

Peaceful advocacy of women's rights criminalized



Nasrin Sotoudeh

Human rights lawyer imprisoned in 2018, issued 38-year sentence (eligible for release after 12 years) for defending women activists; returned to prison after brief furlough despite illness from hunger strikes and COVID-19. Imprisoned 2010-2013

Narges Mohammadi

Civil rights activist imprisoned in 1998, 2010, 2012, and again from 2016-2020 (released early from a 16-year prison sentence) for her peaceful activism for women's and other human rights and against the death penalty

Bahareh Hedayat

Served 6.5 years in prison (from 2010-2016) for co-founding the peaceful "One Million Signatures" campaign to end gender-based discrimination, now sentenced to 4 more years (subject to appeal) for peaceful protest



Access to reproductive health declining

State hospitals/clinics no longer provide free contraceptives

Access to family planning information/services now more restrictive

International treaties and standards ignored

- Has not signed UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Has not addressed recommendations by many countries in UN's Universal Periodic Review to remedy gender discrimination
- Ignores gender equality obligations in treaties Iran has signed: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and International Labour Organization (ILO)

FACT Sheet

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN IRAN

December 2020

Women in Iran are among the Middle East's most educated but continue to face severe rights violations and discrimination in both law and practice.

Iran scores near bottom of global rankings on women's equality

Ranked 148th out of 153 countries*

Only Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen scored worse

Among 19 ME countries, Iran ranked 16th

Only Syria, Iraq and Yemen scored worse

*World Economic Forum 2020 Global Gender Gap Index



Iranian women taking action!

- Educating themselves
60% of university graduates are women
- Leading human rights lawyers, activists and journalists are women
- Grassroots campaigns on sexual violence, harassment and child marriage
- Private marriage contracts protecting rights on the rise

Women are unequal under the law...

Personal status	Crime and punishment
Unequal and highly limited rights to divorce	Age of criminal responsibility: 9 for girls; 15 for boys
After divorce, children placed in father's care after age 7	Woman's court testimony worth half that of a man's
Inheritance rights half that of men's	Compensation to women for death/injury half that of men (state pays difference)
Cannot travel outside Iran without husband's permission	Flogging/death sentences for adultery disproportionately affect women; only men can claim "temporary marriages"

...and in practice

Workplace discrimination	Political discrimination	Public sphere discrimination
Can be forbidden to work by husband	Under-represented in political life	Must conceal hair and body in public
Hiring bias: women's 19% unemployment rate 2X men's	Cannot be judges, members of Guardian Council or Supreme Leader	Police stop millions yearly for "improper hijab," fine tens of thousands
Most hired under temporary contracts	Mass disqualifications of women MP candidates	Peaceful protest of forced hijab: 1-10 years in prison
Sexual harassment unaddressed in law and practice	16 women (5.8% of MPs) elected to Parliament in 2020 <small>IPU Parline</small>	Banned from attending some public sporting events
17% economic participation rate one of world's lowest	6.5% of ministerial positions held by women in 2020 <small>WEF Global Gender Gap 2020</small>	Performances by women singers/musicians restricted

Violence

Women and girls are unprotected



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Violence by family members is "family matter"
Woman can't leave marital home without proof she's endangered
If a woman leaves marital home, she forfeits financial maintenance
No orders of protection
Shelters for abused women absent in one-third of country
32% urban women/63% rural women experience domestic violence
Honor killings persist; lenient punishments for fathers and husbands
Services and shelters inaccessible to women with disabilities
Criminalization of same-sex relations means LGBTQ women can't press charges
SEXUAL VIOLENCE
Limited legal definition of rape
Arduous burden of proof
Weak investigation/punishment by police/judiciary
Insufficient services to victims
Wife required to meet husband's sexual needs
Criminalization of sexual relations outside marriage prevents women from reporting assaults
LEGISLATION
New laws on physical/sexual violence stalled for years
GIRLS LACK CRITICAL PROTECTIONS
Girls can be married at age 13; younger with consent of father and judge
New child protection bill: Does not protect girls over age 9 from sexual abuse Does not address execution of juvenile offenders Does not address child marriage