
Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Stakeholder Submissions

Women & Girls

**SUBMISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

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PEN America

The logo for IMPACT IRAN, consisting of the text "IMPACT IRAN" in white capital letters on an orange rectangular background.

Impact Iran



All Human Rights for All in Iran

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About the Submitting NGOs

The **Siamak Pourzand Foundation** (SPF) promotes freedom of expression for artists, writers, journalists and creative minds in contexts where the censorship apparatus is hard at work. It aims to provide a collaborative platform for creative minds struggling against censorship and repression.

The Siamak Pourzand Foundation (SPF) aims to: Provide a collaborative space for education, knowledge-sharing and dialogue about the concept and practices of freedom of expression; Promote freedom of expression, rule of law, civil and human rights; and Defend the rights of creative professionals and amateurs in their struggles against censorship.



Impact Iran is a coalition of 19 non-governmental organizations committed to advocating for human rights and driving positive change in Iran. Our coalition represents a diverse group of passionate individuals and organizations committed to amplifying the voices of Iranian civil society on the global stage. Each member organization brings unique expertise and experience to our collective mission, creating a powerful force for advocating for the rights and dignity of all individuals in Iran.



The non-governmental organization **All Human Rights for All in Iran** was established in 2017. The history of this organization goes back to 2010 when a group of human rights defenders gathered in Geneva during the first Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We then began a project with the non-governmental Austrian organization Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik, participating in the Human Rights Council, delivering statements and organizing parallel events on human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran through Südwind's support. This project, which had the financial support of the European Union and the Austrian Development Agency from 2012 to 2015, developed into our establishment as an organization. Working with our partners, we strive to improve the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran by drawing attention to the situation and its causes, at the local, regional, national, and international levels.



1. Introduction

1. There is shared concern among UN State Members about the situation of human rights of women and girls, and women's and girls' rights advocates in Iran. That concern is reflected in at least 79 recommendations to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 2019 report (3rd Cycle) of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review ("UPR") referring explicitly to the enjoyment of women's and girls' human rights in law and in practice.
2. At least 23 recommendations called on Iran to ratify, or consider ratifying, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW"). The Government did not support any of these recommendations and has not ratified the Convention, nor taken any steps in that direction since 2019.
3. Rights monitors have for decades documented the system of institutionalized and structural discrimination, exclusion, subjugation and segregation upheld and enforced by the Islamic Republic of Iran against women and girls. Considered against a Constitution that considers women exclusively as wives, mothers to be and mothers, this system of oppression appears as a deliberate effort from the Iranian Government to enforce social constructs and criteria through the regulation of all aspects of women's and girls' lives and the punishment of those perceived to transgress state-sanctioned forms of gender expression. Discrimination and exclusion found in the Constitution and the Iranian legal framework are further institutionalized through and reinforced by countless regulations, guidelines and policies sanctioning the severe deprivation of human rights and the pervasive policing of women's and girls' conduct and choices. In particular, regulations and laws mandating the compulsory veil and other dress requirements have been used as a key tool of the Iranian government to control and subjugate women and girls. The State actively mobilizes resources to force women and girls into compliance with the imposition of the compulsory veil and target them through arbitrary arrests and detention, prosecution and sentencing as well as through the denial of their rights to education, employment, freedom of movement, health and access to justice. Reports show a clear pattern of State failure to punish perpetrators and even acquiescence of public and private violence against women and girls not abiding by the compulsory veil, bolstered by laws sanctioning such violence and judicial processes that deny justice to victims. Each restriction and deprivation, whether de jure or de facto, informs and interacts with one another, forming a system of state oppression in which women and girls in Iran find themselves ensnared.

