

سپیدار حزب زنان ایران

**We are the Sepidar,
standing tall while our roots reach ever deeper.**

We become a sheltering canopy.

We endure both frost and scorching heat.

In mourning broken branches,

we do not bend in defeat;

instead, we rise again, renewed, and in bloom.

SEPIDAR
WOMEN'S IRANIAN PARTY

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October 7: The Mistake That Changed the Middle East

By Ali Soltani

Three years have passed since October 7, 2023, the day Hamas attacked Israel and set the Middle East on a path whose full consequences may not even have been imagined by those who planned the attack. The killing of around 1,200 people and the taking of 251 hostages were not seen in Israel as just another attack from Gaza. They left a deep wound in a society where the security and survival of the Jewish people carry profound historical meaning. In Tehran, however, a very different story was being told. The Islamic Republic and its supporters celebrated what they described as a historic blow against Israel, while Ali Khamenei called it an “irreparable defeat” for Israel. Three years later, in the author’s view, it is time to place that claim against the map of today’s Middle East and ask: Who actually paid the price of October 7, and whose regional position was transformed?



In the author’s view, what the terrorist organization Hamas did on October 7 was above all a stupid mistake and a massive strategic miscalculation. Hamas believed that breaking through Israel’s border, killing and abducting civilians, and delivering an unprecedented shock would humiliate Israel and activate regional fronts against it. Those fronts were indeed activated. Hezbollah entered the conflict from Lebanon, the Houthis launched attacks from Yemen, and Iran-aligned forces in Iraq and Syria also became involved. But the outcome was not what Hamas expected. Hostility toward Israel did not disappear, but the calculation of the cost of confronting Israel changed. In the author’s view, the confidence that some of Israel’s enemies displayed before October 7 collided with the actual price of such a confrontation. Three years later, the Middle East is no longer the Middle East of the morning of October 7.

Israel did not limit its response to fighting Hamas forces inside Gaza. Leaders and commanders whom Israel held responsible for planning, carrying out, or continuing the war were targeted one after another. Mohammed Deif, commander of Hamas’s military wing, was killed. Yahya Sinwar, one of the principal architects of October 7, was killed in October 2024. Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas’s political bureau, was not beyond Israel’s reach even in Tehran, where he had traveled for the inauguration of the Islamic Republic’s president. Israel later officially acknowledged responsibility for Haniyeh’s killing. In the author’s view, the message of this series of operations was clear: time alone would not close the October 7 file, and neither geographical distance, political status, nor presence on the territory of an ally would necessarily guarantee protection.

Lebanon, however, may provide the clearest example of how the rules of the confrontation changed. Hezbollah opened the northern front against Israel on October 8 and subsequently suffered some of the most serious blows in its history. Fuad Shukur, one of Hezbollah’s most

senior military commanders; Ibrahim Aqil, a senior operations commander associated with the Radwan Force; Ali Karaki, commander of the southern front; and ultimately Hassan Nasrallah were killed. For years, Nasrallah had operated under extraordinary security precautions, with very limited public appearances and highly secret locations. Yet on September 27, 2024, Israel identified and struck his underground command headquarters in Beirut’s Dahieh district. Nasrallah, Karaki, and other senior commanders inside were killed. In the author’s view, the significance went beyond eliminating one leader: even the underground headquarters of Hezbollah’s most protected figure was not necessarily beyond the reach of Israeli intelligence.

Only days earlier, the pager operation had demonstrated another dimension of that intelligence penetration. Hezbollah had increasingly relied on alternative communications partly because of concerns about the vulnerability of mobile phones. Yet those very devices became a vulnerability. According to former Mossad officers, the pager project had been developing since around 2022, with front companies, marketing operations, and an apparently normal commercial supply chain used to place modified devices into Hezbollah’s hands. By September 17, 2024, around 5,000 pagers had reached Hezbollah members. The pagers exploded, followed the next day by communications radios. Days later Ibrahim Aqil and other Radwan commanders were killed, and only ten days after the pager operation began, Nasrallah’s underground headquarters was struck. In the author’s view, this sequence was not simply a display of military power. It demonstrated Israel’s ability to penetrate a system Hezbollah had spent years building to protect itself.

The consequences of October 7 did not stop in Gaza and Lebanon. Assad’s Syria had for years served as a crucial link between the Islamic Republic and Hezbollah and as a route for the movement of weapons and personnel. Following Hezbollah’s severe weakening and the collapse of Bashar al-Assad’s government in December 2024, one of the central pillars of Tehran’s regional architecture disappeared. At the same time, the confrontation between the Islamic Republic and Israel moved beyond the old shadow war and proxy model into direct confrontation. In the author’s view, this is where the idea of a “new Middle East after October 7” becomes meaningful. The geographical borders did not necessarily change, but the map of power, deterrence, and the cost of confrontation did. Israel, and alongside it the United States, became central actors in shaping this new balance.

