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International Liberty Association Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

As we prepare this newsletter, we cast our thoughts back to this time last year when the Beast from the East roared across Europe into Britain and, supported by storms from the West, held the whole region in its savage grip such that it was hard to imagine that the harsh Winter would ever cede to the light and colour of Spring.

In the same time frame, we witnessed the Iranian regime cracking down savagely on the people of Iran who rose up at the end of December 2017 in protest at conditions in Iran and against the Mullah's regime that has brought their once great country to its economic and ecological knees.

We thank you for standing with us as we stood with them through those most turbulent days of mixed emotions; immense pride and optimism at the courage of the people for coming out and defying the mullahs, mingled with concern for their well-being and the outcome of their struggle.

Over 8,000 were arrested and many shot in the street, or executed, in these days of 2018 in a brutal attempt to crush the uprisings, but, as the green shoots of burgeoning life inexorably broke free from 'The Beast', ushering in a benign Spring and a glorious Summer, so the Mullahs' fury was unleashed in vain as the people of Iran defied the onslaught, coming out into the streets in ever increasing numbers, from every walk of life and every town and city across Iran. They used the weapons of democracy, the camera, at every opportunity creating first-hand reporting, and social media, to distribute their truth, until their numbers and their truth became so visible to a world that watched as never before that the Mullahs had to stay their most cruel hand.

... continued on p.2

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN



Slogans read: We are children of workers, we stand with them

For the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March, it is appropriate to look at the role women play and the price they have paid and continue to pay to bring justice and human rights to Iran and what we can do to support them.

Ever since the mullahs seized power in 1979, dissidents have been facing imprisonment, torture, and execution. Many of these are women.

Incarceration of political opponents and human rights activists

and repression of all forms of dissent comprise the predominant theme of the Iranian regime's rule. Over and above this, women face the added burden of being subject to the systemic abuse and violence meted out under a regime that is misogynist by both nature and constitution.

At least 86 women have been executed during Rouhani's tenure so far and a considerable number held as female prisoners of conscience and political prisoners, ... continued on p.2

ATTACK ON WOMEN PRISONERS



The inmates of women's prison, Qarchak, in Varamin, south-east of Tehran, were viciously attacked by prison guards on Thursday 7 February.

Many female prisoners were severely beaten and injured.

The raid began when the inmates of wards 1 and 2 requested authorities provide medical care to one of their cellmates and then protested the prison officials' neglect. The prison guards attacked the wards with tear

gas and pepper spray. Prisoners had to set fire to their beds and bed sheets in order to neutralize the effects of the pepper spray and tear gas fired in the closed area. Prison authorities cut off the electricity and gas inside the ward and let the prisoners remain in the cold weather after being drenched by the fire brigade.

According to reports by family members of the prisoners, during the attack the prisoners were severely beaten and injured.

On Saturday 9 February, 40 female prisoners, their heads covered with sacks, were transferred to Ward 240 of Evin Prison.

ILA condemned the attack and called on the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the report and hold the perpetrators to account. Impunity of human rights violators guarantees the repeat of these heinous acts which must be stopped, fully!



Women's Role *continued from p.1*

including those arrested during the uprisings that started in December 2017 and continue to this day. Many female labour activists and teachers are also held behind bars.

More than half of the female political prisoners are detained in the notorious Evin Prison. Although living conditions in Evin are horrific and inhumane, it is the only place where detainees are separated according to offences.

The rest of the female political prisoners are incarcerated in various prisons in Varamin, Urmia, Bukan, Tabriz, Khoy, Kermanshah, Zanjan, Ahvaz, Sanandaj, Kashan, Kerman, Marivan, Mashhad, Mahabad, Yasuj, Yazd, Semnan, and Shiraz, serving their unjust sentences amongst common criminals and often dangerous inmates.

Prison conditions are abysmal and way below standard, in general. The situation, however, is worse for women, given the misogynist nature of the Iranian regime. Female prisoners are deprived of their special psychological and sanitary needs and have to struggle even to obtain their basic daily essentials.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

The International Covenant on

Civil and Political Rights also states that no person shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest.

