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Iranian Women and Gender Discrimination

In recent years that the capitalist system has increasingly put the burden of its crises on the shoulders of women, we have witnessed the deterioration of the living and working conditions of women across the world. The owners and holders of wealth and power try to overcome and go through the crises by intensifying the exploitation of women in every aspect, but our sisters have risen all around the world and have raised their voice of protest in every possible opportunity. The women's struggle is not only for women, but is a struggle for all the humanity to realize a humane life, freedom, equality, and social justice. It is essential that all humans who believe in equality, freedom, and social justice join in this struggle. A society whose half of population is not free and is under various pressures and political, social, economic, and social discriminations cannot be a free and democratic society. In a society

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Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women heartfelt greetings on the occasion of March 8th to WIDF

Dear comrades of the WIDF, and the esteemed Secretariat,

We in the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women convey to you our heartfelt greetings on the occasion of March 8th, the day of the commemoration of women's struggle for peace, freedom, gender and class equality; and for a better world, free from poverty, violence and the destruction of the environment.

Progressive forces and freedom-loving people celebrate the 8th of March every year, as the glorious expression of women's struggle against gender inequality; and commemorate the historic day in which the magnificent movement of women took shape in the struggle of Clara Zetkin and other activists of the communist and working class movement. These women challenged the prevailing reactionary view of women as commodity and changed the face of the world. We look upon the struggles ahead, mindful of the courage and resilience of our predecessors.

"...Iranian women know that the freedom of any society depends on the freedom of its women. For this reason, the struggle for peace, social and economic justice, struggle for the repeal of medieval laws of the regime of Supreme Religious Leader, are at the top of the agenda for women's struggle..."

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Amnesty International Call for an End to the Persecution of Women Peacefully Protesting Against the Veil

On 24th January 2018, Amnesty International published a Public Statement in which it called compulsory veiling as abusive, discriminatory and humiliating and demanded an end to the persecution of women for peacefully protesting against it. The full Woman protestor with white clothcontent of the statement is shown below.

'The Iranian authorities must immediately and unconditionally release a woman who was arrested on 27 December 201

7 in Tehran for engaging in a peaceful protest against compulsory veiling (hijab), Amnesty International said today. The organization renewed its calls on the Iranian authorities to end the persecution of women who speak out against compulsory veiling, and abolish this

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Since 1922, and with the exception of brief periods, our country, Iran has been under repressive regimes, and the reactionary and medieval attitude towards women have not only shown little sign of progress but have deteriorated further. Almost four decades after the 1979 Revolution, in which women played an effective role, and one that was hijacked by the reactionary clergy and led to its defeat, the most basic demands for women's inalienable rights are still on the agenda of our struggle, 100 years on from the beginnings of International Women's Day. These demands include: prevention of child marriage in Iran's civil law, the right to not wear the hejab, the right to equal pay for equal work, the right of divorce, the right to the custody of children in divorce, the right to travel, to education, to have access to all employment or educational fields, the right to sports of one's choice, the right to join sports gatherings in stadia, to enter the fields of arts and culture and social life...

In addition to their struggle against the breach of the human rights of women, the people of Iran are in constant struggle with a regime that pursues particularly exploitative and discriminatory economic and social policies and has drawn millions into poverty and destitution. Women workers suffer the greatest harm from these policies. The leaders of the Iranian regime follow, unquestioningly, the economic and social lead of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other international organisations that serve the interests of capital.

Women are deprived, in law, from the right to organise in their own civil or political organisations. Any attempt at doing so is suppressed violently. The numbers of executions in the last 4 decades (since the Islamic Republic has come to power) and the number of political prisoners and civil activists, who are held in the prisons bear witness to this. Among these prisoners are women with young children (such as Narges Mohammadi). In recent weeks we have seen the brutal treatment of young women who have protested peacefully against forced hejab, and who have been arrested, and been subjected to torture.

The medieval outlook of the regime of Supreme Religious Leader considers women to be the equivalent of commodities whose main role is to satisfy men's sexual needs, and to do housework. The regime imposes massive restrictions to the social, political, cultural role of women in society, especially in economic and employment matters. The country's official statistics demonstrate a deep chasm between the economic share of women and men. The result of the regime's destructive policies has been the fact that the share of women in the economic life of the country amounts to 12% compared against a figure of 22% for the region of the Middle East. These conditions are contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international agreements which are based on governments providing equal access to economic resources for men and women. In

International Women's day demonstrators Tehran, March 8, 1979

breach of such international declarations, the priority of the Islamic Republic, based on Sharia and according to the order of the Supreme Leader, has been to reduce the role of women in all arenas, including the economic one.

