

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

IMPACT IRAN

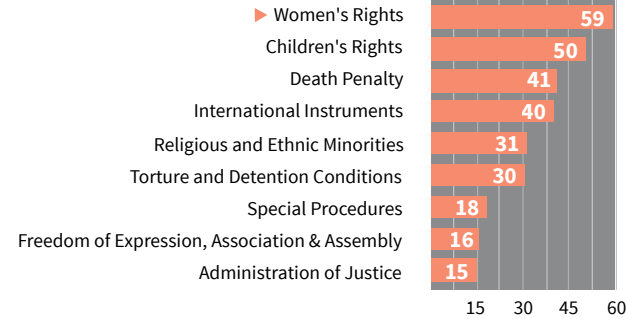
UPR
IRAN

An assessment of Iran's implementation of recommendations received during the 2014 Universal Periodic Review

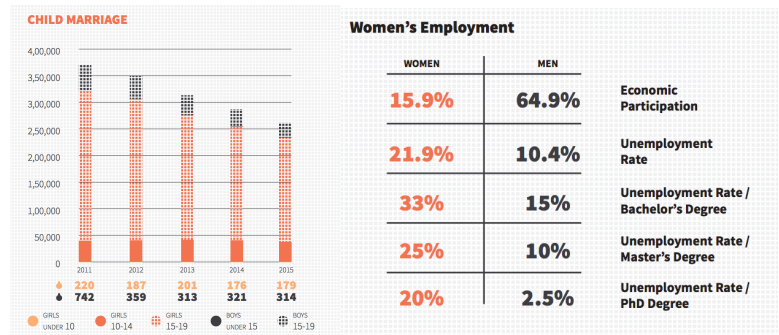
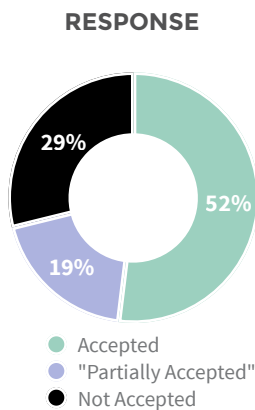
KEY AREAS OF CONCERN RAISED BY STATES

- Gender-Based Discrimination in Law
- Gender-Based Violence
- Persistent Barriers to Political and Economic Advancement of Women

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS RECEIVED BY ISSUE



WOMEN'S RIGHTS AT IRAN'S UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW IN 2014



UPR BREAKDOWN

- Iran received the highest number of recommendations on issues related to women's rights (59 recommendations), mainly on discrimination and women's political and economic participation, and accepted the majority of them.
- Most of these recommendations addressed issues related to discrimination, barriers to economic and political participation, and gender-based violence.
- Iran has implemented 16 of the 27 recommendations it accepted in full, and has partially implemented 11 of them as of the mid-term period. It should be noted that many of these recommendations were weak or vaguely worded, allowing Iran to claim, in good faith, that they had been implemented.

EXAMPLES OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE	SCORE
138.27: Consider introducing specific provisions in the Islamic Penal Code about investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of domestic violence (Portugal)	ACCEPTED	IMPLEMENTED
138.247: Continue efforts for greater representation of women in the political process and their participation in public life (Malaysia)	ACCEPTED	IMPLEMENTED
138.198: Strengthen the means and measures to combat violence against women. (Mali)	ACCEPTED	IMPLEMENTED
138.112 Continue working so that Iranian women have the right to transmit their nationality to their children (Guatemala)	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	IMPLEMENTED
138.91: Take measures to ensure equal access of women to higher education and professional life, including by repealing the restrictions on female students and by lifting bans on women in certain professions (Germany)	PARTIALLY ACCEPTED	PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED
138.218 Raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years and ensure marriage with the legal requirement of free consent of spouses through amendments to the Civil Code and the Family Protection Law (Poland)	NOT ACCEPTED	NOT IMPLEMENTED
138.189 Amend the Civil Code in order to bring to 18 years old the legal marriage age for both boys and girls, and repeal the amendment to the Law on the Protection of Children and Adolescents with No Guardian, which allows for marriage between adoptive parents and their adopted child (Italy)	NOT ACCEPTED	NOT IMPLEMENTED

GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION IN LAW: Member States issued at least **20** recommendations to Iran to reform its laws to address discrimination against girls and women in law. These recommendations were based on concerns that the law explicitly discriminates against women in areas such as:

THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE: Pursuant to the Islamic Penal Code, women are entitled to less compensation than men for compensatory damages (i.e. *diya* or “blood money”) resulting from criminal (or tortious) acts that cause bodily harm. Under the code, the age of criminal responsibility for girls is 9 lunar years, while for boys it is 15. A woman’s testimony is equal to half the legal weight or value of a man’s testimony.