2. Sex and gender-based discrimination sanctioned in law and practice

4. In the 2019 report of the Working Group on the UPR, the Islamic Republic of Iran received at least 5 recommendations calling on the Government to take steps to address laws that are discriminatory or have a discriminatory impact on women and girls. The Government did not support recommendations that specifically called to “review”, “repeal” and “abolish” such laws,ⁱ although it supported those to “identify”, “reform” and “remedy” domestic legislation to ensure non-discrimination against women and girls.ⁱⁱ The drafters of this submission assess that none of the recommendations have been fully implemented since 2019.
5. The Iranian Constitution includes several provisions that obligate the government to guarantee equality for all, including non-discrimination between men and women.ⁱⁱⁱ While these provisions seemingly safeguard the human rights of women and protect against sex and gender-based discrimination, such legal guarantees only exist insofar as they are in conformity with the “Islamic criteria,” a vague requirement with no definition under Iranian law. The room for interpretation allowed under the “Islamic criteria” qualifications to legal guarantees of non-discrimination have been interpreted into laws and practices that discriminate or have a discriminatory impact on grounds of sex and gender.
6. In 2019 the State amended the Civil Code to give Iranian women who are married to non-Iranian men the right to transmit their nationality to their children under certain conditions. However, Iranian women and men are still not on equal footing with respect to their ability to confer nationality - men, regardless of the nationality of their wife, can automatically pass their nationality to their children. By contrast, women married to a non-national must apply to pass nationality to children and a security check must be done by the Ministry of Intelligence.
7. In November 2021 the Guardian Council ratified the “Youthful Population and Protection of the Family” law, which aims to boost the country’s fertility rate in Iran. The law has been denounced by UN experts as being clearly in “contravention of international law,” violating “the rights to life and health, the right to non-discrimination and equality, and the right to freedom of expression.” Art. 61 of the new law vaguely stipulates that, if carried out on a large scale, abortion would fall under the crime of “corruption on earth” and would thus carry the death penalty.^{iv}
8. A draft bill on Discretionary Punishments (which, if enacted, would replace the existing Book Five of the Islamic Penal Code) was reportedly prepared by the

Judiciary's Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Deputy Office and sent to the Government for review in December 2022. The bill seeks to expand the scope of offenses and penalties for women not wearing the compulsory veil. Among many problematic provisions, Article 179 of the draft bill would target "any individual who, online or offline, incites bi-hijabi [nonadherence to compulsory hijab] in any manner" and subject them to punishments such as imprisonment, flogging, a fine, dismissal from governmental or public positions. It also proposes criminalizing women who advocate against the compulsory veil by subjecting them to paying a fine or being imprisoned for up to five years or being flogged. At the time of writing, the draft Bill was still under governmental review and had not been formally introduced before Parliament.^v

9. As of June 2024, a "Bill to Support the Family by Promoting the Culture of Chastity and Hijab" (later in the text "Hijab and Chastity Bill") was sent to the Guardian Council for the third time for its assessment of the conformity of the Bill with the Constitution and Sharia. UN experts have expressed grave concerns over this draft Bill, which "could be described as a form of gender apartheid, as authorities appear to be governing through systemic discrimination with the intention of suppressing women and girls into total submission."^{vi} Already in April 2023, the UN experts had expressed alarm at the repressive enforcement of Iranian veiling laws, which they view as a manifestation of gender-based persecution.^{vii}
 - A. The draft Bill introduces new provisions and criminal punishments for women and girls who do not comply with the compulsory veiling laws and other overbroad and vaguely defined dress requirements. It also increases the severity of penalties of pre-existing related offenses.
 - B. As proposed, the draft compels women and girls to adhere to degrading dress requirements, or see themselves facing severe repercussions, ranging from being denied employment opportunities, access to public services such as education and healthcare, and essential commodities, to passport confiscations, exorbitant fines, and incarceration.
 - C. The draft Bill relies extensively on state authorities but also requires private actors such as commercial establishments and private companies to participate in the enforcement of the Bill, expectedly resulting in the social and economic paralysis of women and girls not complying with the draft and other compulsory veiling laws.
 - D. The draft Bill also directly involves and instrumentalizes private individuals in its enforcement, subjecting those who do not enforce the Bill and other related regulations to punishments, thus coercing complicity with discriminatory and degrading legal provisions.
 - E. The draft Bill mentions the need for broader gender segregation in city planning (e.g., public beaches, urban spaces), public transport, universities, administrative

centers, educational institutions, parks, tourist locations, and hospital treatment sections.

