




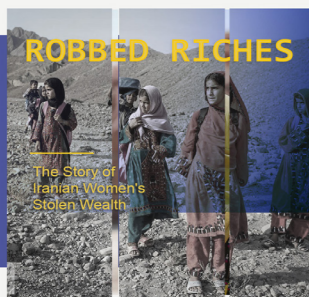
A Report to the CSW68

ROBBED RICHES

The Story of
Iranian Women's
Stolen Wealth

Women's Committee
National Council of Resistance of Iran
February 2024

 A Report to the CSW68



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A Report to CSW68 - Robbed Riches

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Empowering Women and Girls

The central theme of the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) is dedicated to the paramount objective of "accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment for all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective."

This involves a comprehensive approach encompassing the mitigation of poverty, bolstering institutional frameworks, integrating a gender perspective into financing mechanisms, and assessing countries' outcomes in areas such as social support, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure.



The overarching goal is to fortify systems that contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The session will also review the agreed conclusions of the sixty-third session, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

CSW 68

Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment for all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

Executive Summary

Iran is a country rich in wealth and resources, yet is ranked among the world's worst economies. A glance at the lives of Iranian women and the general population shows that the ruling regime is incompatible with carrying out and upholding international norms and 21st century standards.

Due to vast corruption and mismanagement by government authorities, Iran is facing serious inflation, absolute poverty, high unemployment, a widening class gap, a high poverty gap, and price hikes signaling a new crisis in the economy. These challenges resulting from the destructive policies of the regime have caused an alarming and concerning impact on the overall population, specifically families, women and children.

As a result of the calamitous decisions taken by the regime, the Iranian people have been led into a dark world of poverty and destitution. With each passing day, Iranian women find themselves descending further into what is metaphorically described as the challenging circumstances imposed by the ruling mullahs. The cause of the failing economy is vital to keep in mind. The examination of women's poverty in Iran requires an understanding that the government's policies are centered on sustaining its own continuity. The linchpin of the dictatorial regime's strength lies in the Revolutionary Guards, which are deeply involved in internal repression and alleged international terrorism. In other words, the regime utilizes domestic crackdown against its people and warmongering

in the region as a means to hold grip on power. The resources, wealth, and economic potential of the Iranian people are disproportionately directed toward supporting and fortifying the Revolutionary Guards, perceived as a negative influence by all means.

The country's economy heading towards collapse?

Soaring inflation concerning food, transportation, healthcare, housing, and water and electricity, are among difficulties that Iranians face every day. The true inflation rate is unclear as some say it stands at over 40%, while others including government officials argue it is much higher with some putting the figure over 100%. More than half of Iran's population live under the poverty line and around 30 million people in Iran are living in absolute poverty, meaning individuals lack the minimum income necessary to purchase essential needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and access to healthcare.

Examples of price hikes are seen in essential food commodities such as liquid oil (294%), onions (222%), pasta (139%), various sauces (105%), noodles (100%), butter (92%), cucumber, and banana (approximately 90%), eggs and chicken meat (about 82%), milk (79%), and rice (more than 79%).

The price of bread is frequently on the rise in various provinces across the country. In a report issued by Jahan-e Sanat newspaper in November 2023, the Minister of Economy revealed that

The Iranian regime's policies are not centered on the empowerment of women but rather on sustaining its own continuity. The country's resources, wealth, and economic potential of the Iranian people are disproportionately directed toward supporting and fortifying this force, perceived as a negative influence.

bread consumption among different societal strata had decreased by 40%, highlighting further challenges faced by the population. Crucial food items are also affected leading to a decrease in meat and dairy consumption. The rising prices and overall conditions have made life all the more difficult for the average Iranian. The effects of poverty have led to a decrease in calorie consumption, especially in quality calories. The head of the Endocrine and Metabolism Research Institute of Melli University of Medical Sciences (a.k.a Beheshti) mentioned a prevalence of endocrine and metabolic diseases in Iran. Other sources indicate nearly 60% of Iran's population is reportedly malnourished, including over 14 million children. According to Hossein Raghfar, an economic expert, the country's economy is heading towards collapse.

Exploitation and severe consequences of poverty on women and girls

Poverty in Iran has extremely painful consequences for women and girls. Despite working more than eight hours a day behind sewing machines in noisy and challenging environments, women endure physical strain, including back pain and neck arthritis. The low wages, coupled with the demanding work conditions, result in a situation where even working a full month without any breaks does not yield a monthly income equivalent to the minimum wage for a worker. This places them several circles below the poverty line. Women face discrimination in the workplace, resulting in lower wages and limited opportunities. For example, a report from the state-run Salary 99 website highlights the disparity in employment rates between men and women in government companies and organizations. While the employment rate for men in these entities stands at 74%, only 26% of women are employed. Women also endure extended work hours, sometimes exceeding 12 hours a day, and receive only 60% of the salaries earned by their male counterparts. This policy

forces them into a precarious state of subsistence, compelling them to accept short-term and part-time positions with the longest working hours. The comparison with countries like the United States underscores the difference in the financial remuneration for nurses. Data shows that nurses in Iran are not adequately compensated for their work. For example, while a nurse in the U.S. may receive four thousand dollars for seven hours of work, Iranian nurses shockingly only earn around 120 dollars for 10 to 12 hours of work, sometimes even extending to 20 hours a day. A statement from the spokesperson of the teachers' union displays another type of existing economic disparity. The average salary ceiling for teachers currently ranges between 7 and 9 million tomans but the poverty line is estimated to be above 20 million tomans. Among other hardships for women include the absence of safety measures in the workplace. Massoud Heydari, the CEO of ILNA state news agency, candidly acknowledges that the



working conditions for Iranian workers deviate significantly from international standards, lacking essential safety measures and necessary equipment. Particularly in service fields, where women are predominantly employed, the risk of accidents is heightened. Tragic incidents, such as fires in workshops or accidents involving fabric-cutting machines, result in severe injuries, including the loss of limbs or, at times, fatalities. A disturbing trend emerges where some employers, seemingly aware of the hazardous conditions, seek guarantees from workers. This unethical practice absolves the employer of responsibility in the event of accidents, placing an undue burden on the workers who are often left to cope with the physical and emotional aftermath without proper support. A former member of the Labor Dispute Resolution Council, also shed light on a distressing aspect of the legal landscape affecting women workers. In the unfortunate event of an accident, many women find themselves in a

precarious situation, unable to be legally pursued due to their lack of insurance coverage. Women heads of households also face many hardships. Due to factors such as reduced job security, lower average income, and heightened economic insecurity among women under the rule of the mullahs, the brunt of inflation in recent years has been disproportionately borne by female heads of households. In a report on the repercussions of the "inflationary wave on women heads of households," the state news agency Rokna highlights that, under the current circumstances, a staggering 40 percent of women heads of households in Iran, equivalent to one million and 700 thousand people, find themselves below the poverty line. This stark statistic underscores the severe economic challenges faced by a significant portion of female-headed families in the country. It can be concluded that women are the most exploited under this system and unfair conditions. However, the dismal world of poverty for women in Iran delves much deeper. It has led women and girls into child labor, forced marriages, child marriages, and the trafficking of women. Young girls are compelled to abandon their education and engage in work from an early age. In order to be able to make ends meet for a very short period, some even resort to selling their body parts or hair. Another appalling tragedy resulting from poverty is the prevalence of the phenomenon of selling newborns and babies. A children right's advocate shared a harrowing story that occurred in Iran of an addicted man who forced his wife into pregnancy three times, subsequently selling the newborns to individuals that were complete strangers to the woman. Shockingly, when the same woman sought to prevent further pregnancies and visited the hospital, she was told that she required her husband's permission. Women sometimes even pre-sell their babies. These practices that the regime is known to have a part in are not only unethical but also illegal and a grave violation of human rights.

Tragic phenomenon of child labor, sleeping on the streets, and the selling of kidneys and other body parts

The exploitation and engagement of underprivileged women and children in garbage collection is a distressing manifestation of social and economic challenges. In Tehran alone, there is said to be around 4,500 child laborers working in the sector of garbage collection. Due to poverty, many children across Iran are forced to drop out of school in order to work under inhumane and unsanitary conditions. The impoverishment has left no option but for homeless people and even children and women to sleep in cardboard boxes on the streets, in graves, under bridges, and in buses. Ahmad Alavi, a member of the Cultural and Social Commission of Tehran City Council, highlighted a "new phenomenon" where "non-addicted people" are found sleeping in BRT buses on overnight routes. According to Tehran Municipality officials, these individuals "have a legitimate appearance and are not drug addicts; they are even employed." These individuals, unable to afford house rent or guest house

expenses, resort to «choosing the bus to sleep» because it provides a «safe and warm» option during cold nights.

People selling their organs for a small income is yet another terrible and shocking phenomenon that has been going on for years in Iran. These people turn to this option out of poverty and to be able to survive a little longer. The report from Jahan-e Sanat newspaper on 12 April 2023 highlights the distressing increase in cases of individuals resorting to selling body parts, such as kidneys, liver, bone marrow, eye cornea, and more.

The mention of a known kidney market in Tehran, which has expanded to include the sale of other body parts, indicates the severity of the economic struggles experienced by people in the country.

Suicide has increased and has become all the more common. Only in the last eighteen days of August 2023, at least 13 suicides of teenagers under the age of 18 were recorded in Kurdistan province alone. Two 12-year-old girls from Diwandarreh and Sardasht were among them.

Four decades of government mismanagement and the mullahs' fear for another uprising

When the Iranian people peacefully attempt to voice their opinion against the intolerable conditions that the regime has forced them into, they are quickly met with violence. The regime answers their demands with beatings, expulsion, harassment, torture, and/or arrest. Retirees, teachers, nurses, and people from different walks of life in Iran have been persistently active in organizing protests in many provinces across the country. Despite the heavy suppression, the fact that they are willing to protest given the circumstances underscores the gravity of their grievances. The cry for their rights, echoing the concerns of millions of workers, the poor, and retired individuals, highlights a broader sentiment regarding economic challenges and dissatisfaction with the current system. This pamphlet examines only the tip of the iceberg. Over four decades of government corruption and mismanagement has caused widespread poverty and complete misery for the Iranian population. And as for women, on one hand it is the discrimination, gender gap, excessive working hours, inadequate and unequal wages, unfair working conditions, and lack of safety measures they have to deal with. On the other hand, it is the selling of their own body parts and organs, or selling their own children out of destitution.

Unquestionably, these conditions are not limited to only women, as there are millions grappling with poverty in Iran and living in absolute inhumane and intolerable circumstances. Eradicating poverty was one of the hollow promises of the current president, Ebrahim Raisi. Information, data, and statistics have proven that the situation has in fact worsened, and the country today is facing a severe economic crisis. In today's Iran, an increasing number of parliament members and regime officials have admitted to the alarming economic situation and how it can lead to an eruption of anti-government protests.

For example, Mohammad Bagheri Banaei, a member of the Parliament's Economic Commission, has candidly expressed his apprehension, implying a fear of the potential eruption of public anger. Banaei issued a cautionary warning, pointing out that the escalation of the poverty line and the growing population submerged below it in Iran "may lead to social and political problems in the not too distant future."

The state-run Jomhuri Newspaper also emphasized, "People are fatigued by mere slogans and yearn for tangible actions. It's essential to recognize that people's patience has limits. Beware of the day when a hungry populace rises against you." The paper goes on to say, "People refuse to accept a scenario where in a nation blessed with abundant wealth and resources, a select few prosper while millions of families endure the burden of poverty." Iran has witnessed a number of widespread nationwide uprisings in previous years in support of freedom and against the worsening economic conditions. The last major uprising erupted in September 2022 and continued for six months. The Iranian people are well aware that while this dictatorship is in power, misery and suffering will consist. After more than 40 years of the figurative hell that the mullahs' have created along with brute repression against anyone voicing dissent, the brave people of Iran are determined to overcome the wall of repression in order to establish freedom, justice, human rights, and gender equality.



ROBBED RICHES

Analyzing social progress, particularly concerning women's issues, in Iran under the governance of dictatorial and misogynist mullahs is a complex undertaking. In recent decades, the Iranian Resistance (NCRI) has been the primary voice proclaiming that this regime is incompatible with international norms and 21st-century standards, and it does not genuinely represent the people of Iran. Presently, a broader spectrum of truth-seekers acknowledges the reality of the situation. The brutal suppression of protests advocating for people's rights during recent uprisings stands as a stark testament to the authoritarian tactics employed by the ruling mullahs.



Furthermore, their involvement in fueling and supporting terrorist forces has exacerbated conflicts, notably contributing to the bloody war in Gaza.

This pamphlet draws on statistics and reports from government records to assert that, under the rule of the mullahs in Iran, progress has been notably absent not only for women but also for the general population.

With Each Passing Day,

Iranian women find themselves descending further into what is metaphorically described as the challenging circumstances imposed by the ruling mullahs – a situation depicted as a figurative "burning hell."

Iran's economy dying under the octopus of the terrorist IRGC

The examination of women's poverty in Iran requires an understanding that the government's policies are not centered on the empowerment of women but rather on sustaining its own continuity.

The linchpin of this regime's strength lies in the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which are deeply involved in internal repression and alleged international terrorism. The narrative posits that the resources, wealth, and economic potential of the Iranian people are disproportionately directed toward supporting and fortifying this force, perceived as a negative influence.

According to this perspective, as the regime perceives an increasing threat to its stability, there is an alleged escalation in efforts to bolster the IRGC. The statement attributed to Saeed Mohammad, the commander of the IRGC Khatam garrison as of 31 December 2019, outlines the significant role of the garrison in various sectors of Iran's economy. According to the provided information, the Khatam garrison is reported to contribute substantially to the country's key energy sectors.

Specifically, it is stated 35% that the garrison is responsible for approximately of the country's gasoline production, 20% of sweet gas production, 22% of diesel production, and 32% of oil and gas transmission lines.

Additionally, the statement highlights the extensive reach of Khatam garrison's projects, asserting that it is involved in the construction of 50% of the country's dam reservoirs, distributed across 62 dams.

This information suggests a significant and wide-ranging impact of the Khatam garrison on Iran's energy infrastructure and water resource management. It underscores the garrison's integral role in key sectors of the national economy, as per the reported statistics provided by Saeed Mohammad.

The information from a state-run website suggests that the relationship between the Khatam construction garrison and the government has been a significant and ongoing challenge for this influential institution. According to the statement, the government reportedly owes a substantial amount, specifically "30 thousand billion tomans," to the Khatam garrison.¹

The implication is that this outstanding debt posed real challenges to the government of Hassan Rouhani. The statement, by noting that the owed amount is equivalent to one-tenth of the country's annual budget, underscores the magnitude of the financial obligation and its potential impact on the broader fiscal landscape. It suggests that the financial dynamics between Khatam construction garrison and the government are complex and have the potential to influence or create challenges for the government, particularly in the context of budgetary considerations and financial management.

An economic analysis conducted by Forbes has positioned Kyrgyzstan, Swaziland, Nicaragua, and Iran as the 7th to 10th worst economies globally. This ranking is determined through an examination of three-year average statistics, including factors such as GDP growth, inflation, GDP per capita, and the balance of current accounts. Despite having 10% of the world's discovered oil reserves, Iran's economic performance is reported to be adversely affected by factors such as mismanagement, an expanding government role in large industrial and economic activities, and the impact of sanctions.²

The revelation by Abdul Naser Hemmati, the former head of the Central Bank, during a party congress indicates that a substantial amount of money, specifically 23 thousand billion tomans, was printed every month in Iran over the past year. Hemmati further highlighted a significant fiscal practice in Iran, stating that governments in the country have a tendency to spend more than their income, relying on the creation of liquidity to sustain operations. This approach, as described, leads to a dissonance between the government, banks, and pension funds, resulting from the imbalance between expenditures and income.³

The summary of the economic performance of the government of Ebrahim Raisi, as presented by Hemmati on the eve of the second anniversary of his appointment, highlights key indicators. According to the information provided, over this period, there has been a notable increase in various economic parameters.⁴ Specifically, money printing has grown by 83%, liquidity by 73%, the dollar price by 95%, coin price by 162%, and the price index by 114%.

Furthermore, Nobakht, the former head of the regime's Planning and Budget Organization, acknowledged that in less than two years, Raisi's government had issued unbacked financial bonds totaling 311 thousand billion tomans, which equals what the previous government did in more than eight years.⁵

The summarized economic data and the issuance of unbacked financial bonds underscore the challenges and dynamics within Raisi's economic policies, reflecting on aspects such as inflation, currency value, and financial instruments utilized by the government. The information provided offers a snapshot of the economic landscape during this specific period.

In 2021, the growth rate of the agricultural group experienced an additional increase of minus 3.6%, and it further decreased by minus 4.4% in 2020.⁶

The well-being of Iranian households has experienced a marked decline over the past decade. Key contributors to this downturn include the stagnation of manufacturing companies, a deceleration in economic growth, an uptick in inflation, and a reduction in per capita income. Notably, between 2013 and 2019, there has been a threefold increase in absolute poverty in Iran.

Internal statistics reveal a substantial 30% decline in the per capita income of Iranians from 2011 to 2020.

The inflation rate has surged to a peak of 40% and the added value of both the industrial and agricultural sectors of the GDP has experienced a decline.

Despite longstanding challenges of underdevelopment in Iran's economy over the past decades, recent statistics indicate a further exacerbation of Iran's economic regress since the 1990s.

Statistics from the World Bank reveal a consistent upward trend in Iran's inflation rate since 2012. In 2012, the inflation rate stood at 19%, and it had climbed to 40.6% by 2020.⁷

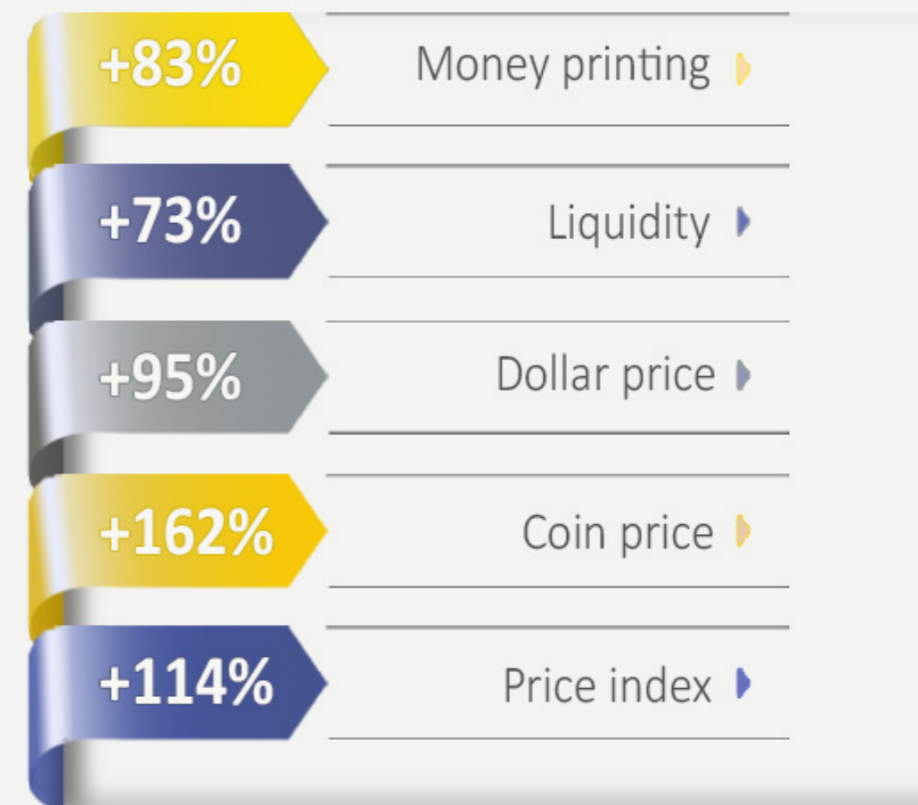
However, MP Gholamreza Nouri Qazalje has expressed skepticism, stating that officials claim an inflation rate of 40%, while he believes the actual inflation rate is higher at 120%. The government's playing with numbers is not concealed from the public.⁸

Albert Boghuzian, an economic expert, highlights a concerning trend, stating that Iran has consistently experienced over 40% inflation for multiple consecutive years.

According to Boghuzian, the cumulative inflation has now surpassed 100%. This has resulted in a 50% decline in the purchasing power of salary earners, especially considering the meager annual increases in their wages.

Boghuzian raises a critical question about accountability, pointing out that despite the adverse economic conditions, there appears to be a lack of repercussions for the individuals responsible for the decisions that have led to the current situation in the country.⁹

EBRAHIM RAISI'S FIRST-YEAR TRACK RECORD:



Raisi's government has also issued \$6.22 billion worth of unbacked financial bonds in less than two years

The state-run Etemad newspaper, in an infographic dated 20 August 2023, reportedly illustrated a substantial increase in the prices of essential items,¹⁰ ranging from 100% to over 300%.

Farshad Momeni, a professor of economics, responds by asserting that the promises made under the banner of poverty eradication, job creation, and related issues constitute significant errors and betrayals.

The statements are made while for the first time in the last 100 years, the period for doubling the size of the poor population in Iran has shortened to less than 3 years.

There is a lack of understanding of development and a notable absence of concern for the economic situation.

