

## NCRI Human Rights Center Weekly Bulletin

December 31, 2018

### Systematic violations of the right to life

Executions, arbitrary killings, deaths in custody, and death sentences

#### Execution

##### **Iran Executions: Man Hanged at Isfahan Prison**

<https://iranhr.net/fa/articles/3595/>

A prisoner was hanged at Isfahan Central Prison on murder charges. According to the IHR sources, prisoner Vahid Jahangiri was executed on Monday, December 17, at Isfahan Central Prison. He was sentenced to death for an alleged murder committed seven years ago. “Vahid had always denied the accusation. However, Vahid was sentenced to death because of testimony from a so-called witness,” the source said.

Vahid was from the Iranian city of Isfahan and the victim was from Golpayegan. The source said that the victim was killed in Isfahan.

The Iranian media outlets have not published news related to the aforementioned execution so far. (Iran Human Rights – Dec. 22, 2018)

##### **A young woman was executed**

<https://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/6775263>

A young woman identified only as Noushin, 25, was hanged on Saturday, December 22, 2018, the Iranian state-run Young Journalists Club website reported.

It is not clear in which city and prison the execution took place.

The young woman had been interviewed by a state-media reporter just before being hanged as she was waiting in the courtyard for her sentence to be carried out.

Noushin was convicted of murdering a man, Soheil, who had promised to marry her, but took advantage of her, and subsequently brutalized, blackmailed and forced her into having sexual relations with his friends. (Young Journalists Club state-run Website – Dec. 26, 2018)

#### Arbitrary killing

##### **A Kolbar Wounded at Oshnavieh Border**

<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7182>

A Kolbar has been shot and injured by the Iranian border guards at Oshnavieh(Also known as Shno in Kurdish) border . Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has been informed that Iranian border guards in the Dasht Bil region of Shno have opened fire on a group of Kolbars. As a result of direct shooting of guards, a Kolbar, Rahman Mami was injured. According to the data collected by KHRN, at least 5 Kolbars and border tradesmen have been killed and 12 others injured by direct firing of Iranian troops since late November. Moreover, 3 kolbars have died of frostbite and cardiac arrest in the border areas. (Kurdistan Human Rights Network – Dec. 22, 2018)

### Four Kolbars Wounded and One Drowned in Kurdistan

<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7200>

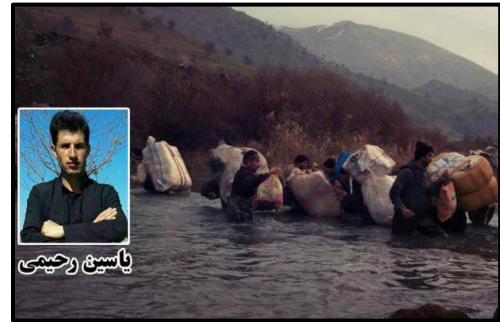
Since late December, four kolbars have been wounded by direct shooting of Iranian frontier forces at the border areas of Sardasht and Khoy and a kolbar from Baneh has been drowned in the river while carrying cargo.

Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has been informed that on Tuesday, December 25, a kolbar, Farshad Mirzai, from the village of Balsur Sofla, was wounded by direct shooting of border guards at the border area of Qatoori of Khoy.

On Monday, December 24, the border guards at Sardasht also targeted a group of kolbars. This attack resulted in the injury of 3 kolbars including Sattar Khezri, 36, from Sardasht and two Kolbars from Saqqez, Ibrahim Mohammad Rahim, 40, and Atta Mohammadzadeh, 48. The two Kolbars from Saqqez were taken to the hospital in the city of Qaladzeh, Iraqi Kurdistan.

Moreover, on December 22, a Kolbar from Sardasht, Ali Mam Dashti was shot and wounded by border guards in Sardasht border.

Meanwhile, KHRN has been informed that a Kolbar, Yasin Rahimi from the village of Bale San of Baneh has been drowned in the river of Zali Baneh while carrying cargo on Monday night, December 25. His body was found and transferred to a hospital in Baneh by the local people. (Kurdish Human Rights Network– Dec. 26, 2018)



### Death sentence

Senior Iranian Cleric Who Was Responsible For 2,000 Executions Dies

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/25/senior-iranian-cleric-who-was-responsible-for-2000-executions-dies/>

Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, a senior Iranian cleric and a former chief justice, died at the age of 70 on Monday after a long illness, Iranian state-run media reported.

Shahroudi had been the head of the Expediency Council since last year and a member of the 12-man Guardian Council.

Shahroudi was appointed by Khamenei in 2017 as the head of the Expediency Council, a body intended to resolve disputes between parliament and a watchdog body, the Guardian Council.



He was also deputy head of the Assembly of Experts which has the power to choose the successor to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – a position to which Shahroudi himself was occasionally linked.

Before this, Shahroudi served as the chief of the Iranian regime's judiciary for 10 years between 1999 and 2009.

During that period Shahroudi led a crackdown on dissidents, activists and reformists. In a controversial move, he led the charge in 2001 against reformist lawmakers despite their parliamentary immunity.

His tenure concluded with the mass protests over allegations of rigging in the 2009 presidential election, which led to thousands being arrested and allegations of severe prisoner abuse.

Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi was responsible for the Islamic Revolutionary Courts that sent numerous human rights activists, defence lawyers, journalists, webloggers, political dissidents, and religious minorities to Iran's notorious prisons where they were subject to torture, rape, and murder.

He was also the first chief of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, a militia group the Iranian regime founded after the 1979 revolution to pursue its expansionist goals in Iraq. The Council has had an active role in carrying out terrorist attacks in Iraq.

At one point, Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of the Iranian regime, was rumored to be grooming Shahroudi to become his successor. In 2011, Khamenei appointed Shahroudi as the head of the Supreme Delegation to Resolve Disputes Between Government Branches.

Earlier this year, Shahroudi was forced to cut short his stay at a Hanover clinic in Germany after activists referred him to prosecutors, citing what they called his record of passing death sentences.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), an exiled opposition group, said his issuing of “thousands” of death sentences amounted to a crime against humanity and urged German prosecutors to investigate.

Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi was born in the city of Najaf in Iraq to Iranian parents. In the 1970s he was jailed and tortured by Saddam Hussein’s security forces because of his political activities.

He moved to Iran after the Islamic revolution in 1979 and was promoted to top posts. (Iran HRM- Dec. 25, 2018)



**Inhumane treatment and cruel punishments  
Amputation, flogging, torture and humiliation**

**Jailed Labor Activist Tortured, Forced Fed Hallucinogen Drugs**

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/24/jailed-labor-activist-tortured-forced-fed-hallucinogen-drugs/>

A relative of a Haft Tappeh Sugarcane mill worker and labor leader says he was tortured in custody and was now suffering from severe physical and psychological problems.

Shahed Alavi a freelance reporter said that the relative, who asked to remain anonymous told

him that Esmail Bakhshi was threatened before his release not to participate in any labor activities and was banned from publishing pictures of himself online. “Esmail was treated in the worst possible way in prison”, the relative said in the audio file in a voice that was changed in fear of identification. “Every time he passed out and then regained consciousness from pain, they gave him hallucinogen drugs and told him they were sedatives,” the relative said.

Esmail’s relative said that he was still suffering from the side effects of the drugs.

“Sometimes, he still has hallucinations and thinks that he’s still in prison. He becomes afraid and is suffering from psychological problems,” he said adding that he was also suffering from constant fever. “He is not under house arrest but upon his release he was told that he had been fired from the sugarcane factory. He was threatened that if he or his family talks about his condition with anyone or if he continues protesting like before, he will be arrested again,” he added.

Esmail Bakhshi was arrested on November 18 in Shush during labor protests at local sugarcane mill, together with more than a dozen labor activists and workers. The others were later released. Shush is located in the oil-rich Khuzestan province.