Beyond this, international law discourages issuing prison sentences for women due to their roles as mothers and caregivers. Rule 61 of the 'United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules)' reads, "When sentencing women offenders, courts shall have the power to consider mitigating factors such as lack of criminal history and relative non-severity and nature of the criminal conduct, in the light of women's caretaking responsibilities and typical backgrounds."

Also, the "Cross-cutting issues" in the Handbook on Prisoners with special needs – UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) New York 2009 - states that "Imprisonment should be used as a last resort for all offenders, taking into account the nature and circumstances of the offence, the risk the offenders pose to the public and the social reintegration needs of the offenders."

The same article reiterates that, "All prisoners have a right to health, equivalent to that in the general community, as part of their basic human rights."

Clearly, these standards are far from the conduct of the Iranian regime. Iran is a country where women are not only imprisoned for murder, robbery and social crimes, but for having different beliefs, drawing cartoons, writing a story against stoning or the death penalty, participating in



peaceful protests, protesting against poverty and even for defending children's rights and championing environmental protection.

In studying the charges and sentences issued for women prisoners of conscience, it also became evident that the regime does not comply with its own Constitution, Civil and Penal codes, or the Punishment Law.

For the misogynous, fundamentalist clerical regime ruling Iran, women who choose to fight against official restrictions, deprivations and rights abuses to gain their own and their nation's trampled rights are considered the worst enemies. So, they have to endure maximum pressure and inconceivable cruelty from prison officials and guards.

Violent and arbitrary arrests of women for exercising their basic right to peaceful expression of opinion, peaceful protest, peaceful demand for justice, peaceful defence of their clients, peaceful opposition to the death penalty, and even for mere telephone contact with their families, is the norm in Iran under the mullahs. Yet all the cruelty they face has not affected the inspiring women who risk their lives for protecting their rights.

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Editorial *continued from p.1*

A year on, here in Britain, blue skies and unseasonably warm sunshine have banished the 2019 Winter early and herald the coming of a beautiful Spring, while inside Iran the nationwide protests continue unabated and bring real hope and optimism that the days of vicious harshness are indeed soon to come to an end.

We give heartfelt tribute to all the courageous people in Iran who are daily proving themselves prepared to pay the price for freedom from oppression, but, due to 8 March being International Women's Day, we have chosen to put the spotlight on the women, those whose lives are blighted by the dictates of a misogynist regime and those courageously taking a stand in the frontline of activism to bring change.

Let us here turn that spotlight for a moment back down the tunnel of time, where we see a long legacy all the way to the late 19th century of women standing, and dying, beside the men in support of self-determination and against despotic authoritarianism.

Two martyrs' voices rise above the rest and we will let them speak for all:

Neda Agha-Soltan who in response to her family asking her to stay safely indoors on 20 June 2009, replied "If I do not go out and people like me do not go out, then there will be no protest and we will have lost." The image of her youth and beauty dead on a street in Tehran first opened the eyes and the heart of the world to the brutal reality of the regime.

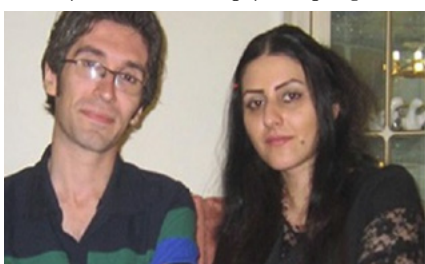
And in April 2011, Saba Haft-Baradaran's rallying cry as she lay dying after the heinous attack on Ashraf, Iraq "We will persevere to the end."

The untold heroines from down the years, Neda and Saba, all the women you will meet in these pages, are the bedrock of a movement that gives real hope that the words voiced during the ill-fated Arab Spring of 2011:

"The age of dictatorship is dead!" can be made manifest in Iran and the region. It is time.

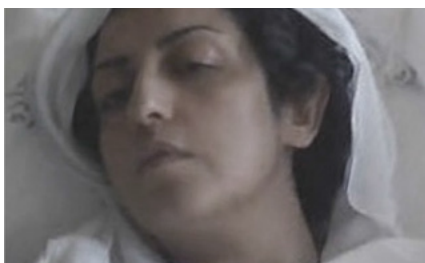


Political prisoner **Atena Daemi**, who is incarcerated in Evin prison for her activities in defence of human rights and against the death penalty, wrote in a letter that was leaked out of prison, "They attacked our house ...I was not raping any students, or embezzling any money, or issuing a death sentence for anyone. I was simply sleeping!"



