

Double discrimination, double pressure make life tough for Iran women

September was replete with numerous instances of suppression of Iranian women and discrimination against them while they did not sit silent by staging or actively participating in at least 42 protests.

This month's bulletin reviews the arrests and sentences issued for women activists, the expulsion of female journalist, the hampering of a bill curbing violence against women, the new measures undertaken by the clerical regime to prevent women from entering stadiums, and the additional pressure women heads of household in Iran have to endure due to the bankrupt state of the economy.

New arrests of women activists

Amnesty International called for release of detained women activists

The Iranian regime continued its unwarranted arrests and imprisonment of human rights lawyers and activists. Amnesty International issued a [statement](#) on September 3, 2018, warning that the arrests of lawyers and women's rights activists in Iran signal intensifying crackdown on civil society.

"These latest arrests are a blatant attempt to silence those advocating for human rights in Iran," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Research and Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The human rights situation in Iran has reached crisis point. Mild expressions of concern are not enough. We call on the international community to demand that the Iranian authorities stop attacks on human rights defenders, including human rights lawyers and women's rights activists. It should urge the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release those most recently detained and ensure that every detainee is provided access to a lawyer of their own choosing from the time of arrest."

Hoda Amid, Najmeh Vahedi, Rezvaneh Mohammadi

On the morning of September 1, 2018, [Hoda Amid](#), a lawyer and a women's rights activist, and [Najmeh Vahedi](#), another women's rights activist and sociology graduate, were arrested by security forces at their homes in [Tehran](#).

The two women used to hold workshops for women to educate them about their rights.

Another women's rights activist and student of gender studies, [Rezvaneh Mohammadi](#), was arrested by security forces on September 3, 2018, for unknown reasons. Ms. Mohammadi has been transferred to the Women's Ward of Evin Prison after undergoing interrogations for nearly one month.



Hajar Saeedi, Sorayya Khedri, Afsaneh Khorsandi

Intelligence forces arrested [Hajar Saeedi](#), a Kurdish women's rights and environmental activist in [Sanandaj](#), on September 5, 2018, and transferred her to an unknown location.

[Sorayya Khedri](#) was also arrested in Sanandaj by security forces on September 13, 2018.

No specific information is available on the reason for the arrest of this civil rights activist and member of Kurdistan's Rojgar Charity Organization. The arrest, however, followed the regime's efforts to crack down on the national strike and protests of the residents of Kurdish areas against the [execution of three Kurdish activists](#) and the regime's missile attacks on the headquarters of two Kurdish parties in the Iraqi Kurdistan on September 8, 2018.

Intelligence agents in [Mahabad](#) raided the residence of [Afsaneh Khorsandi](#) on September 26, 2018, arresting and transferring her to an unknown location. It is not clear why she was arrested and where she has been taken to.

The new wave of arrests of women civil activists and Kurdish activists has been launched by the Revolutionary Guard Corps to intensify the atmosphere of fear and terror in the areas inhabited by Kurds.

Nine women arrested for their faith

Nine women were [arrested in Shiraz](#), Isfahan and Karaj, because of their Baha'i faith.

Nora Pourmoradian, a Baha'i resident of [Shiraz](#), was arrested on September 16, 2018, by agents of the Department of Intelligence and transferred to the department's Detention Center.

Ms. Soudabeh Haghighat was also arrested on Sunday night, September 16, 2018, at her home while her family and relatives were preparing for the funeral of her grandmother.

Earlier on Saturday, September 15, 2018, two other women –Bahareh Ghaderi and Elaheh Samizadeh— were arrested in Shiraz.

Bahareh Ghaderi was arrested when agents of the Ministry of Intelligence broke into the psychology class of her husband, Mr. Navid Bazmandegan. After the inspection of their residence and confiscation of their personal belongings, they transferred the Baha'i couple to an unknown location, leaving behind their three-year-old daughter who is struggling with cancer.