Bakhshi was released on December 12 on bail. Since his release, he has been absent from workers strikes and other labor activities. “He was beaten until he was on the verge of death,” the source said adding that some of his ribs were also probably broken. “He was numerously hit with a baton in his reproductive organs and has trouble walking, sitting and sleeping now,” he added.

“Those who were in contact with Esmail before his arrest, as a colleague or partner in labor activities, were warned that if they visit Mr. Bakhshi they would also be arrested and immediately fired from work,” the labor activist’s family member said.

The source said that Esmail Bakhshi’s bank account was also blocked and one of his main problems was that he could not afford much needed medical treatment.

Labor activists had reported in late November that Esmail Bakhshi was tortured in custody and hospitalized.



The news about his possible injury in custody was reported by the bus drivers' union in the capital Tehran. The union published a statement saying Bakhshi "was hospitalized in a security clinic in Ahvaz", the capital of Khuzestan, but he was later returned to the initial detention facility. The statement added that Bakhshi was subjected to "psychological abuse and physical attacks" in detention to force him to admit to false accusations. The governor of Khuzestan province and the prosecutor in Shush have denied that the prisoner was tortured or hospitalized. (Iran HRM - Dec. 22, 2018)

### **Iran MP says flogging and execution good means for market control**

<https://www.isna.ir/news/97100100168>

Amidst Iran's economic crisis which has Iranian officials concerned about the increasing street protests, the chairman of the Parliament's Committee on Industries and Mines encouraged the use of flogging and execution for "economic offenders".

"If two people are thoroughly flogged and if two people are executed in a timely manner for controlling the market, it will be a lesson for everyone else," Aziz Akbarian said in an interview with the state-run Alborz Radio.

"The Judiciary has done good work in this regard and I hope that it will end well," the representative of the towns of Karaj, Fardis, Eshtehard and Asara added. Akbarian also said that the government had to step up its security measures.

"We have robbery, embezzlement and high prices in the country. If we do not have security in this situation, we will face problems in all fronts," he added in comments carried by the ISNA state-run news agency today.

Iran's first deputy of the Chief Justice recently said that Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, had granted the judiciary permission to hasten the punishment and execution of economic offenders, whom they deem as carrying out the intention of "enemy countries".

"In these conditions when the enemy wants to hurt the system through pressure on the people and engaging in psychological operations, those who carry out criminal acts such as hoarding (goods), selling goods at high prices and smuggling (goods) have to know that they are helping the enemy, putting more pressure on the people and making the people lose hope in the future... and the end result of such actions is hurting the (ruling) system even if there was no intention to do such a thing."

"The law to counter those who disrupt the country's economic system states that if someone intends to hurt the (ruling) system or has knowledge of such a consequence, their punishment is death," he said.

The Judicial official also said that the Supreme Leader had issued bylaws specifying how the Judiciary was allowed to accelerate the punishment for economic offenses.

“In light of the problems and obstacles we faced in countering economic corruption, the head of the Judiciary requested in a letter a number of issues from the Supreme Leader and the Supreme Leader confirmed those issues... which were communicated (to the Judiciary) last week in a bylaw made up of 35 articles and eight amendments,” Mohseni-Ezhe’i said on December 7.

Mohseni-Ezhe’i said that according to the new regulations, special court branches would be established in Tehran’s Revolutionary Courts or any other province that the head of the Judiciary deemed necessary.

The special court branches had the power to finalize all sentences, with the exception of death sentences, without the permission of the Supreme Court.

The new regulations, which bypass the established laws of the Islamic Republic, have been set forth as a way to speed up the punishment for what the regime deems as offenses that “hurt” the regime.

These not only include “economic” offences but also “seditions” as the Iranian regime links all protests to foreign sources and constantly raises concerns about “enemy” countries taking “advantage” of popular protests.

in his interview with Alborz Radio, Aziz Akbarian also criticized previous governments for giving subsidies to all the population and compared Iran’s economy to the UKs.

“Which country gives subsidies to all its people?” he asked.

According to recent government reports that put Iran’s market basket at 5 million toman, more than 80% of the population live under the line of poverty and cannot provide their basic needs. This is while the government refuses to raise wages to match the increasing inflation and high prices which has left ordinary Iranians in very difficult circumstances and poverty. (ISNA state-run News Agency – Dec. 22, 2018)

### **Iranian Azerbaijani Poet Flogged 74 Times For “Spreading Propaganda”**

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/25/iranian-azerbaijani-poet-flogged-74-times-for-spreading-propaganda/>



An Iranian Azerbaijani poet and satirist was flogged 76 times Sunday, in a court in the city of Khoy, West Azerbaijan Province.

Branch 103 of the Criminal Court of Khoy had earlier sentenced Mohammad Hossein Sodagar to 76 lashes for “spreading propaganda.”

Four days before the verdict was carried out, the city’s ‘implementation of verdicts office’ contacted Mr. Sodagar, asking him to go to the court.

When Sodagar denied to do so, the state security forces arrested him in his home and took him to the court where he received 76 lashes.

In yet another case, the state-run IRIB (The Islamic Republic of Iran’s Broadcasting) reported on December 4, 2018 that a man had been publicly flogged in Zeberkhan District. The man who had not been identified by the state media, was convicted of drug charges.

Zeberkhan is a district in Nishapur County, Razavi Khorasan Province, northeast Iran.

Torture and merciless punishment have been institutionalized in the regime’s punishment laws and is sanctioned by the Judiciary as well as the regime officials.

Hadi Sadeghi, Deputy Chancellor of the Judiciary was quoted by the state-run ISNA news agency on May 30, 2018, as saying, “There is no precepts of imprisonment in Islam, so we need to seek alternative punishments.

Physical punishment is much more effective than imprisonment, and the punishment of flogging is much more effective in Islam. But, the human rights agencies do not have a good idea on this matter.”

Under the regime’s laws, at least 148 crimes are punishable by flogging and 20 others are punishable by amputation. Sentences which are considered torture by human rights defenders and the international law.

In its report on January 18, 2017 Amnesty International said: “As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Iran is legally obliged to forbid torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. However, Iranian law continues to allow internationally banned corporal punishments including amputation, stoning and flogging and claims to justify it in the name of protecting religious morals.”

(Iran HRM - Dec. 25, 2018)

## Prison

### Prison conditions

#### **Iranian Minor Offender Goes On Hunger Strike To Protest Authorities’ Failure To Handle His Case**

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/24/iranian-minor-offender-goes-on-hunger-strike-to-protest-authorities-failure-to-handle-his-case/>



Mohammad Reza Haddadi, a death row prisoner in Iran has gone on hunger strike since November 22, in protest to the authorities' failure to handle his case.

The young man suffers from kidney and digestive problems and has undergone cardiac surgery. The hunger strike has worsened his physical condition and caused



severe physical weakness. His father said Haddadi had been set up by his co-defendants, who were over 18 years of age at the time the crime was committed. “[Mohammad Reza] did not commit murder; he was fooled by his two co-defendants. They told him that if he claimed responsibility for the murder they would give money to his family.”

Haddadi's father has repeatedly asked all international and human rights organizations to review the case and defend his innocent son.

Mohammad Reza Haddadi was arrested in October 2003 in connection with the murder of a taxi driver. Three accomplices, who were all over 18-years-old at the time, were convicted of abduction, collusion in murder, and hiding the victim's body, and issued prison sentences ranging from 15 years to life.

Based on his confession, Haddadi was sentenced to death in 2004 when he was 15, in addition to a 15-year prison sentence.

