

March 2017

Greetings on International Women's Day! Campaign for Women's Rights in Iran!



As in previous years, Iranian women mark 8 March, International Women's Day, under difficult conditions. According to information verified by Amnesty International's latest report in 2016, the authorities renewed their

crackdown on women human rights defenders and increasingly likened any collective initiative relating to feminism and women's rights to criminal activity. Women's rights activists who had campaigned for greater representation of women in previous elections were subjected to lengthy and oppressive interrogations by the notorious Sepah Pasdaran (Guards Corp) as well as threats of imprisonment on national security charges.

Shahindokht Molaverdi, Vice President for Women and Family Affairs, recently admitted that there hasn't been any balanced development in the field of women and family and as a result, as far as the economic and political empowerment index of human development indicators is concerned, Iran is very much behind. At present, Iran is amongst the five least developed countries in terms of gender gaps. The situation is so bad that Iran is listed amongst war torn countries in this respect.

Women remain subject to pervasive discrimination in law and practice - including in access to divorce, employment, equal inheritance and political office and in the area of criminal law.

Join the campaign for equal rights, for an end to gender-based discrimination, for the abolition of all oppressive and anti-women policies and for the release of women's rights activists from prisons in Iran! Join CODIR!

Government Has Failed Women!

Molaverdi, VP for Women and Family Affairs: "The current administration is aiming toward a smaller government and is focused on decentralizing and privatizing. The administration really has no choice but to adopt this policy. Naturally, in the process of downsizing the government, women are the first victims. Sanctions are very important as well. Sanctions prevent investment and budget allocations and thus have had a very important effect on entrepreneurship and employment. Naturally, in a country like Iran where men are the main breadwinners of the family, women take a second place to men when it comes to administrative jobs. This is while we have many families in Iran whose sole breadwinner is a woman and all these problems have a double effect on their lives and on the country as a whole.

... The rate of women's employment in the public sector is a little more than 12%. Considering the increase in the number of educated women and the number of women who have graduated from universities and are looking for jobs, we are in need of a serious plan..... During our provincial visits, we heard firsthand from young women that their most important demand is employment."

Progress for women in Iran only comes with freedom, equality and Justice

Jane Green National Campaigns Officer of CODIR



The Iranian economy is in a bad shape. Sanctions have had a crippling impact upon an already fragile economy. The lack of access to foodstuffs, cutting-edge technology and medical supplies has exacerbated the problems posed by an already backward, highly exploitative and deeply discriminatory system of social and economic policies practiced by the regime.

Even before the nuclear deal brought about the promise of a relaxation of sanctions, the regime in Iran rigidly adhered to the economic and social prescriptions of the World Bank, the IMF and other international institutions determined to manipulate the market in Iran in the interests of the West. The consequences of these policies, which include changing the labour law and abolishing the guarantees for labour rights, have meant catastrophic conditions for the people of Iran.

The women of Iran bear the brunt of the hardship that these policies cause, namely increasing poverty and unemployment, malnourishment and the predominance of temporary forms of employment contract.

According to official statistics published in April 2016, the rate of unemployment in Iran is 11%, while

the unemployment rate among women in Iran is twice that of men. Amongst young women this rate stands at 42.8%. This is despite the fact that while the rate of women gaining higher education has increased more than 500% -

amongst the highest in the world - the number of women in paid employment is very low due to open and hidden restrictions.

In the competition for university places in Iran, female candidates have been so vigorous and successful that the regime has had to intervene and counter the trend with regulations designed to prevent male candidates becoming outnumbered by their female counterparts in higher education. There are also now restrictions on women taking certain courses at university.

The regime has also embarked upon a programme of pushing women back into the home through a campaign in recent years to emphasise the virtues of housework and the bringing up of children, as opposed to working outside the home. Women workers are offered incentives to go part time, retire early or take employment in areas designated as more female-oriented fields of work. These are of course poorly paid and insecure.