10. Many of the provisions foreseen in the draft “Hijab and Chastity” Bill are already being enforced by state authorities across the country and at a large scale:
 - A. On 8 April 2023, Iran’s Chief of Police unveiled a new strategy termed the “hijab and chastity project,” which employs facial recognition technology to identify and report women and girls not wearing the veil in public spaces.^{viii} On 14 June 2023, the police’s spokesperson, Saeed Montazer-Almahdi, revealed that since the measures’ inception, nearly one million warning SMS messages were sent to women seen without a veil in their cars. In January 2024, the police commander of Qom announced that 74,000 text messages were sent to women over the last 10 months for non-compliance. He added that 53,000 warnings to women had been sent, and 7,000 vehicles seized from women not adhering with the compulsory veil laws.^{ix}
 - B. State agencies, spanning national, provincial, and municipal levels, along with public institutions such as banks, universities, and healthcare centers, have been promulgating repressive regulations and policies against women and girls not complying with the compulsory veil. A notable instance of this trend was on 27 April 2023, when the mayor of Tehran, Alireza Zakani, released a “hijab and chastity plan,” exclusive to the municipality. This plan leverages a special municipal security force (*yegan-e hefazat-e shahrdari*) to prohibit women and girls who do not wear the compulsory veil from entering the metro system.^x
 - C. The National Police and the Judiciary have proactively disseminated multiple directives urging citizens, business owners, companies, and staff to assist authorities in enforcing veiling laws. According to these directives, failing to fully implement the compulsory veil during the conduct of business activities, for instance, could result in substantial fines and forced termination of business.

11. Socio-economic sanctions against women who do not abide by the compulsory veiling laws and policies further compounds the economic hardship women from minorities face. Many aspects of the “Hijab and Chastity” Bill depriving women and girls of basic rights and services have already been and continue to be implemented through other laws and policies.^{xi} Given the precarious economic situations in which many women belonging to minorities find themselves, these sanctions have a disproportionate impact on these segments of the population. Minority women and girls who do not comply with Iran’s repressive dress laws and/or protest against them, thereby exercising their rights to freedom of expression, religion and belief and equality face arrest, detention, judicial prosecution and punishments, and violence from security forces.^{xii}

3. Criminalization of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence

12. The Islamic Republic of Iran received 16 recommendations calling on the State to take measures and/or strengthen its efforts to fully protect women and girls from violence, including domestic violence. The Government did not support the 6 recommendations that explicitly called to criminalize^{xiii} or adopt laws to combat gender-based violence,^{xiv} repeal or amend legal provisions that sanction gender-based violence,^{xv} and punish perpetrators in line with international norms.^{xvi} The Government did not support either the 4 recommendations to adopt a minimum age of marriage,^{xvii} to put an end to child, early and forced marriage^{xviii} or to take measures for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims, including child brides in accordance with international standards.^{xix} However the Government supported a recommendation to “enhance efforts to ensure the full eradication of child marriages in certain parts of the country”.^{xx} The Government also supported 5 recommendations to promote and strengthen efforts to combat gender-based violence^{xxi} and to adopt the draft bill on the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence.^{xxii} The drafters of this submission assess that none of the recommendations have been fully implemented since 2019.
13. Iran’s legislative framework does not specifically criminalize domestic violence. Cases of domestic violence can be prosecuted as crimes of bodily assault. Rape is not classified as a distinct crime under Iranian law but is considered as a “zina” offence without consent.^{xxiii} Marital rape is not recognized as a crime at all. The legal definition for “coerced zina” is restricted to forced vaginal and anal penetration by a penis - therefore excludes other forms of penetration- and only when the perpetrator and the victim are unmarried - therefore explicitly excludes marital rape. Beyond rape, no other form of sexual assault is specifically criminalized under the Islamic Penal Code.
14. The Islamic Penal Code provides various exemptions for husbands, fathers, and grandfathers who kill or assault their female relatives. Article 630 of the Islamic Penal Code exempts husbands from criminal liability and qisas^{xxiv} if he commits murder, assault and/or battery against his wife, if the husband catches their wife committing a zina offense (adultery) with another man. There also exist exemptions in the Islamic Penal Code for fathers and grandfathers who kill their children.^{xxv} Moreover, adultery can be sentenced with the death penalty in Iran, including the death penalty by stoning.^{xxvi}