However, in a letter he sent to the judge eleven days after his arrest,

Haddadi said he had confessed because the co-defendants had promised him money and insisted he would not be convicted of murder because of his age. Haddadi's execution has been scheduled and cancelled six times - the last time halted due to global outrage. He's now spent 14 years - much of his youth - in excruciating anxiety and in constant trauma about his impending execution. (Iran HRM - Dec. 24, 2018)

### A Kurdish Political Prisoner Deprived of Medical Treatment at Orumiyeh Central Prison

<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7179>



Prison authorities still refuse to transfer Hassan Peyghami, a Kurdish political prisoner detained at Orumiyeh Central Prison, to the hospital despite the advice of prison's doctors.

A reliable source has told Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) that Hassan Peyghami, 45, who is serving his one year imprisonment at Orumiyeh Central Prison, is suffering from heart disease and he has undergone a heart surgery prior to being arrested.

According to this source, the health of Hassan Peyghami has deteriorated due to lack of medicine and limited facilities of prison's clinic whose doctors have advised prison authorities to transfer this Kurdish political prisoner to a hospital outside prison immediately. However, prison authorities refuse to do so due to unknown reasons.

"The rising inflation over the past few years has had a huge impact on the situation in prisons whose health clinics had limited health-care facilities. Accordingly, the prison doctors can provide no medical care other than prescribing painkillers.", the source added.

It is worth mentioning that the Plainclothes of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) fired dozens of bullets to the vehicle of an architecture student at Orumiyeh University, Farhad Payghami in Orumiyeh on August 05, 2016 during a chase. Once detaining him after stopping his vehicle. the plainclothes agents raided his father's house and confiscated a number of his personal belongings and arrested his father called Hassan Payghami.

These two Kurdish civilians were transferred to the Ministry of Intelligence Detention Centre at Orumiyeh and subjected to heavy physical torture to make false confessions. After 12 days of detention, the above-mentioned student and his father were transferred to Orumiyeh Central Prison with bloody clothes and bruised body on Wednesday, August 17.

These two Kurdish civilians were subsequently released from prison on a bail of 500 million Tomans. Their trial was held on September 19, 2016, at Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court of Orumiyeh which acquitted Farhad Payghami of the charges brought forward against him while Hassan Paygami was sentenced to 30 months in prison on charges of acting against national security.

Upon contesting the verdict, the dossier of Hassan Paygami was referred to Branch 13 of the Orumiyeh Court of Appeal which reduced his sentence to one year of imprisonment. He was transferred to Orumiyeh Central Prison in May 2018 to endure the imprisonment.

He had been previously arrested in 2007 for "acting against national security" and sentenced to 18 months in prison and exile to Tabriz Prison by the Revolutionary

Court of Orumiyeh. He spent two years in prison at Orumiyeh and Tabriz prisons. (Kurdistan Human Rights Network - Dec. 21, 2018)

### Female Student Jailed For Demanding Mother's Release

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/25/female-student-jailed-for-demanding-mothers-release/>

Afsaneh Rezaei, a student of Shiraz University, was taken to Adel-Abad Prison on December 24, 2018 to serve a six-month sentence.

She was first arrested in August for participating in the gatherings in support of her mother who was detained during the strikes of teachers held on Nov. 13 & 14, in over 40 cities in Iran.

The mother of Afsaneh Rezaei was a teacher who was arrested in Shiraz for participating in the gatherings and protests of teachers and educators in August 2018.

Iranian security and judicial authorities responded to the second round of peaceful teachers' rights strikes by arresting and summoning alleged participants in several cities across the nation.

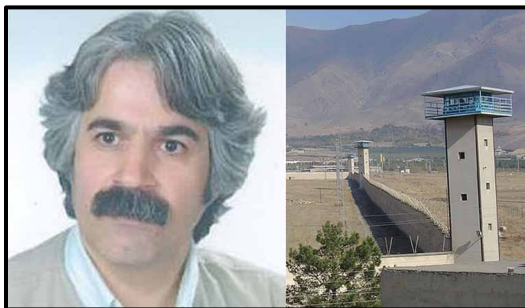


Iranian teachers went on a nationwide strike on November 12 and 13 to demand better working conditions for their poorly paid profession, one month after their last mass protest.

The Teachers' Trade Organizations' Coordination Council (TTOCC) reported that following the strike, at least 13 protesters were arrested, more than 30 were summoned for questioning and 50 others were threatened by security agencies over the phone. (Iran HRM - Dec. 26, 2018)

### Political Prisoner Mehdi Farahi Shandiz Taken To Solitary Confinement

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/29/political-prisoner-mehdi-farahi-shandiz-taken-to-solitary-confinement/>



Iranian authorities have transferred Mehdi Farahi Shandiz, teacher and political prisoner in Karaj Central Prison, to solitary confinement. Farahi Shandiz has been kept in solitary confinement for an entire week for unknown reasons. There's no news of his conditions.

A few weeks ago, Farahi Shandiz sent a message on the occasion of Iran's National

Student's Day, in which he encouraged his compatriots to keep the flame of protests and uprisings alit.

“Presently, under the evil shadow of the religious dictatorship, it is the students who are uniting with the unprivileged workers of our country by chanting, ‘We are the children of workers, we will stand by their side,’” Farahi Shandiz wrote in his letter. “The religious dictatorship has no other solution than to arrest and torture workers who have taken to the streets to reclaim their most basic rights.”

Farahi Shandiz expressed his support for the students who have joined the protests of workers of Haft Tapeh and Ahvaz Steel Company to help them in obtaining their overdue wages and restore their trampled rights. “This is a new chapter in creating a society that thrives in freedom and love,” Farahi Shandiz wrote.

“I am proud of these students. I encourage you to stay true to the principles of freedom and strive to establish a society based on freedom of thought and expression. Don't let the university, the holy bulwark of freedom, be occupied by tyrants,” Farahi Shandiz said.

Mehdi Farahi Shandiz, 57, was sentenced to nine years in prison for three separate charges of “insulting the supreme leader,” six years of which were for charges brought against him while he was in prison.

He suffers from diabetes, but has been denied specialist treatment from outside the prison. Farahi Shandiz has not received any furlough in more than seven years of imprisonment.

The labor activist, who worked as a private high school tutor, was first arrested at a gathering on International Labor Day on May 1, 2009 at Laleh Park in Tehran. He was released nine months later after spending most of his detention in solitary confinement in the Intelligence Ministry's Ward 209 at Evin Prison.

He was arrested again in June 2010 and charged with “insulting the supreme leader,” and released on bail two months later. In May 2011, Branch 28 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced him to three years in prison. Farahi Shandiz began his sentence in January 2012 and has been in prison ever since. (Iran HRM - Dec. 29, 2018)

### **Female political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian is denied family visits**

<https://women.ncr-iran.org/iran-women-news/5661-female-political-prisoner-zeinab-jalalian-is-denied-family-visits>

Female political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian has been deprived of her weekly family visits since December 24, 2018.



In addition to the pressure and denial of medical treatment, the prison authorities recently rejected Zeinab's request for medical treatment outside of prison.

Female political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian is a Kurdish woman sentenced to life imprisonment in Khoy Prison.

She was transferred to the prison's infirmary last week due to severe kidney pain. Doctors said she should receive medical treatment outside prison due to a lack of sufficient medical facilities inside the prison. However, her transfer was objected by prison authorities.

The Kurdish female political prisoner has been on a medicine strike for a year in protest to the lack of medical treatment in prison, and is in critical condition.

Last August, in an open letter about being denied medical care and access to medical facilities, Zeinab Jalalian wrote, "First, my eyes became weak, and afterwards my kidneys, my lungs, my blood pressure, and then my mouth began foaming, and eventually my teeth were damaged and infected. I have been forced to endure intense pain. As a political prisoner, I have no rights."

She added, "I knew that if I requested treatment, I would not receive any answers, just like now. No one and nothing is strong enough to prevent me from achieving my goals. On my own, I will be stronger than ever and I will continue my path."