In addition, the regime has mounted legal and civil obstacles against women through the passing of laws that discriminate against them, and has tried to justify this as being based on Shari'a. As a result, a large number of women

from low-income families are forced into working in small workshops or the informal sector with no safeguards. The employment law does not cover workshops with a workforce of fewer than ten workers and employers in this sector can hire and fire at will. Workers do not have the benefit of insurance. Independent trade unions are not allowed in the workplace, so there is no monitoring of wage levels and conditions of service. A by-product of the above policies and practices has been to drive an increasingly high number of women into drug addiction and prostitution.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing 22 years ago, confirmed that the most important economic and social improvement in the life of women may be facilitated through their greater economic participation; through employment.

Governments have a duty to put in place the changes in laws that are required in order to allow equal access to economic resources. However, the retrogressive regime in Iran, with its adoption of sexually discriminatory policies in all fields, including the economy, has limited women's access even further. The dominant state policy is that of sending women back to the kitchen and to raise children.

Iran's regressive stance on the question of women's rights is visible in its attitude to international conventions. More than 191 countries are members of the UN Convention for an end to Discrimination against Women. In May 2003, the then president, Khatami, agreed to join the Convention but the reactionary Guardian Council refused to ratify the move. As a result, Iran is not a signatory to this most essential Convention. During the presidential elections in 2013, Hassan Rouhani, who won the

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On March 8, Join Women Fighting for Their Rights in Iran on International Women's Day

WOMEN JAILED
Tens of thousands are imprisoned, many for minor hijab errors

CHILD MARRIAGES
Girls married under the age of 15 rose to 43,459 in 2009, up 30 percent in 3 years

FEWER RIGHTS
Threats, intimidation and worse for those who speak out

Help Support Women's Rights in Iran
Join the Campaign on Indiegogo: <http://bit.ly/MVyFxc>



election, promised that he would join the Convention but there has been no movement on that promise almost four years later.

To challenge their barbaric and outdated treatment, women in Iran have formed many independent women's organisations over the last decade. These have promoted progressive social and cultural activities with the aim of improving literacy amongst deprived women, fighting the regime's drive to popularise its misogynistic culture and participating in the wider collective political struggle. Even without the desired immediate changes, the very fact of the mobilisation of millions of women has led to qualitative changes in the forms of struggle. The successful campaigns organised by progressive women in Iran such as the 'Change for Equality' and 'One Million Signatures' against reactionary laws are such cases in point.

Iranian women continue to demand the repeal of the misogynistic laws against women enshrined both in the Constitution and in the civil law of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Under such laws women are reduced to second class citizens and their persecution is legally sanctioned, supposedly according to Shari 'a law introduced by the regime. Iranian women have to fight in order to reinstate the gains they had made in the previous decades which were then taken from them by the Islamic Republic. These include the right to divorce, the ban on polygamy and the right to become judges.

The struggle of Iranian women encompasses a broad range of issues. Iranian women demand the right of employment; of equal standing as witnesses; equal rights in marriage and inheritance; the right to travel without the permission of their husband, or

male guardian; the right to custody of children; the annulment of the right of polygamy for men; raising the age of criminal trial for female children to 18; and pressing Iran to join the Convention for the Prevention of Cruelty and Discrimination.

In the economic sphere and that of civil society, the women of Iran are deprived of the right to form and belong to independent trade union or political organisations. Their civil organisations are brutally suppressed and any peaceful movement by them is met with repression, humiliation, arrest and torture. Members of the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women - a founder member of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) since the 1940's - were attacked severely and banned in the crackdown against progressive forces in the 1980s.

In spite of these pressures, women have shone in culture, sport and education, in defiance of the theocratic regime's opposition and attempts to restrict them. For example, once Iranian women only had the exclusive role of vocal performers in music. In the past 40 years however, women have revolutionised the Iranian traditional classic music genre by becoming experts in all instruments. There are even all-women groups and ensembles.

