

MASS ARRESTS OF WOMEN: TARGETED REPRESSION IN TIME OF CRISIS

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Mass Arrests of Women: Targeted Repression in Time of Crisis

April saw a surging wave of mass arrests and targeted repression against Iranian women, marking a strategic escalation of control amidst the ongoing crisis. This period was marked by sweeping arrests, harsh judicial rulings, and escalating harassment of the families of political prisoners and those killed during the 2026 uprising. This report sheds light on the plight of women as deepening political crises and information blackouts continue to mask the true scale of these human rights violations.

The Iranian regime has once again exploited the atmosphere of tension and the war crisis it has imposed on the Iranian people to intensify domestic repression. While public attention was partially diverted toward regional developments and the war, security apparatuses systematically expanded the scope of internal control and crackdowns.

Field reports indicate that a wave of daily arrests has been unleashed, targeting women and young girls. These detentions are often carried out under the guise of vague security charges and without any semblance of transparent judicial processes. In many of these instances, these women and girls are being [apprehended](#) alongside their spouses or other family members.

These arrests are considered part of a deliberate policy aimed at instilling fear and trepidation, designed to preempt the emergence of any further uprisings.

On April 19, 2026, Ahmadreza Radan, the Commander-in-Chief of the State Security Force (SSF), announced the arrest of 1,800 individuals during a televised interview. Of this number, 700 were detained due to their activities on social media networks. (Fars News Agency, April 19, 2026) While he did not specify the exact timeframe for these arrests, it is suspected that they have occurred since the onset of the war or in the aftermath of the [January 2026 uprising](#).

Simultaneously, the heavy presence of security forces in cities and the escalation of a repressive and militarized environment have directly impacted the daily lives of citizens, including women. Street-level monitoring, direct pressures, and mounting restrictions have effectively rendered presence in public spaces a perilous challenge.

The Iranian regime's judiciary often carries out these arrests under charges such as "collaboration with the enemy," "*Moharebeh*" (enmity against God—a charge that can carry the death penalty), or "propaganda against the state," all justified under the pretext of "national security." Due to widespread internet blackouts and the strictly controlled flow of information, precise figures for these arrests remain unavailable; nevertheless, estimates indicate the detention and imprisonment of a significant number of women and girls.

In this regard, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the Speaker of the regime's Parliament, addressed the state forces, emphasizing: "Do not abandon the strait of the streets." (Tasnim News Agency, March 30, 2026) Furthermore, media outlets close to security agencies have underscored the importance of a continuous presence of forces in the streets to control and suppress protests.

This comes as the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) issued a [statement](#) announcing that more than 50,000 individuals were arrested during the nationwide protests between December 28, 2025, and January 14, 2026. Among them is a significant number of women, youths, and university students, many of whom have been victims of enforced disappearance. Currently, they are being subjected to torture and face unfair trials and death sentences. To date, nine protesters detained during the January uprising have been executed.

Previously, Massoumeh Ebtekar, the former head of the Directorate for Women and Family Affairs, noted in an op-ed that 77% of those detained during the January 2026 nationwide protests are under the age of 30, including 17% who are high school students and 6% university students. (Etemad Newspaper, April 15, 2026)

Execution as a Tool of Intimidation: Women Facing Death Sentences

The death penalty continues to be wielded as one of the regime's primary tools for instilling terror and thwarting the expansion of social protests. Between March 19 and April 25, 2026, eight political prisoners—members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK), the regime's principal opposition—along with nine young protesters detained during the January uprising, were executed.



Bitra Hemmati

Amidst this crackdown, dozens of female protesters have either been sentenced to death or are facing capital charges that carry the death penalty. [Bitra Hemmati](#), a protester from the January 2026 uprising, was sentenced to death in late April following months of interrogation and intense pressure. Furthermore, the judiciary confiscated the assets of both her and her husband, who is facing similar charges.

[Maryam Hodavand](#), a 45-year-old mother of two, is another detainee of the January 2026 nationwide protests. Currently held in Evin Prison, she has been sentenced to death. Additionally, another female protester, whose identity remains unverified, has also received a death sentence.

Furthermore, [Mahboubeh Shabani, 33, from Mashhad](#), is being held in Vakilabad Prison on the charge of 'Moharebeh'. This charge, which can lead to a death sentence, was brought against her in connection with her efforts to transport wounded protesters to medical centers during the January uprising.

[Fateme Abbasi](#), a 34-year-old woman and mother of a 13-year-old daughter, who was arrested alongside her father during the nationwide protests in January, was recently transferred to the women's ward of Evin Prison after enduring weeks of torture and interrogations aimed at extracting forced confessions. Fateme has been sentenced to 25 years in prison, while her father has received a death sentence.



Mahboubeh Shabani

Pressure on Families: Women Survivors of Executed Political Prisoners

The families of those executed or killed during the January 2026 uprising are by no means exempt from the regime's systemic harassment.

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These families seek only to hold funeral services; however, not only are the bodies of their loved ones withheld, and their burial sites kept secret, but the families themselves face threats of arrest.

Families are forcibly deprived of their right to hold mourning ceremonies and memorial services.

These actions reflect a systematic effort to prevent the emergence of any form of social solidarity or movements for justice centered around the victims. Such conduct not only violates the fundamental rights of these families but also imposes a severe emotional and psychological toll on the surviving women, especially mothers.



Poya Ghobadi's portrait on the wall of his family house

For instance, on April 2, 2026, a group of people in the city of Sonqor gathered in front of the residence of Pouya Ghobadi's family to show their support. This gathering took place despite a heavy deployment of security forces in the streets and alleys leading to the house. Pouya Ghobadi, a political prisoner and member of the PMOI/MEK, had been executed in Gezel Hesar Prison just days earlier, on March 31.

Participants in this gathering expressed their solidarity with Pouya's family, particularly with the mother of this executed freedom fighter. They honored the memory of the political prisoner, who had been an active member of the "[No to Executions Tuesdays](#)" campaign. However, security agents forced the family to remove the martyr's portrait from their wall and violently dispersed the crowd. Despite the crackdown, a group of mothers who had entered the house chanted protest slogans as they departed.

Where is the Main Enemy?

The series of measures taken by the clerical regime in the midst of war—ranging from imposing prison sentences on PMOI and uprising detainees to intensifying repression, insisting on "not abandoning the strait of the streets," and accelerating the issuance and execution of death sentences—all point to one reality: the religious dictatorship's profound dread of an imminent surge in social protests. It reveals a regime terrified of an uprising far greater than that of January 2026.

The clerical regime, which puts on a front of bravado and bullying against foreign adversaries, reveals the true address of its main enemy through the execution of Iran's finest and most selfless youth. These actions unmask a dictatorship that identifies its greatest threat not abroad, but in the courage of its own people.

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The true address of the "main enemy" is the Iranian people and their organized resistance. It is found within every Iranian household that shelters its brave, freedom-seeking children. This is precisely why the regime is paralyzed with fear of the streets. Even amidst the conditions of war and bombardment, it has been forced to deploy its agents and their families into the streets in a desperate attempt to maintain control.

Today, more than ever, it is incumbent upon global public opinion and the international community to recognize the organized resistance of the Iranian people. They must uphold the right of the Iranian people and their resistance, including the struggle of the Resistance Units and rebellious youth, to overthrow the regime. Now is the time for the world to stand firmly on the side of the people of Iran.