Political prisoner **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee** who is also imprisoned in Evin Prison has been charged with insulting the sanctities and disseminating anti-government propaganda and sentenced to six years' imprisonment, for writing an unpublished story against the inhuman punishment of stoning.

She was violently arrested by the IRGC without being shown an arrest warrant or any identification. In response to Ms Iraee's request to take her asthma medications with her, the IRGC forces told her that she would die in prison and there would be no need for her medicine.



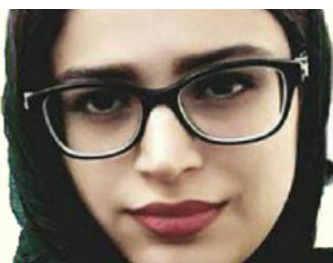
Nargess Mohammadi was arrested on 5 May 2015 in a violent raid on her residence which was also carried out without showing a legal warrant. She was sentenced to 16 years in prison for her activism against the death penalty, despite being known to suffer from emboli of the lungs and muscular paralysis.

After a previous arrest in 2012 on the same charges, the court had ordered Ms Mohammadi's release

indicating her "disability to endure punishment" because of these same medical conditions of emboli and paralysis. Now she is being held in Evin prison where her illness has deteriorated and she is denied proper treatment.



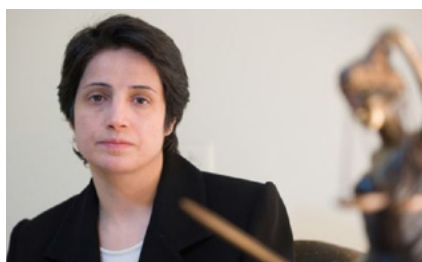
Kurdish political prisoner **Zeinab Jalalian** is serving a life sentence in the Prison of Khoy, in West Azerbaijan. She was viciously tortured to make false confessions, but did not give in.



Sepideh Moradi, currently held at Shahr-e Ray (Qarchak) Prison, was sentenced to 5 years in prison in absentia on August 9, 2018, by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran presided by Judge Salavati. Neither she nor her lawyer were present at the trial.



Rahil Moussavi was arrested on 9 December 2016, for protesting the desiccation of Karun River. There has been no news of her through the prison grapevine and she has had no contact with anyone outside prison; so nothing is known of her fate.



Human rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, winner of international awards including the 2008 Human

Rights International (HRI) Award, the 2012 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, the 2011 Pen Club Award, and the 2016 Women Have Wings Award, was arrested again at home on 13 June 2018 for doing her job, defending human rights! She was first arrested and imprisoned on September 4, 2010, for defending a number of protesters arrested during the 2009 uprising and activists defending women's and children's rights who faced the death penalty.



Maryam Akbari-Monfared was sentenced to 15 years in prison in a 5-minute trial. She has served ten years of her sentence in Qarchak Prison of Varamin, Gohardasht Prison of Karaj, and the Metadon Ward of Evin Prison without any furloughs. Presently, she is incarcerated in the women's ward of Evin Prison. Her family has twice paid 1.15 billion toman as bail to win her leave for medical treatment, but prison officials have refused to allow her to go.

These are just a few examples of women activists in prisons across Iran. Under the misogynist religious rule of the mullahs, everything a woman does to gain her basic human rights is considered a national security threat and dealt with as Moharebeh, 'waging war against God'. Therefore we believe all countries dealing with the Iranian regime must seek the following basic steps from the regime and tie any deals with Iran to:

- **Freedom of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, particularly female prisoners;**
- **Stopping all forms of torture and cruel punishments;**
- **Respect for human rights according to international conventions by the Iranian government and elimination of all forms of physical and psychological torture against prisoners under interrogation and during detention;**
- **Prosecution of the regime's officials in charge of the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988, including the current Minister of Justice, Alireza Avaii, and all others involved.**



IN THEIR QUEST FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY, IRANIAN WOMEN DESERVE OUR SUPPORT



A new wave of protests swept across Iran from 28 December 2017, spreading rapidly to over 100 cities in less than a week. The slogans targeted the foundations of the clerical establishment, calling for freedom and an end to oppression.