PERSONAL STATUS AND FAMILY LAWS: Under Iran’s Civil Code, women do not have equal rights to men in marriage, divorce, child custody or inheritance. For example, husbands have an incontestable right in law to divorce their spouse. Married women cannot obtain a passport or travel without the permission of their husbands. Moreover, a husband can prevent his spouse from pursuing an occupation which he believes to be against family values or harmful to his or her reputation. The legal age of marriage for girls is 13 (while for boys it is 15) and fathers can apply for permission from courts to arrange for their daughters to be married at an even younger age. According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2015, 21 percent of females in Iran aged 15 to 19 years old were married.

OTHER LAWS: Recently passed legislation further curtails women’s access to health and family planning services and employment, or renders women increasingly vulnerable to gender-based violence. For example, *the Plan to Reduce the Working Hours of Women with Special Conditions*, which passed into law on 29 September 2016, reduces the working hours of female employees with certain family obligations—including female-headed households, those with children under the age of seven years, and women with children or spouses with disabilities or incurable and chronic diseases—from 44 hours to 36 hours a week, without reducing their salaries. Though the law is intended to protect these women, it effectively creates barriers to women’s participation in the workforce because no comprehensive anti-discrimination protections banning gender discrimination in the workplace exist.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: Member States emphasized concerns over gender-based violence, providing **11** recommendations on the topic. Despite some measures taken by authorities targeted at improving the situation for victims of domestic violence (such as establishing 31 safe houses and 22 social rehabilitation centers for victims of violence), there is no comprehensive and effective law that protects women from such violence. For example, no protections are in place to criminalize or prohibit early or forced marriage, marital rape, or domestic violence. Moreover, current Iranian law allows for punitive loopholes in cases of “honor killings.” A domestic violence draft bill has been pending review and a vote in Parliament since 2012.

PERSISTENT BARRIERS TO POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN: Member States issued at least **12** recommendations aimed at improving women’s participation in the political and socio-economic life of the country. Policies adopted by various organs of the state that limit women’s political, economic and social participation range from fertility promotion measures intended to increase the number of children per family, to gender-based quotas in university admissions and restrictions on enrollment in certain academic fields considered to be more appropriate for men (e.g. medicine, math and engineering). Additionally, some government offices and municipalities have limited certain types of employment to men only.

While women occupy over half of all university student slots, their participation in the labor force is only 17 percent. The 2015 Global Gender Gap report ranks Iran among the last five countries (140 out of 144) for gender equality in terms of economic participation and opportunity. Women’s participation in the labor market in Iran is significantly lower than average when compared to other upper-middle income countries, and lower than the average for all women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (which has very low female participation compared to other regions).

Since President Rouhani’s election, authorities have made small efforts to remove some of these barriers, including removing some gender-based quotas connected to access to higher education. On 31 July 2016, the Rouhani administration issued an executive order freezing the civil service exam and all hires of new government employees until measures are in place to guarantee equal opportunities for women. In August 2017 Rouhani appointed three women as part of his cabinet, though no female ministers have been appointed, despite demands raised by 175 MPs. Moreover, the administration has not yet met its goal of increasing the percentage of female managers in the executive branch to 30 percent, in accordance with the country’s Sixth Development Plan. Women currently occupy only 5.8% (17 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament elected in February 2016, the highest percentage since the 1979 revolution.

CASES OF NOTE

ALIEH MOTLABZADEH: In

November 2016,

Intelligence

forces

arrested

women’s

rights

activist, Alieh

Motlabzadeh, and

interrogated at least 20

others, for participating in a

workshop in Georgia.

Motlabzadeh has been

released on bail and was

awaiting further court

proceedings as of this

writing.

On 19 November 2016, the **Iranian Wrestling Federation** barred three female athletes from participating in a world wrestling competition, for allegedly failing to uphold “Islamic values.”



17

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Seats held by women
in Parliament

World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index in Iran 2016

The Global Gender Gap Index is an index designed to measure gender equality in 144 major and emerging economies.

98/144

Health and Survival

94/144

Educational Attainment

140/144

Economic Participation

136/144

Political Empowerment