Female political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian is also constantly being harassed. On Wednesday, November 28, 2018, several of the Khoy Prison agents went into the women's ward and, without any explanation, inspected the bed of political prisoner Zeinab Jalalian. They then seized all her personal belongings, including blankets, clothes, books and manuscripts.

In a call for urgent action on June 15, 2018, Amnesty International said Zeinab Jalalian is being subjected to torture by blocking her access to medical care. (NCRI women's committee - Dec. 29, 2018)

### Prison sentences

#### **Court Of Appeals Upheld Upholds Prison Sentence For Jailed Teacher Mohammad Habibi**

<https://www.isna.ir/news/97100301722>



Court of Appeals upheld 10-and-a-half-year prison sentence for jailed teacher Mohammad Habibi.

Branch 36 of the Tehran's Court of Appeals presided by judge Zargar held on October 24, sentenced Mr. Habibi to a 10-and-a-half-year

prison sentence for “assembly and collusion against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the state”, 74 lashes, a two-year ban on leaving the country and political and social activities. Mr. Habibi’s lawyer was informed of the verdict Monday, December 24.

Trade unionist and welding teacher Mohammad Habibi, a 29-year-old member of the Iranian Teachers’ Trade Association, was first arrested on March 3, 2018 outside the school in Tehran where he taught, in front of his students.

Revolutionary Guards agents pepper sprayed and beat him during his arrest and transferred him to an undisclosed location where he remained in solitary confinement until around 19 March.

During this period, he was repeatedly interrogated while blindfolded and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment including through being slapped in the face, having his head forcibly shaved, and receiving insults and threats against him and his family. He was then transferred to Evin prison and released on bail on April 15.

On May 10, 2018, while out on bail, Mr. Habibi was violently arrested again for participating in a peaceful gathering of teachers in Tehran against the poor economic circumstances of teachers, both retired and active, and the lack of sufficient funding for public education.

On 23 July, he underwent a trial before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran which lasted only two hours and ignored marks of beatings on his body. He was not allowed to meet with his lawyer until 10 minutes before his trial.

In August, he was convicted of several spurious national security-related charges stemming entirely from his human rights activities as a teacher trade unionist, and sentenced to 10 and a half years in prison, 74 lashes, a two-year travel ban and a two-year ban on “membership in political and social parties, groups or collectives.”

The Iranian authorities have subjected numerous teacher trade unionists to years of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy prison sentences following unfair trials, according to Amnesty International.

“In addition to Mohammad Habibi, other imprisoned teachers in Iran include Esmail Abdi and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroodi, both of them human rights defenders serving prison sentences for peacefully exercising their rights as trade unionists.

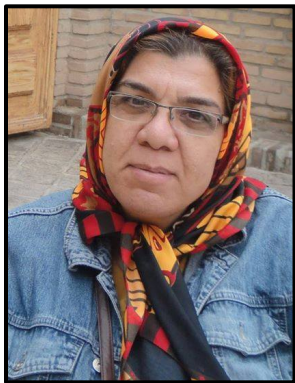
At least six other teachers were given a nine-month suspended prison sentence and a flogging sentence of 74 lashes in September 2018 for their peaceful participation in gatherings on 10 May 2018,” Amnesty said. (ISNA state-run News Agency – Dec. 24, 2018)

## Arbitrary arrests

### Social arrests

#### Workers' representative blasts regime for arresting steel workers

<https://women.ncr-iran.org/articles/5650-workers-representative-blasts-regime-for-arresting-steel-workers>



Parvin Mohammadi blasts regime for arrest of steel workers

In an open letter published on December 20, 2018, Ms. Parvin Mohammadi, former representative of workers of Iran Metal Industries and member of the Board of Directors of the Free Union of Iranian workers, harshly criticized the regime for raiding the residences of protesting Ahvaz Steel workers after midnight and arresting them at home.

Ahvaz steel workers had been on strike for 38 days and marched in the streets of the capital of the oil-rich province of Khuzestan while enjoying the support of the people of Ahvaz and the country in general. Women joined the steel workers of Ahvaz and marched in the frontline of their protests.

The translated text of Ms. Mohammadi's letter appears below:

Shame on the rulers who responded with arrests and imprisonments to 38 days of cries of the steel workers of Ahvaz who demanded their rights.

The workers of the National Steel Industrial Group were able to awake everyone's conscience in 38 days. They were able to attract the support of all workers and every honorable and freedom loving human being in Iran and the world.

These workers cried out their pains every day on the streets. Their throats turned sore so much that they cried out for their rights.

They held gatherings in front of every government agency and (appealed to) every faction in charge of the city and province of Khuzestan.

The record of the National Steel Industrial Group in Ahvaz is a solid evidence of the record of the country's looting and plundering mafia.

This mafia won windfalls in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution when the state confiscated (the factories and industrial complexes) and turned them into different foundations. Then the foundations were transferred to persons who had ties to

those holding power and the country's wealth, and eventually destroyed them all together.

Although the process of destruction of these companies over the past 40 years met their workers' all-out resistance, hundreds of companies and manufacturers including Iran Metal Industries, Kian Tire, Haft Tappeh, HEPCO, Mazandaran Textile, Ghaemshahr Textile, Shokoufeh Vegetable Oil in Babol, Northern Farm and Industry Company, Ghoncheh Vegetable Oil, Gas Air Conditioners, Choka Textiles, Behshahr Textiles, ARJ Co., Azmayesh Company, etc. have ultimately gone down the road to deterioration.

With their jobs and livelihoods in ruins, workers have no way but to defend the last remaining breaths of the production cycle just to sustain their survival.

But the rulers who are accomplices to the mafia of wealth and power, most shamelessly raided the houses of steel workers after midnight, before the eyes of millions of people in Iran and around the world, arresting dozens of workers who were fed up with poverty and had only demanded their rights. And two days later, they entered the company like conquerors and most brazenly asked workers why they had not referred to them to solve their problems. They claimed that if workers had not protested for 38 days, such incidents would not have happened and the company's problems would have also been solved!

Gentlemen, you arrested and incarcerated (some workers). From now on, however, what will you do with the rage and fury of thousands of steel workers and their families and millions of workers and toiling wage earners across the country whose lives have turned into hell at your hands?

Of course, oppressors take to the extremes when they reach the point of insatiable greed and they can no longer think reasonably.

Gentlemen, if the arrests and imprisonments of dozens of steel workers have put them in a position to stop their street protests for several days, you should rest assured that this is not the end of it.

Because these are only moments and days when the rage and fury of steel workers and all workers throughout Iran are accumulated to soon erupt like a giant volcano.

December 20, 2018

Parvin Mohammadi, former representative of workers of Iran Metal Industries and member of the Board of Directors of the Free Union of Iranian workers  
(NCRI women's committee - Dec. 23, 2018)

**A Kurdish Civilian Transferred to Sanandaj Central Prison to Endure his Sentence**



<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7186>

Saber Naderi, a Kurdish civilian from Ghorveh who had been sentenced to four years in prison by Sanandaj Court of Appeal last year, was arrested and transferred to Sanandaj Central Prison to serve his sentence.

Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has been informed that Saber Naderi was arrested at his home in Ghorveh on Sunday, December 23 and subsequently transferred to Sanandaj Central Prison to endure his 4-year sentence.

The above-mentioned civilian was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of membership in one of the opposition groups by branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj last year, but this ruling was reduced to 4 years in prison by the Court of Appeal upon contesting the verdict.

Saber Naderi, director of Shahir Narmafzar Pooya Company, was arrested by security forces at his home in Ghorveh on Monday, December 4,

2016. At the time of arrest, the security forces had surrounded the house while around 20 officers, some of whom were dressed in Kurdish traditional clothing, raided his house for and inspected all his belongings.

After searching the house, the security forces seized three laptops, one of which belongs to Naderi's wife, and the cell phones of all the family members in addition to some books and pamphlets.