15. Moreover, numerous articles in the country's Civil Code actively undermine the already severely limited legal protections for women against domestic violence:
- A. Article 630 of the Islamic Penal Code (2013) exempts husbands from criminal liability and qisas (retribution in kind) if he commits murder, assault and/or battery against his wife if the husband catches their wife committing a zina offense (adultery) with another man. There are also exemptions in the Islamic Penal Code for fathers and grandfathers who kill their children.
 - B. Article 1105 of Iran's Civil Code states that "in relations between husband and wife, the position of the head of the family is the exclusive right of the husband." 'Disobedience' to the husband can be used as a legal ground for battery.^{xxvii}
 - C. Article 1117 forbids a woman from leaving the matrimonial home without the husband's permission unless she is able and willing to go to court to prove she is endangered. This leaves Iranian women deeply vulnerable to violence especially given the evidentiary requirement of witnesses^{xxviii} and the fact that a female witness's testimony is worth half that of a man's.^{xxix}
 - D. Article 1108 stresses that if a wife refuses to have sex with her husband without a "legitimate excuse," she is not entitled to 'spousal maintenance.' Although the legal minimum age for marriage is 13 years old under Iranian law,^{xxx} girls as young as 9 lunar years (around 8.5 calendar years) can marry, subject to parental consent and court approval.^{xxxi} Therefore, 9 lunar years old married girls and older are also subject to the Civil Code Article 1108's obligation to fulfil the sexual needs of their husbands. In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran found that Article 1108 of the Iranian Civil Code "might even condone sexual abuse".^{xxxii}
16. A bill on violence against women has been in the making for more than a decade. The Bill for the Protection, Dignity and Security of Women Against Violence, first announced in 2011, is still going through its adoption process under review. In January 2020, the U.N. Secretary General had already expressed concerns about the slow progress of the bill. The Secretary General also noted that "critical articles were reportedly removed from the initial proposal of the Executive, including provisions protecting women from various forms of violence and criminalizing domestic violence." The Parliament adopted on April 11, 2023 the general content of the draft. MPs can now register proposals on the details of the bill, which will then go through a review article by article (currently 57 articles) in plenary session. It is unclear when such a review will take place.^{xxxiii}

4. Protection and redress for victims of sexual and gender-based violence

17. Women and girls are denied meaningful access to avenues for justice and redress in Iran. Legally, a woman may be given permission to leave the marital house only if she can prove to a court a significant risk of bodily harm or threat to her life and safety. The standard of proof for testimony in all offences must be two male witnesses, except in cases of “zina” or rape which must be corroborated by the testimonies of four male witnesses, a prohibitive evidentiary burden for women victim of sexual and gender based abuse, including domestic violence. In addition, women and girls who cannot prove they have been abused may be prosecuted for adultery, a charge which may carry flogging and the death penalty. This requirement facilitates perpetrators escaping accountability, in addition to a permissive legal framework.

Domestic violence

18. Reports have shown that police and judges often consider domestic violence as internal family matters. Police intervention has been reportedly discouraged and parties urged to settle out-of-court. State institutions and Iranian authorities have been reportedly unwilling to investigate, punish perpetrators and provide social services to victims of sexual assault or rape.
19. There is a serious lack of comprehensive and readily available official data on the prevalence of domestic violence in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The last extensive and published study on domestic violence carried out in the Islamic Republic of Iran dates back to 2004. The study showed that about 66 per cent of women sampled responded that they had been subjected to domestic violence in the first year of their marriage, and of these 30 percent had experienced physical violence and 10 percent had experienced physical violence with lasting harm. Despite the lack of comprehensive official data, cases of domestic violence are regularly reported and considered widespread in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In July 2019, the head of the Medical Examiner’s Office of Tehran Province reportedly announced that more than 16,420 cases of domestic violence had been reported to the office, a number consistently increasing since at least 2017.^{xxxiv} In February 2019, deputy of social affairs of the State’s Welfare Organization, Habibollah Massoudi Farbod, reportedly announced that during 2018, about 10,000 calls relating to violence against women were made to the public social welfare hotlines.^{xxxv} In April 2020, Mahmoud Aligoo, the head of the department of social harms of the State’s Welfare Organization reportedly announced a dramatic increase in the number of cases of domestic violence, as Iran was going through a government-mandated lockdown to combat