There is a shift away from a focus on quality and development, emphasizing the impact of corrupt rentier relations. The prevailing economic structures and practices have hindered the effectiveness of job creation in alleviating poverty. Particularly alarming is that 89% of Iran's poor population comprises former and current workers and retirees, indicating that those who have contributed to the workforce are disproportionately affected by economic challenges.¹¹

Economic Strain (2011-2020)

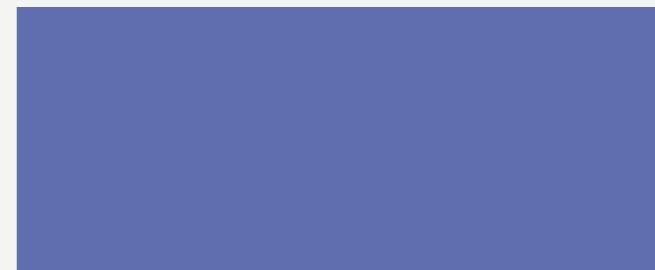


Hossein Raghfar, a government economist, has expressed a critical perspective, stating that the government has so far lacked a comprehensive plan to address the economic challenges facing the country. Furthermore, he contends that the seventh development plan presented to the parliament is the weakest in the history of the country's planning. Raghfar goes on to suggest that the most optimistic forecasts under this plan anticipate a staggering 40% inflation for the year. He attributes this prediction to the substantial increase in the currency price implemented by the government in 2022 and 2023. The economist emphasizes the gravity of this inflation, characterizing it as very significant.¹² Mohammad Reza Jafarian, the tax consultant of the Chamber of Trades in Tehran, has raised concerns about the economic situation, asserting that 420 billion tomans worth of banknotes

are printed every hour. This practice has led to inflationary pressures and, in turn, taxation on inflation. Jafarian contends that despite a reported 70% inflation, the salary increase for employees has been only 25%. Moreover, he expresses frustration that this process has continued for the past 40 years. Jafarian also raises questions about the transparency of government spending, stating that the destination of taxes is unclear, and there is a lack of reporting on where the money is allocated. He metaphorically suggests that the government has "two hands in the pockets of the people," implying a perceived financial burden on the citizens.¹³ The situation regarding poverty in Iran appears concerning, as indicated by various indicators. The poverty gap, which measures the distance between the poor and the poverty line, has reportedly reached its highest value, standing at

approximately 27% in the years 2020 and 2021. This suggests that even individuals above the poverty line are approaching it, underscoring that in the year 2021, compared to 2011, the population of the poor has increased by around 11 million people.¹⁴ The latest unemployment statistics for the summer of 2022 have led to the calculation of the misery index, which combines the inflation and unemployment rates. Alarming, this index has surged to its highest level, reaching 52.9. In a healthy economy, this index is expected to be around 6 to 7. However, in Iran, over the last few decades, it has consistently been above 20 due to unbridled inflation. The current figure represents a historical record, emphasizing the severity of economic challenges in the summer of 2022.¹⁵ Adding to these concerns, the latest estimates indicate that point-to-point inflation has risen to 68.7% in March 2023 and is poised to hit 70%. This marks the highest recorded inflation in at least 32 years.¹⁶ There is a whopping class gap in such a corrupt economy. The description of the income and expenses in Iran, as provided by the Ministry of Labor for the year 2022, highlights a significant class gap within the economy. The figures reveal substantial disparities between the net incomes of poor and rich families across different deciles. According to the data, the net income of a poor family in the first decile was reported to be 42 million 443 thousand tomans, while a rich family in the tenth decile had a significantly higher estimated net income of 424 million 622 thousand 100 tomans. The lowest income belongs to unpaid family workers and non-working individuals. Most Iranian women belong to this group.¹⁷ Hossein Raghfar points out that in other countries worldwide, welfare for the people has been achieved without relying solely on oil revenues. These countries have successfully established active and dynamic economies by collecting taxes from income owners. Raghfar suggests that those who should be

responsible for stabilizing and implementing a fair tax system are often the same individuals who should be paying taxes. This implies a potential lack of willingness or effective mechanisms for equitable taxation, which, according to Raghfar, contributes to the current disorganized state of income distribution in the country.¹⁸ MP Hamid Reza Haji Babaei admits that as long as the economy remains under government control, inflation will be challenging to control for any administration. Babaei suggests that the economy should be in the hands of the people rather than the government. Furthermore, he specifically points out the auto industry, advocating for the government to withdraw its involvement in order to foster competitiveness and discourage rent-seeking behavior. Ahmad Alirezabeigi, a member of the regime's parliament, characterizes the economy as "sick" and attributes this ailment to the lack of competition. Alirezabeigi suggests that the absence of a competitive environment is a result of the government's extensive control over border and customs, as well as its ability to set tariffs. This, in turn, creates a market monopoly for a specific group, leading to the loss of people's rights.¹⁹



Under the Poverty Line

The poverty line is indeed a threshold or level of income that is considered the minimum required for a household or individual to afford the basic necessities of life. Falling below this threshold is referred to as "absolute poverty," signifying a situation in which households or individuals lack the minimum income necessary to meet essential needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and healthcare.

A report from Jahan-e Sanat newspaper in August 2022, titled, "Half a Century of Mistakes," indicates that the population of the poor has tripled since the 1979 revolution.

The report states that in 1979, around 20% of Iranians were below the poverty line. However, by 1989, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, this percentage had increased to about 40%. The situation worsened further, with the poverty rate reaching approximately 52% by 2021. The report noted that about 60% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2022, with a significant portion living below the misery line.²⁰

Ebrahim Raisi, the regime's current president, had pledged to eradicate absolute poverty. However, according to the estimates from state media, during the two years of Raisi's administration, at least 18 million people have been added to the number of individuals below the poverty line.²¹ The poverty line jumped by 50% in 2021 compared to 2020.²²

Despite unbridled inflation, the government considered less than 20% salary increase for government employees and retirees in the 2023 budget bill. Still, the proposed meager increase. The retirees have held protests in various cities on numerous occasions demanding their salaries to be brought to the poverty line, questioning why they should be paid only half of the poverty line after thirty years?²³

A decade of decline in per capita income has narrowed the gap between the non-poor and the poverty line since 2018, indicating that poverty is spreading across various groups with different characteristics.

This means that households above and around the poverty line are not significantly better off than those below the poverty line in terms of welfare and income.

A 5% increase in the poverty line in 2022 is equal to 600,000 tomans added to the poverty line for a family of three in Tehran. For example, the 5% increase in the poverty line in 2021, added more than 2.85 million people to the population living below the poverty line.²⁴

The population of individuals living below the poverty line in Iran doubled in the past three years alone.²⁵

On 23 October 2022, the state-run Kabna website, estimated the poverty line to be 18 million tomans for a family of four.²⁶

In November 2022, the state-run Khabar Online reported that more than 65 million people in Iran live below the poverty line.²⁷ It's noteworthy that 60% of the poor are reported to be economically active and working.²⁸

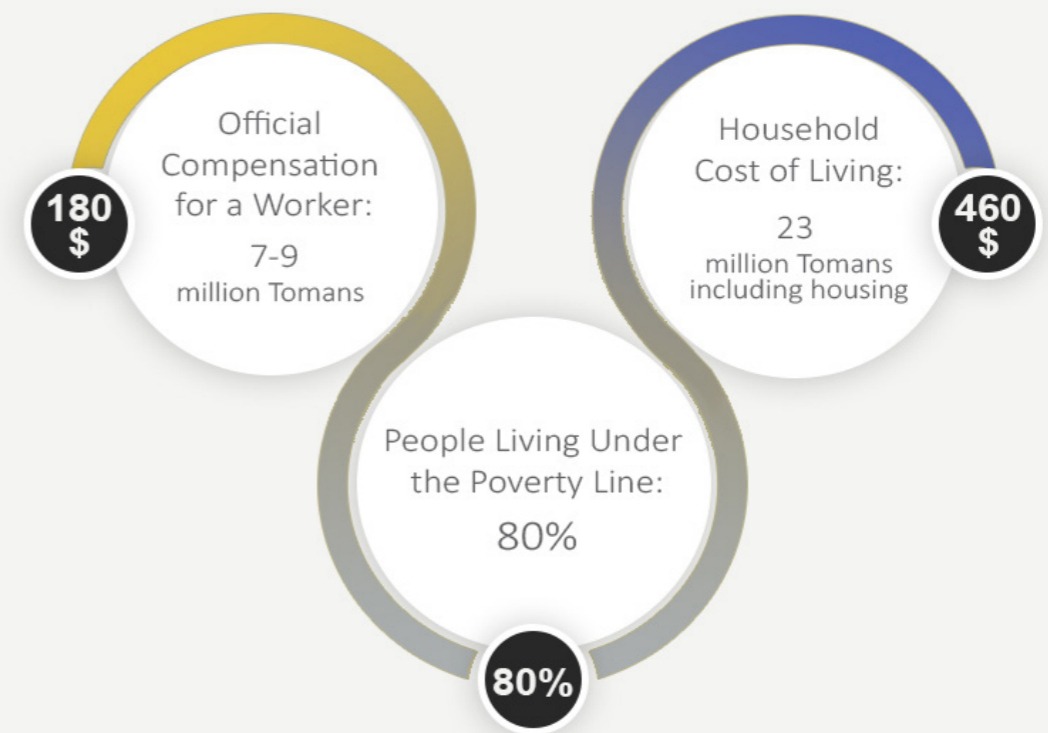
The above figures are catastrophic on their own. However, state-run media, including the Ensafnews.ir, had previously reported that 70% of the Iranian population lived below the poverty line.²⁹

The workers' minimum wage, even with all benefits included, is lower than one-third of the poverty line in Tehran.

During the wage negotiations in 2023, the representatives of the government and employers were not willing to accept the labor group's figures for the poverty line, which was set at 18 million tomans at the time. Instead, they set the figure of 9 million tomans for wages and benefits combined. While at the same time, a member of the Economic Commission of the mullahs' parliament asserted that the poverty line in Tehran was 30 million tomans.³⁰

Morteza Afgheh, a professor of economic development, drew attention to an additional dimension of economic challenge in Iran. He noted that in addition to the poverty line, "we have the burden of "Takafful," which refers to

Iranian Socioeconomic Snapshot



Female Workers:

- Majority Engaged in Informal Jobs
- Salary Range: **Less than 1 million tomans (\$17.5)**

the financial dependency of young individuals on their fathers due to a lack of employment opportunities. Many families are experiencing a situation where young people are economically dependent on their parents, highlighting the financial strain caused by the lack of job opportunities.³¹ The reliability of government statistics is severely undermined by the corruption within the government structure, leading to contradictions and inconsistencies in official reports. Shahab Naderi, a member of the mullahs' parliament, and Mohammad Sadegh Mashayekh, the head of the Commercial Development Commission of Omid Iranian Foundation, further emphasize the severity of the economic situation. Naderi revealed in 2017 that 80% of Iran's society lives below the poverty line³² and Mashayekh asserted in December 2022 that between 70 and

80 percent of Iranians have an income of less than 10 million tomans. Notably, the impact of poverty is greater on women and children.³³ Mohsen Pirhadi, the vice-chairman of the 7th Development Plan Consolidation Commission, acknowledged the economic downturn experienced by certain segments of society over the last decade which had consequences, including the proliferation of slum dwelling, a rise in addiction rates, increased instances of corruption, a surge in migration to major urban centers, and the feminization of social harm, among other outcomes.³⁴

Hungry and No Bread

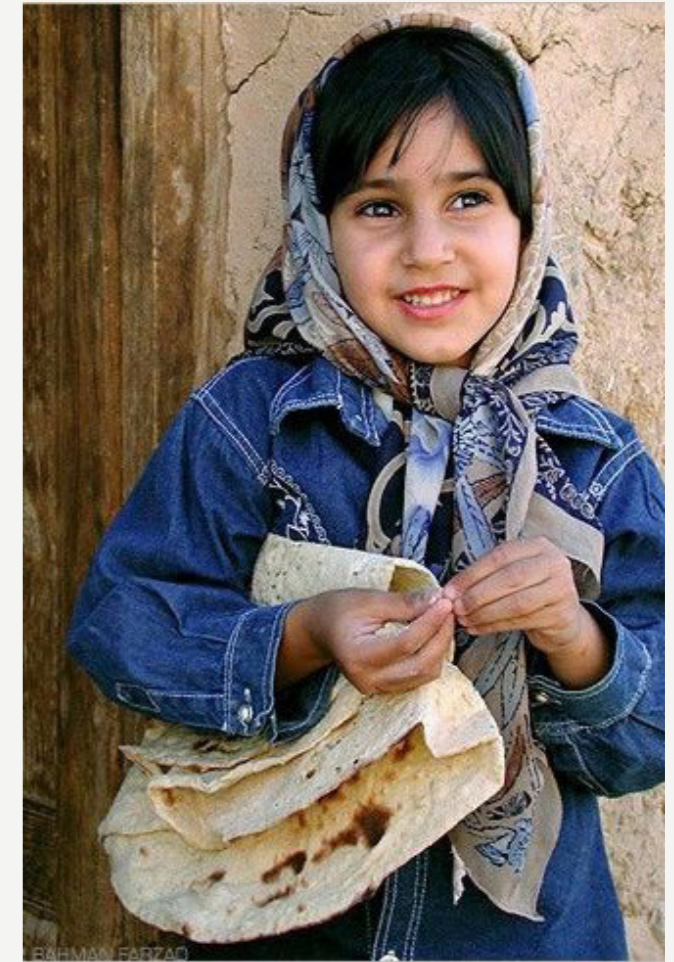
The inflation in Iran has escalated to a point where, as of September 2023, a labor activist revealed that the subsistence basket, considering minimum standards, has reached 19 million and 400 thousand tomans. When housing costs are factored into the calculation, the livelihood basket in Tehran surpasses 23 million tomans. This is a stark contrast to the minimum wage of a worker, which, even with all benefits included, falls between 7 and 9 million tomans.³⁵ It is crucial to note that a significant portion of working women is engaged in informal jobs, where the salaries they receive are considerably less than the minimum wage. The point-to-point inflation figures released by the National Statistics Center for the summer of 2021 revealed an overall inflation rate of 54%,

with the food group experiencing an even higher rate of 90%.³⁶ Subsequently, in 2023, food prices in Iran reached another peak. Despite restrictions on the publication of official economic statistics, field data indicates significant increases in various food items. The reported statistics illustrate substantial price hikes in essential food commodities, including liquid oil (294%), onions (222%), pasta (139%), various sauces (105%), noodles (100%), butter (92%), cucumber, and banana (approximately 90%), eggs and chicken meat (about 82%), milk (79%), and rice (more than 79%). Additional increases were observed in yogurt (70%), carrots and apples (58%), fish (49%), sugar (44%), and beans and peas (over 38%).

Food Price Surge in 2023 Soaring Costs Across Staples



In central areas of Tehran, the cost of each egg has reached 5,000 tomans, a kilogram of chicken with bones is being sold for 100,000 tomans, a kilogram of mutton is priced at around 600,000 tomans,³⁷ and a kilogram of veal is sold for 750,000 tomans.³⁸ People do not even afford to buy tuna fish, because a 180 gram can of tuna fish is sold for 105,000 tomans.³⁹ This sharp increase in inflation across various sectors, including food, transportation, health and treatment, housing, and water and electricity, signals a new crisis in Iran's economy. The escalating prices are placing significant pressure on households, compelling more people to omit essential items from their livelihood baskets due to financial constraints.⁴⁰ For instance, in 2021, the average consumption of red meat decreased by more than 40% compared to the previous year (2020). Over the last decade, the average consumption of chicken meat has dropped by more than 10%.⁴¹ Mehdi Sarvi, a government advisor on the economy, declared that the per capita consumption of red meat per person is around 700 grams per year in the three lower deciles of society. Therefore, the majority of people who are wage earners and workers, cannot consume even one kilogram of red meat during the whole year.⁴² Highlighting the challenges in the dairy industry, Mohammad Reza Banitaba, the spokesperson of the dairy industry, pointed out that the per capita consumption of milk worldwide is approximately between 150 and 160 liters per person per year. However, in Iran, the per capita consumption of dairy products per person, even in the most optimistic scenario, is around 70 liters.⁴³ The statistics from the National Statistics Center reveal a substantial decrease in meat consumption per capita over the years. From 13 kg in 2011, the figure dropped to 6 kg in 2021, and for the lower deciles, it further decreased to less than 3 kg within one year, from 2021 to 2022.⁴⁴ The examination of household food consumption in Iran reveals three simultaneous



events. Firstly, there is an increase in the share of food expenses from the total household budget. This indicates that people are facing economic challenges to the extent that they struggle to allocate resources for other essential needs for themselves and their families. Secondly, the food consumption of the household has decreased. and thirdly, the household's calory intake has decreased.⁴⁵ Statistical evidence supports this observation, as the energy intake of Iranian households has reportedly fallen below 2000 calories in the last decade.⁴⁶ Additionally, the available calories are sourced from cheaper and lower-quality items.⁴⁷ The economic challenges in Iran are reflected even in the basic necessity of bread. In July 2023, the price of Barbari bread in Mashhad surged from 1,150 tomans, marking an increase of about 43%, to 1,650 tomans within one week.⁴⁸ Similarly, Lavash bread saw a price hike to 525 tomans, indicating an increase of about 24%.

The head of the Mashhad bread union stated that the decision to increase the price of bread was not within the hands of the union or Mashhad officials; rather, such decisions were made at the capital level.⁴⁹

The economic challenges affecting the affordability of essential goods, including bread, are widespread across various provinces in Iran. In Shiraz, the governor announced an increase in the price of Lavash bread from 450 tomans to 600 tomans. Additionally, the prices of other bread varieties, including Sangak bread, Taftoun bread, and Barbari bread, experienced similar increases.

Similarly, in Qazvin, Gholam Hasan Eslami Sadr, the acting governor, declared a 20-25% increase in the price of all types of bread in the province.⁵⁰ Mohammad Barzali, the head of Golestan province's Agricultural Jihad organization, announced that the prices of various types of bread would rise. Specifically, Sangak bread weighing 600 grams will be priced at 9 thousand tomans, Barbari bread weighing 500 grams at 7 thousand 500 tomans, and Taftoun bread with a weight of 200 grams at 4 thousand tomans.⁵¹ In response to the rising bread prices, the concept of buying "half bread" has become common practice.⁵²

On 6 August 2023, the state-run website Eghtesad-24 reported that bread prices in Tehran were expected to increase by 50-60% starting in the second half of August. The report quoted the Deputy Governor of the capital, stating, "The increase in the price of bread is supposed to start from the counties as an experiment and will become more expensive in Tehran in the second half of August."

The reported increase in the price of bread, carried out under the name of "proportionalization." However, there seems to be a contradiction in statements, as Ahmad Vahidi, the regime's Interior Minister, claimed that "in the government, we did not have anything called an increase in the price of bread."⁵³

The decrease in calorie consumption, particularly quality calories, poses a significant threat to



people's health. Azizi, the head of the Endocrine and Metabolism Research Institute of Melli (a.k.a. Beheshti) University of Medical Sciences, highlighted the prevalence of endocrine and metabolic diseases in Iran. Common conditions include obesity, diabetes, blood lipid disorders, thyroid diseases, and osteoporosis. Notably, about 60% of individuals over 20 years of age are overweight and obese, and in Tehran, this figure rises to 70%.

Improper nutrition, especially the elimination of protein foods, vitamins, and sufficient nutrients, including dairy products, is identified as one of the main reasons for the increasing prevalence of obesity. Abdominal obesity is recognized as a significant factor in the occurrence of cardiovascular disease. Additionally, between 50 and 70 percent of women reportedly suffer from vitamin D deficiency, which can contribute to an increased risk of osteoporosis.

Furthermore, on 11 July 2023, the 90eghtesadi.com reported that 57% of Iran's population is malnourished, as stated by Hadi Mousavinik, the former Director General of Social Welfare Studies of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. This alarming statistic includes 14 million and 500 thousand children, with 10 million of them being under the age of 12.

Motahareh Mohammadi, a doctor and social activist, has emphasized the impact of food poverty on women, particularly those residing in counties, suburbs, and small towns. She notes that the majority of women experiencing food poverty face challenges in ensuring the safety of their bodies. These women often suffer from health issues such as osteoporosis, tooth decay, and various forms of arthritis, which can be attributed to multiple pregnancies and having many children. The lack of adequate nutrition also contributes to premature aging in women, exacerbating the burden of problems they already face. The combined challenges of various burdens and food poverty have a significant negative impact, causing women to age rapidly. The harsh conditions of food poverty and associated challenges are reflected in the accelerated aging of women, with a 20-year-old woman appearing as if she were 40, and a 40-year-old woman resembling someone who is 60.⁵⁴

Additionally, a member of the mullahs' parliament highlighted the difficulties faced by many young people who struggle to afford basic necessities, including finding food for the night. The housing situation further exacerbates their challenges, as the high cost of rents makes it difficult for them to establish their households. Acknowledging the lack of accountability among ruling authorities, he said, "The consequences of the decisions made by the authorities are felt by the society, without subsequent accountability. The blame is often placed on external factors." Theft and corruption within the hierarchy of the mullahs' regime have had a profound impact on the livelihoods of the people. As reported by the state-run newspaper, Jahan-e Sanat on 29 October 2023, the Minister of Economy revealed that within two years of the tenure of Ebrahim Raisi's government, bread consumption among different societal strata had decreased by 40%.

Hossein Raghfar, an economic expert, expresses concern about the current conditions, stating that the country's economy is heading towards collapse. He highlights that the widening class gap, created by economic disparities, is the most dangerous aspect, posing risks of mental, psychological, and social damage. Raghfar states, "All governments (in Iran) often attempt to conceal facts and present misleading statistics to the public. However, in the present day, people are less accepting of false information, as they can assess the accuracy of official claims based on their own lived experiences." He warned that it should not be forgotten that the Arab Spring began with the self-immolation of a peddler, suggesting that similar social and economic discontent could pose a danger to the country.