The women's struggle against medieval laws continues in the face of great difficulties and hardship. There are many female political prisoners suffering inhuman conditions in the prisons of the regime. Among them are women of all ages, peace activists, students, lawyers, journalists, workers, 'house-wives', and even mothers mourning their children who were executed by the regime.

Women in Iran have shown in the years since the 1979 revolution that, in spite of the many obstacles placed in their path, in spite of the open misogyny of the regime, they are still able to record significant achievements in many fields. Consolidating these achievements and fighting back against the reactionary tendency of the clergy is a daily battle. However, it is a battle in which the younger generation of Iranian women are prepared to engage more readily, as they reject the traditional role of homemaker and seek to establish themselves independently.

AFFILIATE TO CODIR



Solidarity with the struggle of the Ira- nian people for peace, equality, human rights STARTS HERE!

CODIR supports the campaign for peace, human and democratic rights in Iran. We campaign for release of all political prisoners and for trade unions to have freedom to organise and campaign effectively. We supply news and analysis of events in Iran and related issues from the world.

Affiliation fees:

*Local organisations £20 -£50,
Regional organisations £50,
National Orgs: £100 to £250.*

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International campaign for the release of Narges Mohammadi, the Civil & Women Rights Activist!

Iranian human rights defender Narges Mohammadi faces trial on 3 May for peaceful activism.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL



Narges Mohammadi, the civil and human rights activist in Iran, is a prisoner of conscience held in Evin prison with thirty two other women. Mrs Mohammadi, a mother of two children, has already served several prison sentences in the last decade and is now sentenced to an additional sixteen years imprisonment.

Mrs Mohammadi is the Vice President of the Centre of Human Rights Defenders in Iran. The Centre and its leader, Shirin Ebadi, have called for international solidarity and asked all individuals and organisations who are libertarians, human rights activists and defenders of freedom of speech, to do what they can to bring about the release of Narges Mohammadi. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi, highlighted how the Iranian Judiciary and Security authorities have issued this heavy sixteen-year sentence in order "not only to silence human rights defenders but also to show all how heavy the price of freedom of speech is in Iran".

On 26 May 2016 the Nobel laureates of the Nobel Women's

statement, the laureates joined the call of the international community for Iranian authorities to end repression against human rights activists.

In a letter written on 10 December, Human Rights Day, Mrs Mohammadi herself, while referring to the severe clamp-down of civil liberty organisations in Iran, the tense situation in the region and the counterproductive pro-war approaches, said: "War and sanctions target ordinary people and weaken civil society. The civil society in our land, Iran, is now subject to violent repression while its activists stand firm with their peaceful civil behaviour. I am a small member of this civil society who has been sentenced to twenty-five years imprisonment in the last five years - sixteen years of it

Initiative called on the Iranian government to immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender and journalist Narges Mohammadi from the notorious Evin prison. In their

mandatory - and I am serving my sentence in Evin prison. I have been involved with at least ten independent civil societies since 1992 and unfortunately they all have been exterminated in a continual wave of repression."

In the letter, Mrs Mohammadi called on the progressive institutions and organisations "to investigate the status of civil association and societies in Iran, support them and ask your government and international institutions to speak out about repression of civil society in Iran, and the arrests and torture of its activists - as well as to demand that the Iranian government end its severe repression of civil society and abide by its own constitution".

Recently, in a joint statement, forty-two university students' organisations in Iran have demanded the unconditional release of Narges Mohammadi.

We urge you to affiliate to CODIR and support its campaigns

The campaign of CODIR to support trade union, democratic and human rights in Iran continues to make its voice heard with your support. We ask you to add your voice to the call by the international community to:

- ◆ Condemn human rights abuses in Iran
- ◆ End censorship in Iran
- ◆ Demand an end to all discriminations against women
- ◆ Demand that the Iranian government respects and observes international conventions
- ◆ Demand the release of all political prisoners;