the spread of the virus COVID-19.^{xxxvi} Yet, cases of domestic violence are believed to be largely underreported. According to an official with Iran's Legal Medicine Organization, in 2021, about 75,000 domestic violence cases were investigated, accounting for 37% of all examinations.^{xxxvii} These statistics only reflect cases reported to authorities and referred to Forensic Medicine to verify the severity of the assault or identify other mental and physical injuries.

20. The FFMI noted that “The infrastructure to protect women against violence is extremely limited with only approximately 27 women’s shelters in the country, with a capacity for five persons at each shelter.”^{xxxviii} According to the Government, “between 2015 and 2018, an average of 1,500 women, victims of domestic violence and their children, received specialized services annually.”^{xxxix} In comparison and as aforementioned, 16,420 cases of domestic violence have been reported in 2019, just in Tehran.^{xl} The World Bank put the percentage of women who have experienced intimate partner violence at 31 percent, above the world average.^{xli}

Violence perpetrated by state actors

21. There have been multiple reports of women being harassed, intimidated, dragged, and beaten by security forces and/or the so-called “morality police” for not wearing the compulsory veil. Because of their gender and ethnic identities, women belonging to minority groups face frequent and severe encounters with the state's oppressive laws. The morality police, and other policing authorities, scrutinize them not only as women but also as members of ethnic and religious minorities, subjecting them to harsh punishments.
- A. The death of Kurdish Iranian Jina Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the morality police on 16 September 2022, for allegedly not wearing the “proper hijab,” exemplifies the systematic violence and persecution faced by women and girls belonging to minorities in Iran.
- B. A year after her death, on 1 October 2023, Armita Garawand, who was also Kurdish Iranian, was hospitalized with a brain injury following an encounter with the morality police in Tehran’s subway, reportedly for not wearing a hijab. Her family reported state pressure to refrain from speaking about her situation and prevention from burying her in her home city of Kermanshah.^{xlii}

5. Trafficking of women and children and modern slavery

22. The trafficking of persons by means of threat or use of force or coercion, abuse of power, abuse of a victim's position of vulnerability for purposes of prostitution, slavery or forced marriage has been a crime under Iranian law since 2004. Penalties can reach up to 10 years imprisonment for perpetrators.
23. The Judiciary drafted a bill to amend the law which, as of June 2024, was under parliament's review since April 2019.^{xiii} The draft bill includes higher penalties for crimes of human trafficking involving children, adolescents, women, persons with disabilities, victims of floods and earthquakes, and for cases where the perpetrator is the legal guardian of the victim. The current draft also exempts women, children, and adolescents who have been trafficked by their husbands or legal guardians from criminal liability for the illegal crossing of the border.
24. The current draft, if adopted, does not amend the 2004 law's definition of trafficking, which is currently inconsistent with international standards. For instance, the law and the draft do not protect persons against all forms of trafficking other than prostitution, slavery or forced marriage (e.g., organ removal, debt bondage, child soldiers, domestic servitude, etc.).^{xiv} The draft also does not address the absence of an independent mechanism mandated to monitor acts of human trafficking and that is competent to receive complaints from victims.
25. The State does not publish official and comprehensive statistics of victims of human trafficking, or numbers of investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sentences for perpetrators. However, reports suggest that human trafficking is an issue in Iran, and that it targets women and children in particular.^{xiv}
26. There are no national procedures or measures to proactively identify victims of trafficking in Iran. Additionally, while the State Welfare Organization provides some level of protection to victims of abuse, it does not offer special protection services to victims of trafficking, including special shelters or medical, psycho-social, and legal assistance.