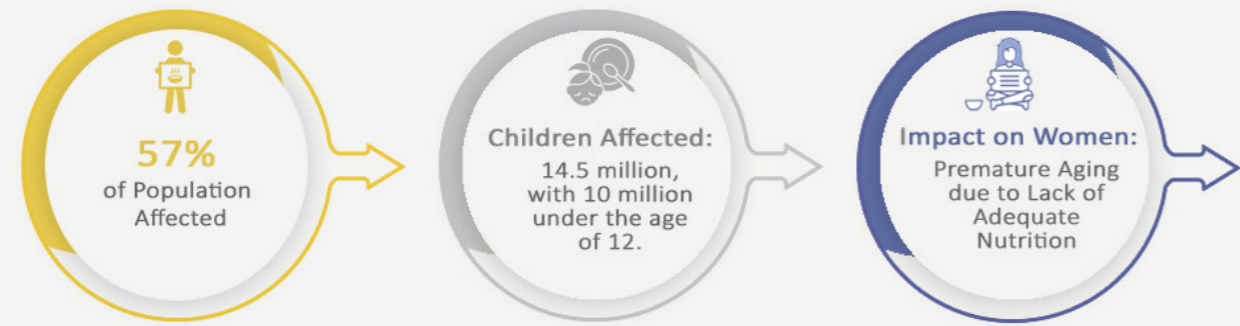


Women Are the Prime Target of the Whip of Poverty

As the poverty line increases, the challenges intensify for women, particularly as the income of most women is lower than the minimum salary of 9 million. The National Statistics Center has reported that the unemployment rate for women is twice that of men. It's important to note that this figure encompasses women actively seeking employment and not the overall unemployment rate for all women, including housewives. Additionally, more than 71% of elderly women in Iran are reportedly alone and lack a source of income, presenting significant challenges for them, especially in covering healthcare and rehabilitation expenses. A significant portion, specifically 29%, of the employed population reportedly earns a monthly income of less than one million tomans, which is deemed extremely insufficient in the face of current inflation.⁵⁷ Somayyeh Golpour, the head of the Women's Committee of the Supreme Center of the Workers' Trade Union in 2021, affirmed this issue, emphasizing the stark contrast between official poverty line statistics ranging from 10 to 11 million tomans and the reality faced by some women workers receiving less than 1 million

tomans. This places them in the lowest income decile of society.⁵⁸ An internal report from the Khomeini Relief Committee reveals that, in Greater Tehran alone, approximately half a million female heads of households live with a monthly income below 1 million tomans.⁵⁹ The Iranian regime's misogynistic policies, coupled with economic crises, are swiftly plunging Iranian women into poverty, restricting their access to "health, education, and jobs." Discrimination in the labor market further exacerbates the situation, resulting in lower wages for women and limited opportunities to enjoy welfare services. Therefore, managing household responsibilities become complex for them. This cyclical set of challenges is a daily reality for Iranian women. In addition to the overarching economic struggles and widespread poverty, these problems stem from the constitution and labor laws, which position women as second-class citizens and dependents on men. The vortex created by the mullahs in Iran contains hidden and painful aspects, including forced marriages, child marriages, unions with older men, and the trafficking of women. Young

Malnutrition Crisis in Iran



Women's Unemployment

girls are compelled to abandon their education and engage in work from an early age, often recruited for scavenging garbage and begging. Some are even forced into selling body parts or hair, plunging them into the abyss of corruption. Saba Saadatjou, a government expert, paints a relatively clear picture of the situation of women in Iran. Approximately 45% of women over 50 are single, which includes those who are unmarried, divorced, or widowed. Women's retirement income is lower than that of men, contributing to financial disparities. After divorce, the standard of living for women decreases by a staggering 73%. Furthermore, an alarming 80% of widows in Iran live in poverty. According to the National Statistics Center, more than 30% of marriages in Iran end in divorce, with financial conditions being a major factor. Iranian women are deprived of accessing various insurance services. Notably, housewives' insurance, ostensibly designed to empower women, has age restrictions, only covering individuals between 18 and 50 years old. Maryam, at 53 years of age, faces a challenging situation. Unmarried and dealing with a mental illness, she took on the responsibility of caring for her nephew after her brother's separation from his wife. For this reason, her father prevented her from marrying. Now that her nephew is married, her father has registered the family house in her nephew's name, and Maryam has only been allowed to live in one room with the understanding that she will have no share in the house after her father's passing. This precarious situation has led Maryam to resort to scavenging garbage and selling recyclables to make a living. She says, "Everyday, I wake up early. I usually separate the plastic objects and cardboards from among the garbage and sell them. In this way, I can buy my food." Despite being covered by welfare, the funds are insufficient to meet her basic needs and address issues like broken teeth.⁶⁰

The latest annual report from the World Bank titled "Women, Business, and the Law" provides insights into the state of laws related to women's business across 190 countries. According to this report, as of the year 2021, the regime in Iran ranks in the fifth row from the bottom globally. The regime's score in three key indicators related to women—laws restricting freedom of travel, laws limiting the freedom to determine the workplace, and legal restrictions related to marriage—is reported to be zero. The World Bank's report on "Women, Business, and the Law" reveals that over the past 53 years, from 1970 onwards, the Iranian regime has only improved by 2 points in terms of reforms related to women's business laws. The report emphasizes that the Iranian regime ranks among the worst globally concerning wages and other laws governing the open work environment. Additionally, the report sheds light on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment in Iran. The official unemployment rate for women in 2019 was approximately 9 times higher than that of men. Official statistics indicate that over one million women lost their jobs due to the pandemic. However, a member of the board of directors of the regime's Supreme Labor Center suggested that most of the 6 million informal workers who became unemployed were women working without insurance and earning less than 2 million Tomans in salary.⁶¹ The employment statistics from the National Statistics Center indicate that, as of the March 2022, out of 23 million and 447 thousand working individuals in the country, about 85 percent (19 million and 932 thousand) were men, and 3 million and 515 thousand were women. A comparison of these employment statistics for Iranian women from 2004 to the present reveals that this number of employed women is the lowest compared to the period between 2005 and 2007, to 2009, and to the period from 2016 to 2020. Moreover, following the spread of the coronavirus in Iran, the number of female workers has decreased by 830,000 women.⁶²

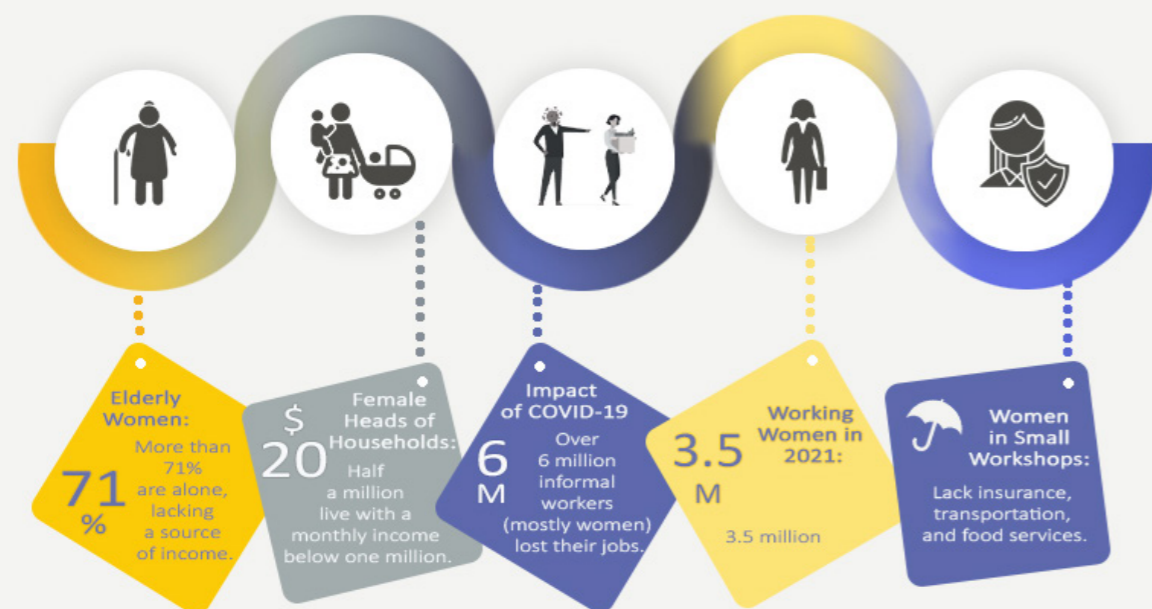
Women Workers Are the Most Exploited

Women's poverty in Iran is exacerbated by a lack of job opportunities and institutionalized discrimination in employment. A report from the state-run Salary 99 website highlights the stark disparity in employment rates between men and women in government companies and organizations. While the employment rate for men in these entities stands at 74%, only 26% of women are employed.⁶³ Moreover, women with education, skills, and expertise in various fields often face challenges in securing positions commensurate with their qualifications. Despite having specialized knowledge and expertise, many women find themselves confined to lower-level positions, often unrelated to their qualifications. Employers may exhibit a preference for hiring women in roles that traditionally offer lower pay and reduced responsibilities.⁶⁴ The economic challenges imposed by the government in Iran have affected professionals across various sectors, including those with

advanced qualifications and responsibilities such as dermatologists, nurses, and teachers. Despite their essential roles in healthcare and education, these professionals, if not affiliated with the government, often struggle to make ends meet. Nurses and teachers live under the poverty line and their persistent protests have so far led nowhere. Furthermore, there is a limited representation of women in leadership positions, with only 735 women serving as CEOs and 2,300 as board members. Accurate statistics on the number of female workers in Iran are challenging to obtain due to limitations in available data. The existing statistics often focus on workers covered by social security insurance, labor organizations, and trade unions. However, a significant number of female workers operate without insurance coverage or formal employment contracts, especially in smaller workshops or informal sectors.

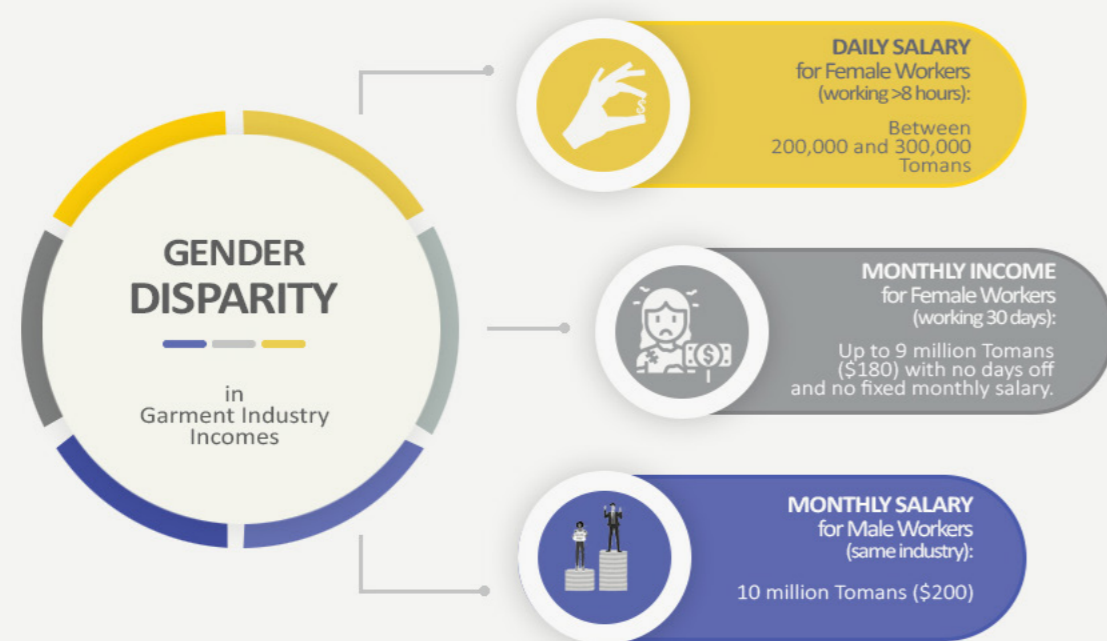
Challenges Faced by Women

in Iran



Working women in Iran encounter various challenges, particularly those in informal jobs or short-term contractual positions. Many face issues such as the absence of employment contracts or having very temporary contracts lasting 30 or 90 days. Financial problems and lack of insurance coverage further contribute to the difficulties these women experience. Some women, who are often the sole breadwinners of their families, may feel compelled to accept short-term contracts and provide checks or promissory notes to secure and maintain their employment. The prevalence of informal employment and the lack of job security make women workers in Iran vulnerable to uncertainties about the continuity of their employment. This situation adds stress and concern about job stability, impacting the overall well-being of these working women.⁶⁶ The testimonial from a female worker in the garment industry highlights the challenging working conditions faced by many women in Iran. She mentions receiving a daily wage of 200 to 300 tomans with no fixed monthly salary. This precarious payment structure leaves workers financially vulnerable, especially in the event of illness or inability to work, as they do not have any income security. Despite working more than eight hours a day behind sewing machines in noisy and challenging environments, these women endure physical strain, including back pain and neck arthritis. The low wages, coupled with the demanding work conditions, result in a situation where even working a full month without any breaks does not yield a monthly income equivalent to the minimum wage for a worker. This places them several circles below the poverty line. Moreover, the gender pay gap is evident in the same industry, where men earn higher salaries, although still below the poverty line.⁶⁷ Dilan Mam Qadri, holding a bachelor's degree in computer science, shares the challenges she faces while working at a post bank in Iran. Despite having a degree, she expresses dissatisfaction with her salary, which amounts to three and a half million tomans. After deducting

travel and taxi expenses, she is left with about two and a half million tomans. This income is deemed insufficient for basic needs like clothing. Dilan highlights the difficult job market conditions, noting that she continues working at the bank because, at the very least, it provides her with insurance. She shares her experience of working four hours a day in a lawyer's office for a monthly salary of 2 million tomans. She reveals the challenging dynamics in the workplace, where employers may have additional expectations.⁶⁸ Many working women in Iran find themselves earning less than 3 million tomans per month, pushing them to endure insecure job conditions despite the uncertainties associated with such employment. The risks associated with non-standard work are substantial, encompassing a range of physical and mental health concerns. In addition to well-documented occupational hazards like falls, limb defects, and skeletal/muscular injuries, female workers are especially vulnerable to hormonal problems and mental disorders. Industries such as pharmaceutical or cleaning companies expose them to chemical and hormonal pollutants, posing threats to their respiratory and physiological systems. Vali Tarani, a labor activist, highlights the pressing concerns faced by women workers in factories involved in the production of pharmaceutical and health products. Tarani underscores the detrimental impact of noise and environmental pollutants on the well-being of these women. The working conditions in the Salafchegan region, where thousands of women are employed, reveal a stark reality: these women are overlooked in job classifications, devoid of any employment benefits, particularly in the packaging sector where the majority of workers are female. Beyond the evident physical repercussions such as breathing and lung problems caused by chemical pollutants, there is a more insidious threat posed by hormonal



pollutants. This additional menace not only exacerbates physiological issues but also leads to psychological disorders among the female workforce. Tarani notes instances where exposure to hormonal pollutants results in an elevation of testosterone levels, contributing to sexual problems.

An alarming aspect highlighted by Tarani is the method through which these pollutants infiltrate the workers' bodies. Airborne particles are not only inhaled but are also absorbed through the skin, amplifying the risks faced by these women. In the face of these challenges, Tarani calls for urgent attention to rectify the systemic neglect and to institute measures that safeguard the health and rights of female workers in this critical sector. Not too long ago, we encountered a female worker whose facial appearance resembled that of a bearded man. Another instance involved a female worker who had lost her feminine features. These distressing complications are prevalent in companies engaged in the production of hormonal and chemical drugs, shedding light on the insufficient consideration given to the health of workers in these industries. Furthermore, there is an inherent risk of infection in the bodies of these individuals, and without timely intervention, the potential for developing cancerous tumors looms large.⁶⁹

Alireza Heydari, a member of the Insurance and Treatment Committee of the Veteran Workers' Union, draws attention to the pervasive health hazards faced by women in the garment industry. He emphasizes that ergonomic injuries are rampant among female workers due to the failure to meet job standards. The disregard for these standards leads to the onset of skeletal and joint diseases among women involved in carpet weaving and similar service-oriented occupations.⁷⁰

Senor Qadri is a 40-year-old working woman. Her husband has left the house without formally divorcing her, and Senor cleans people's houses to support her living expenses, working for fifty thousand tomans an hour. She expresses the challenges of her demanding job, revealing that she suffers from lumbar and neck disc disease. Despite lacking insurance, she emphasizes that in order to provide for herself and her children, she perseveres by working in people's houses, engaging in tasks such as cooking, washing carpets, and cleaning homes.⁷¹

Women working in small factories face a glaring absence of essential benefits such as insurance, transportation, and food services. The lax oversight from the Ministry of Labor coupled with employer negligence has created an environment where job-related injuries are

on the rise, posing a threat to the lives of these workers who may even succumb to extreme conditions like cold weather.

A tragic incident on 20 December 2022, exemplifies the dire consequences of these circumstances. A van transporting women workers from the Bahar morgue facility in Borujen caught fire, resulting in the tragic deaths of five women. Lacking heating facilities, the workers had resorted to lighting a picnic fire for warmth during their transportation. When the van door caught fire and became locked, they were unable to escape, leading to their deaths. Sadly, this is not an isolated incident. On 31 December 2023, reports from labor sources detailed the death of another woman in a factory in the Khazarabad industrial town in Yazd.

This time, the cause was drowning in a water pond. The underreporting of such incidents is exacerbated by the silence of these vulnerable workers and the absence of non-governmental labor organizations to advocate on their behalf.⁷² Massoud Heydari, the CEO of ILNA state-run news agency, candidly acknowledges that the working conditions for Iranian workers deviate significantly from international standards, lacking essential safety measures and necessary equipment. Particularly in service fields, where women are predominantly employed, the risk of accidents is heightened. Tragic incidents, such as fires in workshops or accidents involving fabric cutting machines, result in severe injuries, including the loss of limbs or, at times, fatalities. A disturbing trend emerges where some employers seek guarantees from workers, absolving the employer of responsibility in the event of accidents.⁷³

Rafat ol-Maluk Vakili, a former member of the Labor Dispute Resolution Council, sheds light on a distressing aspect of the legal landscape affecting women workers. In the unfortunate event of an accident, these women are unable to legally pursue the case due to their lack of insurance coverage. Vakili highlights a critical flaw in the legal process: the requirement for proof of salary and work history, which becomes a nearly

impossible task for these workers because these women do not receive pay slips or bank payments from their employers; their salaries are provided in cash. This lack of formal documentation further hampers their ability to assert their rights in the aftermath of workplace accidents. Additionally, the absence of support and accountability from colleagues, who fear losing their jobs, adds to the vulnerability of these workers. Many of these workers lack the financial means to afford legal representation.⁷⁴

Despite facing numerous challenges, women in the workforce in Iran find themselves disproportionately affected when it comes to job security, lacking unemployment benefits, healthcare, and retirement benefits. The exploitation of working women in Iran, often hidden from public view, proves advantageous to employers. Women endure extended work hours, sometimes exceeding 12 hours a day, and receive only 60% of the salaries earned by their male counterparts. This policy forces them into a precarious state of subsistence, compelling them to accept short-term and part-time positions with the longest working hours.

These women are not covered by labor laws. This lack of legal protection not only leaves them



without the rights afforded to other workers but also prevents them from protesting these unjust conditions, as their removal from the workforce can occur easily and without consequence.

In contract companies, particularly those involved in service work such as cleaning or housekeeping companies, employers sign long-term contracts with female workers, gaining temporary or permanent control over a portion of their income. Labor activist Tarani points out that these contracts lack provisions for their rights. The contractual agreements are signed without clear delineation of the workers' entitlements. During the hiring process, workers are not adequately informed about the potential risks associated with their employment. The lack of transparency leaves most workers unaware of the harm they may face. The challenges faced by working women have not only persisted but have multiplied over time, resulting in severe deprivation. According to Vakili, this issue has particularly detrimental consequences for female workers, with 90% of them being independent and grappling with numerous economic problems.

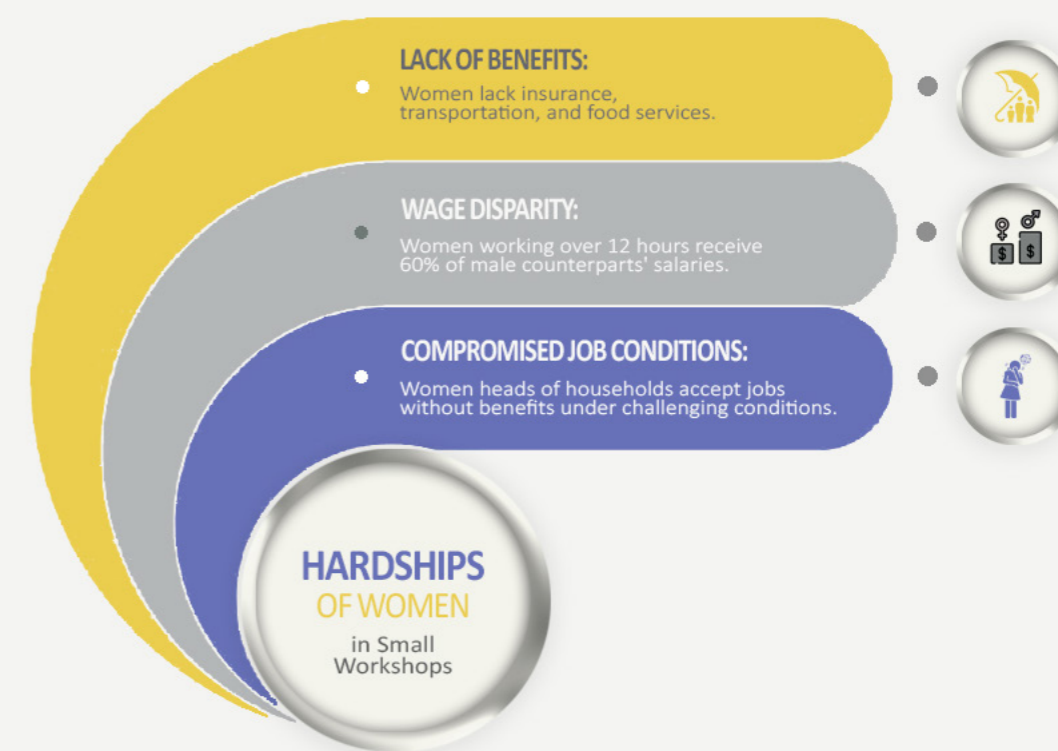
Vakili further highlights the grim reality that women employed in the private sector are vulnerable to various injuries and stress, even during childbirth. The uncertainty of retaining their jobs after giving birth adds another layer of anxiety. In many instances, employers opt to replace these women with other workers. Vakili also noted that there are 4 million female heads of households in Iran, who are compelled to accept jobs without benefits under challenging conditions. Even women covered by government agencies, if they head a family of five, find themselves with a total income of 1.4 million tomans, an amount deemed insufficient for a decent standard of living.