None of this means that hostility toward Israel has disappeared. The Islamic Republic still considers Israel an enemy. Hezbollah continues to exist. The Houthis have not lost all of their military capabilities, and Tehran’s regional network has not been completely destroyed. Yet, in the author’s view, the last three years have delivered one clear message to the Middle East: no one has the ability to confront Israel, and no one has the ability to defeat Israel in such a confrontation. This is the author’s conclusion, but the chain of events from Gaza and Beirut to Damascus and Tehran illustrates the argument behind it: having the confidence to begin a confrontation is not the same as having the ability to withstand its consequences.

In the author’s view, Israel’s response was never intended to send a message only to a handful of Hamas commanders. Palestinian society and every regional actor were confronted with a new reality: an attack on the scale of October 7 could not be carried out with the expectation that, after some time, everything would simply return to the previous status quo. Through its operations, Israel sought to establish that attacks on the lives of Israelis and Jews could trigger a response capable of changing not only the fate of the direct perpetrators but the wider security equation of the region. In the author’s view, Israel will not consider the October 7 chapter closed until those responsible, and the armed structures supporting such a threat, have paid a heavy price and the ability to repeat a similar attack has been substantially reduced.

Three years later, perhaps the best way to understand October 7 is to compare two maps: the Middle East before October 7 and the Middle East after it. Hamas has suffered severe blows and much of its historic leadership has been eliminated. Hezbollah has lost major leaders and commanders. Assad’s government has fallen. The Islamic Republic’s regional network is no longer in the position it occupied before the war. None of these developments has a single cause, and three years of Middle Eastern history cannot be reduced to one day. But October 7 was the moment that set this chain of confrontation into motion. In the author’s view, Hamas’s stupid mistake was intended to break Israel, but instead became one of the forces that reshaped the Middle East. Those who spoke of Israel’s “irreparable defeat” in October 2023 now face a region that looks very different from the one on which they were counting that morning.



The Collapse Puzzle: When the Alternative Is Being Prepared

By M.H. Labafbashi

Over the past week, the Islamic Republic continued to move between two contradictory paths: on the one hand, negotiations and efforts to reopen the path of diplomacy, and on the other, insistence on its nuclear red lines, continued security pressure, and the preservation of its power structure. Trump rejected Tehran's proposal regarding Hormuz, but indirect channels remained open. Tehran, meanwhile, spoke simultaneously of its readiness to negotiate and of refusing to accept major concessions. Reuters has reported that diplomatic channels have remained open, although the prospects for successful negotiations continue to be assessed as limited.



Against this ambiguous backdrop, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's activities should be viewed within a broader framework. On September 25, in response to Colombia's decision to sever diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic, he welcomed the decision and described it as a position in support of the Iranian people. On the surface, this was a diplomatic message, but it forms part of a broader direction that has become more prominent in his activities in recent months: an effort to transform the Iran issue from a "crisis between a government and foreign countries" into an issue concerning Iran's political future and the position of the Iranian people.

This can also be seen in his recent remarks about political transition. During a virtual meeting with leaders and representatives of Australia's Coalition Party, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi once again emphasized that he does not consider himself a candidate for permanent rule and described his intended role as the "leader of the transition" and a bridge toward democratic elections. That same week, leaders of Australia's opposition also invited him to visit the country, although they themselves emphasized that the visit would not mean endorsing him as the leader of the opposition and that they intended to engage with other opposition groups as well.

Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's activities, and those of his team, are very important at this time; not because they prove that a transfer of power is imminent, but because the discussion of the "day after the Islamic Republic" has entered political discussions outside Iran more openly.

However, an important distinction concerning Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi is the five-part framework he himself has defined for the transition period: maximum pressure on the Islamic Republic, maximum support for the people of Iran, increasing defections and departures from within the government, organizing

Iranians, and the "Iran Prosperity Project." His official website continues to present these five pillars as the strategy for transitioning Iran toward a national, secular, and democratic government.

Within this framework, another important development that deserves attention is Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's increasing focus on defections from within the Islamic Republic's structure. In his Toronto speech in September, he stated that some civilian officials and members of the Islamic Republic's military structure had secretly distanced themselves from the government and were no longer performing the same role for it as before. However, the very concept of "defection" has become highly significant under current circumstances. Because if external pressure, economic crisis, and domestic discontent alone cannot change the power structure, another factor that could become decisive enters the equation: the behavior of individuals within that very structure. This is what, in the political literature on transitions from authoritarian governments, is connected to the issue of loyalty among security, administrative, and political forces. For this reason, when Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi speaks of "Maximum Defections," he is in fact placing one of the links in his model precisely at this point.