The continuance of the protests to this day reflects widespread discontent not only over rising prices, government fraud and corruption, and the clerical regime's costly involvement in regional conflicts but also the nation's deep-seated fury against the mullahs' oppressive rule.

People are clearly demanding the end of the clerical dictatorship and calling for freedom and a decent living.

In their angry chants, protesters call the mullahs and the regime's leaders and officials "thieves" and blame them for the majority of the nation's destitution.

Most remarkably, women are actively engaged everywhere, in every protest and venture.

Women have demonstrated tremendous courage, fearlessly confronting armed security forces empty-handed, encouraging others to not fear and carry on, inviting everyone to join the protests, leading the chants, tearing down the images of the Supreme Leader, Khamenei, and fending off security forces trying to apprehend young protesters.

The nationwide uprising was sparked by a big demonstration against rising prices and corruption in Mashhad, Iran's second largest city. Women were numerous, loud and active in this protest which spread to vast parts of the holy city. Eyewitnesses described women's role in the demonstration as admirably courageous.

A daring scene caught on the video tape which happened on only the second day of the protests was created by a woman in the western Iranian city of Hamedan. While surrounded by security forces, she shouts "down with Khamenei" several times before being whisked away by a friend.

The protesters in Mashhad had only gone so far as to chant "down with the dictator", stopping short of openly addressing Khamenei.

From then on, people started to tear down Khamenei's



huge portraits in every demonstration in a show of rejection of "the dictator".

Women were also very outspoken in defying the regime's security forces to their face.

Video clips hastily shot during hit-and-run clashes between demonstrators and security forces show young women openly disobeying the officers of oppression in Isfahan, central Iran.

In Tehran, young women studying at Tehran University were actively engaged in confronting the guards and in efforts to open the gates of the university and march on to the streets. They were highly spirited, encouraging others to unite and not fear anything. They led the students with chants of "down with the dictator" and "down with Khamenei."

Another young woman has been caught on video challenging security forces during the protests in Zanzan, northwest of Tehran.

Indeed, the video clips from all the major cities across Iran show the large presence of women in the demonstrations and their active role in talking to crowds of bystanders and urging them to join the protests. In one video a woman addresses the crowd and says, "I as a woman will stand in front and protect you. Come represent your country".

Women defying the dictates of a misogynist regime that has oppressed them for 40 years are playing a great role in the struggle for freedom and human rights. They are there at every level of protest, including those of the various social sectors, the workers' protests, teachers' protests and protests by those whose savings have been plundered by the regime authorities.

Having borne the brunt of repression by the mullahs, their worth officially designated as half that of a man, the Iranian women are fighting back, proving by their determination that they represent a powerful force for change.

The women of Iran have paid the price of freedom with their utmost dedication and sacrifice in the 1980s, proved their credentials during the dark era of vicious tortures, mass executions and the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners. They have also proved their true worth by taking on the leadership of the struggle that has been relentless ever since.

In the 21st century, Iran's women are resolved to turn the page of their country's history. In their quest for freedom, equality and human rights, they deserve support from all freedom-loving people of the world.





CHILD MARRIAGE DESTROYS LIVES AND MUST BE STOPPED



Where should paedophiles go if they want to marry children? Iran. Legally, the age of marriage is fifteen for boys and thirteen for girls, but there are loopholes: girls of ten and boys of eleven have been married in recent years. Theoretically, a man of ninety could marry a girl of nine, even if she is his stepdaughter.

Attempts to raise the age of marriage have been blocked, and no wonder: members of the regime married children themselves. Khomeini's wife was fifteen when he married her.