Additionally, Vakili points out that 2 million working women are engaged in informal economic activities, where they do not receive the minimum salary and are deprived of job benefits. This situation paints a distressing picture, as the children of these women often go to bed with hungry stomachs at night.⁷⁵

The conditions in small workshops, where a significant number of women are compelled to work, are described as even more dire. Fat'hollah Bayat, the head of the Union of Contractual Workers, highlights the challenging circumstances faced by women who work as tirelessly as men, enduring long hours. What makes the situation more concerning is that many of these workplaces operate in spaces and environments that are difficult to inspect, often being vacant during official inspector office hours. Bayat underscores that these workshops rarely undergo inspections, especially those without clear signs or evidence of economic activity, such as assembly and packaging units. Additionally, despite working for extended periods, i.e. 15 years, some women employed in these workshops still lack insurance coverage and formal employment contracts. The existence of legal exemptions for workshops with fewer than 10 employees and the prevalence of temporary contracts contribute to the exploitation and abuse of women workers.⁷⁶

Another segment of women workers operates in even more informal and precarious conditions. Many women find themselves working from home, behind computers, under the sun, weaving carpets, or in the homes of employers, and sadly, they are entirely deprived of basic labor rights. Rural women make up a substantial portion of this disadvantaged workforce. Engaging in agricultural work side by side with men for approximately nine months of the year, many of these women endure long-term health consequences without receiving proper compensation. Disturbingly, a significant number of seasonal workers are women whose daily wages are often handed over to their husbands or male family members.

Mina Sh., a resilient working woman from the village of Daryaz in Mahabad, shares her story with a smile on her face, though her forehead bears the marks of a life filled with challenges. She reflects, "I have never been unemployed, and I've been working for as long as I can remember. I hail from one of the villages of Bukan. I got



married at the age of 16 and came to this village, and somehow, I became a worker's wife. My spouse and I both work together in a garden. He serves as a guard and foreman. We toil in this garden for nine months, and for the next three months, I engage in knitting."

Mina goes on to share the financial aspects of their labor, revealing that they were paid between 250,000 to 300,000 tomans a day in the previous year. However, as the owner of the garden does not provide all the wages at once, they have been waiting six months to receive half of their wages. However, delays persist, with promises of payment today or tomorrow, despite a successful harvest the previous year. Mina has never personally received her salary. Instead, her husband manages the finances, utilizing the earnings to purchase necessities or invest in various activities each year.

In addition to their work in the garden, Mina Sh. engages in entrepreneurial pursuits, selling grape leaves as well as producing pickles and jam to earn some money for herself. Remarkably, at the age of 40, she has never received a single unit of her labor income from her husband.

Mina provides a broader perspective on the

lives and work of women in the village, stating, "All the women in the village often live like this, and you will not see any woman in this village unemployed in the first 6 months of the year." It's evident that the women in the village are actively engaged in various activities, particularly during the harvest season. They not only contribute to the agricultural labor but also manage household responsibilities and take care of their children. Mina recounts how they constructed a wall for a room in their house and painted it. She reveals, "I have undergone three operations to date, and the last time, my lung problems kept me at home, requiring a lengthy recovery period. Many working women in the village face problems with their head and back, yet continue to work because they have been taught that women should persevere in their labor."

Nurses

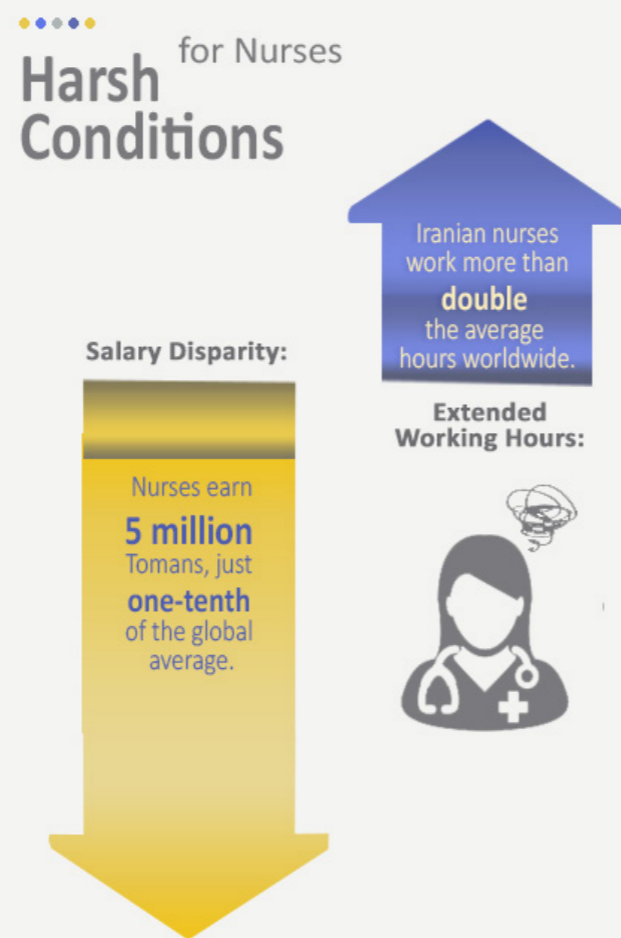
Mohammad Mirza Beigi, the head of the Nursing System Organization, has brought attention to a critical issue in the healthcare sector. He revealed that there are approximately 20,000 to 30,000 unemployed nurses in the country. However, the situation is exacerbated by a severe shortage of more than 100,000 nurses in the medical centers and hospitals across the nation.⁷⁷

Many nurses in Iran receive a salary of less than 5 million tomans. There exists a substantial tenfold difference compared to the global labor market standards, where the average monthly salary is around 2,000 dollars. Moreover, their working hours can sometimes be twice the average working hours of nurses worldwide. Low salaries and exhausting working hours are factors of nurses' migration.

Despite promises made by the regime, there are apparent issues with delayed payments, inadequate rewards for round-the-clock services, and a failure to adhere to the stipulated monthly income according to the law. For example, if the overtime payment for a nurse is 800 tomans per month, the employer pays them between 50 and 100 tomans.

The comparison with countries like the United States underscores the stark difference in the financial remuneration for nurses. While a nurse in the U.S. may receive 4,000 dollars for 7 hours of work, Iranian nurses earn around 120 dollars for 10 to 12 hours of work, sometimes even extending to 20 hours a day. (The state-run Arman-e Melli Newspaper, 14 October 2020) The significant challenges and discrepancies in compensation and working conditions for nurses in Iran contribute to a concerning trend of healthcare professionals leaving the country.

According to the Financial Times, citing statistics from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Iran experienced the fastest growth rate of immigration to wealthy countries globally between 2020 and 2021. The increase was reported at 141%, with the number of immigrants rising from 48,000 in 2020 to 115,000 in the year 2021.



A Glance at the Plight of Iranian Teachers

Five ministers and four caretakers have run the Ministry of Education over the past 10 years. The situation even drew comments from the mullahs' Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, who acknowledged that the ministry has faced shortcomings.

It is the outcome of 40 years of mismanagement of a ministry that is in charge of Iranian children's education. The wear and tear of infrastructure further exacerbate the difficulties faced by both educators and students.

The clerical regime does not value teachers' work. On 4 May 2023, the state-run Alef website wrote, "Unfortunately, teachers are being increasingly ignored and their respect and status undermined. Their role and authority in class have drastically declined."

In January 2023, the Minister of Education stated that 64% of the country's educators are women. (The state-run Borna news agency, 23 January 2023)

Additionally, the Education Minister's adviser on women's affairs reported the number of female teachers to be 500,000, and an additional 50,000 student teachers. Notably, 32,000 of these women are working at the managerial level in the Education Ministry. (The state-run Iran Economist website, 23 January 2023)

Shortage of Teachers

In addition to lacking a minister, the Education Ministry particularly faces a concerning deficit of 300,000 teachers and 50,000 educational coaches. Compared to international standards, the deficit is even more than what has been officially announced. "Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education uses outdated methods and, as experts put it, exploits teachers." (The state-run Ham-Mihan Newspaper, 13 May 2023)

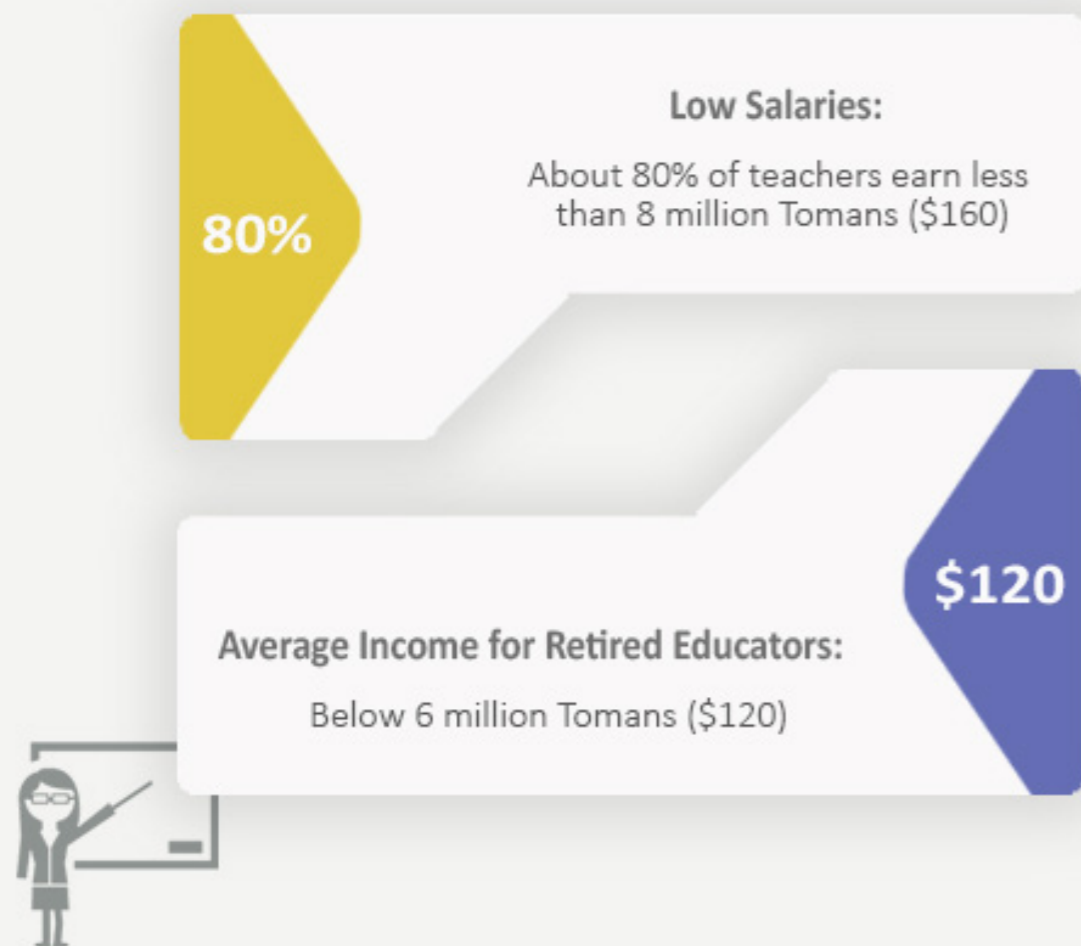
The Farhangian University also faces difficulties in compensating for the lack of teachers due to a decrease in student recruitment from 2014 to 2016. (The state-run Oudsonline.ir, 2 May 2023)



Currently, the deficit of teachers is being provided through recruitment of "conscript teachers" and "reserve teachers," many of whom enter the classroom without completing formal teaching courses. Additionally, the type of contract offered to them lacks job security and necessary motivation for sustained commitment to their work. (The state-run Oudsonline.ir, 2 May 2023)

Mohammad Mohammadi, Director General of the Office of Primary Education, provides insight into the challenges facing the education system in Iran, particularly regarding teacher shortages. According to Mohammadi, a significant number of teachers who have been employed in education since the early years of the revolution until 1991 have either retired or are on the verge of retirement, creating a substantial gap in human resources at the primary and secondary levels.

UNFAIR SALARIES FOR TEACHERS



Mohammadi further explains that since the 15-year halt in teacher training has led to a shortage of teachers, while the decline in student enrollment in Farhangian University between 2014 and 2016, has contributed to the current situation. (The state-run Qudsonline.ir, 2 May 2023)

The shortage of teachers in Iran has persisted for years while thousands of qualified teachers remain without official employment and live indeplorable conditions.

The clerical regime has tackled the teacher shortage through temporary and contractual employment of informal teachers with different titles so that it would pay smaller salaries.

Informal teachers often do not receive

the minimum salary, insurance coverage, and benefits provided to formal teachers. Additionally, the reported delays in salary payments for both formal and informal teachers further exacerbate the difficulties faced by these educators.

Teachers in the private sector lack job security. Their contracts are temporary and annual like those of private sector workers. (The state-run Ham-Mihan Newspaper, 11 April 2023)

The poverty of female teachers in Iran

The spokesperson of the Teachers' Union highlighted a significant economic disparity between the salaries of teachers and the poverty line in Iran. With the average salary ceiling for teachers currently ranging between 7 and 9 million Tomans and the poverty line estimated to be above 20 million Tomans, there is a substantial gap. The spokesperson emphasized that even if the Ranking Plan was fully implemented, it would not adequately address the living conditions of teachers in the current economic situation. The widening gap between wages and the poverty line over the years has reached its highest level today. (The state-run Ham-Mihan Newspaper, 11 April 2023)

Currently, the basic salary for teachers is 5,600,000 Tomans. The implementation of the ranking process, if implemented, could add 45% to their salaries based on work experience and desired conditions considered by the Education Ministry. However, the ranking plan has not yet been implemented. (The state-run irantahsil.org, 16 April 2023)

Additionally, there's information about a proposed increase in the salary of student teachers to 7 million and 920 thousand Tomans. However, the implementation of this salary increase is contingent on the approval of the Parliament and the approval of the Guardian Council. From this amount, deductions ranging from 20% to 45% will be made for university and dormitory services. (The state-run irantahsil.org, 16 April 2023)

According to a teacher, while the rating regulations suggest that most teachers should have been rated 3, only a small fraction, specifically one thousand and 200 out of about one million official teachers, received the maximum rank of 5.

The teacher, with a master's degree, translation of a book, and nearly 30 years of experience, expressed dissatisfaction with being ranked 2nd. He said many experienced and educated teachers were ranked 1st or 2nd from the five

ranking levels. Most teachers, between 60 and 70 percent of them, had a rank below 3, including zero, one, and two. (The state-run irantahsil.org, 16 April 2023)

The salaries of elementary teachers are currently 6 million and 700 thousand Tomans. (The state-run Pasokhbama.com, April 2023)

The teachers' ranking process took place in the absence of representation for teachers and without considering educational qualifications and work experience. Therefore, the salary of 80% of teachers does not reach 8 million Tomans. An economic expert told the Sharq Daily, "Based on our studies, 54% of teachers in Tehran stand below the income poverty line. The poverty of teachers is increasing day by day." (The state-run Sharq Daily, 2 December 2022)

According to the latest figures announced by the government, the average income of retired educators does not even reach 6 million Tomans. Considering the poverty line and inflation, the income of teachers and retirees is either below or at least equal to the absolute poverty line. (The state-run khabaronline.ir, 16 December 2021) Ebrahim Saharkhiz, the former Deputy Minister of Education, suggests that the education budget is not aligned with the realities on the ground and has not been effectively addressing the needs of the ministry for the past 30 years.

He also noted the use of retired teachers to address the shortage of 300,000 teachers. These retired teachers work 24 hours overtime in addition to their regular 24 hours a week. These retired teachers, however, are paid only one-third of their salary after one year. According to Saharkhiz such arrears are trouble making and would lead to potential protests. (The state-run Shafaqna.ir, 29 December 2021)

Teachers, both male and female, have been at the forefront of protests over the past three decades, expressing dissatisfaction with various aspects of the education system and their working conditions. Their protests have expanded and escalated in recent years, with women playing a prominent role.

These protests go beyond livelihood issues and



The Education Ministry uses retired teachers to address the shortage of 300,000 teachers. Retired teachers work 24 hours overtime in addition to their regular 24 hours a week. However, they are paid only one-third of their salary after one year.

encompass a range of systemic challenges, including the lack of human resources, insufficient funds allocated to the Ministry of Education, concerns about the content of textbooks, issues of educational justice, salary and benefits disparities compared to other government employees, and dissatisfaction with ranking and full-time teaching schemes. The protests also express objections to practices that impact the well-being and dignity of educators, such as inefficient insurance policies. The government's indifference and lack of attention to the teachers' demands, the Education Ministry's lack of support, threats of termination of protesting teachers, and creation of various obstacles before their demands, have not been able to quell the protests of teachers and educators, and they continue to pursue their demands with determination.

An education expert said, "Educators have been protesting their distance from the poverty line and average society for decades. When they see that a teacher with a Ph.D. degree receives a monthly salary of 8.5 million Tomans, but the CEO of Dena Petrochemical receives 73 million Tomans per month, they protest." (The state-run Borna news agency, 10 January 2022) Teachers continued their protest gatherings and demonstrations in 2023 in at least 14 provinces, expressing their deep-seated dissatisfaction with various aspects of the education system and the treatment of educators. The release of imprisoned teachers, protest against unfair ranking systems, and concerns about the overall incompetence of the system have become focal points of these protests.

The fact that teachers are willing to protest, even in the face of potential consequences such as imprisonment and expulsion, underscores the gravity of their grievances.

The clerical regime has escalated its pressure on teachers, by arrests, summonses, and expulsions. The Security Department and the Board of Administrative Offenses of the Ministry of Education have turned into the arms of intelligence services in recent years.

By filing fabricated cases against teachers, they try to suppress teachers' protests. Suppression of peaceful protests may lead to further tensions and challenges within the educational community.

Ms. Fariba Anami, a teacher with over 25 years of experience in Gilan and Anzali high schools, was fired by the Board of Educational Violations of Gilan Province. Ms. Anami was among hundreds of other teachers who seek their rights.

Currently, at least 16 freedom-loving teachers are imprisoned in different prisons across Iran.

The accusations against these teachers include meeting with the families of those killed in recent protests and posting content in solidarity with the protests on social networks.

Ms. Farzaneh Nazeranpour was sentenced to ten months in prison on charges of "propaganda against the state and disturbing the public." The ruling handed down by the 26th Branch of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran was upheld by the Revision Court, and she was transferred to Evin Prison on 2 May 2023.

Two other teachers, Atakeh Rajabi and Fatemeh Tadrissi, were arrested and imprisoned on 9 May 2023 for taking part in the teachers' protests.

In the mean time, the Public and Revolutionary Court of Ahvaz issued indictments for 11 teachers, including Ms. Kokab Badaghi and Ms. Zohreh Bakhtiari. These teachers are accused among others of "membership in groups aiming to disturb national security" and disseminating "propaganda against the state."



54% of teachers in Tehran stand below the income poverty line. The poverty of teachers is increasing day by day.

The Most Innocuous Heads of the Household and a Thousand Unspeakable Pains



Female heads of households cover various groups of women in diverse situations. Widows, divorcees, wives of addicted or imprisoned men, wives of immigrant men, self-supporting single girls, and wives of disabled individuals often find themselves managing and providing for their families without the regular presence of a male figure in the traditional roles of husband or father, while the regime's laws considers them as second-class citizens. The data from the National Statistics Center in 2020 indicates that nearly 4 million women take on the role of household heads.⁷⁹ Based on the same data, 3 million and 517 thousand of the total 25 million and 685 thousand heads of households in Iran, are women. It is notable that a substantial portion of these women, approximately 1.5 million, are self-supporting and live in one-person households.

Therefore, 13.7% of all heads of households in the country are women, and nearly 41.5% of all female heads of households live independently.⁸⁰ Nearly half of the breadwinners in the family are among the poorest people in society, with about 45% of household heads being women in the poorest decile (decile one).⁸¹ Ensieh Khazali, the head of the directorate for women and family affairs, indicates, "Unofficial statistics suggest that there are nearly 6 million female heads of households, whereas there were around 3 million female heads of households in the beginning of the sixth development program. During this period, some self-supporting women have been added to this group."⁸² According to the statistics published by the clerical regime's Labor Ministry, the number of female heads of households grew from 1.6 million in 2006 to 3.4 million in 2021.⁸³

However, no statistics have been published in 2022 or 2023.⁸⁴ However, the summarized data below may provide a more objective perspective on the number of female heads of households in Iran.