Today, as a result of the catastrophic role of the Supreme Religious Leader's regime, the country is in the grip of a deep economic and political crisis. The protests of January 2018, that brought the unemployed youth and the people who have reached the end of their tether to the streets, ended with 27 protestors killed, and shook the foundations of the dictatorship. The active presence of young women has been notable in these protests.

At the same time, we witness tensions in the region and the aggression of the US imperialism, implementing its 'Greater Middle East' plan and posing a serious threat to world peace, in complex and dangerous conditions in the region. The people of Iran, men and women, must fight on two fronts: on the one hand they must fight the war-mongering policies of imperialism and the escalating tensions that cast the sinister shadow of war over the region, and on the other to fight the reactionary regime ruling Iran with its neo-liberal exploitative policies based on class and gender discrimination and exploitation. The women of Iran have had to shoulder the burden of increased poverty, unemployment, and the normalisation and spread of zero hour contracts. These have led to the disaster of prostitution, drug addiction, child labour and street children, sale of children and even the sale of body organs.

Dear Comrades,

Iranian women know that the freedom of any society depends on the freedom of its women. For this reason, the struggle for peace, social and economic justice, struggle for the repeal of medieval laws of the regime of Supreme Religious Leader, are at the top of the agenda for women's struggle, one for which we continue to pay a heavy price. The solidarity of progressive forces and organisations, with the struggle of Iranian women, will weaken the hand of the reactionary and misogynistic regime in its oppression of freedom-loving people, especially the political prisoners and women political prisoners.

Long live 8th March, the day of militant solidarity of women the world over,

With warm greetings,

Mina Rasteen

Iranian Women and Gender … Contd.

where there is no equal rights and freedom for women, the concepts of democracy and social justice are meaningless and unreal. Various gender discriminations in workplaces are one of the main factors in diminishing economic opportunities for women. This is while women have demonstrated that under equal conditions, can be as successful and even more productive and efficient than their male counterparts in many economic, social, and political endeavors and undertakings, but the prevailing laws always holds them under various pressures and discriminations. Even in many of the "advanced" countries of the world, there are unwritten rules and regulations that impose restrictions on women in various ways. For example, working mothers who are breadwinners of the house and have children, on average have less chance to get hired compared to women who don't have children, or men with comparable family and job conditions. Even when hired, such women are paid less wages and benefits for equal work.

Such discriminations imposed on the women of Iran, stem from the shadow of reactionary and theocratic viewpoints cast over our country in the past several centuries. However, these repressions and discriminations have been challenged by the relentless struggle of women to achieve freedom and equal rights with men. These women have always fought in the course of social movements for freedom and equality, alongside other social groups, but have always been deprived of their rights and freedom. After the popular revolution of 1979, and following the founding and establishment of Islamic Republic based on theocracy and individual tyranny of the Supreme Leader, whose policies are deeply anti-people and misogynistic, the women of Iran who demanded their real and human rights, unfortunately lost many of their achievements they had won over decades of struggle for freedom and rights. The ruling reactionary regime of Iran, blatantly unfaithful to the people and particularly the women, has trampled and destroyed their individual and societal rights, social position, and identity by enacting medieval laws. The women of Iran, suffering from such inequalities and discriminations for years, are in a situation that in many cases is even worse than the living and working conditions in many underdeveloped countries of the world. The discriminatory laws of marriage, divorce, custody of

children, and heritage, and imposition of numerous restrictions on the personal and social freedoms, have made the lives of the Iranian women comparable to the conditions of women during slavery. In our country Iran, the dark-minded and reactionary rulers exploit the religious rules and laws to degrade women, have no respect for their rights, and prosecute, torture, and imprison the women movement activists. However, despite the steady and inhumane pressures on women, the women movement of our nation continues its struggle bravely and consciously. Iranian women have launched several movements that have had significant impacts on organizing the women and increasing the awareness among them. The "One Million Signature Campaign" against the gender discrimination, the "Mothers of Peace" campaign, other campaigns targeting the violence against women and children, and forming social and trade organizations, are all examples of wide-ranging efforts of women on this path.

This year, the Iranian women celebrate the International Women's Day when the fervent participation of women in protest movements, and particularly their heroic struggle against the compulsory hijab (head and body covering of women) has challenged the socio-economic policies of the oppressive and misogynistic regime of Iran. For this reason, the security apparatus of the theocratic regime, fearing from any organized and coordinated campaign of progressive forces, has fortified its attack on the labour, student, and women activists.