At the same time, a number of security forces also attacked Naderi's office, located in Ghorveh, and interrogated all his colleagues while searching the company and checking its computers. He was transferred to the Sanandaj Central Prison after being detained in solitary confinement for about 70 days at the Ministry of Intelligence Detention Centre in Sanandaj. (Kurdish Human Rights Network- Dec. 23, 2018)



### Basic freedom and rights abused

#### Twenty Thousand PhD Graduates Are Unemployed In Iran

<https://www.radiofarda.com/a/twenty-thousand-graduated-phd-in-iran-unemployed/29674140.html>

<http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/83145881>

Iran's Deputy Minister of Science, Research and Technology for educational affairs says 20,000 Ph.D. holders in Iran are unemployed and jobless. Dr. Mojtaba Shariati

Niasar has also noted that 100,000 students are currently studying for a Ph.D., but only 4,000 of them have been employed by the universities, so far.

The ministry of Science is not responsible for creating jobs, Shariati Niasar has insisted, noting, "but it can increase the students' potential for employment by expanding their capabilities."

Earlier on December 13, the deputy governor for economic affairs and development of human resources in the oil-rich province of Khuzestan, Yadollah Mehralizadeh had announced, "Out of 3.5 million unemployed persons across Iran, 30% to 35% are university graduates."

Nevertheless, the Planning and Management Organization (PMO) begs to differ, insisting that the number is much higher.

"42 percent of unemployed people in Iran have a university degree, and huge sums of money have been spent on their education," said PMO Deputy for Social Development Sa'eed Namaki last April, adding that unemployment among university graduates leads many to leave the country in search of opportunities.

"We are facing a grave problem, and we have to address it fundamentally to stop elite Iranians from leaving the country," said Namaki.

The head of Azad University in 2017, Farhad Rahbar had also warned about 20,000 students at the Ph.D. level in the university's nationwide colleges with no prospect of employment.

"We do not need an army of (unemployed) students anymore," Rahbar, who was sacked last August, had grumbled.

Iran's inefficient economic system has had anemic growth in the past 40 years since the 1979 revolution, while the population has more than doubled. Lack of foreign investment, mismanagement and nepotism has restricted job growth in the country, compounded by international sanctions.

Furthermore, a local website, Eqtesad Online reported last year that there were more than 204,000 persons in Iran that hold Ph.D. or Masters degree, but have no jobs.

Based on a report compiled by the Statistical Center of Iran, the majority of employed people in Iran carry high school diplomas and pre-university (college)degrees.

However, those who hold a Ph.D. are the least employed individuals among the people with jobs in the country.

State-run Mehr News Agency (MNA) has also reported that those with degrees in Computer Science top the table of unemployed graduates with 41.14 percent unemployment, followed by graduates in Environment (37.6 percent), Arts (28

percent), and Physics (27.8 percent), while graduates of Veterinary Science are at the bottom of the table with the lowest unemployment. Meanwhile, the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) reports the rate of unemployment in the last Iranian year (ending March 20, 2017) for the country as a whole at 12.1 percent. The unemployment rate among 15 to 29-year-olds was 25.3 percent.

However, many analysts believe the actual unemployment rates in Iran are much higher than what is reported by the SCI.

Despite the high degree of unemployment among university graduates in Iran, Shariati Niasar has previously boasted about the high number of students with higher education in the country.

During a visit to a higher education center in the city of Shirvan in North Khorasan on Tuesday, July 10, Shariati Niasar said that each year over 5,000 students graduate in the field of engineering in Iran, which is almost the same number of graduates in the field in the United States.

In the meantime, a report compiled by Iran's parliament from December 2017 highlights the fact that unemployment among female graduates is disproportionately higher. (IRNA state-run News Agency, Radio Farda – Dec. 24, 2018)

### Increased Imprisonment Sentence for Telegram Channel Admin Detained at Orumiye Central Prison

<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7183>

A telegram activist, Farokh Abdi, who had previously been sentenced to a total of 30 months of imprisonment on two separate charges including blasphemy, participation in gatherings and collusion against national security, was sentenced to an additional 5 years of imprisonment per Article 134 of Islamic Penal Code (Aggregation of Fines).

“Both Branch 102 of Public Court and Branch 2 of Orumiye Revolutionary Court each had each sentenced Farokh Abdi to 15 months of imprisonment. Upon applying the Article on Aggregation of Fines, his 15 months imprisonment on the charge of blasphemy was annulled but he was sentenced to an additional 5 years of imprisonment sentence on charges of participation in gathering and collusion against national security in addition to the 15 months prison sentence for the same charge.”, a reliable source told Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN).



This Cyberspace activist and director of telegram channel, known as Amanj which covers Kurdistan news, was tried earlier at Branch 102 of Orumiyeh Public Court and Branch 2 of the Orumiyeh Revolutionary Court. He was sentenced to a total 30 months of imprisonment on two separate cases.

The source further stated that “the Article on Aggregation of Fines leads to a reduction in prison sentences. However, in Mr Abdi’s case, application of this Article has led to an increase in his sentence. On Thursday, December 20, 2018, this political prisoner was summoned to the Enforcement Office of Orumiyeh Central Prison and his five years imprisonment was formally served on him”.

According to this source, Judge Ebrahimi from Branch 102 of the Orumiyeh Public Court who has a close affiliation with the Security Institutions in Orumiyeh, has so far played an active role in filing new charges against Kurdish political prisoners and increasing their sentences over the past few years.

“Farokh Abdi, the director of telegram channel known as Amanj, was arrested by security forces in February in Qeshm and was transferred to Intelligence Ministry’s Detention Centre in the city of Tehran. He was transferred to the Ministry of Intelligence Detention Centre in Orumiyeh after two days and was interrogated for the news and materials he had published in his telegram channel in addition to calling people to participate in the gatherings in protest to the attack of Turkish Army on Efrin. Upon completion of the interrogations, this activist was transferred to the Orumiyeh Central Prison from Intelligence Ministry’s Detention Centre in the city of Tehran on March 7 with an order of temporary detention and he is currently detained in ward 3-4 of Ordinary Crimes contrary to the principle of Separation of Crimes.

He was sentenced to a total of 3 years in prison on charges of “propaganda against the state” and “insulting the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran” by Branch 2 of Revolutionary Court of Orumiyeh.

Upon contesting the verdict, the dossier of Farokh Abdi was referred to the Orumiyeh Court of Appeal which reduced his sentence to 15 months in prison.

On Thursday, August 6, Farokh Abdi was also tried for another case on the charge of blasphemy at Branch 102 of the Public Court whose verdict of 15 months in prison on charges of insulting the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran was served on this Cyberspace activist on August 21. (Kurdish Human Rights Network- Dec. 22, 2018)

**A Kurdish Cyber Activist Transferred to Orumiyeh Central Prison to Endure his Sentence**

<http://kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7201>



Salahedin Ranjbar, director of the Telegram channel “Orumiyeh Dang” who had been previously sentenced to one year in prison, was arrested and transferred to ward 13 of Orumieh Central Prison to serve his sentence.

Kurdistan Human Rights Network (KHRN) has been informed that Salahedin Ranjbar was summoned to the Orumiyeh Court of Appeal on Sunday, December 23 and subsequently transferred to the Orumiyeh Central Prison to endure his one-year sentence.

He was sentenced to one-year imprisonment by the Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Orumiyeh on charges of propaganda against the state in July. Upon contesting the verdict, the case was referred to Branch 1 of Orumiyeh Court of Appeals which equally approved the verdict in recent days.

It is worth mentioning that the director of the Telegram channel “Orumiyeh Dang” was arrested by the security forces for broadcasting news of the protests against sexual harassment of a 13-Year-Old Schoolgirl and encouraging turmoil on Dec 13, 2017. He was temporarily released from prison after two weeks on a bail of 200 Tomans.

