

## Children in Iran

Bulletin of “*The Association of Abolishing Child Labor in Iran*”  
Number 1, Mars 2001



*Since children in Iran have no rights, since children's slavery and working conditions in Iran are not known to the international public, and since the existing related international organizations have not attempted to show children's working situation in Iran openly and publicly, "The Association of Abolishing child labor in Iran" is focusing its activities on working conditions of children in Iran and on revealing children's rightlessness in different aspects. By publishing news in many languages, the bulletin of "Children in Iran" is committed to drawing the world's attention to this matter in order to organize an international struggle against child labor in Iran.*

Susan Bahar

### Girls situations in Iran

According to retribution law of Iran, the puberty and marriage age for girls is 9. Recently, due to international pressures and activities of children's rights activists, it was proposed that this age be increased to 14. This proposal was designed to meet the definition of "child" and "child age" based on the Children's Rights Convention, which was in fact signed by Iranian government. Unfortunately, it is probable that the Council of Guardians refuses this proposal. In August 2000, "Irna", the official broadcast of the Islamic Republic, reported "The Council of Guardians would not approve the proposal of "Buy and sell prohibition" of girls in Iran. On the August 8th, 2000 session of parliament, the cons and pros of the amendment of article 149 in regards to the marriage age of girls and boys, expressed their different views."

The 149 article of civil law, passed in 1991, recognized the slavery and selling of girls by their families by various means. According to this law, marriage before puberty is forbidden, but there is no objection to it if the guardian of the child gives permission in the name of the child's own goodwill. Based on this law it even would be possible to "pre-sell" children under 9 years of age or upon their birth because of the "Child's own goodwill".

"Irna" continues: "Parliament had generally approved to increase the official marriage age of girls to 14 and boys to 17. Ezat Al Saadaat Mirkhani, expert in religious jurisprudence, said that, "The Council of Guardians would refuse the parliament's amendment of this law. According to Islamic religious laws the puberty age for girls is 9 to 13 and

10 to 16 for boys and since the Islamic parliament is based on Islamic laws, the Council of Guardians would definitely defeat this bill unless under social conditions." This law, before being divine (God's laws), has roots in slavery and strong exploitation of children. These children are working in different industries such as weaving, spinning, coarse carpet, napped coarse carpet, agriculture, small manufacturing and also as domestic workers. This law increases the extreme exploitation and open gender discrimination of children. Discrimination against females is the same as sexual apartheid that women have been facing from their childhood.

### Great percentage of workers in industries are Girls

- According to official governmental statistics, 264557 children aged 10 to 14 are employed. 43% of that total are working in some kind of domestic work. 25% to 72% of them are girls.
- In total, 1 753 979 children aged 6 – 14 do not go to school due to employment.
- In addition to those children who go to school while working, 4970 children aged 10 – 14 are employed by governmental sections.
- 72.3% of employed girls are working in industries while 32.5% of industry workers are boys. These girls are working in carpet and fabric-weaving industries. ("Zanan" Magazine, April 2000)

### Lowering the education level and quality based on gender discrimination

- According to the instruction of the Supervision Council of the Education Office in Tehran, from the beginning of the school year there is no permission to teach by a teacher of the opposite gender of the students in academic schools and training centers. In other words, the attendance of female teachers in classes consisting of boys over 10 years of age and the attendance of male teachers in classes composed of girls are strongly forbidden. ("Zanan" Magazine – March 2000)

### Girls are deprived from education more than boys

Fatema Tondgooyan, the Advisor of the Minister of Education and the General Director of Women's Affairs said, "1 689 000 girls are excluded from education due to the lack of opportunities in underprivileged regions. The average



space of education allocated to girls is 3.37 square meters in contrast to 5 square meters allocated to boys. Furthermore, out of 915 educational boarding schools, only one third is allocated to girls.”

She believes the best way of continuing education for girls who get married while attending school, is the instituting of day schools for them. She said, “53 473 female students between the ages of 10 – 14 and 617 920 female students aged 15 – 19 years are married.” (the same source)

### **Girls have no share in sports**

Fatema Tondgooyan, the Advisor of the Minister of Education and the General Director of Women’s Affairs said, “There are more than one thousand sport clubs for boys while there are only 11 sport clubs for girls.”

### **Lack of enough physical movement is the main problem of female students**

“According to scientific and developmental observations and researches among female students in 16 provinces in Iran, there have been many awkwardness observed in the upper and lower parts of their bodies. These researches have been done among 18 thousand girls - 600 female students in each province- and have revealed 22 types of physical awkwardness among them. The main cause of this problem is the lack of physical movement and also non-standard furniture at schools and insufficient environmental conditions.”(Aftaab, October 2000)

### **The happiness and freedom of girls are considered mortal sins based on religious laws**

On April 2000, the “Zanan” magazine wrote, “At Friday’s gathering of prayer, Mohammed Yazdi said, ‘Girls have had a bad upbringing.’ He addressed parents and complained that, “Parents beautify 3 or 4-year-old girls like a doll, or even prettier than doll. They take her to parties, dress her in nicer clothes as she is growing. They give her permission to bike ride on the street while wearing shorts.....”

### **Discrimination against girls is the important part**

## **of the structural beliefs and laws of the Islamic republic regime**

The discrimination against girls and women in Iran is legitimized and legalized by civil and judicial laws of the Islamic republic regime. For example, according to Islamic laws, girls inherit half of what boys inherit. Even though they are considered mature by the age of 9 and can be given away for marriage legally, they have no control over their wages. Instead, father, husband or any male guardian has the right to supervise their expenditures. The punishment of the murder of a daughter by a parent is less than the punishment of the murder of a son. The viscous and horrible law of Ghisas (Islamic judiciary) is applied to girls and women more than to men.

The presence and function of civil and judicial laws of the Islamic regime and the persistence of government leaders have added to discrimination and gender apartheid against girls and women. As a result, it has severely lead to the inferior situation of women in society and has extremely increased the sexual assault rate against females. Based on these laws, the gender discrimination and violence against girls have been increasing and the response has been less punishment for committing gender violence. For instance, legal marriage at the age of 9 for girls is an open and an official disregard of children’s rights. Especially when medical science has proven that delivering a baby before the age of 18 would create many dangerous physical problems for women. The following news taken from Iranian newspapers are only a few examples of news in these regards:

- In June 2000, a 12 years old girl became a mother at Feeroozabaady Hospital in Tehran.
- A father, who murdered her 14-year-old daughter and threw her body in the desert, has been sentenced for 3 years and *half* the payment of the “Diyeh” (blood money) because women are considered *half* the humans that men are.
- Girls are suffering from mental illnesses and severe depressions.
- Fatema Kamgooyan, the Advisor of the Minister of Education and the General Director of Women’s Affairs announced that in Tehran 20 people attempt suicide daily, among which 8 would die most of them being girls. She also said that 73% of girls are idle with their time.
- The rate of suicide amongst girls has increased by 13% in comparison to 1997.
- One of the reasons for committing suicide amongst girls is sexual assault by a close relative.

Adress: Box 854  
101 37 Stockholm  
Sweden

Secretary of ”The Association...” and editor of ”Children in Iran”: Susan Bahar  
Translation to English: Parvin Ashrafi

Mobil: (46) 70- 77 162 27

Fax: (46) 8- 29 80 56

E. mail: suzanbahar@hotmail.com