This is an unavoidable reality that the root of political, social, and economic discrimination and pressure on women is in the economic system of the society. In our country Iran, too, the neoliberal economic system imposed on the nation, combined with the reactionary religious viewpoints of the dark-minded rulers, have posed the Iranian women with a very difficult struggle. The victory in this struggle, and similar popular and right-seeking movements of the workers, students, and other working people, hinges on the collaboration and coordination of these movements in getting rid of the rule of the theocratic regime of Supreme Leadership and replacing it with a democratic system in which the state is separate from religion. The women of Iran very well know that fundamental and major changes are not possible as long as the theocratic regime of Iran reigns. It is only through relentless and harmonized struggle of the various social movements, including the women movement, that broad and enduring achievements could be won.

Amnesty International Calls … Contd.

discriminatory and humiliating practice. This practice has violated women's rights in Iran for decades, including their rights to non-discrimination, freedom of belief and religion, freedom of expression, and protection from arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

A video has gone viral on social media platforms since Wednesday 27 December 2017, which shows a woman standing alone on a concrete structure in a busy section of Tehran's Enqelab (Revolution) Street, without wearing a headscarf and silently waving a white flag in an apparent protest against the country's mandatory Islamic dress code which, among other things, forces women to cover their hair with a headscarf. The video was first obtained and released by White Wednesdays, a popular campaign which urges women to share pictures and videos of themselves on social media every Wednesday, wearing white headscarves or pieces of clothing in protest at compulsory veiling.

According to three eyewitnesses, law enforcement officials arrested the woman on the spot and transferred her to a nearby detention centre known as Kalantari 148. No information about her fate and whereabouts has since been made available publicly, sparking fears about her safety and well-being, and prompting thousands of people to take part in a social media campaign with the English hashtag #Where_is_She? and its equivalent in Persian.1 Amnesty International understands from two independent sources that the woman's name has so far been withheld by her family due to perceived security concerns.

On 22 January 2018, prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh wrote on her Facebook page that she has found through her investigative efforts that the woman was initially released after her arrest but was subsequently detained again. She stated that a criminal case against her has been opened at the Office of the Prosecutor for Zone 6 of Tehran. According to information obtained and shared publically by Nasrin Sotoudeh, the woman is around 31 years old and has a 19-month-old infant.

Amnesty International has learned that on the same day, 27 December 2017, another woman, aged approximately 18, was also arrested in Tehran for peacefully protesting against compulsory veiling. Her name has also been withheld by her family and lawyer due to security concerns. The woman is held in pre-trial detention in Gharchak prison in Varamin near Tehran, where women convicted of violent criminal offences are detained in extremely poor conditions.'

Solidarity with the Courageous and Combatant People of Palestine

Dear comrades,
We wish you a happy new year - one with successes for the people's struggle for peace and socialism.
Please find below, the statement by the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women, condemning the recent provocative announcement of the USA and its relocation of its embassy to Jerusalem.

Solidarity with the Courageous and Combatant People of Palestine

The Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women condemns in the strongest terms, the destructive and provocative policies of Trump, the president of the United States of America, and its relocation of that country's embassy to Jerusalem in contravention of international law, which we see as an attempt to escalate tension and conflict in the Middle East and to destabilise the region. The United States' government had provoked the anger and condemnation of the peace movement in Iran and worldwide relatively recently, with its provocative unilateral position rejecting the multi-lateral Nuclear Agreement with Iran – an Agreement that, despite all its shortcomings, had been forced on the Islamic Republican Regime by our people's steadfast struggle in order to prevent a destructive war in our country and to prevent the loss of human lives.

This is not the first time, in the last few decades, that the dangerous and war-mongering policies of US imperialism and its reactionary allies, has cost millions of innocent lives in military interventions and wars of aggression. The list is long, such as the US-instigated war between Iran and Iraq, military conflicts in Eastern Europe, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Yemen... which have led to mass displacements and involuntary mass migrations which continue to this day, and which have claimed the lives of thousands of people. Rape of women, abuse of children and falling victim to people smugglers are among the human catastrophes that have befallen our people, as a result of the imperialist wars.

The Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women expresses its solidarity with the heroic people of Palestine, especially with the combatant and peace-loving Palestinian women and their struggle for the establishment of an independent state of Palestine in the pre-1967 borders. We believe that the hands of imperialism and its allies must be cut off from the Middle East region. We demand the freedom of all political prisoners of Palestine who are incarcerated in Israeli prisons, and at one with all the peace-loving people of the world, we condemn the irresponsible and provocative policies of the US and its allies in the region and worldwide.

On behalf of the Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women
Mina Rasteen