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## Human Rights Council

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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Verein Sudwind Entwicklungspolitik, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[10 February 2013]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Continuation of discrimination against women in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

This report has been compiled by a number of women's rights activists and highlights the worsening situation of women. Following the 1979 revolution women are legally discriminated, impacting on their private and public life.

As mentioned in various oral statements to the human rights council, repression against women activists has carried on increasing systematically.

Legislation and policy-making born out of the 2005 Chastity and Hijab Directive aggravated the problem and the scope of discrimination and violence against women widened.

An example of the fundamentalist approach to women is demonstrated in the internal directive issued by the Islamic Guidance Minister in October 2005, which demanded women should go home at the end of office hours because their presence warmed the heart of the family unit.<sup>1</sup>

### **Education**

After the revolution, gender discrimination began with the Cultural Revolution and continued in various ways. Students' associations critical of the universities were dissolved, thousands of students expelled, Islamization of the universities accelerated along with closer cooperation with the intelligence and security apparatus and above all selection and quotas.

As the latest act of discrimination in education during 2011-12, the establishment of female-only universities accelerated and gender segregation and gender ration rapidly progressed in more than 60 universities and over 600 subjects.<sup>2</sup> Women have also been barred from 14 fields of education. According to an official from the ministry of higher education 23 all female universities will be ready for operation from next academic year.<sup>3</sup> This was not confined to the state-owned higher education establishments. According to Mohammad Mehdi Mazaheri, Vice President of the privately owned Free Universities Group (which has branches in many cities & towns): "As many as 6 single sex universities are on operation, while about 90% of the science and laboratory lessons and 100% of general fields are sex-segregated."<sup>4</sup> Segregation ratio in some universities read as follows: Maths & technical 20%, human sciences 30%, arts 34%, foreign languages 25%. This is against the fact that in the current academic year, 60% participants were females against 40% males.<sup>5,6</sup>

Segregation has reached university transport system and queues at the canteens. Students receive notices or worse expelled from the university due to "improper behaviour" which includes talking to male colleagues. Females are advised to wear loose clothes of dark colours and avoid make up. The university intelligence informs parents of "improper behaviour" in the university dormitories.<sup>7</sup> As a result female students are harassed and intimidated regularly.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mag.gooya.com/politics/archives/037278.php>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.daneshjoonews.com/node/7643>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1811124>.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13910413000279>.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.daneshjoonews.com/node/7643>.

<sup>6</sup> This is despite the fact that according to a research carried out in Iran in 2003/2004 academic year the number of girls registering for high school was less than boys (46.33% girls, 53.66% boys).

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.daneshjoonews.com/node/8080>.

Regionalization of university gender ratios has created further obstacles for women as those with higher marks than men in the entrance exams are unable to move away from home to a better university outside their region. Women's desire for financial independence is reflected in the increasing number of women entering universities thus future employment. Yet the high number of female graduates and post graduates are not reflected in the employment figures. According to the national census in 2006, women age 10 years and above had a total share of 15% of the job market. This figure went down to 14.1% in 2011 and 12.6% in 2012. With regards to these figures the head of the national census declared: "Women with higher education expect better jobs while the market is made for men and women cannot replace men."<sup>8</sup>

The fundamentalist approach to gender inequality is demonstrated in the philosophy of education. At a plenary session on "Women and Their Spiritual Health", the former education minister emphasized: "Boys and girls are different and education authorities and parents are aware that even the duration of study at school must be different for them."<sup>9</sup>

### **Sports**

Restrictions in sports range from the type of outfit to the field of sport. Islamic dress code works as a barrier to free movement hence prevents women engage in many fields of sports. Women are also barred from stadiums to watch matches.

### **Prisons and detention centres**

Women suffer abuse, torture and execution while in prison. Yet, they bear further violence as wife, daughter or sister of prisoners and are sometimes taken at ransom. An example of daughter abuse is Nasrin Sotoudeh's 12 year old daughter who was banned from travelling abroad. The ban was only lifted after Sotoudeh went on hunger strike for 49 days.

Young girls face further dangers and assault in prison. There are no separate provisions for juveniles in many prisons. According to a woman activist who served 6 months in a prison in Iran, abuse of sexual nature and beatings by older prisoners of girls as young as 11 to 18 is common in prisons and these young prisoners are unable to defend themselves.

### **Reproductive rights**

Abortion is illegal even in cases of rape or incest. There are no official statistics on the illegal abortions. Women who use unprofessional methods of abortion often suffer from the consequences of long-term ill-health.

State policy is to increase the population rate and as the population growth rate has declined, the family planning centres which provided education and guidance were closed down and the distribution of free condoms stopped. Free men's vasectomy has also stopped though that can still be done privately. Such policies are geared to force women to have more children and stay home although population growth has brought poverty, addiction and unemployment.

### **Dress code**

According to a note to Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code: "Women who appear in the public without proper dress code will be imprisoned between 10 days to 2 months and ordered to pay a fine as well."<sup>10</sup>

Compulsory dress code though opposed by women since it was introduced more than three decades ago has remained unchanged. Control, detention and violence against women even

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.tebyan.net/newindex.aspx?pid=208761>.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.advar-news.biz/spip.php?page=imprimer&id\\_article=6951](http://www.advar-news.biz/spip.php?page=imprimer&id_article=6951).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ghavenin.ir/detail.asp?id=1232>.

in private places are perused with such zeal that according to the head of moral police “70 thousand employed corps work in this area.”<sup>11</sup>

Women are constantly harassed in the public and private places, detained and released on heavy bail and get a criminal record which works against them if caught in future. The figure now runs into thousands who have been reprimanded at the airports when travelling abroad.

### **Law**

Civil law in Iran supports men’s supremacy in the family, permits polygamy for men, gives men the unilateral right to divorce, unequal inheritance, child marriage, child guardianship and allows them to punish their children. Such provisions inherently violate women’s rights, but also provide further opportunities for violence against them.

Bisexual and lesbian rights' are not recognized in law and they are constantly under threat of detention and punishment.

Woman’s right to employment (1117) and travel (article 18-4-3 of the Passport Code<sup>12</sup>) are also in the hands of her husband after marriage.

Recently, in a bill presented to the parliament, women over 18 can apply for passport but all women regardless of age and status must seek permission from a male family member either the husband, if not married a male guardian on father’s side or the court to travel abroad.

### **Recommendations**

Women’s rights activists believe that discriminatory laws must be changed, Iran ratifies the CEDAW and complies with its contents. At present, as it stands, violence against women and gender discrimination will continue to grow in all areas and spheres of public and private lives of Iranian women.

We urge the Human Rights Council to consider the issues raised in this report as grave abuse of women’s human rights and demand the Islamic Republic of Iran to:

- Stop discrimination, segregation and violence against women in education from nursery to the PhD levels.
- End discrimination at job market.
- Stop restrictions on women’s freedom of expression including dress code.
- Cancel the humiliating and unjustifiable bill which restricts freedom of movement and travel for adult women.
- Withdraw the family bill which among other privileges, give men free hand to polygamy.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9002191229>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://tafatton.ir/plugins/content/content.php?content.279>.