It's also not surprising that, though the issue affects both sexes, it affects far more girls than boys. They often become pregnant far too young for either their health or that of their babies, whose risk of dying in their first year of life is 60 per cent greater if their mothers are under nineteen. The mothers are also at risk of dying. The State of the World's Children report by UNICEF (2009) states that 70,000 girls aged from fifteen to nineteen die in pregnancy or childbirth every year. Even if they live, these mothers usually fail to finish their schooling and, while still only children, are put under the control of husbands who may be twice their age, or more.

As if that were not enough, their husbands may have up to four wives and any number of temporary wives (provided they are over nine years-old). There is even some question of the minimum age being abolished: just think what that would mean.

At least 98 child marriages have been recorded in one Iranian province in the last nine months, according to the Director General of Ilam's Welfare Organization.

Zahra Hemmati told the state-run IRNA news agency on Tuesday,

5 February, that 98 children under the age of 15 - 94 girls and four boys - have been married in Ilam province since May 2018.

This does not account for children aged between 15 and 18 or marriages that were not officially recorded, which means that the situation could be much worse. And that is just in one province.

Back in January, shortly after the Iranian Parliament's Judicial Committee rejected the proposal to increase the marriage age for girls to 15, Parvaneh Salahshouri, head of the women's faction in the regime's parliament, said that 6% of all Iranian girls get married between 10 and 14.

According to regime officials and experts, some 180,000 child marriages take place every year in Iran. This accounts for roughly 24% of all marriages. One expert said that 41,000 marriages involve a child under the age of 15. There are also 24,000 widows under 18, of which 15,000 are under 15.

In 2017, at least 37,000 Iranian girls aged 10-14 were recorded as married and 17% of all girls in Iran were married before age 18. This did not include "temporary marriages", which are a growing problem in Iran.



It is worth noting that child marriages are banned under the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriage. It is a form of child abuse and, for girls, it is considered an act of violence against women.

The children subjected to this, most often girls, frequently suffer severe mental, physical, and psychological trauma as a result, but

it has been legalised by the Iranian regime. It has even been encouraged by Iranian state media, most recently with the launch of a TV series that has been bashed by Iranians on social media using the Farsi hashtag "no to child marriages".

Four victims of child marriage spoke to Hamshahri Daily about their experiences as child brides and the horrific things that happened.

Nazi Jamalzadeh said that she was forced to marry a 22-year-old man when she was 12. She said the worst part was being separated from her mother. She recounts walking an hour in the cold and snow every day to see her mother, but when she got there her father would scold her for leaving her married home without her husband's permission and prevent her from seeing her mother.

She said: "After a year, I attempted suicide which I had learned from the women in the village."

Her husband took her to hospital, but beat her after she was discharged, for humiliating him. Then he divorced her.

Soon after, her father forced her to marry a man in his 40s, who had children that were around her age, and she recalls that when they did their homework she wished she could join them and learn as well.

Ashraf Akhlaghi was married at 13, had her first baby at 14, and her second at 16. The second child had seizures from the start, but, because of her age, she didn't know what to do and now the baby is "mentally handicapped", something that she says she will never forgive herself for.

Razieh married a man in his early 20s when she was just 13, despite the fact that she would rather have waited to finish her studies. But, she laments, everyone there marries early and the girls that don't are assumed to have something wrong with them.

She said: "We have no other choice".

But we at ILA think otherwise. There should be another choice. This social ill must be exposed and eradicated. The international community who ratified the protections mentioned earlier, must raise its voice and stop this inhuman behaviour. Clearly Iranian authorities must be held to account for these violations!



WOMEN MARCH IN PARIS STREETS TO VOICE DEMANDS OF IRANIAN PEOPLE



On Friday, 8 February, a large number of women were at Place Denfert-Rochereau in Paris to support the ongoing uprising in Iran, calling for tougher policies against the misogynist mullahs ruling that country.

The Force Behind Protests

In Iran, they are teachers, students, nurses, plundered credit depositors, workers, pensioners, farmers, mothers of political prisoners or victims of executions and the list continues as does their grievances. They march through streets, rally in front of banks, ministries and the mullahs' parliament; they gather wherever they can.

They are the nightmares of credit banks linked to the Revolutionary Guards who siphoned their savings. They regularly storm the Caspian Credit in all cities, copiously splattering the front doors of the plunderers with eggs and paint, chanting, "With one less financial fraud, our problems could be solved!", "Banks steal from us and the State supports them."