[Bahareh Zeini \(Sobhanian\)](#), [Sepideh Rouhani](#), and [Foujhan Rashidi](#) were arrested in the city of Baharestan in the Province of [Isfahan](#) on September 23, 2018.

On Sunday, September 16, 2018, agents of the Intelligence Ministry raided an environmental education class held at Ramin Sadeghi's residence in Andisheh township of [Karaj](#). The class instructor [Maryam Ghaffarmanesh](#), and [Ms. Jamileh Pakrou](#) were among those arrested who were subsequently transferred to Evin Prison.

Women sentenced or summoned to court

Arezoo Sahraii and Maryam Asadloo summoned

Two women, [Arezoo Sahraii](#) and [Maryam Asadloo](#), were among 35 protesters summoned for trial by the Branch One of the Court of Khoy in West Azerbaijan Province.

Arrested for participating in the protest on January 1, 2018, in Khoy, they will be prosecuted for all or a few of the following allegations: "Collusion and conspiring against national security", "propaganda against the state", "insulting the (mullahs') Supreme Leader", "distorting the public opinion", "disrupting the public order" and "violating the public's peace."

The detainees were subjected to harsh beatings, insults and humiliation at the time of arrest and instructed to withhold information on their arrests.

Soha Mortezaei sentenced to 6, Maryam (Massoumeh) Mohammadi to 7 years in prison

[Soha Mortezaei](#), a graduate student of humanities and secretary of the Central Council of Tehran University students, was sentenced to six years of imprisonment by Branch 26 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court and two years of suspension from membership in political parties, and groups.

Soha Mortezaei was arrested at home on January 4, 2018, by security forces for inquiring about the status of students arrested during the December-January nationwide protests.

[Maryam \(Massoumeh\) Mohammadi](#), a 22-year-old female political prisoner from [Fereydunkenar](#), was tried on September 15, 2018, and she was sentenced to serve seven years in [Babol](#) Prison for "propaganda against the regime."



Aliyeh Eghdam-Doost sentenced to 9 months' jail, 74 lashes

Aliyeh Eghdam-Doost, a teacher and member of the (Teachers') Retirement Union, was [sentenced to 9 months of imprisonment and 74 lashes](#).

Ms. [Aliyeh Eghdam-Doost](#) was among six teachers arrested in a teachers' protest gathering in Tehran on May 10. Her trial was held on September 5, and the verdict issued on September 15, 2018, by Branch 1060 of Tehran's Criminal Court.

The six teachers arrested in the May 10 Tehran protest were convicted of "disrupting public order by participating in illegal gatherings" and "defying on-duty officers," for demanding to have their salaries increased above the poverty line.



Rouhiyeh Nariman sentenced to 2.5 years in jail

A Baha'i woman residing in Shiraz by the name of [Rouhiyeh Nariman](#), was sentenced to 2.5 years in jail by the 17th Branch of the Revision Court in this city.

Currently there are many Baha'i women behind bars because of their faith. They are deprived of their basic human rights and are constantly harassed or insulted by security agents.

Baha'ism is considered an illegal faith in Iran and its adherents are deprived of their rights to education, employment and practice of their faith.

Authorities step up pressure on prisoners

Sotoudeh Fazeli illegally held despite old age

[Sotoudeh Fazeli](#) is a political prisoner detained in [Evin prison](#) despite old age. Prison authorities rejected her conditional release.

The 66-year-old retired teacher suffers from cancer and thalassemia. She must be released from jail according to the law because she is older than 55.

She served as a teacher and school principal for 30 years. She was arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in spring 2010 when she was leaving the country to visit her sons in [Camp Ashraf](#), Iraq. Sotoudeh Fazeli was arrested again on June 29, 2016, and transferred to the [Women's Ward of Evin Prison](#). Then she was sent on furlough in June 2017.

After her request for conditional release was turned down, she was returned to Evin Prison on May 21, 2018. Sotoudeh Fazeli was not even allowed to visit her dying mother.

Her brother, Seyed Shamseddin Fazeli was arrested in 1981 at the age of 20 and eventually executed in 1985, without informing his family.