On the other side, the government is also focused precisely on this sensitive point. If the internet becomes freer, communication between those inside and outside the country increases, information about repression spreads more quickly, and opponents are able to maintain their communication networks, the government's information monopoly will weaken. As a result, issues such as Starlink, which in recent weeks has even been described by Iranian officials as a threat to internet control, are not merely technological matters; they have become part of the political equation.

On the other hand, external pressure is also changing in nature. The nuclear file, Hormuz, sanctions, human rights, internet communications, and the issue of Iran's political future are no longer completely separate from one another. If negotiations fail, economic and security pressure could increase; if an agreement is reached, the next important question will be who in Iran has the capacity to implement it. And if the gap between the government, the diplomatic apparatus, and the security sectors deepens, another question arises: where is the real center of decision-making?

Under such circumstances, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's political activities add another layer to the puzzle. He is attempting to present himself not as the person who determines the final form of Iran's government, but as a bridge for the transition period; while his official framework emphasizes a national, secular, and democratic government and determining the country's future through the choice of the people. This position is consistent with what he also stated explicitly in Australia.

Pressure can weaken a government; protests can erode its legitimacy; defections can shake its pillars. But moving from "collapse" to "transition" requires organization, coordination, a plan, and an institution capable of guiding the country from a power vacuum toward the free choice of its people. This is precisely where Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's recent activities become significant; not as proof that a transition has taken place, but as an effort to prepare an answer to the question of what plan will be on the table if the moment of transition arrives.



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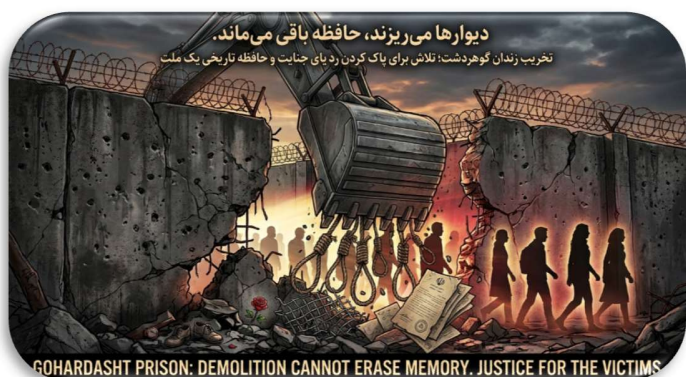
Sepidar
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Friday, October 9, 2026

An Attempt to Erase the Traces of Crime and a Nation's Historical Memory

By Leila Fathali

The complete demolition of the high walls, watchtowers, and wards of Gohardasht (Rajai Shahr) Prison in Karaj is far from a routine urban development project or a public service initiative. Instead, it represents a continuation of the Islamic Republic's decades-long strategy to bury the evidence of its systemic atrocities. For the people of Iran and the movement for justice, Gohardasht was not merely a complex of concrete barriers and barbed wire; it stood as a living testament to human rights violations, a torture facility for dissidents, and a central site of the 1988 massacres. Within its corridors, the so-called 'Death Commissions' sent thousands of political prisoners to the gallows for refusing to abandon their beliefs.



The brutality executed within the halls and execution chambers of Gohardasht remains among the darkest chapters of modern Iranian history. Survivor testimonies from the summer of 1988 detail how the prison's amphitheater was converted into an execution hub. Political prisoners who refused to comply during brief interrogations were blindfolded, lined up in corridors, and led into the hall in groups. Executioners suspended multiple ropes from overhead beams, hanging dozens of prisoners simultaneously. Former detainees testified in international proceedings that guards routinely pulled on the hanging bodies to hasten death. The victims' remains were subsequently loaded into refrigerated trucks and buried in unmarked mass graves without notifying families or returning personal belongings and wills.

The atrocities at Gohardasht were not confined to the 1980s. Over the past four decades, the facility functioned as a primary tool of repression against dissenters across generations—from the

student protests of 1999 and the 2009 Green Movement to the widespread demonstrations of November 2019 and the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement. Beyond physical torture, the administration systematically employed prolonged medical neglect, psychological abuse, and solitary confinement in isolated wards to break the resolve of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

This hasty physical destruction follows a clear pattern of state actions designed to alter execution sites, similar to the leveling of the Khavaran cemetery and other mass graves across the country. By dismantling the physical structures, the regime attempts to destroy tangible evidence that could be utilized in international human rights tribunals. The historic trial of Hamid Nouri in Sweden—which relied heavily on survivor testimony, precise spatial mapping, and structural details of Gohardasht—demonstrated that the physical site itself poses a significant legal and political liability to the regime as an enduring crime scene.

