

These obvious crimes should be added to the massive losses imposed on the Iranian people because of the regime's enormous corruption: people are killed during natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and air pollution caused by environmental degradation; and a number of people died in road accidents, several times the global average; the collapse of poorly constructed and unstable buildings, and so on. Repressive initiatives such as the Population Growth Plan are implemented while the housing poverty line in Tehran and other major cities in Iran has reached 80 or 90 percent. Some 40 million of the country's population live in slums or substandard housing. About 30 million of the country's population are renters who spend 50 percent of their income on housing. On the other hand, due to recent price hikes and the elimination of food subsidies, Iranian families spend 86 percent of their income on food. Half of the Iranian households have nothing left to spend on education and health care (The state-run Rouydad News Agency – May 28, 2022). This brings the Iranian people to the streets, finding their only answer in protesting and demanding the overthrow of the entire religious dictatorship. The best way to defend Iranian women (and women's rights), who, according to state-run media, are at the forefront of popular uprisings, is to support the people's protests and boycott the mullahs' regime.

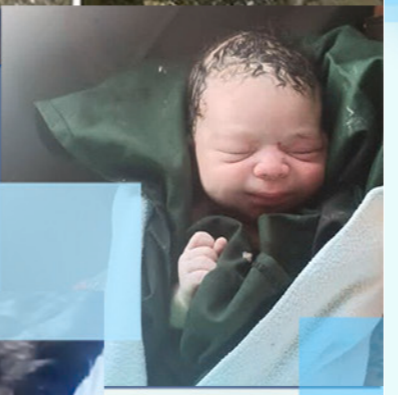
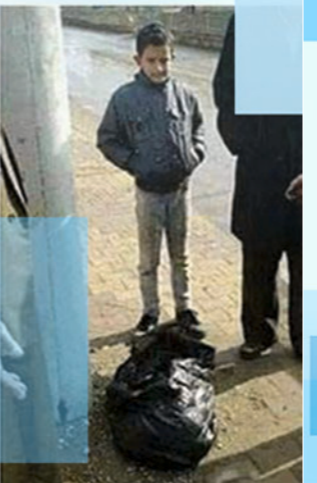
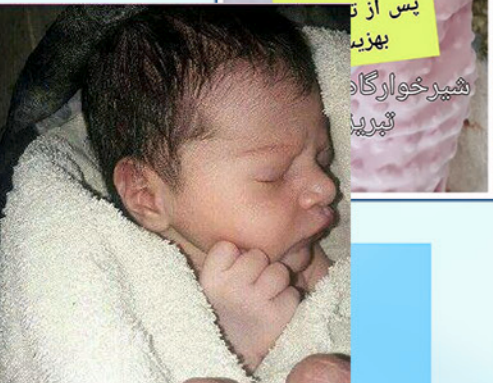
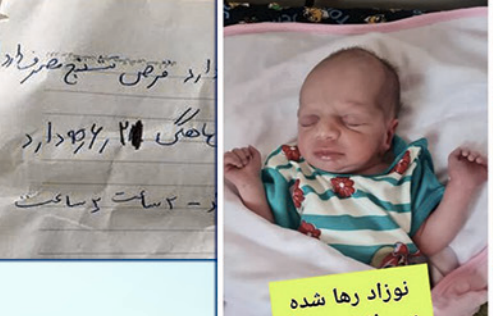
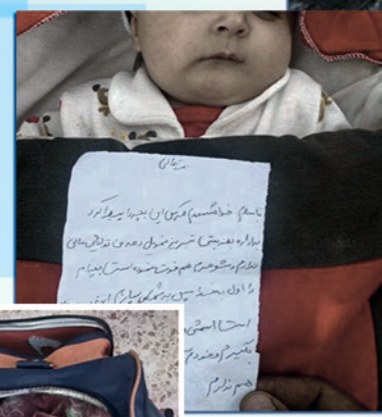
Imposing the Population Growth Plan when people are suffering from poverty led to the following outcome:

Between 2,000 and 2,500 abortions are carried out every day or the new borns abandoned in the streets.

اتفاق تلخ و غم انگیز
رها کردن طفل معصوم
در شهرضا اصفهان

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