Approximately 45% of women over the age of 50 are unmarried, encompassing those who are single, divorced, or widowed. Of this group, 80% live in poverty as 30% of marriages end in divorce primarily due to economic conditions. Notably, women's pensions are reported to be lower than those of men.⁸⁵

According to the most recent statistics shared by Maryam ol-Sadat Mirmalek Thani, the then Director General of the Support Affairs and Empowerment Office of the Iranian regime's Ministry of Labor in May 2021, citing reports from 2018, the number of female-headed households below the poverty line in urban areas is 2.7 times higher than the number of male-headed households. Similarly, in rural areas, the number of female-headed households below the poverty line is 3.1 times higher than the number of male-headed households.⁸⁶

In essence, female-headed families are more susceptible to falling into poverty.

Over the past 12 years, the unchecked rise in the inflation rate, coupled with a significant decrease in the purchasing power of Iranian households, has exerted pressure on nearly all Iranians, particularly those belonging to the middle and lower socioeconomic classes. However, due to factors such as reduced job security, lower average income, and heightened economic insecurity among women under the rule of the Mullahs, the brunt of inflation in recent years has been disproportionately borne by women heads of households.⁸⁷

In a report on the repercussions of the "inflationary wave on women heads of households," the state news agency Rokna highlights that, under the current circumstances, a staggering 40 percent of women heads of households in Iran, equivalent to one million and 700 thousand people, find themselves below the poverty line.

Government statistics indicate that approximately one million and 500 thousand female heads of households are covered by the Welfare Organization and the Relief Committee.⁸⁸

However, the significance of being covered by the regime's welfare and aid committee is minimal in the current inflationary conditions. The subsidy provided is described as so insignificant that it "practically does not make any difference in the living conditions of these women" and fails to alleviate their hardships. Habibullah Masoudi Farid, the deputy for social affairs of the Welfare Organization during the Makhundi regime in 2021, acknowledged that "out of 250,000 female-headed households covered by the Welfare Organization, the support mainly involves paying a small monthly pension. Unfortunately, this amount, given the rising prices of essential items, does not even cover one person's expenses for a week."⁸⁹

Fatemeh Moghimi, the head of the Iranian Business Women's Association, added to this discussion, "Although the Relief Committee recently announced its intention to provide job creation loans to women heads of households, it is essential to recognize that even if these loans are granted to the majority of women below the poverty line, it may not be sufficient to lift them out of poverty. Creating a job demands ample knowledge, expertise, and experience, and due to existing job discrimination in our society, women generally have less experience in the labor market than men. As a result, many female heads of households may struggle to create employment for themselves solely by obtaining a loan."⁹⁰

The exacerbation of social inequalities, a decrease in job opportunities, rising divorce rates, and a shift in the role of women toward household caregiving are contributing to the increasing feminization of poverty each day. On top of widespread corruption and diverting the resources of the Iranian people towards its proxy groups in the region, the clerical regime has dealt a severe blow to women's livelihoods by "disabling Instagram and Telegram" to

ECONOMIC STRAITS FOR FEMALE HOUSEHOLD HEADS



advance its repressive policies of censorship at home.⁹¹

These platforms served as a source of income for many women, and their deactivation has further worsened their living and economic conditions without providing adequate compensation. Meanwhile, the working environments for female heads of households are extremely challenging. Sociologist Amanullah Qaraei states, "We cannot ignore the challenges faced by women in the workplace. Whether you are an unmarried young woman, a married woman, or a woman heading a family, you may be subjected to various forms of harassment in the workplace. "These challenges exacerbate living conditions and earning a livelihood more difficult for female heads of households. Due to these difficulties, many women are compelled to leave their jobs and cope with additional economic hardships by resorting to informal or illicit occupations. "Instead of improving the living conditions for these individuals, the government's decision to shut down Instagram and Telegram, which served as a source of income for many female heads of households, dealt an irreparable blow to their livelihoods and economic situations. "Many of these women had established small home-based businesses on such platforms, earning a minimum income for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, they lost this opportunity, and now many of them face the harsh reality of widespread layoffs in private offices and

companies, struggling to find alternative employment. This trend further feminizes the face of poverty every day."⁹² Iranian families, having recently endured the devastating impact of the COVID19- pandemic worsened by Khamenei's policy of restricting vaccine imports, find it challenging to recover amidst the economic turmoil and inflation caused by the ruling mullahs. Female heads of households, lacking insurance coverage, often lose their assets when confronted with unforeseen financial challenges like illness. Inadequate insurance policies frequently fail to cater to women's needs. Consequently, some of their children are forced to forgo education and enter the workforce.⁹³ During the COVID19- era and its aftermath, the plight of women and orphaned children, who lost their parents to the virus, remained a silent voice that did not receive official attention. In 2021, the social deputy of the Welfare Organization disclosed statistics indicating that 51,000 children had lost their parents to COVID19-. Among the mothers who assumed the role of household heads, only 43% were covered by social insurance. During the COVID19- pandemic, working female heads of households were disproportionately affected by job losses and unemployment in economic enterprises. The economic challenges, coupled with psychological pressures, government discrimination against female heads

of families, concerns about the future, feelings of loneliness, despair, and the burden of life problems, have collectively made female heads of households a vulnerable group in need of support.⁹⁴

Homayoun Mirzaei, a sociologist, highlights that there are undeniable truths about poverty causing numerous social harms. When poverty affects women, the nature of these harms takes on a different form. "One must experience the challenges of making a living to comprehend the gravity of the situation for women who resort to harmful activities like prostitution and drug sales to meet their basic needs."⁹⁵

In addition to economic hardships, these women experience psychological stress and problems, as well. Over the past few years, there has been an escalation of depression among female heads of households, leading to various repercussions in the lives of Iranian households.

Ardeshir Garavand, a sociologist, highlights that the struggle to provide for the livelihood of family members can lead to depression among the heads of households. He expresses concern about the challenges Iranian families face in managing their household income, emphasizing

that "these difficulties result in significant psychological injuries for many individuals." Ardeshir Garavand points out that "the pressure on heads of households can result in depression and isolation, potentially leading to severe consequences such as suicide or addiction among married men and women who are heads of households in Iran." He underscores the mounting challenges faced by heads of families, emphasizing that even families with sufficient income must grapple with the pressures arising from the struggle to manage their household expenses. The burden of adjusting the cost of income falls heavily on the heads of households.

"Regrettably, many Iranian families, even those with two earners, are currently grappling with challenges in managing household expenses. The widening gap between daily expenses and the incomes of middle-class and poor households in the country continues to grow, presenting an ongoing struggle for families." (The state-run Rokna news agency, 16 June 2022)



And the House That Is a Dream

Under Mullah's rule in Iran, the population residing below the "housing poverty line" is alarmingly double the global average. The prospect of owning a house remains an unattainable dream for the majority of Iranians. Farid Qadiri reveals that, in 2021, a staggering 70% of residents lived in housing poverty. Tehran, in particular, bears a heavy burden, with more than two-thirds of its residents facing higher rents compared to global standards. The disheartening reality is that it takes a staggering 66 years for a couple to achieve homeownership in the city. Compounding this issue is the disproportionate growth of wages in relation to inflation. In other countries, when wages increase in tandem with inflation, it still takes approximately 10 to 12 years for a family to acquire a home.⁹⁶ According to a report from the Research Center of the clerical regime's parliament (Majlis), "policy deviations" in projects such as the National Housing Movement and the Jihadi Housing Garrison of Tehran's Municipality have led to unintended consequences. While these initiatives aimed to address housing issues, the outcome has been an increase in the "share of rental housing and existing homeowners acquiring additional properties." Essentially, over the past decades, there has been a surge in housing purchases, but the new buyers are not individuals transitioning from being tenants. In the five years leading up to 2016, around three million and 500 thousand residential units were added to Iran's total housing stock. However, instead of witnessing a corresponding decrease in the number of tenants, the report highlights a concerning trend. During this period, two million and 500 thousand tenant households were added to the population of renters. This indicates that government and private sector housing constructions have been completed to the detriment of vulnerable groups without housing.

The ambitious promise of constructing one million houses per year has given rise to the prevalence of shared housing. In a separate report analyzing housing policies, the Majlis Research Center explicitly stated that during the 44-year rule of the Mullahs, the planning to provide housing resulted in the exclusion of the first lower income deciles from the housing market. Hosseinpour, a member of the regime's parliament, openly acknowledged the failure of the project aimed at building 4 million housing units, noting that even if a unit is delivered, people struggle to afford the installments of 19 million Tomans. Hosseinpour highlighted the stark contrast between the meager wages, such as the 7 million Tomans paid to a worker, and the hefty installment amounts.⁹⁷ A report titled "Purchasing Power and Waiting Time for Homeownership" from the National Statistics Center of Iran had previously underscored the dire situation. It revealed that at average prices in 2023, a minimum wage worker would need to labor for an astonishing 178 years to purchase an 80-meter apartment.⁹⁸ According to the statistics released by the Central Bank in 2021, in November of that year, rents in Tehran rose by 51.6% compared to the same month the previous year, while the increase was even more substantial at 54.9% in all urban areas.⁹⁹ Taking into account housing deposits, the rental rate for a modest 60-meter apartment in the central neighborhoods of Tehran is estimated to be no less than 15 million Tomans per month.¹⁰⁰ Statistical reports reveal a concerning trend in the five years leading up to the final months of 2022. The cost of providing housing in the household's livelihood portfolio witnessed an average increase of 900%, whereas household wages grew by less than 700% during the same period.¹⁰¹ There are currently four million and 500 thousand vacant houses or second homes in



Iran, with two million of them classified as luxury residences. These properties are being rented out at exorbitant rates, exemplified by instances such as a 22-square-meter suite with a monthly rent of six million Tomans or a 25-meter roomless suite in Tajrish requiring a 50 million Tomans deposit and a monthly rent of six million Tomans.¹⁰² Mohammad Bagheri Banaii, a member of the Economic Commission of the mullahs' parliament, has noted that the high prices and rents in the housing market, coupled with an increase in the cost of living and a growth in the inflation rate, have resulted in the "practical marginalization of the middle class in Tehran" and neighboring cities.¹⁰³ Fereydon Babay, the vice-chairman of the assembly of heads of the commission for urban development of metropolitan cities and provincial centers, has disclosed that 24 million people in the country are residing in marginal areas or slums.¹⁰⁴ There is a growing concern about the "complete evacuation of villages," signaling a worrisome trend in population distribution. The rapid increase in the population below the poverty line in Iran has reached a "shocking" stage. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon, including environmental crises exacerbated by mismanagement and inefficiency of officials, high unemployment rates, widespread poverty, and a significant surge in rental costs. These challenges are compelling more and more people to relocate to the outskirts of cities.¹⁰⁵



The emerging forms of homelessness in Iran include sleeping on the roof, sleeping in a motorhome, sleeping in a car, sleeping in a grave, sleeping in a bus, having no fixed place to sleep, and living together with two or more families in a single residential unit.

Over 50% of the country's population is living below the absolute poverty line. This grim reality implies that a significant portion of the population lacks the minimum requirements for a dignified human life.



Sleeping in Cartons, Graves, Bridges... and Buses

In a report titled "Assessment of the Seventh Development Plan Bill from the Perspective of Providing Housing for Low-Income and Vulnerable Groups," the Research Center of the regime's Parliament has identified the prevalence of eight forms of homelessness in Iran. The report confirms that the housing policies implemented in the past years and decades have not only failed to elevate low-income families on the housing ladder but have also resulted in a broadening spectrum of individuals descending from this ladder.

According to the report, the emerging forms of homelessness in Iran include sleeping on the roof, sleeping in a motorhome, sleeping in a car, sleeping in a grave, sleeping in a bus, having no fixed place to sleep, and living together with two or more families in a single residential unit.¹⁰⁶ Sleeping in cartons, graves, and tires has been also prevalent for years.¹⁰⁷

However, the dimensions of homelessness have gained momentum in recent years. Ahmad Alavi, a member of the Cultural and Social Commission of Tehran's City Council, highlighted a "new phenomenon" where "non-addicted people" are found sleeping in BRT buses on overnight

routes. In an interview with ISNA news agency on 2 January 2023, he cited Tehran Municipality officials, saying that these individuals "have a legitimate appearance and are not drug addicts; they are even employed. These individuals, unable to afford house rent or guest house expenses, "have chosen the bus to sleep" because it provides a "safe and warm" option during cold nights.

The state-run asriran.com wrote, "these people do not necessarily wish to own a house but rather to find a bus seat to sleep on—a warm place to spend the night." The report paints a grim picture, forecasting that if the current economic conditions persist in Iran, it may not be long before buses become crowded at night, and some individuals might even be forced to sleep standing up.¹⁰⁸

A report from the state-run tejaratnews.com, dated 29 December 2023, estimated that the cost of spending a night in Tehran's BRT buses ranges between 12,000 and 25,000 tomans. This equates to a monthly cost of 360,000 to 750,000 tomans per person for those relying on buses to sleep at night.¹⁰⁹



Women's Life Under a Misogynist and Inhuman Dictatorship

The economic challenges faced by the people of Iran, particularly women, under the rule of misogynistic mullahs, are indeed complex and deeply troubling.

According to economist Hossein Raghfar, the poverty and suffering experienced by the population are more profound than statistics might suggest. Raghfar asserts that the situation is far worse than officially presented, and it appears that over 50% of the country's population is living below the absolute poverty line. This grim reality implies that a significant portion of the population lacks the minimum requirements for a dignified human life.¹¹⁰ A government expert says, "Many people have more than one job, which does not cover the poverty line."¹¹¹

Our lives pass in different queues

On 26 January 2023, a 53-year-old woman suffered a heart attack and passed away after waiting in line for an oil quota. This tragic incident happened in Fanuj city of Sistan and Baluchistan province, southeastern Iran.

In an interview with the state-run Etemad Daily, the woman's brother emphasized the continuous struggle faced by the residents, spending their lives waiting in queues for basic necessities such as bread, gas, and oil. Sistan and Baluchistan, as he described, is at the bottom in terms of available facilities.

One local news agency attributed the incident to a lack of management, suggesting that the tragedy was preventable with proper organization and governance.

However, in a practice often used by the government to cover up scandals, the authorities compelled the brother of the deceased woman to appear on TV alongside local officials, and say that her sister had a heart condition and her death did not have anything to do with the queue.¹¹²

HOUSING POVERTY



Bare Winter

Hossein Bayat, the head of Kermanshah's Garment Union, shed light on the economic challenges faced by individuals in the region. Bayat said, "No one buys winter clothes any more. The cost of purchasing winter clothes is at least between 2 to 2.5 million tomans. The price warm clothing, particularly coats and jackets, has increased about 50% compared to the previous year's cold season. Many people prefer using clothes from previous years."¹¹³

Death is sweeter than life

Suicide to escape from the mullah-made hell takes a new peak every day. Only in the last eighteen days of August 2023, at least 13 suicides of teenagers under the age of 18 have been recorded in Kurdistan province alone. Two 12-year-old girls from Diwandarreh and Sardasht are among these people.¹¹⁴

Selling body parts for a few days of survival

Destitution has led many people to sell their body organs to be able to provide for the basic necessities of life.¹¹⁵

On 4 May 2023, Jahan-e Sanat Newspaper wrote about the distressing increase in cases of individuals resorting to selling body parts due to poverty.

"An alley near Firouzgar Hospital in Tehran was known as kidney market. Since a year ago, in addition to ads for sale of kidneys, there are ads for sale of liver, bone marrow, eye cornea, and more. The real price of kidney fluctuates between 500,000 tomans and one billion tomans depending on blood type, health of the kidney, and the number of brokers involved.

The regime's Kidney Association has set the price of kidney at 80 million tomans. Almost all of those who sell their kidneys do so because of financial straits. Sale of body parts is a common practice among men and women, between 18 and 40 years of age.¹¹⁶

These body parts, despite being sold by Iranians, do not reach those in need within the country because they do not afford to buy them. They are rather sent to neighboring countries like Dubai, Turkey, and Iraq to be sold at higher prices between 7,000 to 15,000 dollars.¹¹⁷

Brokers take advantage of people's poverty and gain a lot of profit.

Recently, there are advertisements where young people sell several body parts at the same time because of financial pressure. It is also common among women who put up ads for embryo and egg donation, as well as surrogacy.¹¹⁸



Garbage boom

Government authorities exploit underprivileged women and children by recruiting them for garbage scavenging. Some 4,500 child laborers work specifically in the garbage collection sector in Tehran whose earnings fill the pockets of 18 contractors and garbage scavenging networks.¹¹⁹

Helpless mothers and child trafficking

One of the most shocking tragedies resulting from the poverty of women in Iran is the prevalence of the phenomenon of selling babies. It is the story of mothers and fathers who are more and more bent by poverty and the profit-seeking gangs mainly affiliated with the government who make huge money by ruining the fate of children.

The Tebyan government website has contacted several baby sales accounts and writes based on this: They have search teams that are usually scattered in all cities and the fee also changes depending on the request of the recipient. For example, the rate and process of handing over a baby in a short time is about 100 million tomans. This site writes about the price of babies. There is no fixed rate or price. Some families give up their babies for free so that they don't die of hunger, and some demand huge fees. One of the brokers says: "If they could afford their child's expenses, they would never have given up their child. They have no other choice."¹²⁰

In the 12th district of Tehran, under the awareness of government officials, brokers easily sell and buy from one-day-old infant to children under four or five years of age.

A broker has advertised for the sale of a one-month-old infant. He says, "The family wants 500 million tomans, but I can get you a discount. The family lives in one of the slums outside Mashhad. They have four other children and they are very poor. They want to use the money to pay for their family's expenses."

In the phenomenon of buying and selling children, the dirty hands of the government can be seen. The mediator continues, "If you want, I will find a pre-purchase item for you. I have acquaintances at the registry office and the hospital to get a birth certificate and rest assured that their money will be calculated separately."

A children's rights advocate says: "I know at least two very poor women in Tehran who have pre-sold their babies. I know they are desperate due to extreme poverty and disease and they have no choice." The story of buying and selling children, especially babies, has very large dimensions.

"Many individuals are implicated in this distressing narrative, ranging from certain government hospital officials to physicians, brokers, and even influential figures within the registry system.

"The process is not as simple as a parent deciding to sell their baby, finding a buyer who readily pays and takes the baby away. Particularly in Iran, where the law stipulates that the father and paternal grandfather have guardianship over the child, such actions are not legally permissible unless circumventing the law. The complexity of the situation involves multiple actors exploiting legal loopholes or engaging in illicit activities to facilitate these transactions."

This children's rights advocate is acquainted with women who, due to pressure and coercion from their husbands, found themselves compelled to pre-sell their babies. He recounts the harrowing story of an addicted man who forced his wife into pregnancy three times, subsequently selling the newborns to individuals the woman had no understanding of. Shockingly, when the same

woman sought to prevent further pregnancies and visited the hospital, she was told that she required her husband's permission.

The activist emphasizes that the real-world dimensions of this issue far surpass what is evident in the virtual space.

It's crucial to note that the policies promoting population growth, as announced by Ali Khamenei in the 2010s, not only prohibited the distribution of contraception but also forbade health centers from providing educational services in this domain.

Under this law, providing information about high-risk pregnancies was effectively treated as a crime, and access to contraceptive tools became scarce and expensive. An advocate for reproductive rights expresses frustration, stating, "You only need to visit the streets of Shush and Herandi in Tehran or go to Pakdasht and Varamin to understand that this law amounted to nothing less than a crime against dozens of



for a sum of money. Although they navigated through welfare and court procedures numerous times, success remained elusive in the end.¹²¹

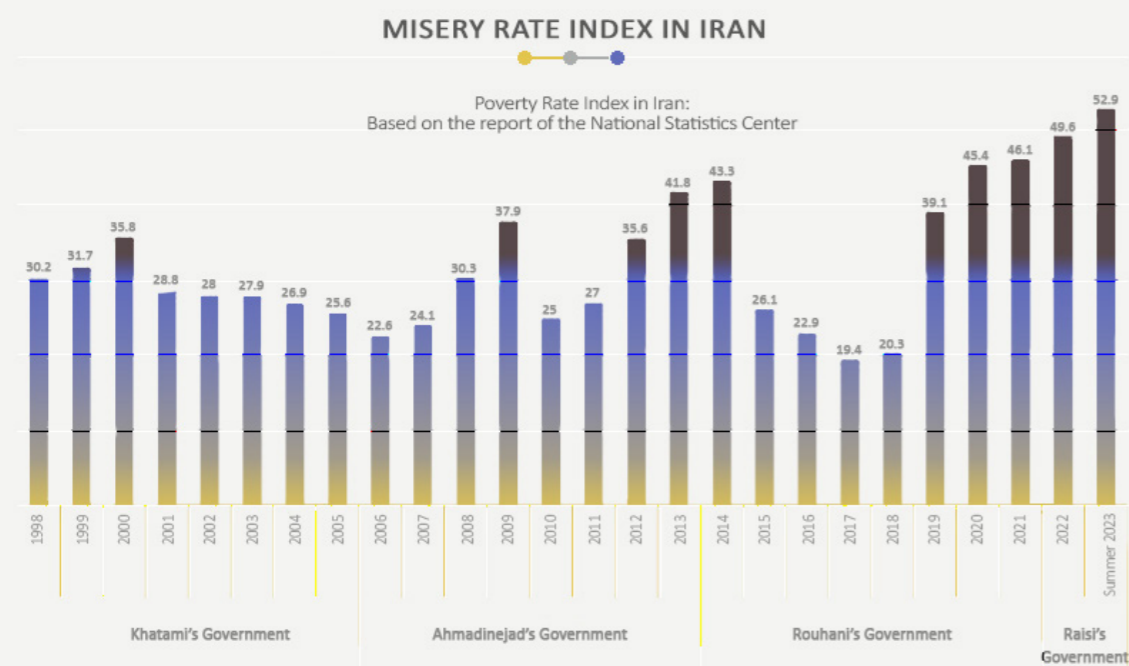
Working Children

The profound poverty experienced by the people not only impacts the current generation but also poses a threat to the future generations of Iranians. According to the website of the mullahs' parliament, a significant number of children are engaged in various forms of labor due to diverse reasons, prominently among them being the poverty of their families. Child labor not only robs them of their childhood but also diminishes their potential, abilities, and dignity, thereby adversely affecting their physical and mental development. The statistics provided by this government source indicate that approximately 15% of children are affected by this concerning issue.¹²²

In addition to the poverty experienced by families, the inadequacy of teachers resulting from the regime's insufficient budget allocation and the reduction of education expenditures pose a threat to the next generation's knowledge levels and human capital. This, in turn, may lead to lower productivity, increasing the likelihood of these individuals experiencing poverty compared to their parents.¹²³

According to government media, there is a reported shortage of at least 300,000 teachers in Iranian schools. As an interim solution, education authorities suggest the use of retired teachers, but this proposal faces challenges. Retired teachers lack motivation to return to schools, given that they have not received their bonuses for the past two years. Moreover, existing teachers are hesitant to take on additional teaching responsibilities due to the non-payment of overtime from the previous year.¹²⁴

Monster of Poverty Gets Fatter by Leaps and Bounds



Unfortunately, as long as the misogynistic and inhuman mullahs continue to rule Iran, the situation is expected to deteriorate each year. While recognizing the unreliability of government reports and statistics, comparing the data provides a glimpse into the alarming state of affairs.