Nasrin Sotoudeh continues to defy threats, harassment by judiciary

Iranian lawyer and human rights activist Nasrin Sotoudeh faced various forms of pressure in the month of September, but reacted with strength.

Her temporary three-month detention was extended for the second time on September 1, 2018. She was [informed of three new charges](#), in addition to the previous five.

Her husband, Reza Khandan, was also arrested and detained on September 4, 2018, by agents of Iran's Intelligence Ministry.

In mid-September, Ms. Sotoudeh refused to sign a written pledge stating she would wear the head-to-toe veil while having visitors, giving up her family visitation right to protest against the prosecutor's demand.

On September 16, Nasrin Sotoudeh's daughter, [Mehraveh Khandan](#), was also threatened to be deprived of visiting her mother if she did not properly observe the veil. The threat was made when she and her brother had gone to Evin to visit their mother.

By the end of September, Nasrin Sotoudeh [filed a complaint](#) with the SSF Court for Judges against Mohammad Moghisseh, the judge presiding her case.

Nasrin Sotoudeh accused Mohammad Moghisseh of issuing verdicts outside the indictments, breaching impartiality in the due process, ordering illegal arrests, etc. (The official IRNA news agency – September 30, 2018)

[A skillful lawyer](#), Nasrin Sotoudeh deems her arrest as unjust. In August, she sent out an [open letter](#), explaining the reasons for her refusal to appear before the court and present her defense. She also [did not accept to be released on bail](#).

Detained since June 13, 2018, Nasrin Sotoudeh [began a hunger strike](#) on August 25, in protest to the alleged national security charges levelled against her and the security forces' [harassment of her family and friends](#). On October 3, she ended her hunger strike which had worn down her



strength such that she keeps going unconscious while walking up the stairs and she needs to be accompanied by a cellmate all the time.

Mahin Taj Ahmadpour went on hunger strike

[Mahin Taj Ahmadpour](#), a political prisoner detained in Nashtarud Prison, went on hunger strike on September 10, 2018, for 16 days, to protest being denied medical care, deprived of making phone calls, and threatened with new charges.

Ms. Taj Ahmadpour suffers from blood platelet deficiency. She is suspected of developing leukemia and needs to receive seven blood units every month. Despite doctor orders, prison authorities prevent her from going to a hospital for medical examinations and treatment.

Mahin Taj Ahmadpour, 46 and a street vendor from [Tonekabon](#), was [arrested during last year's popular unrests and uprisings](#). Ms. Ahmadpour has been sentenced to a total of 10 months' imprisonment.



40 female journalists and staff fired by ANA news agency

All female journalists and administration staff of the ANA news agency, belonging to the so-called Islamic Azad (Free) University, were [fired](#) on September 18, 2018, just because of their gender.

An informed source in ANA said, "The expulsions were not due to professional reasons, but the news agency's management has fired not only the journalists but also all female staff of the administrative section just because they are women."

Most of the female journalists sacked by ANA had more than three years of work experience.

"Provision of Security for Women" stuck in a labyrinth

At a meeting on September 18, 2018, to review the [bill for Provision of Security for Women](#), Parvaneh Salahshouri, a member of mullahs' parliament, revealed, "The bill initially called, 'Elimination of [Violence Against Women](#)', was first renamed as Provision of Security for Women. For two and a half years, the bill has been supposed to come back to the parliament, but the bill has got stuck in a labyrinth incomparable to any other bill or plan."

Criticizing the parliament's conduct regarding the bill for Provision of Security for Women, Salahshouri added, "When we came to the parliament, they said the bill had already been under examination for five years. The presidential directorate on Women and Family Affairs made some changes in it and sent it back to the government to be sent to the parliament. The bill, however, was redirected to the Judiciary because it contained incriminating items which had to be examined by the Judiciary." (The state-run IRNA news agency - September 18, 2018)

Salahshouri also revealed, "Today we see that [violence \(against women\) has been institutionalized](#)." (The state-run ILNA news agency – September 18, 2018)

Parastoo Sarmadi, a regime expert on the issue, told the meeting, "[Iran has one of the highest statistics on violence against women](#)", and this makes adoption of the bill for Provision of Security for Women even more urgent."