The channel of the Orumiyeh Dang was blocked by security forces after the arrest of its administrator, despite being licensed by the Directorate of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

Another activist, Farrokh Abdi, director of the telegram channel known as Amanj which covers Kurdistan news, is serving his 5 years of imprisonment at Orumiyeh Central Prison. (Kurdish Human Rights Network- Dec. 26, 2018)

## Fatal Bus Crash On University Campus In Iran Could Have Been Prevented

<http://www.irna.ir/tehran/fa/News/83147098>

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/26/fatal-bus-crash-on-university-campus-in-iran-could-have-been-prevented/>

<http://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news/426516>

<https://www.farsnews.com/news/13971004000777>

<http://www.kurdistanhumanrights.net/fa/?p=7201>

At least 10 students were killed and 27 others injured after a bus overturned on a university campus.



The crash happened Tuesday at Tehran's Science and Research Center in Azad University, which is nestled in the foothills of the Alborz Mountains.

Seven students, two women and five men, lost their lives on the spot state TV said, while three others died in hospitals.

While families of the university students were seen outside the campus seeking information about their loved ones, the authorities dispatched anti-riot units to the scene in fear of possible outbursts of anger.

The death toll might further rise as some of the injured are in critical condition.

The deputy university dean first claimed the driver had suffered a heart attack, but a number of the students interviewed after the accident said that bus brakes were malfunctioning, leading to this tragic incident. An Iranian journalist tweeted that the university's use of a "ramshackle bus in a mountainous region" amounted to "manslaughter".

Iran suffers from a high rate of traffic accidents, with an estimated 17,000 casualties every year. The toll is widely blamed on poor safety, the presence of older vehicles and the inadequacy of emergency services.

Iran was the world's seventh deadliest country for drivers per capita, according to the World Health Organization's latest figures from 2013.

A plan that could prevent the death of 10 students halted

Entekhab state-run website wrote that the accident could have been prevented if the university's cable car project, which was to replace the depleted bus fleet, was not halted in 2016 after a change in Azad University's management.

The project to build a cable transportation system with 72 cable cars, each large enough to hold eight people, started in 2015.

The cable cars would enable the transportation of 4,000 people every hour.

Entekhab said that the project was halted three months before its completion for unknown reasons.

"In the summer of 2016, all the equipment needed for the Science and Research Unit of the Islamic Azad University's cable transportation system was imported into the country and was completed in terms of equipment and testing," Entekhab wrote.

"The project progressed to about 80% and could have been launched within three months, but with the change in the management of Azad University, the project was halted," the website wrote.

(Iran HRM- Dec. 27, 2018)

(IRNA state-run News Agency - Dec. 25, 2018)

(Hamshahri online state-run News website - Dec. 25, 2018)

(Fars state-run News Agency - Dec. 25, 2018)

(Borna state-run News Agency - Dec. 25, 2018)

### **Hundreds of Tehran Students Protesting At Azad University**

<https://www.radiofarda.com/a/azad-students-protesting-over-bus-accident/29682662.html>

<http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/83152363>

Hundreds of university students in Tehran gathered on Saturday to express their anger at a bus crash that killed and injured dozens of their peers on December 25.

The official IRNA said “hundreds of students” joined the protest. The report also added that some family members of students killed in the crash are also present on the campus. From photos and videos circulated the crowd appeared to be large.

ISNA reported that the protest was spontaneous as students gathered in the parking area for the university buses, holding banners, protested against the university’s transport system and voiced other grievances about the management of Azad University.



However, some social media reports said that the protest was organized by the conservative Student Basij and the protesters were demanding the removal of Azad University’s president Ali Akbar Velayati, who is also a senior advisor to the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

It is not clear what the role of the Student Basij might have been in the protests, but many angry students independently joined the gathering.

The university has already fired five officials for responsibility in the sorry state of student buses, but IRNA quoted protesting students that this is just a tactic for higher-ups to avoid their own share of responsibility.

The bus that lost control and crashed against a column on a mountainous road within the large campus of the university was carrying students from the Sciences and Research faculty. Nine students and the driver were killed and 28 others injured.

Immediately after the accident, university officials tried to blame the crash on the driver having a heart attack. Later, safety officials said that the bus lost its breaks. A traffic police officer also announced that the bus was listed as a salvage vehicle six years ago, but somehow the transportation contractor managed to use it as part of the university fleet.

Protesting students were demanding the presence of a high-level university official at the gathering and were threatening to continue their protest until this demand is met. But it appears that by early evening the gathering ended, although it can continue in the coming days.

So far there have been no protests at other universities, but if Azad university students continue their defiance it is possible that other campuses might join them.

Mother of one of the students killed in the accident spoke at the rally, saying, “I am sorry I live in a country where the life of a human being has no value”, Fars news agency close to the Revolutionary Guards reported. (Radio Farda, IRNA state-run news agency – Dec. 29, 2018)

### **Iran Deal With Fashion Models In Social Media Crackdown**

<https://www.isna.ir/news/97100502893>

Police have dealt with dozens of people that officials describe as “members of the largest modeling network” in the southern city of Hormozgan, according to an announcement by local police chief Azizollah Maleki on December 25, 2018.

More than 54 people have been dealt with in the southern port city of Hormozgan, 630 miles south of Tehran, the state-run ISNA news agency reported on Wednesday. Maleki pointed out that ‘members of the network’ had violated the norms by disseminating unethical photos on social media.

“In this regard, a total of 54 people were identified in coordination of the judicial authorities and the legal proceedings were taken,” Maleki said.

At the time Iranian police vowed to crack down further, and said they planned to shut down similar bands on the popular social media network.

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the country has had strict rules governing women’s behavior and dress. Women can face penalties ranging from a \$25 (£19) fine to prison time for even showing their hair.

In July 2018, Iran arrested dozens of people, including Instagram models and beauty salon owners, for posting photos online, in a recent crackdown against “immoral” behaviour.

Among the detainees were Instagram models, and people who work in photography, beauty salons and wedding businesses, who used social media to share footage that the state deems “indecent”. (ISNA state-run News Agency – Dec. 26, 2018)



## Religious and ethnic minorities

### Crackdown On Iranian Christians Continues Ahead Of Christmas

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/24/crackdown-on-iranian-christians-continues-ahead-of-christmas/>

Nearly 100 Christians have been arrested in Iran in the past month and arrests are expected to continue over the Christmas holiday.



Christian leaders in Iran have said that pressure on Christians increases every year around Christmas but that this year it is particularly severe.

Sources explain that these arrests in the officially Shia Muslim country normally spike during December when more Iranians are attracted to Christianity, as Iran hopes to intimidate potential converts away from the religion. However, arrests have been especially severe this year, with some speculating that security branches who fear losing money in the new budget are trying to show how effective they can be.

Miles Windsor, advocacy and development manager at Middle East Concern (MEC), said: “The current situation has been described by some as unprecedented. There are a huge number of arrests and detentions. Recently it seems there is definitely a coordinated and determined campaign to decimate the Christian community and to spread fear and intimidation.”

While Shia Islam is Iran’s official religion and bases its laws on the mullahs’ interpretation of Sharia, the constitution recognizes Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity as official religious minorities. However, according to the US State Department’s International Religious Freedom Report, it also specifies the death penalty for “proselytizing”, attempting to convert Muslims, “enmity against God”, and “insulting the prophet [Muhammad]”.

Iranian Christians recently arrested include:

Those arrested include Shima Zanganeh, 27, and her sister, Shokoufeh, 30, are among those Christian converts who have been targeted.

They were arrested by Intelligence Service officials in their homes in Ahvaz, capital of Iran’s western Khuzestan province, on December 2, reports Mohabat News, a website that exclusively reflects the news concerning Iranians converted to Christianity.