The state-run Arzeh website published a report on the 6 December 2021, indicating a significant increase in misery in Iran, rising from 39.1% to 52.9% over the last four years.¹²⁵

World Bank statistics indicate that absolute poverty in Iran has tripled. The international organization defines absolute poverty based on a daily income of 1.9 dollars per person, using the purchasing power parity index at constant prices in 2011. This figure represents the minimum amount necessary for a person to meet their basic needs.¹²⁶

Hossein Raghfar, a government expert, points out that since 2011, net investment in the country has been negative. The invested resources have not even covered the depreciation of existing capital, leading to limited job opportunities, increased economic stagnation, job losses, rising unemployment, and various consequences such

as increased crime, addiction, depression, suicide, brain drain, emigration, and capital flight. This trend continues to persist.

Hossein Raghfar emphasizes that the current situation suggests no clear prospect for an exit, and a fundamental structural change is needed in the country's economy, which is not currently visible. He adds that a large population is facing absolute poverty, unable to meet basic needs. This is particularly true in a society like Iran, where job opportunities are increasingly limited, leading to a growing number of unemployed individuals, with a significant portion being women.¹²⁷

The economic situation in Iran remains challenging, with members of the parliament seeking to remove the "minimum wage" law despite the already difficult conditions.¹²⁸

Even if a worker receives the minimum wage, it is only half of the poverty line, excluding housing costs. A member of the Economic Commission of the mullahs' parliament mentioned that the poverty line in Tehran is 30 million tomans. In 2022, the population living in absolute poverty increased from 26 million to about 30 million.¹²⁹ Currently, millions of people struggle to meet

their basic needs for food and housing, and cannot consume the necessary daily calories.¹³⁰ Removing the minimum wage law could exacerbate and deepen poverty.

Shahriari, a member of the regime's parliament, has acknowledged that despite President's assurances to protect people's property, lives, and bread, the people's table has not just been reduced but has become empty. Some people and their children cannot afford to have meat even once in six months.¹³¹

Albert Baghozian, a government economic expert, has expressed concern about the lack of plans to improve economic conditions in the country. He predicts that the number of people lacking basic living facilities will continue to increase in the next year.¹³²

The Iranian society grows poorer every day. The stress caused by poverty, coupled with feelings of inequality and discrimination, can diminish people's resilience and potentially lead to increased crime and societal damage.

Mohammadreza Moghaddassi, director and founder of Tabavari House, emphasizes that poverty on an individual level may not necessarily lead to victimhood, as individuals can maintain hope in their situation. However, when poverty becomes a pervasive social and economic issue, the dynamics change. In a poor society, supporting vulnerable or damaged individuals becomes challenging. Poverty is described as an adversary to both religion and the human world, distorting people's identity by affecting their self-esteem, dignity, independence, and personal growth opportunities. Such individuals do not have the opportunity for education and growth. Moghaddassi underscores the critical nature of the feminization of poverty, identifying it as a highly perilous issue. In contrast to men, women face unequal access to job opportunities and incomes that match the cost of living. The feminization of poverty poses a significant threat to cultural and social structures. The mutually reinforcing relationship between poverty and its feminization exacerbates their respective impacts. In a society grappling with persistent female poverty,

POVERTY LINE IN IRAN:

30
million Tomans

Government Expert Opinion:

There is
**no plan to improve
economic conditions**
in the country.

achieving a high resilience score becomes an improbable prospect.¹³³

Davoud Manzoor, the head of the Planning and Budget Organization, has acknowledged a 30% budget deficit in the first seven months of 2023 in Ebrahim Raisi's government.

Economic expert Mehdi Pazouki disclosed that the clerical regime sells Iranian oil at a discount of "20 to 30 percent lower than world prices." Pazouki further explained that the persistently high inflation, exceeding 50% for approximately five years, is attributed to the escalating growth of liquidity. This, in turn, is linked to the lack of discipline in money and finance, for which the government bears responsibility.¹³⁴

Is Iran's Old Civilization Regressing or Being Overhauled?

The specter of poverty has undeniably cast its shadow over the lives of the Iranian people, exacerbated by the prolonged rule of the mullahs' dictatorship. Instead of addressing the economic plight of the citizens, this regime diverts resources intended for the people's welfare to bolster terrorist forces in the region, escalating the threat posed by this monstrous issue.

Gholamreza Nouri Qazalgeh, a member of the mullahs' parliament, has shed light on the discrepancy in official statements regarding inflation. While authorities claim a 40% inflation rate, Qazalgeh contends that the true figure is a staggering 120%. Manipulating these figures is a practice not lost on the public. By excluding essential items such as home appliances, automobiles, and transportation, and considering only "food and housing" as metrics for determining the genuine inflation rate affecting people's lives, the reality emerges: a surge of over 100% within the past year alone.¹³⁵

The stark admission by the government expert signals a worrisome reality: the tolerance of the Iranian people is eroding, as they find themselves bereft of much to lose.

Mohammad Bagheri Banaei, a member of the Parliament's Economic Commission, has candidly expressed his apprehension, implying a fear of the potential eruption of public anger. Banaei has issued a cautionary warning, pointing out that the escalation of the poverty line and the growing population submerged below it in Iran "may lead to social and political problems in the not too distant future."¹³⁶

The state-run Jomhuri Newspaper: People are tired by hollow slogans and yearn for tangible actions. It's essential to recognize that people's patience has limits. Beware of the day when a hungry populace rises against you. If you fail to fulfill your religious and legal duty, which is to serve the deprived and ensure justice, at least consider your own survival and reign. People refuse to accept a scenario where in a nation blessed with abundant wealth and resources, a select few prosper while millions of families endure the burden of poverty.¹³⁷

According to Kamal At'hari, an economic researcher for the government, this situation "will dismantle society and prompt a societal response, which the government labels as riots."¹³⁸

The actions of the religious dictatorship ruling Iran go beyond prediction and rhetoric. The Iranian people aspire to the end of the Velayat Faqih dictatorship, as demonstrated in the uprisings of 2017, 2019, and 2022. Throughout history, it has been evident that no nation can endure oppression indefinitely. The Iranian people have shown their readiness to make any sacrifice for freedom and transformation of their destiny and the future generations of their country. History will document who aligned with the right side of history and who ignored the crimes of the dictator.

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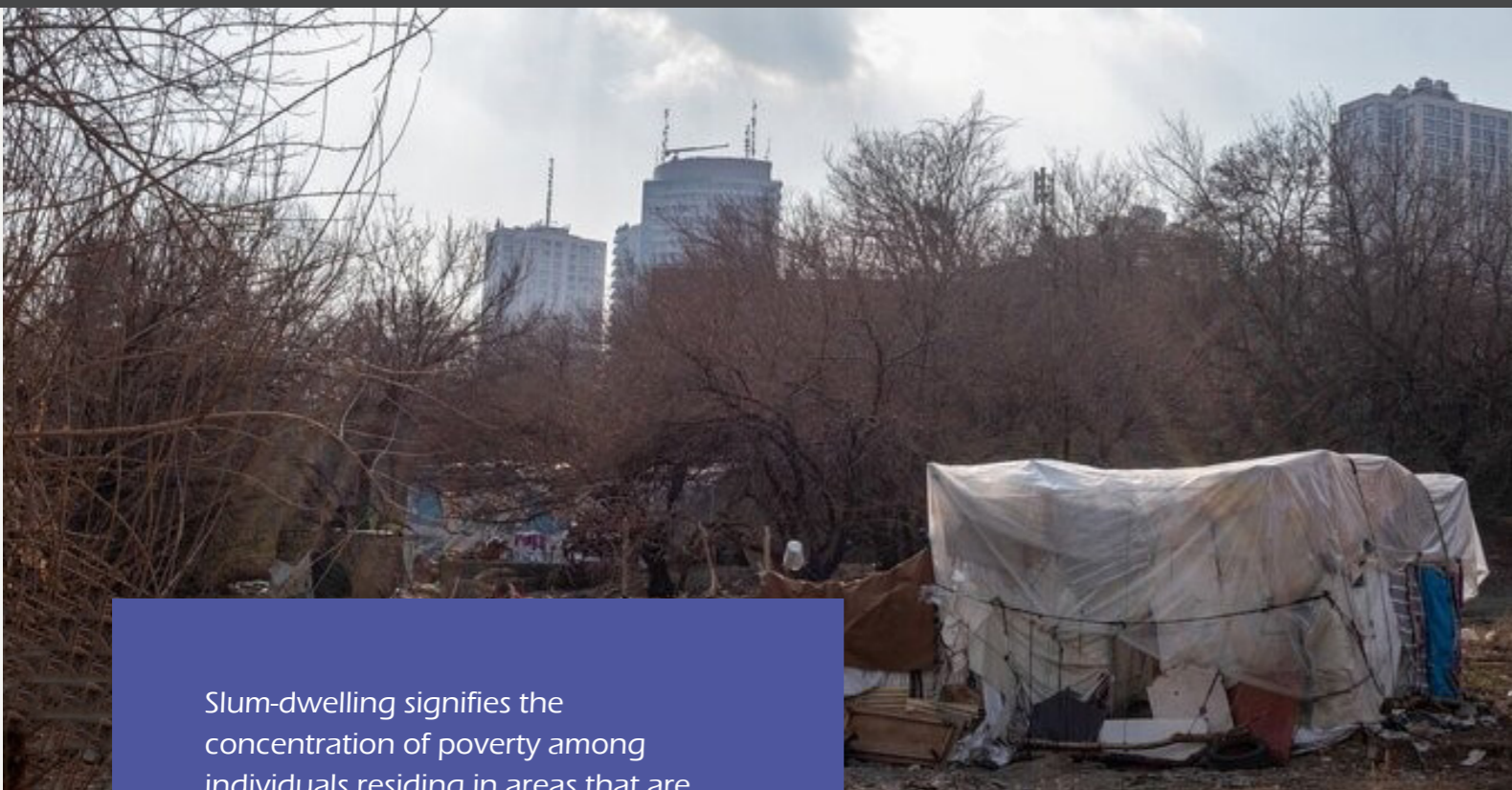
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Iranian Women's Stolen Wealth

The primary victims of the housing crisis are often the female heads of households. Struggling without a stable income, lacking access to entrepreneurial resources, and bereft of social support, these women find themselves unable to afford the escalating rent prices. The physical manifestations of these marginalized areas are deteriorating and dilapidated buildings, along with meandering and narrow passageways. At a national level, public and private health services are notably absent for residents of these areas. The presence of open sewers, serving as local garbage dumps, contributes to the creation of unsanitary conditions, leading to the transmission of numerous digestive and skin diseases.



Slum-dwelling signifies the concentration of poverty among individuals residing in areas that are neither urban nor rural. This results in a densely populated region where basic sanitary, service, and cultural facilities are conspicuously absent.

Slum-dwelling in Islamabad in the margins of Tehran

Unbridled spread and expansion of slum-dwelling around the capital

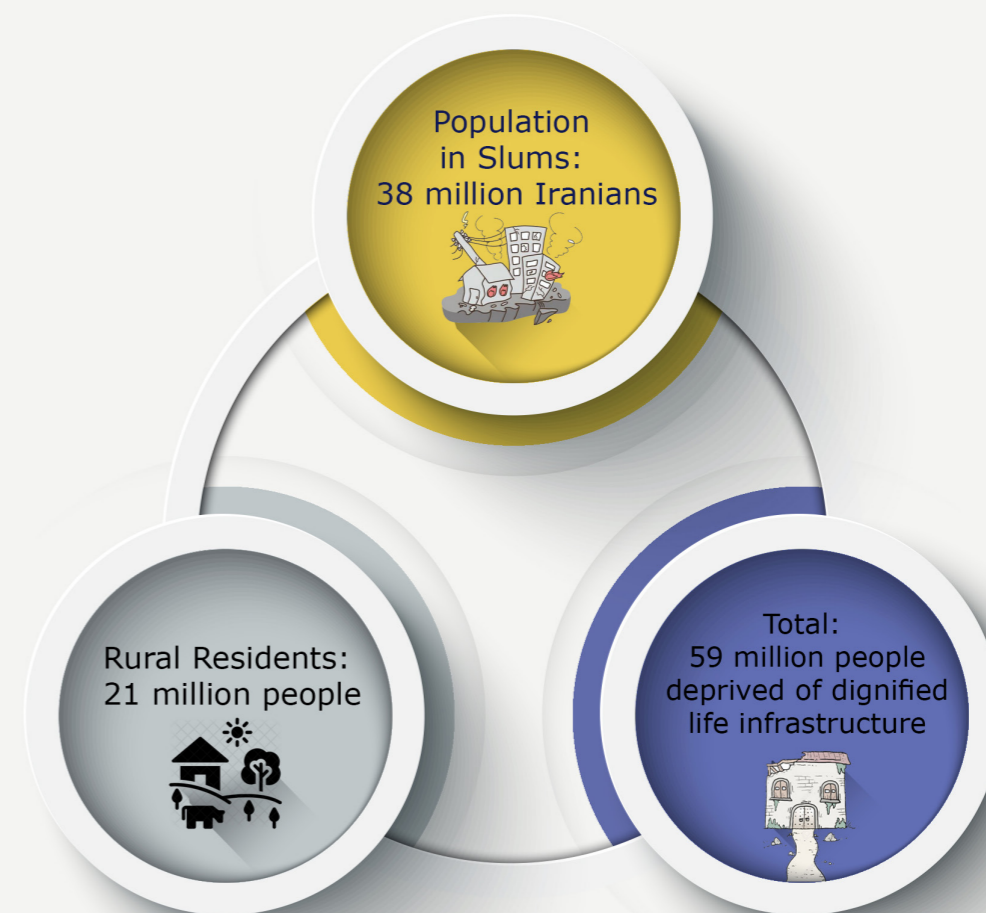
Introduction

The challenging circumstances faced by Iranian women are exacerbated by desperate poverty, injustice, and the oppressive policies of the misogynistic clerical regime. The widespread looting of the national capital, directed towards the pockets of regional terrorists, is progressively leading to the degradation of the environment and the disruption of essential infrastructure crucial for the dignified life of the Iranian people. This impact is particularly severe for millions of Iranian women residing in villages or marginalized on the outskirts of cities due to economic hardships, as they find themselves deprived of fundamental infrastructure necessities.

Access to piped water, a sanitary sewage system, electricity, suitable and accessible medical clinics, and even reliable transportation during times of crisis are basic requirements for leading a dignified life, which many Iranians, especially women, aspire to achieve.

In July 2020, Mohammadreza Mehboubfar, a social harms expert, disclosed a staggering statistic: 38 million people in Iran are marginalized, meaning that almost half of the country's population lacks access to proper infrastructure and safe housing.¹ When considering an additional 21 million rural residents, it becomes evident that approximately three-quarters of Iran's population grapples with severe infrastructural deficiencies.

Living Conditions until 2020



Slum-dwelling and A Return to Life in Caves

The issue of marginalization has regressed millions of Iranian women and girls to a state reminiscent of cave dwelling.

Slum-dwelling signifies the concentration of poverty among individuals residing in areas that are neither urban nor rural. This results in a densely populated region where basic sanitary, service, and cultural facilities are conspicuously absent. The state-run Rokna news agency has acknowledged the challenges associated with the "excessive cost of living in big cities and the escalating trend of house rent." This acknowledgment sheds light on the disconcerting reality that the middle class is compelled to "shoulder the burden of life and relocate to the outskirts of cities."²

Even in the less expensive and marginal areas of Tehran, the price of purchasing a very small apartment of 40 to 50 square meters, even after a decade of construction, can soar to a staggering one billion and 200 million tomans.

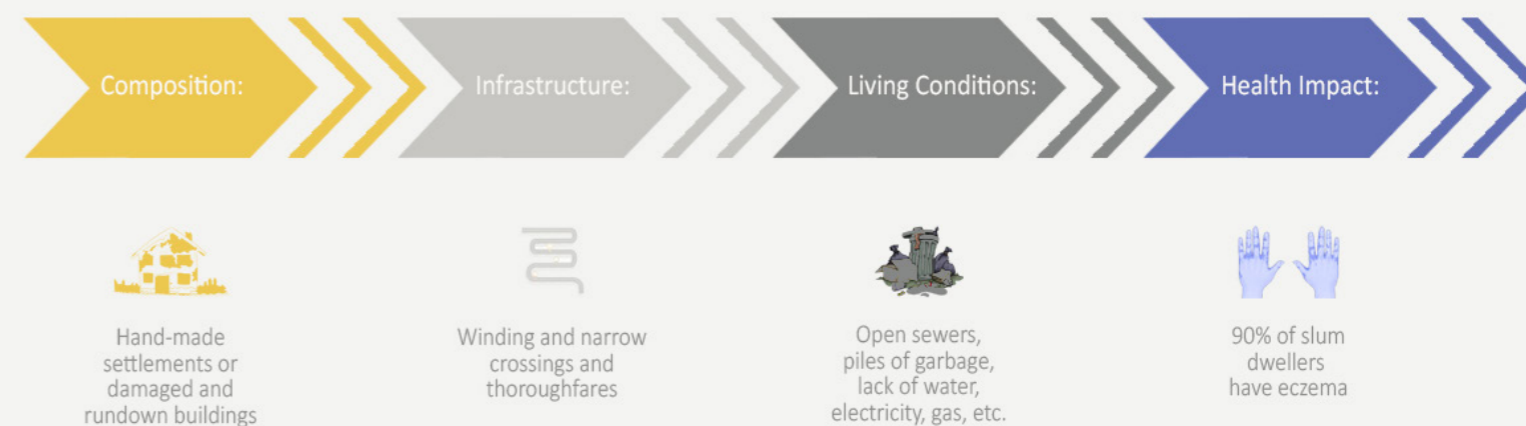
The rental market follows a similar trajectory, compounding the challenges faced by those seeking affordable and suitable living arrangements.

The mortgage for an eight-year-old unit with an area of 60 square meters, situated in the most affordable district of the city, comes at a staggering cost of 150 million tomans, with an additional monthly rent of 3 million tomans. It's important to note that these prices are escalating daily, making such housing options increasingly scarce. Consequently, tenants find themselves compelled to migrate to more remote areas on the outskirts of cities due to their financial incapacity to meet rising rental costs.³ The primary victims of this housing crisis are often the female heads of households. Struggling without a stable income, lacking access to entrepreneurial resources, and bereft of social support, these women find themselves unable to afford the escalating rent prices.⁴

The physical manifestations of these marginalized areas are characterized by deteriorating and dilapidated buildings, along with meandering and narrow passageways. At a national level, public and private health services are notably absent for residents of these areas. The presence of open sewers along many alleys, serving as local garbage dumps, contributes to the



CONDITIONS OF MARGINAL AREAS OR SLUMS



creation of unsanitary conditions, leading to the transmission of numerous digestive and skin diseases. Shockingly, approximately 90% of residents in these marginalized areas suffer from various forms of eczema and skin diseases, painting a stark picture of the health challenges faced by this population.

The residents of marginalized areas face a myriad of general problems, including "unemployment and the absence of a permanent job for the head of the household," "financial instability and insufficient income," "lack of suitable housing," "inadequate social and cultural environments," and "absence of municipal care." Additionally, heavy traffic emerges as another significant issue in these areas. The unauthorized constructions, narrow streets, and poorly designed non-standard sidewalks contribute to traffic congestion, creating additional hurdles for the residents.