Women teachers protest in all cities. Educators and their staff suffer blatant discrimination, demand job security, demand higher wages as their salaries are now aligned with the poverty line and call for the release of their colleagues, imprisoned for protesting.

Nurses demand months of unpaid wages and lower workloads; many of them have died of exhaustion. Women farmers in Isfahan are on the streets with men demanding their water quota, as the diversion of the river, and drought, have ruined their farms. They shout: "Our enemy is right here, they lie when they say it's the USA", "Rouhani the liar, what happened to our river".

Wives of Ahwaz steel and Haft-Tappeh sugarcane workers marched with their children in December and January, waving banners that spoke volumes about the economic crisis in Iran: "We are hungry!", they say.

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the revolution that brought the rule of mullahs to Iran, thousands convened in Paris to make the voices of their sisters in Iran heard. The women in Iran are struggling with poverty, repression, sexual segregation, and discrimination. They want real change. They want freedom, equality, human rights and women's rights. And they rely on solidarity and sorority.

WORKING CHILD GIRLS ABUSED BY CITY AGENTS

Based on reports and video clips disseminated in social media, girl child labourers who are forced to work on the streets of Iran to earn meagre amounts of money are abused physically and sexually by municipal agents.

One of these girls said, "My two brothers and I were doing our homework and at the same time selling walnuts when municipal agents came and caught my two brothers. I told them, 'what do you want to do with them?' Then they caught me too... They took off my older brother's clothes and started beating him with sticks. My younger brother started crying. At the same time, they told me to polish their shoes, I said I won't. Then they rubbed black polish on my face."

A social worker said that working child girls are also sexually abused in addition to being brutalized. "Two of these child girls who work on the intersection, were forced into a car by municipal agents. One of the agents told one of the girls to unbutton her clothes. This girl even told us that when she was taken to the police station, she was separated from other kids and forced to take off her clothes."

Another girl talked about sexual abuse of her friend by municipal agents. She said, "One day, when I saw Sara, I asked her, 'Why are you upset?' She said municipal agents caught me and mistreated me... when I went to the office of the municipality and told my story, they did not believe me. They said I was making up the story so that they would let me go."

According to a report published by the state-run Tasnim news agency on 27 September 2017, social experts believe the population of child labourers in Iran amounts to 7 million. The government does not publish official figures in this regard.





NEWS IN BRIEF

OVER 271 PROTESTS IN JANUARY IN IRAN



One year after protests started, the Iranian Regime continued to be besieged by protests in January 2019, with over 271 protests recorded across 72 cities, villages, and industrial areas. That's an average of 9 protests per day.

LABOUR ACTIVIST SENT TO PRISON



Ms Parvin Mohammadi, vice-president of the Free Union of Workers in Iran, was arrested on 28 January 2019, by State

Security Force agents in Fardis, Karaj. All her personal belongings including her laptop and mobile phone were confiscated.

She was sent to prison on 1 February for her comments in defence of labour protests.

SUFI WOMEN URGE PRISON WARDEN TO OBSERVE PRISON RULES



The Sufi women who are locked up in the same ward with drug-trafficking inmates in Qarchak Prison wrote a letter of protest to the prison's warden to complain about their condition and breach of their rights in prison.

Shokoufeh Yadollahi, Elham Ahmadi, Sepideh Moradi, Sima

Entessari, and Shima Entessari have been detained under the most difficult conditions in Qarchak Prison. Shokoufeh Yadollahi who suffered a crack in her skull at the time of arrest, has chronic headaches and is supposed to be detained in a clean environment according to the doctors' prescription, but is presently detained among drug addicts.

The latest reports indicate that she has lost her power of speech due to inhaling the smoke of drugs and cigarettes consumed by other inmates.

The State Security forces (SSF) shot Ms Sima Entessari at the time of arrest. A year after the crackdown, the bullets are still in her leg.

The Sufi women were arrested during the crackdown on the protest of Gonabadi dervishes on 19 February 2018 and have been imprisoned in Qarchak Prison since then. Each of them has received a five-year sentence.