The sisters told their family in a phone call that they had been beaten during one of the interrogation sessions.

On the same day the Zanganeh sisters were arrested, security authorities also raided the homes of Farzad Behzadizadeh, 30, and Abdollah Yousefi, 34, and confiscated Christian books, phones and computers.

Behzadizadeh was first apprehended while at work in a customer-support center for Tejarat Bank and Yousefi was arrested at his home. After their homes were searched they were both taken in for interrogation and are currently held at a prison in Mollasani, 43km north of Ahvaz. Meanwhile, on 6 December, intelligence agents arrested Amir Taleipour, 39, and his wife Mahnaz Harati, 36, at their home in Mashhad, northeast Iran, in front of their seven-year-old daughter, according to Middle East Concern. The couple have been held in detention and have not been allowed to contact their family or to access legal assistance. Their family is taking care of their daughter. On 30 November, 64-year-old Jamshid Derakhshan from Karaj, 36km west of Tehran, was arrested.

Mr. Derakhshan had arranged to meet in Hashtgerd, where he planned to attend a prayer gathering in house church. On December 12, he called his family to say he was being held in Rajaee Shahr prison and would be released soon.

Derakhshan has been a convert for 30 years and was fired from his job with a government agency because of his Christian faith, according to Mohabat News.

Windsor said that these continuing arrests are increasing fear and limiting the flow of information, noting that most Christian arrestees are falsely charged with vague national security crimes, including espionage. These charges, often followed by sham trials, carry prison sentences of 10-15 years.

He said: "There is no doubt that it's the Christian faith of these individuals that is the reason behind their arrests and detentions."

The US State Department yet again listed Iran as a Country of Particular Concern for severe violations of religious freedom earlier this month. Despite the crackdown, Christianity is growing in Iran with estimates of between 800,000 and 1 million Christian Iranians. (Iran HRM - Dec. 16, 2018)

### Suppressive maneuvers

#### Security Forces Fir Tear Gas Into Peaceful Isfahan Teachers' Gathering

<https://iran-hrm.com/index.php/2018/12/27/security-forces-fir-tear-gas-into-peaceful-isfahan-teachers-gathering/>



Security forces attacked a peaceful a Thursday protest gathering of teachers held outside the ministry of education in the central city of Isfahan.

Iran's Free Labor Union (FLU) reported on Thursday the state security forces fired tear gas and pepper spray into a rally of teachers protesting low wages, poor living conditions and skyrocketing prices.

A video circulated on social media shows the aftermath of tear gas used by security forces against the protesters. Reports say police arrested dozens of protesters, though the figures are still not exact. In another video, the state police heard threatening to fire more tear gas into the crowd of teachers holding a peaceful rally.

From the very beginning of the gathering outside the city's Education Department, Iranian authorities had already dispatched large number of anti-riot units to the scene and stationed a variety of security forces at the pre-planned in advance.

The teachers, some retired, held their rally Thursday in Isfahan's Hasht-e Behesht Avenue outside the regime's Education Department. Based on a previous call, the teachers were protesting low wages, demanding the release of jailed colleagues, regulating and equalizing retirement pensions, and other demands. Videos circulating on social media showed teachers chanting, "A nation has never seen such injustice." Another video shows a teacher complaining to a reporter holding a microphone from Iran's state-run TV. "You talk as if you don't live in this society. You ask me to talk about my financial condition. Don't you see it? Are we living in Paris?" the teacher asked sarcastically.

"We are part of a society where 90% of the people live under the line of poverty. Now you want me to talk about my condition? You're show is a farce," the angry teacher added.

Teachers groups have frequently held protests in Iran in the past two years, because of low salaries and substandard schools.

Their demands including an increase in wages and an improvement in their livelihood conditions and insurance, and the release of detained teachers, have yet to be met. (Iran HRM - Dec. 27, 2018)

### **Violence against women**

#### **Parliament Rejects Motion To Ban Marriage Of Girls Under Thirteen**

<https://www.radiofarda.com/a/parliament-committee-rejects-plan-to-prevent-child-marriage/29673578.html>

A parliamentary motion banning child marriage in Iran has been rejected by Majles (parliament), an MP reported.

A member of women's faction in the Islamic Republic's parliament, Tayyebeh Seyavoshi says, "The Legal and Judicial Commission of Majles has rejected a

parliamentary motion that proposed a ban on allowing under thirteen-year-old girls to marry." According to a member of the Legal and Judicial commission, Yahya Kamalpour, the motion was rejected after Grand Ayatollahs and sources of emulation" vehemently opposed it. Without referring to a time frame, Ms. Seyavoshi announced that more than 300 girls under nine, and between 30,000 to 40,000 girls under 13-14 years old marry in Iran.

Earlier on December 4, a prominent member of the Islamic Republic's Cultural and Social Council for Women had defended child marriage, arguing it protects girls from a life of prostitution and illegal abortions.

Fereshteh Rouhafza had told the state-run Iran Labor News Agency (ILNA) on December 4, that in light of the rapidly growing number of increasingly young girls undergoing illegal abortions and joining the sex trade, "opposition to child marriage is wrong."

Rouhafza, who is in charge of planning and policy for the council, declined to provide evidence of her claims about Iran's young women, saying the statistics are available, but it would be irresponsible to make them public.

"Publishing the statistics will encourage other underage girls to follow suit. I believe revealing such statistics is harmful to society," Rouhafza said.

Rouhafza's comments reflect the position of the conservative clerical establishment toward child marriage. Insisting that Prophet Muhammad is the perfect example for all Muslims, they note that he married a six-year-old bride, Aisha, with whom he consummated the marriage when she was only nine years old.

According to Iran's Association of Children's Rights, the number of girls married in Iran under the age of 15 climbed from 33,383 in 2006 to 43,459 in 2009, a 30 percent increase in three years. Experts say the increase is due to deepening poverty and parents' desire to control their daughter's sexuality.

The Islamic Republic's civil code stipulates that the legal age of marriage in Iran is thirteen for girls and fifteen for boys. However, the civil code allows girls as young as nine to marry with the consent of their father or the permission of a judge. (Radio Farda - Dec. 24, 2018)

### **Iran's Judiciary Signals A Less Restrictive Position On Women Attending Men's Sports**

<https://www.radiofarda.com/a/hadi-sadeqi-on-iranian-womens-presence-in-stadiums/29672179.html>

<https://www.isna.ir/news/97080201198>

<https://www.isna.ir/news/97073016940>

The deputy head of Iran's judiciary says women can be allowed to go to stadiums to watch men's sports if certain "conditions" are met.

"Women attending matches at the sports arenas, is not a problem, per se," says mid-ranking cleric Hadi Sadeqi, adding, "They are allowed to go to sports arenas, as men are, provided a number of moral and religious matters and standards are respected." Sadeqi's comments are in sharp contrast with earlier remarks made by Iran's Prosecutor-General on the same subject. Mohammad Jafar Montazeri has repeatedly warned that his office would not tolerate women entering sports arenas, watching "half-naked" soccer players running on the pitch.

Women watching footballers "leads to sin," Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, speaking in the city of Qazvin, said on October 14. "I object to the presence of women in Azadi Stadium yesterday. We will deal with any official who wants to allow women inside sports venues under any pretext."

State-run Mehr News Agency (MNA) quoted Montazeri as also stressing, "When a woman enters a stadium and sees half-naked men in sports jerseys, it will lead to sinful acts."

"The presence of women in stadiums is harmful," warned Iran's Prosecutor-General Mohammad Javad Montazeri. A select group of women watched the friendly with Bolivia in Azadi Stadium in Tehran on October 16 (above).

Moreover, Montazeri cautioned, "If repeated, I will order the Tehran prosecutor-general to step in."

Nevertheless, it seems that the country's judiciary has decided to slightly change its position on the controversial issue, by setting some rules to allow women watch men's sports matches.