These problems are especially pronounced during emergencies such as floods, earthquakes, or fires. The narrow, winding streets and passages, and in some cases, dead ends on the outskirts of the city, pose considerable obstacles to relief operations.⁵

Alireza Nemat Soltani, the CEO of Ardabil Water and Sewerage, acknowledges the significant challenges faced by these marginalized areas, particularly in the provision of drinking water. In informal settlements and on the outskirts

of cities, where construction permits are often not granted by the municipality, the drilling of unauthorized wells becomes a common practice. This results in the use of raw and unsanitary water, posing a severe threat to the health of the residents.⁶

Moreover, there are no green spaces or recreational facilities for children.⁷ The lack of adequate play areas not only hinders the overall well-being of the children but also contributes to their malnourishment, robbing them of a joyful and fulfilling childhood experience. Additionally, these children are often deprived of education as they enter the labor market due to the absence of accessible schools and their families' financial constraints.⁸

The proliferation of marginalization has taken on new dimensions due to the escalation of inflation, a sharp surge in housing and land prices, foreign currency fluctuations, and a widening gap in income distribution. This complex situation is a direct consequence of a discriminatory mechanism and an unjust distribution of power and wealth resources within the society.

Over recent years, two distinct groups have emerged among the population migrating to the outskirts of cities.

The first group comprises individuals compelled to move to the periphery due to exorbitant housing and land costs, or losing their jobs.

This is particularly pronounced among female heads of households who frequently engage in informal jobs. Unfortunately, these informal sectors have borne the brunt of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, a substantial portion of this marginalized group consists of families headed by women.

The second group of migrants to the outskirts of cities and informal settlements consists of residents from rural areas who have lost their jobs in villages due to consecutive droughts. Faced with diminishing opportunities in their agricultural communities, these individuals often relocate to urban areas in the hope of finding better employment prospects.

Illustrating the severity of this trend, the National Statistics Center's report on employment statistics in Iran's agricultural sector reveals a significant decline in employment numbers between 2015 and the summer of 2022.

During this period, the workforce in Iran's agricultural sector decreased by 1.3 million, dropping from 5.1 million in 2015 to 3.763 million in 2022.⁹

Marginalized residents, facing limited resources and challenging circumstances, have resorted to constructing homes with whatever materials are available to them.

In the east of Tehran, some individuals reside in slums that are either dug below ground level or built into the walls of pits or mountains. These settlements lack conventional construction materials.

Another form of dwelling is makeshift sheds, where rooms are assembled using various discarded materials such as old car parts, household items, cardboard, aleppo, and nylon. These makeshift settlements are observable in cities like Hamadan, Tehran, and Kerman.

In Sistan and Baluchistan, as well as Khuzestan, Kapars are prevalent dwellings. These structures, primarily made of mats, may be covered with felt when possible.

The settlements of Gergin Neshinan in Tehran, Khuzestan, and Bandar Abbas exhibit a different construction pattern, featuring conventional

KINDS of Slum Settlements



walls made from construction materials but topped with thatched roofs.¹⁰

Mojtabi Yousefi, a member of the Civil Commission of the mullahs' parliament, estimates that the number of marginalized slum dwellers in Iran stands at around 20 million individuals, constituting almost a quarter of the country's population. According to Yousefi, the housing market is grappling with a significant 50% inflation. Despite an annual addition of 800,000 new marriages, contributing to the demand for housing, the government has reportedly not initiated any new housing projects in the last eight years.¹¹

Mohammad Hassan Moghimi, the former governor of Tehran in 2017, highlighted a concerning statistic, stating that 4.5 million people in Tehran province live in deteriorating structures and on the outskirts of cities.¹²

Massoud Shafiei, the head of the Management and Planning Organization of Tehran province in 2021, reiterated the same statistics, emphasizing

that this population constitutes a substantial 31% of Tehran's residents.¹³

However, despite these numbers, the unfortunate phenomenon of marginalization continues to spread across Iran. Ahmad Sadeghi, a member of the Tehran City Council, expresses deep concern, noting that over the years, the issue of marginalization has seen an exponential increase.¹⁴

In Kurdistan province, an alarming 51% of the urban population is marginalized. Within Sanandaj city alone, four distinct urban areas lack access to both rural services and urban management services. Additionally, between 40 and 50 percent of employment in this province is informal, leading many individuals, including a significant number of women, to engage in the laborious job of cargo carriers for their livelihoods.¹⁵

The challenges extend to Hormozgan province, where over 40% of the population and 50% of the total population of the capital city of Bandar Abbas reside in marginal areas with worn-out infrastructure.¹⁶

In Kermanshah, more than 300,000 people out of the one million population live in the outskirts. The Iran-Iraq war resulted in the abandonment of 400 villages in the province, prompting the migration of numerous people to the city of Kermanshah. Even after 35 years, these individuals remain marginalized.¹⁷

Sistan and Baluchistan has earned the reputation of being the "record holder of marginalization," with over one million marginalized individuals residing in its four cities alone. In Chabahar, a staggering 63% of the population lives in the outskirts of the city and in informal settlements.¹⁸ In Alborz province, one-third of the 3 million residents live on the outskirts, deprived of urban facilities. This situation is observed in 25 informal settlements located in the heart of Karaj and Fardis cities.¹⁹

Unfortunately, the outskirts of cities often serve as breeding grounds for social issues and insecurity. Various crimes, including extortion, smuggling, drug sales, violence, and inter-group conflicts, are

prevalent in these marginalized areas.²⁰

Marginalized women face not only material poverty but also endure cultural challenges, including social indifference, family disarray, and a sense of hopelessness, which contribute to the creation and intensification of harm in their lives. These women often lack education on sexual health and fertility, as well as basic hygiene practices. The high rates of illiteracy among women in marginalized areas perpetuate a cycle of poverty from one generation to the next. Women and girls in these marginalized areas are particularly vulnerable, lacking security in various aspects of their lives.²¹

Instead of receiving essential life infrastructure support, the government, under the pretext of lacking permission, ruthlessly demolishes the homes of marginalized residents, often seizing their land. Hossein Zadeh, the deputy of housing, road construction, and urban development in Ardabil province, acknowledges that "the policies in place have contributed to the creation of these marginalized areas." He emphasizes that the forceful demolition of houses not only leads to "violent confrontations and dissatisfaction" but also contributes to "numerous social problems."²² A poignant example of the challenges faced by marginalized communities is their reaction to the high price of gasoline in November 2019, which ignited a nationwide uprising.²³ This incident underscored the deep-seated frustration and discontent prevalent in the outskirts and informal settlements, where the impact of economic decisions is keenly felt.

Beyond informal settlements, numerous urban areas throughout Iran grapple with dilapidation and a lack of basic living standards. A case in point is the neighborhood of Islamabad in the northwest outskirts of Tehran, which has been in existence for 40 years. The houses in this area have an aged infrastructure, worn-out structures, and weak foundations, making them highly vulnerable to events such as earthquakes.²⁴

Arid Conditions and Yearning for Water

The scarcity of water stands as a primary catalyst compelling individuals to abandon their villages and cities, often leading them to settle on the outskirts. Among those most profoundly affected are rural and marginalized women, who endure a spectrum of violence and hardships.

The absence of piped water obliges women and girls to undertake the arduous task of fetching the minimal water required for their families from distant sources to their homes. In numerous Iranian villages, piped water infrastructure is non-existent, and women and girls traditionally bear the responsibility of securing water.

The daily transportation of water, often in heavy containers weighing up to 70 kilos, over considerable distances inflicts numerous physical and psychological tolls on women.²⁵

Sistan and Baluchistan is a province marked by a cumulative array of deprivations. Across all villages in this province, not a single meter of piping has been installed. In Zahedan, the provincial capital, 80% of citizens contend with acute water shortages. The daily reality for village girls and women involves multiple trips covering long distances on uneven roads, with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius in summer and enduring the cold of winter. This relentless routine takes a toll on their health, leading to various ailments such as lumbar disc issues, spine fractures, back pain, and miscarriages.

The water they exert considerable effort to carry is sourced from hotags, and unfortunately, it is unsanitary, contributing to additional health problems.²⁶

Hotags are closed ponds filled with rain water simultaneously used by animals and humans.

Tragically, there have been instances where women and young girls have faced dangers, including drowning during water collection or falling prey to crocodiles in the process.²⁷

The water crisis in Sistan and Baluchistan is starkly evident, with over 50% of its 2.8 million residents residing in villages. Astonishingly, 700 thousand individuals in the rural population lack access to any water network, and 1,261 villages rely on water tankers for their water supply.²⁸

Ahmad Darazehi, the governor of Borooj village in Sirkan city, explains that families in his village receive a delivery of 2,000 liters of water every 15 to 20 days through tankers, equating to a mere 100 liters per household per day. This allotment is expected to cover all consumption needs, including washing, cleaning, and drinking, and is particularly challenging given the crowded nature of most families in the area. Notably, this falls significantly below the world standard, which recommends a minimum of 150 liters per person per day.²⁹

Javad Sepahi, the deputy governor of Sistan and Baluchistan, openly acknowledges the severe water and electricity challenges faced by the people in the region. "In Chabahar, despite being located just a few meters from the sea and serving as a city with an ocean port, residents have been without water for extended periods, leading to numerous difficulties."

Sepahi also pointed out the lack of electricity in at least three villages, emphasizing the relatively straightforward solution of installing electricity poles and transformers. He expressed puzzlement over the delay in conducting the necessary investigations and ensuring the timely provision of electricity to these villages. The consequence of this delay is that villagers are left without electricity or have limited access to lighting, preventing them from using electrical appliances and significantly impacting their daily lives.

In villages that do have access to electricity,

Water Challenges in Villages



Piped Water Access: Most villages lack piped water infrastructure.



Traditional Responsibility: Women and girls are traditionally responsible for supplying water to households.



Health Impact: Carrying heavy containers for long distances, up to 70 km, causes many mental and physical injuries for women.

fluctuating voltage causes damage to and burning electrical appliances used by the residents.³⁰

The water crisis extends beyond villages to affect cities like Sirkan, where over three thousand people reside 65 km from Mashkid Dam.

The residents of Sirkan search for water in unsanitary holes and wells throughout the city. Their primary wish is for rain, as their houses have pipes, but instead of a consistent water supply, the clerical regime dispatches water tankers to the city only once every three weeks, provided there are no delays.³¹

Dehydration is a prevalent issue across various provinces in Iran. In Khuzestan, Mojtabi Yousefi, a member of the mullahs' parliament from Ahvaz, acknowledges that despite the proximity to five large dams and seven rivers, residents in 800 villages lack access to sustainable drinking water.³²

Women in Khuzestan, particularly, face numerous challenges concerning personal health and the care of their children due to the scarcity of drinking water and frequent water cuts. They endure long waits in lines for hours to obtain potable water from tankers.

The water challenges are pervasive, extending to Urwa village in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province, where residents must use a donkey

and a mule to fetch water from a spring. The water source is shared with various wild animals, and families rely on this spring for their drinking water. Lacking plumbing, residents must manually transport water for bathing, a process that involves heating the water with woods.

This arduous daily routine not only diminishes personal hygiene but also exposes individuals to the risk of infectious and incurable diseases.³³

The city of Birjand in South Khorasan has grappled with a prolonged drought, prompting farmers to seek alternative employment and leading to the migration of villagers. In the summer, the residents of 400 villages in South Khorasan eagerly await water tankers for relief. Hossein Emami, the managing director of the provincial wastewater company, says that 27 villages in the province, each with more than 20 households, lack access to sustainable water sources.³⁴

The devastating flood of 2019 had a profound impact on Iran's infrastructure, including water pipes, leading to severe damages. For instance, the Alolak to Ivanki water pipeline in Garmsar suffered significant destruction, incurring damages amounting to five billion and 500 million rials for just 150 meters of the pipeline. Unfortunately, for at least a year following the

flood, no substantial action was taken to address this issue.

In the aftermath of the Khuzestan flood, Qasem Taghizadeh Khamesi, the Deputy Minister of Water and Wastewater, reported that 70 kms of sewage lines in Ahvaz were rendered nonfunctional. Despite the passage of time, as of April 2020, half of these sewage lines remained in the same disrepair.³⁵

In Kerman, the disparities in water access persist, exemplified by Ali Asghar Street, where one side enjoys piped water while the other side has been without water for years. Despite the absence of illegal construction and violations by residents, there has been no resolution to this issue, leaving residents on one side of the street in continued hardship.

The lack of water and basic infrastructure poses significant challenges for the people in this area. Residents express that while they can endure various hardships, the absence of water is an unbearable source of pain and suffering. Issues such as the lack of asphalt on roads, dirt alleys

turning into sand, and the resulting dust clouds from passing vehicles exacerbate the challenges faced by the community.

A woman from the neighborhood, who is a mother of three children, says, "Even our garbage is not collected. Like displaced people, we put our garbage on the top of our car and go leave it on highways." She notes the irony of being charged city service fees despite the absence of essential services like asphalted roads. The pervasive dust has led to health concerns, with children suffering from asthma, respiratory issues, and infectious diseases.

Mohammad Taheri, the CEO of Kerman Water and Sewerage Company, acknowledges that the problem extends beyond this specific neighborhood, affecting at least three other points in the city.

This situation indicates a broader issue in some parts of the city where land is allocated, buildings are constructed, but essential water transmission infrastructure is lacking.³⁶

Delapidated Buildings; Giving Services Under the Shadow of Death

The deteriorating state of buildings and services, particularly in the context of hospitals, has been a significant concern, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The international community witnessed how the clerical regime banned the import of authentic vaccines into Iran on the orders of the mullahs' supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, sacrificing the lives of half a million people to preserve their illegitimate rule. The regime benefits strategically from keeping people preoccupied with basic survival needs. The authorities believe that in this way the people will have no energy to protest and rise. Therefore, the government does not allocate any funds to general public services, unless there is a profit for them.

A closer look at the limitations on services, especially within the dilapidated and worn-out infrastructures, provides insight into the challenges faced by the people and women of Iran.

Hospitals

The state of medical services, particularly in hospitals, has faced significant challenges, with the state of many buildings remaining the same as it was 50 years ago.

Amir Saki, the Director-General of Physical Resources at the Ministry of Health, has acknowledged that approximately 70% of medical buildings are in a worn-out condition. In Tehran, this figure rises to more than 80%. Even more concerning is the fact that over 90% of these dilapidated hospitals are beyond retrofitting, posing a critical threat to the provision of medical services.

Notably, Tehran's Motahari Burn Hospital has received 10 fire warnings, highlighting the dire state of safety in some medical facilities.

Implicitly acknowledging the government's lack of prioritization of public health, Saki emphasized

the numerous challenges in securing hospitals and the essential need for financial investments in health infrastructure. He noted that currently, only 1% of capital asset acquisitions are allocated to the health sector.³⁷

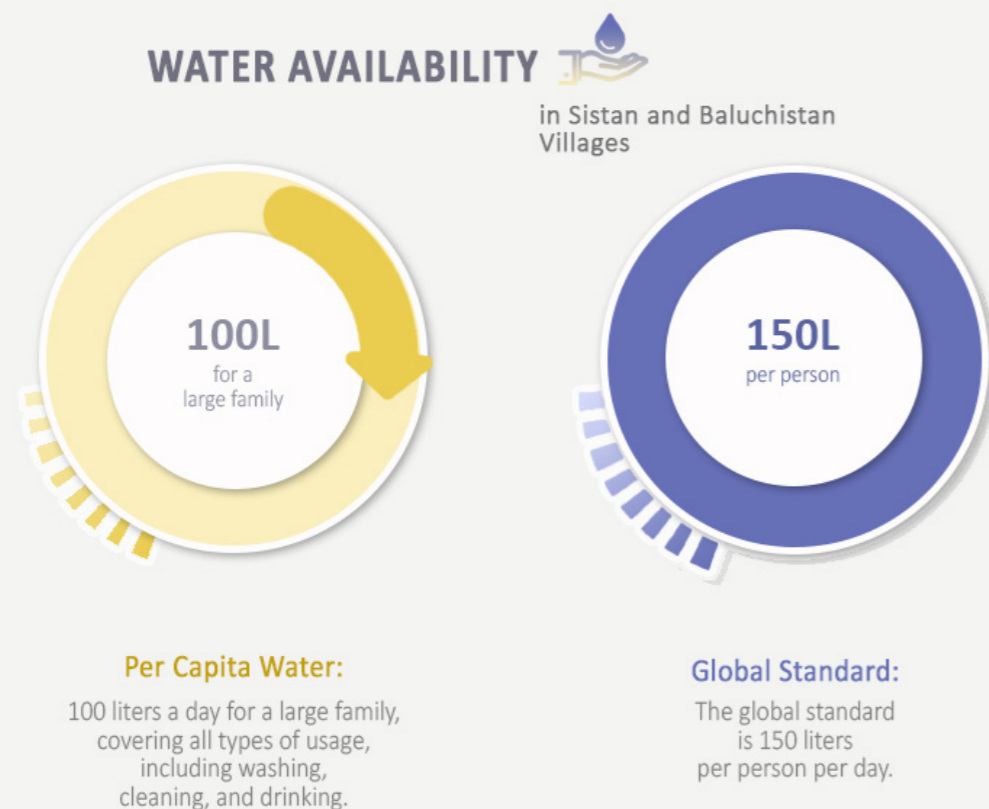
Saeed Karimi, the deputy medical director of the Ministry of Health, has expressed concerns about the lack of specific funding for securing efforts, highlighting the challenge of executing necessary work with the current resources of the Ministry of Health.³⁸

Alireza Zali, the president of Melli University (a.k.a. Beheshti University), has drawn attention to the deteriorating state of 50 hospitals in Tehran, with approximately 70% of the capital's hospitals being over 40 years old. He emphasized that 3,200 hectares of the capital's area are worn out, where the health and treatment centers are located. Among the total of 155 thousand hospital beds, 85% are deemed depreciated and old. Additionally, considering Iran's susceptibility to earthquakes, with Tehran situated on five fault lines, there is a heightened risk that natural disasters could threaten health and treatment centers.³⁹

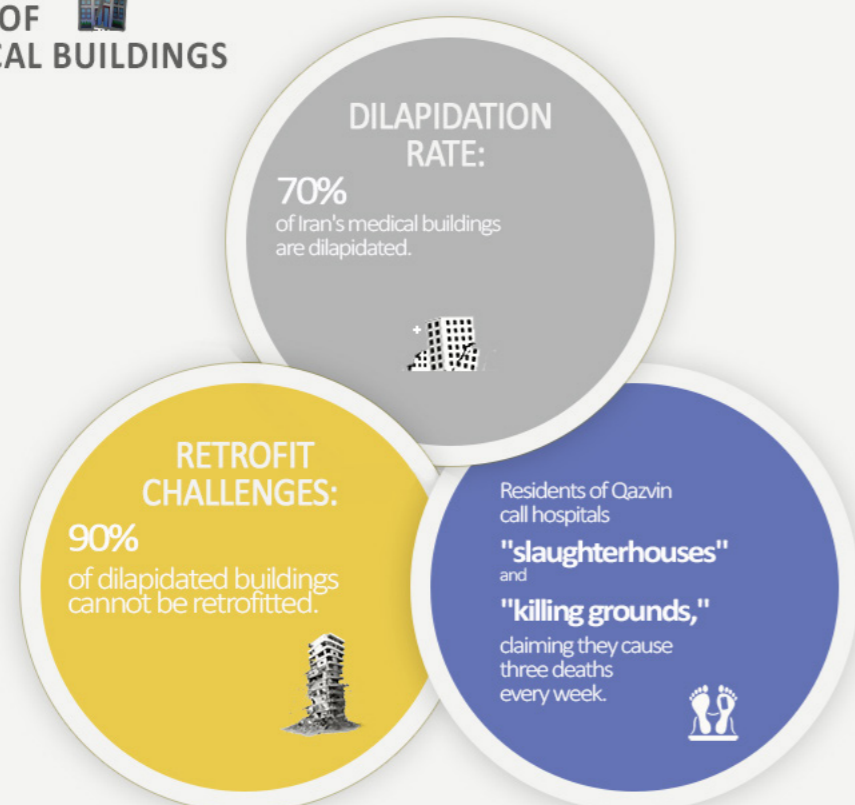
In Qazvin, the locals reportedly refer to their city's hospitals as a "Slaughterhouse," that kills three people every week. Residents say that the hospitals lack adequate beds, and the equipment is outdated. Rajai Hospital, the most equipped hospital in the city, dates back 40 years, adding to the concerns about the outdated infrastructure and insufficient medical resources.⁴⁰

Ramzan Ali Sangdwini, a member of the mullahs' parliament, has openly acknowledged the dire state of hospitals in Golestan province, stating that most of them are dilapidated. Hospitals in the province face multiple challenges, including a shortage of beds, issues with insurance claims, and inadequacy of hospital and medical equipment.⁴¹

In Chabahar, in Sistan and Baluchestan province,



CRITICAL STATE OF MEDICAL BUILDINGS



parts of the Imam Ali hospital building are reportedly supported by iron jacks, posing a serious risk to patients as the structure appears to be in danger of collapsing. The hospital's overall condition is described as worn-out, with visible rebar, and lacks a central air conditioning system, making it unsuitable not only for patients but also for the movement of healthy individuals. The existing ventilation devices are reported to be malfunctioning due to the use of salty and poor-quality tanker water.

Southern Baluchestan is facing a critical shortage of hospital beds, with a per capita number of beds at 0.6, significantly lower than the Ministry of Health's standard of 1.8.

The hospital also grapples with severe shortages of doctors, nurses, and other human resources, as well as a lack of essential health and treatment facilities and expertise.

