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

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)

Access to reproductive health declining

State hospitals/clinics no longer provide free contraceptives

Access to family planning information/services now more restrictive

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

For more information on these issues visit www.iranhumanrights.org
Women are unequal under the law...

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<tr>
<th>Personal status</th>
<th>Crime and punishment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Unequal and highly limited rights to divorce</td>
<td>Age of criminal responsibility: 9 for girls; 15 for boys</td>
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<td>After divorce, children placed in father’s care after age 7</td>
<td>Woman’s court testimony worth half that of a man’s</td>
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<td>Inheritance rights half that of men’s</td>
<td>Compensation to women for death/injury half that of men</td>
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<td>Cannot travel outside Iran without husband’s permission</td>
<td>Flogging/death sentences for adultery disproportionally affect women; only men can claim “temporary marriages”</td>
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...and in practice

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

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

Crime and punishment

Age of criminal responsibility: 9 for girls; 15 for boys
Woman’s court testimony worth half that of a man’s
Compensation to women for death/injury half that of men (state pays difference)
Flogging/death sentences for adultery disproportionally affect women; only men can claim “temporary marriages”