6. Forced, early and temporary marriage of girls

27. Child marriage continues to be permitted under Iranian law. The legal minimum age for marriage is 13 years old for girls and 15 years old for boys.^{xlvi} However, younger children who have reached puberty can marry with parental consent and court approval.^{xlvii} The predefined age of puberty under Iranian law, and the age of legal majority, is 9 “lunar years” for girls (about 8 years old and 9 months) and 15 “lunar years” for boys (about 14 years old and 6 months).^{xlviii} Under the official interpretation of Sharia law in Iran, marriages (Aghd in Farsi) of girls as young as 9 “lunar years” are permitted, although such marriages cannot be officially registered, given the legal minimum age. Young girls are also subjected to temporary religious marriages in Iran, which may not be legally registered, known as sigheh.
28. Forced, early and temporary marriage of girls has particularly egregious physical, psychological and social consequences. These coerced conjugal relationships, may also entail other violations, including rape, torture, forced pregnancy and forced labour. Article 1108 of the Civil Code stresses that if a wife refuses to have sex with her husband without a “legitimate” excuse, she is not entitled to ‘spousal maintenance’. As a result, under the law, 9 lunar years old married girls and older are also subject to the Civil Code Article 1108’s obligation to fulfill the sexual needs of their husbands. A court ruling may still give the right to a husband to restrict his wife’s education if he finds it “incompatible with the interests of the family or with his or his wife’s dignity”.
29. While the Government stated that child marriage is prohibited by law, forced and child marriages remain without legal consequences, especially in rural and remote areas. With a court’s permission, a legal guardian has the right to legally enter a daughter into a compulsory marriage, regardless of whether she gives free and informed consent to the marriage. Iranian authorities are reportedly providing no meaningful State protection against either forced marriage itself or violence within marriage.
30. Girls lack access to redress and legal recourse as they cannot file lawsuits without the representation of their legal guardian. Further, a girl or woman only has permission to leave the marital house without her husband’s consent if she is able and willing to prove to a court that she faced a significant risk of bodily harm or threat to her life and safety.^{xlix} The lack of legal safeguards, as described above, discrimination within

the formal justice system in addition to the precariousness of the situation of women and girls suffering domestic violence lead victims to be routinely forced back into abusive households.

31. Poverty is commonly understood as being one of the key drivers of child marriage. Official data shows that child marriages are increasing each year, especially in minority provinces.ⁱ These areas have the highest rates of child marriage, significantly impacting the lives of women and girls. Child marriage is a key driver of school dropouts. One survey conducted in 2016 revealed that about 37.5% of married children, boys and girls, were illiterate.ⁱⁱ Authorities reported that only 40% to 50% of girls in minority-populated border provinces complete high school, and NGOs,ⁱⁱⁱ highlight that the number of female-headed households, many led by girls under 18, in Sistan and Baluchistan Province (Iran's poorest province) is growing.ⁱⁱⁱ
32. Official data provided by the National Organization for Civil Registration shows that the number of child marriages is increasing each year in Iran.^{iv} Since the Committee's previous report, more than one million child marriages have reportedly been registered. Between 2018 and 2022, a total of 474,946 child marriages have been recorded. Among them, 458,566 marriages involved girls under 18, and 51,521 of them were 13 years old or younger. In April 2023, the state-owned Statistical Centre of Iran reported over 20,000 child marriages with girls under the age of 15 between March and December 2022.^{iv} Numbers, however, are likely to be higher as many child marriages go unregistered.
33. Poverty is commonly understood as being one of the key drivers of child marriage. Official data shows that child marriages are increasing each year, especially in minority provinces.^{vi} These areas have the highest rates of child marriage, significantly impacting the lives of women and girls.