POLITICAL PRISONER NASRIN SOTOUDEH BANNED FROM VISITS

The lawyer of political prisoner



Nasrin Sotoudeh announced on Monday, 14 January, that Mrs Sotoudeh has been banned from visits at the women's ward of Evin Prison.

Nasrin Sotoudeh's

attorney, Payam Derafshan said: "It's unfortunate that prison officials, under any pretext, try to ban my client from visits with her children, and, in this way, they harass my client by violating the principle of punishments of a personal nature and by imposing suffering on her young children."

CIVIL ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IMPRISONMENT

Sahar Kazemi, a Kurdish civil and environmental activist, was sentenced to five years in prison by the Sanandaj Court on 14 February 2019. She complained about the ruling and plans to appeal.

Sahar Kazemi was originally arrested in August 2018, temporarily



released on 24 November, but arrested again on Sunday, 2 December 2018, after going to the Justice Department of Sanandaj for an interview.

TWO GIRLS SAVED FROM MORALITY POLICE BY PUBLIC INTERVENTION

On Friday, 16 February, 'morality' police tried to arrest two girls in Tehran for 'mal-veiling'. A group of people intervened and saved the girls from being arrested.

According to witnesses, the morality police attempted to disperse the crowd by firing bullets into the air. Heavy clashes followed and the crowd broke the door of the police vehicle and brought the two girls out.

The morality police were forced to



retreat and leave the scene.

The state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged this news on the same day.

A video clip disseminated in social media on 18 April showed at least four patrols attacking four young women in a park, beating and shoving them around. One of the young women suffered from a heart condition and fell unconscious as a result of the beatings.

The video clip rapidly went viral and raised public outrage in Iran and around the world, so much that a number of regime officials including the Minister of the Interior had to speak out against the patrols' behaviour and promise to follow up the case and have the agents involved punished.



I AM PROUD TO BE AN ILA VOLUNTEER



My name is Zohreh. My family was victim of both Shah's and mullahs' regimes. I lost two of my uncles while I was only nine years-old and my third uncle was in Shah's prison for seven years. I grew up with the understanding that I too should stand for democracy and freedom. The revolution took place in 1979 but our happiness did not last long. The revolution was hijacked and a tyrant replaced with another. One of the first steps of the new dictator was announcing war against women. I had my own hijab; however, in support of other women's right to free choice, I opposed the compulsory hijab. As a result I was arrested in October 1980 and experienced severe torture from the day I arrived in Evin Prison. They wanted to make us confess to our 'guilt' on TV.

During the years I was in Evin prison I witnessed different ways of torture and executions, of even underage children.

One of my cellmates was 16 year old Maryam Pakbaz. Since she was the youngest in our cell, in order to put more pressure on us, they took her away for several days and then brought her back to the cell with bleeding and swollen legs, broken ribs and a large writing on her forehead, "EXECUTION".

It was heart-breaking to see her in that situation, but she was strong. Although she was in pain, she used to smile, saying they could not break us and we have to stand for freedom and democracy until the end.

Maryam was in prison for over 7 years and was executed during the prison massacre of summer 1988.

Although I was released from prison by chance, the memory of my friends and those I had seen in prison made me commit myself, more than ever before, to bring an end to the pain and sorrow of people, especially women and children, who are more vulnerable.

Now I am proud to work with ILA as a volunteer and I have more passion for ILA's campaign for women's rights, to stop women to be considered second class citizens, or being used as objects of trade. Forcing under-age children to get married and reducing the marriage age to nine years-old is child abuse. I am hoping by my commitment, and through our supporters' help, we can achieve a better life, peace and happiness, for everyone, especially the women and children of Iran.



Demonstrations in 1979 against forced hijab

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO UPCOMING ILA EVENTS

Fee £10 RSVP info@iliberity.org.uk or call (020) 8452 3481

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

4.30PM–8.30PM

SATURDAY 16 MARCH 2019

St John's Church, Waterloo
Waterloo Road, London SE1 8TY



NORUZ AND EASTER EVENT

4.30PM–8.30PM

SATURDAY 20 APRIL 2019

Hammersmith Town Hall,
King Street, London W6 9JU