Eager female football fans face news obstacles

[Ban on women's entrance](#) to sports stadiums was once again reiterated by officials on September 17, 2018, ahead of the Asian League game between Tehran's Persepolis and Qatar's Ad-Dahil.

Farhad Nikoo-khesal, the supervisor of the [Azadi Stadium](#) in Tehran said, "We have been taking the necessary measures since a month ago, so that all spectators would be closely examined before entering the Azadi Stadium."

"While we are going to examine the spectators in terms of tickets, female security forces are also going to be stationed at the Azadi Stadium's entrance gate to make sure women's entrance to stadium by wearing men's makeup would be prevented," Nikoo-khesal added. (The state-run ISNA news agency – September 17, 2018)

[Female police and mounted police officers](#) were also deployed on September 27, 2018, to prevent women from entering the Azadi Stadium in Tehran to watch the game between the capital's two most popular teams.

The state media wrote, "The women police are present at the Azadi Stadium gates to identify female fans dressed in boys' outfits to intervene and deal with the issue if anyone was suspected." (The state-run ROKNA news agency – September 27, 2018)

According to other reports, 500 CCTV surveillance cameras were used to identify and prevent women from entering through the gates.

Despite tight control by the State Security Force, a brave girl called Bahareh Khosraviani was able to enter the stadium with a boyish make-up to watch her favorite team in person.



Asia's champion, Iranian women's national futsal team lacks funding

Iranian [women's national futsal team](#) does not have any [sponsors](#), and the women's futsal league has been [facing various problems](#) since it began in mid-September.

It was expected that winning Asia's championship would attract financial sponsors. Not only this did not happen, but the number of contracts have been fewer than last year's. Tehran's Azad University, for example, withdrew from sponsoring women's futsal.

The first week of women's futsal league thus kicked off while a number of national team stars did not have any teams.

The players' financial conditions are also bad and their championship in Asia has not raised their salaries.

[Shahrzad Mozaffar](#), former coach of the Iranian women's national futsal team, left the country in mid-September for Kuwait where she has signed a better contract. She left basically due to lack of financial stability in Iranian clubs and lack of job security.

Farzaneh Tavassoli, the goal keeper of the Iranian women's national futsal team, also said, "Futsal players are fed up because the offers this year are lower than last year, while all prices have soared several folds. Instead of receiving higher offers, the players are either playing on contracts similar to last year, or on lower pay contracts." (The official IRNA news agency – September 22, 2018)

Women heads of household endure double economic pressure

With the deteriorating economic situation in Iran, [women heads of household](#) have suffered double economic pressure in recent months. The start of the new school year has also added the expenses of their children's education to their concerns.

Rouhollah Babaii, chairman of the Social Committee of the mullahs' parliament, admitted, "Many of the damages we see in this realm cannot be rectified in any way." (The state-run [salamatnews.com](#) - September 18, 2018)

Giving support to these women has been long overdue. Female heads of households often earn their living with great difficulty, even if they receive any aid from relatives or acquaintances. The [occasional and insignificant support](#), such as loans and subsidies, do little to improve the living conditions of women heads of household.



According to government officials, there are [at least 3.5 million](#) women heads of household in Iran, 82 percent of whom are [unemployed and live below the poverty line](#). Only a small percentage of women heads of household are covered by the Welfare Organization and [receive a meager monthly aid](#) of 70,000 toumans which is less than 10 percent of the minimum wage of 930,000 toumans, while the poverty line in Iran currently stands at 5 million toumans. (The official IRNA news agency – November 22, 2015)

A government official in [Kermanshah](#) admitted, "We have seen many times that a woman head of household has been forced to take unconventional measures, the most common of them being the selling of kidneys." (The state-run Mehr News Agency – October 8, 2015)