7. Women's participation in public and political life

34. Women's political participation is significantly limited due to a system based on discrimination on the basis of gender that excludes women from holding most public positions and participating freely in public life. For instance:
 - A. Women are completely prohibited from holding the position of Supreme Leader.

B. Candidates for the presidency in Iran must be what the Constitution refers to as Rajol-E-Siasi (“political men”).^{lvii} Though some argue that the phrase as a whole could be understood as “political persons,” without a specification as to gender, the Guardian Council^{lviii} has never approved a woman to stand in presidential elections or elections to the Assembly of Experts.^{lix} Additionally, no woman has ever served on the Guardian Council, nor on the Expediency Council.^{lx}

35. Similarly, while there is no legal limitation for women to run for parliament, city and village councils, the Guardian Council is known to arbitrarily disqualify women candidates from running for election. For example, in the run-up to the 2020 elections, the Guardian Council disqualified 56% of all candidates, a majority of whom were women. There are currently no female ministers in the Government’s cabinet. No provincial governors are women. Women currently occupy only 5.8 percent (16 out of 290) of parliamentary seats in the new parliament elected in February 2020, compared to 17 percent in the previous parliament.^{lxi} This number also decreased in the March 2024 parliamentary elections, and currently, only 14 women representatives are present in the Islamic Council.^{lxii}

8. Right to work

36. Iran’s legal framework places extensive restrictions on the right to employment of women, in effect undermining, if not denying, their access to financial autonomy and independence. In the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report in 2023, Iran ranked 143 out of 146 countries assessed.^{lxiii} Among multiple restricting measures violating women’s right to work, the 1990 Labour Code forbids women from being employed in “dangerous, arduous or harmful work”.^{lxiv}

37. Women’s right to work is also extensively dependent on their husbands and male relatives. 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.^{lxv} There is no law prohibiting an employer from seeking a husband’s permission for a woman to work and employers have been reportedly requiring engaged or married women to provide a written statement of permission from their husbands in order to be hired.

38. Further, Article 1105 of the Civil Code establishes that the position of ‘head of the family’ is the exclusive prerogative of a man; a designation that empowers men in household decision making, including financial decisions. Additionally, job benefits such as social security and health insurance, family bonuses or paid overtime inhere

to the man.^{lxvi} As a result, unmarried and separated women and girls, widows and women-headed households are pushed into economic precarity.

39. Under Iranian law, women cannot be appointed as judges.^{lxvii} While women can hold the position of “legal advisers,” a role which allows them to oversee case proceedings or sit on three-person Appeals Court panels, they cannot render final verdicts, which must be signed by a judge.^{lxviii} In its National Report to the Universal Periodic Review in 2019, the Government reported that “more than 970 female judges work in the Judiciary”^{lxix} while the total number of judges reportedly reached 10,000 in 2015.^{lxx} In its 2021 State party’s report to the Human Rights Committee, Iran’s Government stated that 1077 women were employed as “administrative staff of the Judiciary”.^{lxxi} As highlighted above, and as suggested by “administrative staff”, women can only be employed in advisory or assisting positions in the Judiciary, and do not have decision-making power whatsoever.
40. Discrimination limits minority women’s job opportunities, restricting access to decent, higher-paying work. Women from minority backgrounds face additional obstacles due to marginalization and exclusion that limit their mobility and autonomy. These barriers perpetuate economic disparities, putting many women belonging to minorities at greater risk of poverty.^{lxxii}
41. In practice, women challenging institutionalized discrimination are routinely prohibited from exercising their profession, with recruitment, continued employment or promotion being conditional on adherence to the mandatory hijab.