Additionally, the hospital faces the challenge of frequent water cuts in the city that lies on the shore of an ocean.⁴²

In Dehdasht, the aging Khomeini Hospital

building, now 40 years old, poses a serious concern for patients. Mansour Taqavi, the director of the Kohgiluyeh health and treatment network, acknowledges that all the sewage and electrical systems in the hospital are worn out and old. The infrastructure is deteriorating, and the chiller system of the hospital is broken. Despite these challenges, the hospital is responsible for serving four cities and seven counties.⁴³

Shiraz, considered a medical center in Iran, faces similar issues with its hospitals. Thirteen out of a total of 15 medical centers in Shiraz have a lifespan of over 50 years, with some even exceeding 100 years. Despite surpassing their intended lifespans, these hospitals continue to operate with over 100% occupancy rates. In some instances, departments designed for 20 people are accommodating 80 patients.

Seyed Abulfazl Hashemi, Vice President of Management and Resource Development of the University of Medical Sciences of Shiraz, has expressed concerns about the structural integrity



A dilapidated Emergency room in Sar Pol-e Zahab

of approximately 90% of hospital beds.⁴⁴ The tragic incident of the collapse of the Abadan Metropol building in June 2022 has raised concerns about the safety of buildings, particularly medical facilities, in Iran. An unofficial list of unsafe buildings with fire warnings has been published in the aftermath of this incident. Previous events, such as the serious damage to Harris Hospital after the Harris-Varzghan earthquake, the inefficiency of the newly built Sarpol Zahab Hospital after the Kermanshah earthquake, and the explosion incident at the Sina At'har Clinic in Tehran, resulting in the loss of lives, highlight not only the issue of structural exhaustion but also significant shortcomings in structural safety, equipment, and adequate supervision in the construction of new hospitals. These incidents emphasize the critical importance of ensuring the structural integrity and safety of medical facilities, especially in the face of potential crises and natural disasters. The lack of proper safety measures and oversight can lead to severe consequences, paralyzing hospitals that

play a crucial role in providing assistance to the injured during times of crisis.

Gholamreza Massoumi, a member of the Disaster Health Board of the Ministry of Health, has highlighted concerns about the safety of hospitals in Iran. He mentioned instances of both dilapidated and newly renovated hospitals facing safety issues. For example, Harris Hospital, despite taking 15 to 20 years to build, suffered significant damage in the Varzaghan earthquake, leading to the evacuation of patients just a year after its completion. Similarly, Khomeini Hospital in Kermanshah, delivered over a year ago, faced problems during the earthquake.

Massoumi emphasized that 97% of the country's regions have faults, making it susceptible to earthquakes. In the event of a severe earthquake, such as one above 7 to 7.5 on the Richter scale, the destruction in cities like Tehran would be extensive, especially in central areas, posing challenges to moving patients in the streets due to limited resources and capabilities.⁴⁵

Schools

The deplorable condition of schools, posing a threat to the lives of children, is yet another facet of the challenging situation in Iran. Reza Darman, the CEO of the Community Charity Organization, acknowledges that the Ministry of Education does not provide funds to construct schools. He notes that the per capita education space in the country is 5 square meters per student, meaning a school with 100 students should have 500 square meters of infrastructure. Despite an increase to 8 meters on paper in the Fundamental Transformation of Education and Training Document, some educational centers currently have less than half a square meter per capita.

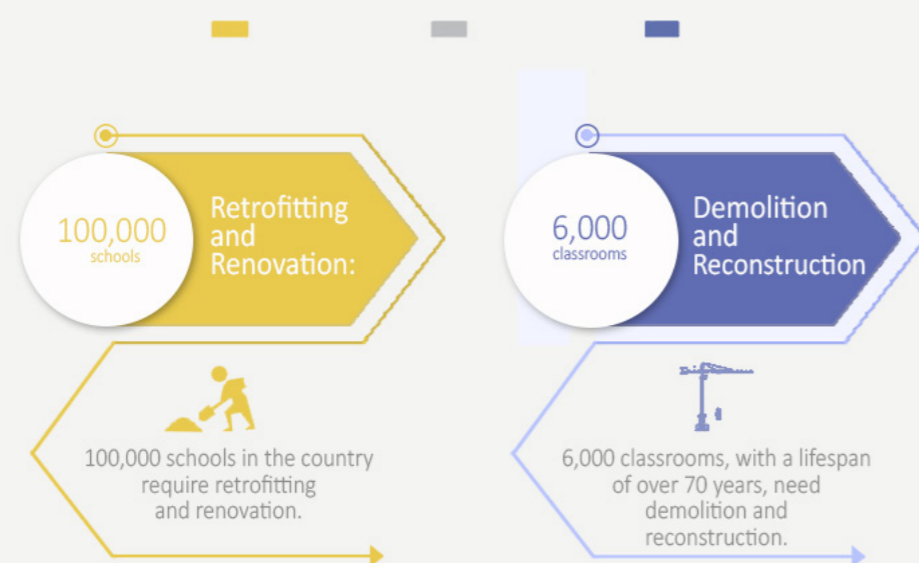
Darman points out the overcrowded conditions in certain schools, with examples of classes designed for 20 students accommodating 50 individuals. Additionally, he highlights that 30% of schools in many provinces are dilapidated and pose potential harm. Families, concerned about the distance of schools or the presence of male teachers, sometimes prevent their daughters

from attending. Furthermore, 7% of children dropping out of school do so simply due to the distance from the educational institution.⁴⁶ Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, head of the Renovation, Development, and Equipping of Schools Organization, and the Education Ministry's deputy for construction, has revealed that currently, 19.5% of the country's schools are not considered safe.⁴⁷

Approximately 100,000 schools in Iran are estimated to require retrofitting and reconstruction, posing a significant concern for student safety in the event of earthquakes. Rakhshanimehr also noted the 5,000 charitable school projects that remain unfinished due to the government's failure to contribute its share, leading to a decrease in benefactors' willingness to participate in school construction.⁴⁸

Mohammad Vahidi, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament's Education Commission, emphasized that three million students are studying in severely dilapidated schools. With the current funding levels, it would take 300 years to retrofit and rebuild these schools.

DILAPIDATED SCHOOLS



STATE OF EDUCATION IN VILLAGES



In Tehran province, 28% of schools are reported to be dilapidated, with 10% (equivalent to 6,000 classrooms) requiring demolition and reconstruction. These schools are more than 70 years old and have not undergone renovation or improvements during this extended period.⁴⁹ Mohammad Delavarian, Director General of Alborz Schools Renovation, Development, and Equipping, acknowledged the deficiency of 7,000 classrooms in the province. Out of the 1,500 schools in Alborz province, 450 are described as dilapidated, old, and dangerous.⁵⁰ Kalamullah Safari, Director General of Education in Ardabil province, disclosed that 120 schools in the province, mainly in Ardabil city, need to be demolished and reconstructed.⁵¹ Majid Nasimi, head of the General Department of Renovation, Development, and Equipping of Schools in Isfahan Province, stated that there are 10,344 classrooms in Isfahan Province that are over 40 years old.⁵² In most villages of Sistan and Baluchistan province, schools are constructed up to the sixth grade, with teachers often being conscript soldiers. Beyond the sixth grade, students are required to travel to schools located in the district or city, facing long and difficult routes that contribute to a high dropout rate, particularly among girls.⁵³

Hadi Salimi, the governor of Hatam Abad village in Kaboudar Ahang city, noted that there were 120 students in the village. However, the only school in the village, which is 50 years old, is dilapidated and only accepts elementary school students. After completing primary school, students have to travel 5 kilometers to Mehdi Abad village, where a mixed-gender high school is held in a trailer. Families are reluctant to send their daughters to mixed schools for cultural reasons. Although various Ministers of Education have announced plans to dismantle the school sheds and containers, there are still many rundown school sheds and containers in Iran. Marzban Nazari, Director General of Kermanshah's Renovation, Development, and Equipping of Schools, reported the existence of 200 schools set up in containers in this province. There are 134 classes in West Azerbaijan and 408 school containers in East Azerbaijan. Yaqub Ali Nazari, the governor of Razavi Khorasan province, also mentions the existence of 200 school trailers and 20 schools made with stones in his province.⁵⁴ Mehrollah Rakhshanimehr, the head of the School Renovation Organization, seems dismissive of the condition of schools, calling them "authentic architecture" and stating that "there is no plan to dismantle them."⁵⁵

Healthcare

Living in poverty without necessary life infrastructure poses risks to the mental, physical, social, and sexual health of millions of Iranian women. They face highly discriminatory conditions under the clerical regime's misogynistic laws. These women are often forced to give birth prematurely and repeatedly, while being deprived of reproductive and pregnancy health, proper childbirth, post-natal healthcare, and prevention and treatment of common women's health issues.⁵⁶ Women in deprived areas have limited access to medical centers due to the long distances from their residences. This situation reduces their access to essential healthcare services. Many rural women end up giving birth to one child every year. Malnutrition is prevalent among rural and nomadic girls and women. Late cancer diagnoses are common due to infrequent checkups, leading to disease progression. Dental services are also a pressing need for these women, but financial constraints often prevent them from accessing such care.⁵⁷ Rasoul Izadi, the head of Khur-and-Biabanak City Council, admits that although there is a hospital, named Aftab-e Hashtom, in Khur city, but it has only one general physician and one pediatrician who is also the emergency room doctor. There are no permanent specialists. People in this region are deprived of the minimum healthcare. More than 90% of emergency patients are sent to other cities. Delays in transportation, combined with the challenges of worn-out roads, sometimes result in patients losing critical treatment time and, tragically, dying on the way to medical care. A notable example is the absence of an educated professional capable of performing ultrasounds in the local hospital. Residents in need of ultrasound examinations must undertake journeys of up to 200 kilometers, taking the risk of road accidents. This city lacks the presence of obstetricians, gynecologists, or facilities for screenings to confirm the health of the fetus.

As a result, families must travel to the provincial capital multiple times during pregnancy, posing additional burdens. Referring to the Population Growth Plan ordered by Khamenei, Izadi said, "It would have been better for the managers to prioritize the long distances, regional deprivation, and the lack of essential life infrastructure, over solely considering population statistics."⁵⁸ Transporting pregnant women from inaccessible villages to medical centers poses significant challenges, particularly during harsh weather conditions such as snow and blizzards. These journeys can take more than 10 hours, and the impassable roads further exacerbate the difficulties faced by these women. The villages of Hashtrud and Charuymaq District in East Azerbaijan face significant challenges due to their remote and inaccessible locations. Issa Badri, the emergency expert of Charuymaq city, states that approximately 300 villages in this county encounter road closures during the winter season. The routes of Gowijeh Qaleh village, Qermezi Bagh village, and Zaker Kandi village in Charuymaq are particularly problematic. Charuymaq only has one helicopter pad to address emergency situations. Farshid Khairi, the emergency expert of Hashtrud county, shares the difficulties faced during emergency missions. In Hashtrud, where the snow in villages doesn't melt even in spring, transportation difficulties persist. The lack of medical infrastructure in remote areas was tragically highlighted in November 2023 when a 17-year-old girl in the nomadic area of Bahmai County faced a life-threatening situation. Mohammad Amin Nikouyii, head of the emergency department 115 of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad province, recounts the difficulties faced during the response. After a report about the injured girl at 12 noon on 21 November, emergency forces arrived at the location after three hours and 30 minutes of walking. The girl was bleeding from the thigh.

Lack of Healthcare in Villages



Despite initial treatment, the challenging terrain made it impossible for a quick transfer to a medical center. Requests for helicopters from the air emergency services of Shiraz and Behbahan were unsuccessful. The young girl, who had lost a significant amount of blood, suffered a cardiorespiratory arrest and passed away at 5.30 p.m. on the way to Bahmai County. Bleeding and delays in transferring her to a medical facility, ultimately led to her death. Mohammad Amin Nikouyii reveals that the unavailability of helicopters in seven critical cases, including transportation of pregnant women, snake bites, falls from heights, strokes, heart attacks, and accidents, resulted in the deaths of two individuals.⁵⁹ The statistics from the Medical System Organization highlight a concerning shortage of specialist doctors in Iran. The per capita number of specialist doctors in Iran is less than six doctors per 10,000 people, which is only one-fifth of the standard in European countries. Mehrdad Veis Karami, a member of the parliamentary Education and Research Commission, states that in many provincial capitals there is no female radiologist. The

situation is worse and more regrettable in more deprived regions. Criticizing those opposing the increase in the number of doctors, he says, "They would better walk out of their homes and pay a visit to deprived regions. They should consider the plight of people in less fortunate areas who face long queues in hospitals." He urged policymakers to prioritize the healthcare needs of the broader population.⁶⁰ Kamal Hosseinpour, a member of the mullahs' parliament, expresses deep concerns about the lack of justice in the distribution of healthcare resources by the Ministry of Health. He points out that privileged centers are consistently gaining more advantages, leading to an increasing disparity with less privileged areas. The per capita healthcare costs in many deprived and border counties are notably low, and efforts to rectify this situation have been insufficient. Furthermore, people, especially in deprived and border areas, face the challenge of having to travel to other counties, provincial centers, or even Tehran to address their health concerns. This situation has led to widespread dissatisfaction and complaints among the population.⁶¹

The dire condition of roads and the lack of proper maintenance contribute to a significant number of casualties in Iran. Poor quality roads built only to reap profits have turned into another means of killing the people of Iran.

An alarming 17,000 people die in road accidents annually due to safety lapses.

Worn-out, Impassable Roads Do Not Lead to Destination

The dire condition of roads and the lack of proper maintenance contribute to a significant number of casualties in Iran. Poor quality roads built only to reap profits have turned into another means of killing the people of Iran.

Kamal Hadianfar, the head of the Highway Police, revealed that within 8 months of the year 2023, approximately 12,500 people lost their lives in road accidents—an alarming toll comparable to a month of bombing in Gaza.⁶²

Government statistics indicate a surge in the number of accidents despite reduced travel and private car usage over the past couple of years. The poor quality of roads, attributed to inadequate funding and a lack of identification of accident-prone areas, is a significant factor, accounting for 20 to 30 percent of accidents. Ahmad Khorram, the former Minister of Roads and Urban Development, has acknowledged the presence of numerous accident-prone locations in Iran that are more than many other countries. He highlighted the insufficient service levels on the country's roads, contributing to driver fatigue. Khorram further noted that in 2003, the primary focus on highway construction resulted in decreased attention to rural and main roads, exacerbating the issues in various road sections across the nation.⁶³

The lack of funds for road maintenance has led to a significant decline in the condition of roads, compromising safety standards.

Mohammad Bukharai, CEO of the Road Safety Advocates Association, noted that during road operations, essential standards are not adhered to.⁶⁴

Hossein Mirshafi, adviser to the Minister of Roads and Urban Development in the road development department and CEO of Road Charity Association, highlighted the alarming rate of road-related fatalities in Iran, with approximately 17,000 deaths annually due to safety lapses.

Mirshafi identified a major cause of accidents as the failure to address accident-prone areas.

Additionally, the increase in the price of bitumen has led contractors to use low-quality bitumen for paving, contributing to a rise in road accidents and fatalities.⁶⁵

The mountainous areas, known as "death roads," suffer from poor-quality roads, insufficient lighting at night, a lack of traffic signs, deep potholes, hazardous valleys, unprotected turns, and roads with low depth and heavy traffic. Despite these issues, the authorities of the regime have been unresponsive to the concerns and demands for improvements.⁶⁶

Hadi Tavazehi, the head of the Road and Urban Development Department of Fereydunshahr in the city of Isfahan, revealed that there are 170 kilometers of dirt and gravel roads in the area, with an additional 300 kilometers of roads suffering from wear and tear.⁶⁷

In rural areas, the situation is dire, with some villages lacking any roads. For instance, the road in Barafi village of Po-e dokhtar city is unpaved and lacks asphalt coating, making it impassable for vehicles, especially during the rainy season.

This road is not only essential for Barafi but also serves as the route for four other villages.⁶⁸ Some 200 million vehicles per year drive through the roads in Qazvin Province which serves as a transit point for the traffic from 13 provinces and is strategically located in terms of communication routes. However, the infrastructure and asphalt of some 5,400 kilometers of rural roads in this province have not been maintained.⁶⁹

The Darreh Kayad Road in the nomadic area of Dezful County in Khuzestan Province, is a dirt road, making it challenging to traverse. Unfortunately, this road has been the site of numerous accidents leading to the loss of lives.⁷⁰ In deprived villages and hard-to-reach areas of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, the lack of proper access roads, basic health and treatment facilities, drinking water, and water for agriculture are among the critical needs of the people.

Most villages in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari lack asphalt access roads, and their roads become

ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS



impassable with the onset of autumn rains. This lack of suitable roads contributes to the migration of villagers. Additionally, the absence of proper roads impedes the transportation of basic necessities like oil, gas canisters, and flour, and makes it impossible for students to go to school. Each of the villages in these regions are inhabited by over 100 families. However, they do not have any machinery to main their road and lack a garbage collection vehicle.

Farkhondeh Alijani, the governor of one of these villages, highlights the absence of an oil and gas capsule branch representative, making the cost of transporting 200 liters of oil prohibitively expensive for the residents.⁷¹

The challenges faced by the Mehban Nikshahr rural district, with a population of over 15,000 people, highlight the absence of a suitable asphalt road in the area. Particularly during the rainy season, reaching these villages becomes incredibly difficult, and air relief is sometimes the only viable option. Muradbakhsh Vidadzehi, the head of the rural district council, expresses frustration with the lack of action from the authorities, despite promises made by officials and parliament representatives. In Gorgan and Darukan regions, 23 villages with a collective population of 2,000 have been awaiting the construction of asphalt roads for three to four decades. Additionally, these villages lack communication lines, forcing residents to travel considerable distances to make phone calls.⁷²

The villagers of Kohrang share their dream of having a dirt road, as asphalt roads remain

elusive. They transport their cargos with donkeys. These villages lack basic amenities, such as communication lines, health services, and sanitized houses. The absence of television and radio further isolates these communities. The only means of communication is a towing hawser with a rope that assists in crossing the river towards Lorestan province. Unfortunately, this wire is worn and has caused tragic accidents due to multiple breakages.⁷³

Bashagard county is one of the most deprived places in the country due to a lack of communication infrastructure. A staggering 80 to 90 percent of rural roads in Bashagard are dirt and impassable, totaling 1,641 km of dirt roads. These conditions have led to heartbreaking incidents, such as the drowning of female students due to the absence of a bridge over the Jegin River. Every rain event leads to the isolation of many villages from the county's capital, sometimes lasting for several days. Tragedies, including the miscarriage of pregnant mothers, are unfortunately recurring in these situations. Additionally, the delay in transporting people's food and flour on these roads can lead to spoilage.

Ismail Kazemi, the head of Bashagard Road and Urban Development Department, revealed that the budget for their department was zero in 2018.⁷⁴ The residents of six villages in the Oareh Pashtelu district of Zanjan have been waiting for the authorities' promise to pave 15 kms of communication road for an extended period. The delay in fulfilling this promise has led to

the abandonment of villages. Difficult access to medical centers, impassable roads in winter, and issues with selling agricultural products due to poor road conditions disappoints people from staying in the village.

One of the residents of Orachi village said 15 kms of rural road from Orachi to Zanjanrud passes straight through six villages and connects to Tabriz Road. Five years ago, the officials promised to provide the necessary funds to asphalt the rural road, however, there has not been any asphalt so far.

The agricultural products of this village remain in the hands of farmers and are sold to buyers at a low price. If someone gets sick in this village, it is difficult for them to get to the medical center.⁷⁵ The residents of Mehban Nikshahr rural district complain about IRGC's Khatam al-Anbia Garrison and say it had taken advantage of the construction of Chabahar-Nikshahr railway to Iranshahr.

In the past 10 years, the IRGC has completely destroyed the 50-kilometer road from Hitak to Metsang with the round-the-clock traffic of heavy railway machinery, and people are now traveling with difficulty and incurring a lot of costs because this road has become sanded. It destroys passenger car tires.

The residents of this area face 115 kms of unpaved roads, 53 precarious areas near valleys and rivers, 22 kms of hazardous spots, and at least 34 perilous turns lacking warning signs. The rural schools are also in poor condition, lacking basic facilities such as fences, toilets, and window glass, with no apparent provision for water supply. Additionally, many houses have suffered damage from explosions carried out during the railway track reopening, yet there has been no assessment of the incurred damages. Jasem Sadeghi, the vice-chairman of Mishod village council, expresses discontent, pointing out that since the construction of the railway line near Mishod village began, problems have escalated. The village's water pipe, originally sourced from an upstream spring, has been redirected underground, resulting in multiple bursts and complete destruction of sections of the pipe. The railway construction has also disrupted

access to agricultural lands and residential areas. While the railway project enjoys various benefits, including free access to water, mining resources, soil, sand, and low-wage labor, the community is met with bureaucratic hurdles when seeking redress for the damages caused by the project. Issa Baluchi, the governor of another village in the region, adds that the access road from Nikshahr to Mehban, Metsang, and Gorgan has also been damaged due to the daily traffic of railway machinery.

Mowlavi Mohammad Yaqoub Molazehi, the prayer leader of Mahban Nikshahr rural district, highlights the oppressive actions of authorities, stating that even minor and reasonable requests from the people are met with harsh responses. Those making requests are often threatened with complaints and referrals to judicial bodies. The authorities resort to using military forces or sending threatening letters to discourage people from making demands.⁷⁶

The final word

The presented examples, obtained from government media reports, provide a glimpse into the dire situation of poverty and deprivation faced by the Iranian people. It is impossible to provide a full picture due to the regime's corruption and censorship. These instances shed light on why there is widespread discontent with the ruling religious dictatorship. The people of Iran are determined to secure their freedom and rights, and history will bear witness to those who supported the oppressive clerical regime for short-term economic gains and those who heeded the call of conscience to alleviate the suffering of the Iranian people, especially women.

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