Describing women's attendance at stadiums as a fact that is not a problem in itself, Sadeqi has suggested that there could be ways to let women watch men's sports freely.

There are two "indispositions" involved in the case," Sadeqi has maintained, adding, one is the fact that "watching naked stranger men by women is banned by Islamic regulations", second, the "immoral and inappropriate environment of stadiums is not suitable for women".

However, Sadeqi has argued, "As the naked stranger men (players) are far away from the spectators, the problem needs further technical religious analysis. Therefore, we can discuss the case with foqaha (Shi'ite jurists, Grand Ayatollahs and sources of emulation)."

Dropping the ball into the court of managers of the sports arenas, the cleric said, "It is up to the managers of the stadiums to prepare a morally suitable environment where women would also be able to watch men's sports events."

The outspoken deputy speaker of Majles (parliament), Ali Motahari believes that women should be permitted to watch men's soccer matches, but letting them attend arenas where men are competing in the fields such as swimming, basketball, and volleyball is against Sharia.

Meanwhile, several hardline clergymen, including the Qom-based Nasser Makarem Shirazi, who is officially recognized as a "Grand Ayatollah", are vehemently against allowing Iranian women watch live men's soccer matches at stadiums.

Ninety-one-year-old Makarem Shirazi insisted last December that the presence of women in stadiums "inevitably" leads to "morally corrupt acts".

Another ultraconservative clergyman also lambasted President Hassan Rouhani's government last June for letting women enter Tehran's main sports arena (Azadi stadium) and watch Iranian national football squad's televised soccer match against Spain.

"It is not glorious to allow women to enter an arena for watching soccer games," 99-year old official Grand Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani roared.

The ultraconservative cleric has also gone further, insisting "gender segregation in Iran's universities" should be enforced "at any cost".

Meanwhile, the international soccer body, FIFA, says that banning women from watching football games is against its regulations, and Iran should address the problem, otherwise its soccer sides will be banned from participating in international competitions.

(Radio Farda – Dec. 23, 2018)

(ISNA state-run News Agency – Oct. 22 & Oct. 24, 2018)

### Women's role in a year of persistent Iran protests

<https://women.ncr-iran.org/articles/5658-women-s-role-persistent-iran-protests>



A year into the uprising, it is befitting to have a glance on women's role in a year of persistent protests in Iran.

On December 28, 2017, some 10,000 people took to the streets of Mashhad to protest against skyrocketing prices while the general public's purchasing power was next to nothing.

Women were numerous, loud and active in the protest. Eyewitnesses described women's role in the demonstration as admirably courageous.

The protest in Mashhad sparked a year of persistent anti-government uprisings and protests across Iran bringing ever closer the prospects for regime change and the overthrow of the misogynist theocratic rule of the mullahs.

On the second day of the protests, a daring scene was created by a woman in the western Iranian city of Hamedan. For the first time in the protests, she shouted "death to Khamenei" right into the face of security forces surrounding her and then repeated it a couple more times before being whisked away by a friend.

Throughout the past year since last December 28, women have been at the forefront and in the center of most protests.

In the nine months since March, they have actively taken part in at least 850 protests compared to the 436 protests in 12 months the previous year where the presence and participation of women had been registered. Girl students have been actively involved in at least 300 protests since last December by participating in every student protest.

Teachers protests

Despite great risks and intimidation, women have always been at the forefront of teachers' protests. On May 10, 2017, Iran saw the nationwide protests of teachers in 32 cities over low salaries, difficult living conditions, lack of insurance and other job benefits, as well as the non-payment of their past due wages for consecutive months.

Women joined extensively in the two rounds of strikes and sit-ins of teachers and educators held on October 14 and 15, 2018, and on November 13 and 14, 2018.

In August, Iranian women had their effective impact on the new wave of protests sweeping the country, so much that the Revolutionary Guard Corps was compelled to speak out. The state-run Fars news agency, the mouthpiece of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), reported on Iranian women's role as the driving force and engine behind the protests.

Fars reported, "In the riots of Karaj (the fourth largest city of Iran), 20 leaders were identified and arrested, the majority of whom were women." (The state-run Fars news agency - August 5, 2018)

In another report, Fars also highlighted women's role in leading the protests. "It is noteworthy that today, too, similar to the previous days, the leader of these people [the protesters] was a woman." (The state-run Fars news agency - August 5, 2018)

Fars also pointed out that women's role in the protests were "more dominant" and a similar situation was "noticeable and evident in the protests in other cities, as well."

Rassoul Sanaii Rad, political deputy for the IRGC, said, "For the first time, 28 percent of the arrests in the protests were women." Referring to the arrests of women in the protests December and January, he noted, "Previously, the number of women arrested in the protests was 5 to 7 percent." (The state-run Mehr News Agency - August 15, 2018)

Defiant cities

Women's role was remarkable in all major uprisings and protests by different strata and in various cities.

- Khuzestan: Women have been outspoken since March in the protests held by families of the arrested workers of the National Steel Group of Ahvaz, in the protests of defrauded clients of credit institutes, and in the month-long protests over insulting comments made against Arab Iranians on the state TV. More recently in November and December, women provided a strong backing to the sugarcane workers of Haft Tappeh in Shush and the steel workers of Ahvaz in their month-long strike and protest marches.
- Kazerun: Thousands of residents of Kazerun, in the southern Iranian Fars Province, including a remarkable number of brave women held consecutive protests against segregation of their city in April and May. They braved heavy presence of security forces and anti-riot units and marched in the city's main square. They chanted, "We are fighting women and men, we fight against segregation."
- Isfahan: Isfahan's farmers held their protests for several consecutive days in mid-April with active women's role. The state-run Sharq daily acknowledged women's massive participation in these protests. Farmers of eastern Isfahan have been protesting continuously to gain their share of water for farming from Zayanderood which used to be a copious river passing through Isfahan, but has dried up under the mullahs' rule since its water has been diverted for military purposes to various compounds and facilities belonging to the Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).
- Borazjan: Major protests were held in June and July over water shortage in the city of Borazjan, the second largest city in the Province of Bushehr lying along the Persian Gulf coast. The people of Borazjan are dissatisfied with the situation of water in their city. Women's role in protests of Borazjan against lack of water in hot summer days was significant and active.
- Khorramshahr: Women of Khorramshahr protested against lack of clean drinking water by actively participating in the large scale protests by thousands



of residents of this key port city of southwestern Iran for three days from June 29 to July 1, 2018. Young men and women of Khorramshahr confronted the regime's troops empty-handed. They chanted "death to Khamenei", "death to Rouhani", "death to the Islamic Republic", "the mullahs must get lost."

- Mashhad: Women wore shrouds in a protest against the fraudulent Padideh Shandiz company in Mashhad on April 12, 2018. The protesters have not yet received any response on reimbursement of their properties after four years.
- Rasht: Women held regular protests, every week, against the IRGC-backed Caspian Credit Institute in Rasht, demanding return of their plundered assets.

women's role in student day protests

This brief review provides a perspective on Iranian women's role in the uprisings over the past year. They have been present everywhere in every strata acting as the driving force. Iran's brave women started their fight against the tyrannical mullahs in 1979 only two weeks after they seized power, endured great suffering and made great sacrifices during the mass arrests and executions which began in 1981.

They have a brilliant record with thousands of women who gave their lives for Iran's freedom. They have never given up their faith in victory and have earned their rightful place in the leadership of the Iranian Resistance.

So, a great potential has been saved for 40 years in the struggle of Iranian women which is going to expand with an enormous power like a compressed coil, and will uproot the ruling religious tyranny.

The women of Iran are resolved to turn the page of their country's history in the 21st century and they deserve the support of all freedom-loving people of the world. (NCRI women's committee - Dec. 27, 2018)