9. Right to education

42. The Islamic Republic of Iran supported 4 recommendations calling on the State to take measures to promote and ensure women’s and girls’ equal access to quality education.^{lxxiii} The Government did not support the one recommendation to review and repeal discriminatory laws related to education in line with CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
43. In 1983, gender segregation policies were introduced in the Iranian education system that implemented quotas and resulted in the exclusion of women from 91 out of the 169 academic specializations existing at the time. Despite the lifting of these policies in 1993, the Government introduced gender-segregation measures in universities in

2012, resulting in women being excluded from 77 academic specializations in 36 universities.^{lxxiv} A decree prepared and approved by the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution in 2013 on the "Islamization of Universities" (Strategic Guide for Islamization) to be implemented by all educational entities, called for "Institutionalizing the culture of chastity and hijab, organizing the public space of universities and preserving the affairs of the university scientific environment." The decree mandates all educational institutions to "review and improve the design of spaces and optimize university services in order to reduce unnecessary mixing of girls and boys."^{lxxv} The implementation of policies relating to the Supreme Council's decree correlated with the decrease of women enrollment in universities after 2012.

44. In higher education regulations in Iran, academic specializations in different universities and cities across Iran must adhere to state gender quotas for admissions and certain totally bar women from enrollment. Majors in various universities barring women from admission are often in the fields of computer science, engineering, construction or agriculture.

45. Child marriage is a key driver of school dropouts. One survey conducted in 2016 revealed that about 37.5% of married children, boys and girls, were illiterate.^{lxxvi}

46. Authorities reported that only 40% to 50% of girls in minority-populated border provinces complete high school, and NGOs,^{lxxvii} highlight that the number of female-headed households, many led by girls under 18, in Sistan and Baluchistan Province (Iran's poorest province) is growing.^{lxxviii} Girls belonging to ethnic minorities in Iran are more likely to live in poverty and lack basic amenities due to chronic underdevelopment in minority-populated provinces, often resulting from systemic neglect and government policies that fail to address their needs. Schools in minority-populated provinces are often underfunded, with few resources and poorly trained teachers. Other barriers include inadequate educational facilities in minority areas, cultural biases favoring male education, and state neglect in addressing gender disparities.

47. Iranian authorities have been implementing measures to further restrict the access to education of women and girls who do not abide by the compulsory veiling laws. In April 2023, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education announced that universities and schools would not provide education and other services, such as student accommodation, to women who do not wear the compulsory veil.^{lxxix}

ⁱ [A/HRC/43/12](#), paras. 26.247; 26.240

ⁱⁱ [A/HRC/43/12](#), paras. 26.248; 26.238; 26.246

ⁱⁱⁱ Articles 20 & 21, the Constitution.

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- iv OHCHR, “[Iran: Repeal “crippling” new anti-abortion law – UN experts](#)” 16 November 2021
- v ARTICLE19 “[Iran: Siege on women and girls intensifies as authorities deceive the world](#)”, 12 April 2023; [A/HRC/53/23](#), para. 42, 15 June 2023;
- vi OHCHR, “[Iran’s proposed hijab law could amount to “gender apartheid”: UN experts](#)” 01 September 2023
- vii OHCHR, “[Repressive enforcement of Iranian hijab laws symbolises gender-based persecution: UN experts](#)” 14 April 2023
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- ^{liii} Deutsche Welle, "Government statistics: 93 thousand women are heads of households in Sistan and Baluchistan" 11 October 2021.
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- ^{lvii} Art 115, the Constitution.
- ^{lviii} The Guardian Council is a body mandated to 1) bring parliamentary resolutions in line with Constitutional and Islamic law, 2) supervise elections and 3) vet candidates seeking to run in local, parliamentary, presidential and Assembly of Experts elections. The Guardian Council is composed of 12 members, six constitutional law experts elected by the Parliament and six experts of Islamic law appointed by the Supreme Leader and is responsible for overseeing elections and vetting candidates.
- ^{lix} The Assembly of Experts is a constitutional body with authority to appoint or dismiss the Supreme Leader. It is a 88-member body, elected by direct popular vote, among candidates vetted by the Guardian Council.
- ^{lx} The body, whose members are all appointed by the Supreme Leader, was initially established as an arbitration body between parliament and the Guardian Council. The body serves as the Supreme Leader's advisory arm, formulating "general policies for the state" and overseeing the implementation of those policies on the behalf of the Supreme Leader.
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- ^{lxiv} Articles 6 and 75, Labour Code.
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- ^{lxvi} Articles 1102 to 1119, 1133 to 1142, Civil Code.
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