



Iranian Women's Voice Must be Heard

We write on behalf and in support of a collective of Iranian women activists calling for global feminist solidarity. A year on from the death of Mahsa Jina Amini at the hands of the Iranian regime's Morality Police, which sparked a women-led uprising nationwide, the regime's repression of women, LGBTQI+ people, and minorities has worsened. Women in Iran continue their struggle for freedom and call for an end to the regime's gender persecution¹ that impacts over half of the country's population, even while they continue to be targeted, threatened, arrested, and killed by the regime for speaking out and taking action.

On 16th August Iranian regime security services [arrested at least 11 women activists](#) and influencers in the northern Iran province of Gilan. According to a [media outlet](#) linked with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), those arrested are accused of "plotting to incite disorder and vandalism" on the anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini's death. Since the start of Iran's women-led uprising in September 2022, at least [500 protestors have been killed](#), hundreds [blinded in one or both eyes](#) or otherwise injured, and over [tens of thousands were arrested](#) in Iran.

The arrests in Gilan are not isolated, and there are reports of numerous arrests by the authorities in Teheran and many other cities, with activists being summoned and warned by authorities to not partake in any protests.² In some cases, activists have been rearrested after being released.³ Nargess Mohammadi, a women's rights activist, issued a statement from the notorious Evin Prison, reporting worsening treatment of women prisoners in recent months.⁴ Women have also

¹ Under the Rome Statute, "'persecution' refers to the intentional and severe deprivation of fundamental rights contrary to international law by reason of the identity of a group or collectivity. Gender persecution is committed against persons because of sex characteristics and/or because of the social constructs and criteria used to define gender." See International Criminal Court Office of the Prosecutor, Policy on the Crime of Gender Persecution, at 6 (Dec. 2022),

<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2022-12/2022-12-07-Policy-on-the-Crime-of-Gender-Persecution.pdf>.

² Leily Nikounazar and Aaron Boxerman, "Women's Rights Activists Rounded Up in Iran as Protest Anniversary Nears," The New York Times (17 Aug. 2023),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/17/world/europe/iran-women-activists-detained.html>; Yuliya Talmazan, "Iran arrests female activists in crackdown ahead of protests anniversary," NBC News (18 Aug. 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-arrests-women-activists-mahsa-amini-protests-anniversary-rcna100566>.

³ Radio Farda, "Mozhgan Ilanlu, an Iranian documentary maker, was arrested again," (2023),

<https://www.radiofarda.com/a/32555347.html>; Leily Nikounazar and Aaron Boxerman, "Women's Rights Activists Rounded Up in Iran as Protest Anniversary Nears," The New York Times (17 Aug. 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/17/world/europe/iran-women-activists-detained.html>.

⁴ Nargess Mohammadi, "Increase in violence against women prisoners in the last three months," (Aug. 2023), <https://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php/news1/more/109782/>.

reportedly been targeted by Iranian security forces and subject to sexual abuse while in detention.⁵ [UN Experts have also criticised](#) the Iranian regime's targeting of ethnic and religious minorities. In particular, members of the Baha'i religious faith have been disproportionately targeted.

The infamous Morality Police, responsible for the death of Mahsa (Jina), returned recently under a different name and accounts from across the country report agents warning women and in many cases, arresting them for not properly observing the hijab.⁶ Importantly, the Iranian regime has proposed a new law with draconian measures against women who do not abide by the compulsory hijab. Punishments include unaffordable financial penalties, harsh custodial sentences, prohibition from employment, and confiscation of communication devices among others.⁷ The bill is being hastily passed through the parliament.⁸ UN Experts warned that the bill could amount to gender apartheid, "as authorities appear to be governing through systemic discrimination with the intention of suppressing women and girls into total submission."⁹

These acts of suppression against women, LGBTQI+ people, and minorities are seen by many activists in Iran and the diaspora as intentional acts of the regime to prevent any protests during the approaching first anniversary of the death of Mahsa and other victims of the security forces and the military institutions.

We call upon people of the world to condemn the Iranian regime's atrocities against the people of Iran and to show their support for Iranian Women's demand to stop discrimination against women, religious and ethnic minorities, and LGBTQI+ people. We request you show your solidarity with Iranian women, LGBTQI+ people, and minorities by taking the following actions:

1. Publicise the plight of Iranian women, LGBTQI+ people, and minorities and show solidarity on social media with #WomanLifeFreedom.
2. Call on the Iranian envoys in your country as well as the relevant international bodies to condemn the Iranian regime's treatment of women and the de facto gender apartheid they have imposed.
3. Call on your government and parliamentarians to exert pressure on the Iranian Regime and its envoys to stop atrocities against women in Iran.

⁵ Deepa Parent and Ghoncheh Habibiadzad, "They Used Our Hijabs to Gag Us": Iran Protesters Tell of Rapes, Beatings and Torture by Police," *The Guardian* (6 Feb. 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/feb/06/iran-protesters-police-rapes-beatings-and-torture>; Tamara Qiblawi et al., "How Iran's Security Forces Use Rape to Quell Protests," *CNN* (21 Nov. 2022), <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2022/11/middleeast/iran-protests-sexual-assault/index.html>; Golnaz Esfandiari, "Women Share Stories Of Sexual Abuse In Iranian Prisons," *Radio Free Europe* (31 May 2021), <https://www.rferl.org/a/women-sexual-abuse-iran-prisons/31282808.html>.

⁶ Amnesty International, *Iran: Authorities Doubling Down On Punishments Against Women and Girls Defying Discriminatory Veiling Laws*, (26 Jul. 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7041/2023/en/>.

⁷ Amnesty International, *Iran: Authorities Doubling Down On Punishments Against Women and Girls Defying Discriminatory Veiling Laws*, (26 Jul. 2023), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/7041/2023/en/>.

⁸ BBC, "Iran's politicians to debate hijab laws in secret," (13 Aug. 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-66490859>.

⁹ Javid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran et al., "Iran's proposed hijab law could amount to "gender apartheid": UN experts," (1 Sept. 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/irans-proposed-hijab-law-could-amount-gender-apartheid-un-experts>.

4. Call upon your government and parliamentarians to provide international protection for those who suffer persecution at the hands of the Iranian regime.

We further call upon the international community to take action to end gender apartheid in Iran and support Iranian women activists. The international community must show solidarity with Iranian women by unequivocally condemning the regime's violence and oppression of women.

Endorsed by:

WILPF International Secretariat
Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI)
CEMO
Corporación Humanas - Chile
Defying Gender Roles
Feministas en Holanda
Glasgow's Queer Choir, Scotland
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Me Too Movement Iran
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MundoSur
Peter Tatchell Foundation
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