Despite the regime's efforts to erase the physical geography of Gohardasht, the collective memory of a society cannot be demolished with heavy machinery. Detailed documentation, survivor memoirs, architectural maps, and extensive testimonies recorded by victims' families have permanently preserved the historical record of these wards. The demolition of Gohardasht Prison has drawn fierce condemnation from human rights advocates and justice-seeking families worldwide. While the physical structure has been reduced to rubble, the documented evidence and living memories remain intact, ensuring that accountability for the crimes committed within Gohardasht will continue to be pursued.



Mental Health Is Not a Luxury; It Is a Necessity for Life

By Azadeh Sharafi

October 10, World Mental Health Day, is an opportunity to remember an issue that can sometimes be pushed to the margins amid the pressures of daily life, economic hardship, and social concerns. Mental health does not simply mean the absence of mental illness or psychological disorders. It is also connected to a person's sense of safety, ability to cope with life's pressures, quality of relationships, sense of meaning, and hope for the future. The human mind does not exist separately from its environment. Economic, social, and family circumstances, as well as the way people perceive their future, can all affect psychological well-being. When a person is exposed to fear, insecurity, violence, or persistent uncertainty about the future for an extended period, the mind may gradually enter a state of heightened alertness—as if it is constantly anticipating something bad. Under normal circumstances, this internal alarm system is essential for protecting us. But when a sense of threat continues for a long time, it can become increasingly difficult for the individual to relax. Persistent anxiety, sleep disturbances, irritability, difficulty concentrating, exhaustion, and a continuing sense of insecurity may emerge as consequences. The World Health Organization has also emphasized that circumstances such as economic crises, violence, and insecurity can increase psychological distress at both individual and community levels.



This issue is particularly significant for the people of Iran. In recent years, Iranian society has faced economic pressures, uncertainty about the future, the suppression of protests, arrests, and reports of executions. According to Amnesty International, at least 2,159 people were executed in Iran in 2025, one of the highest numbers recorded by the organization in Iran since 1981. In 2026, the organization has also warned about the risk of executions involving protesters and people convicted in politically related cases. From a psychological perspective, however, the significance of such circumstances extends beyond the individuals directly involved. When a family fears for the life or freedom of one of its members, when a person cannot feel secure about their future, or when reports of arrests and executions become a recurring part of public life, the psychological consequences can extend far beyond those directly affected. Families and communities may experience fear, grief, anger, helplessness, and persistent anxiety. Even people who have not been directly involved in a traumatic event may be affected by the broader psychological climate of society. Constant exposure to violent news, disturbing images, and the feeling that the future is unpredictable can gradually undermine a person's sense of psychological safety. In such

circumstances, anxiety is no longer merely an individual experience; it can become a collective one. One of the most concerning aspects is the normalization of anxiety. People may live under pressure for so long that they no longer recognize how psychologically exhausted they have become. Sleep may deteriorate, concentration may decline, irritability may increase, and activities that once brought pleasure may gradually lose their appeal. Becoming accustomed to fear does not mean that fear is healthy. The concept of being “strong” is also sometimes misunderstood. Resilience does not mean that a person should never feel afraid, sad, or exhausted, nor does it mean enduring every difficult circumstance indefinitely. Resilience means being able, despite adversity, to preserve psychological and social resources and, as far as possible, continue moving forward with life. For this reason, statements such as “just think positively,” “be strong,” or “don't think about it” are not always helpful responses to psychological suffering. Sometimes the first thing a person needs is the freedom to say, without being judged, “I am afraid,” “I am exhausted,” or “I am worried about the future.” Mental health does not mean eliminating unpleasant emotions; it means recognizing them and learning how to manage them.

At the same time, the entire responsibility for mental health should not be placed on the individual. When a person lives in an unsafe or highly stressful environment, advice about positive thinking or relaxation alone cannot solve the underlying problem. Mental health depends not only on individual factors but also on social and environmental conditions. People need safety, healthy relationships, stability, and the ability to imagine a future in order to experience genuine psychological well-being. Nevertheless, even under difficult circumstances, self-care remains important. Limiting continuous exposure to distressing news, maintaining connections with trusted people, establishing a daily routine, getting sufficient sleep, engaging in physical activity, and setting aside time for rest can help reduce psychological pressure. If anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, or feelings of helplessness persist and begin to interfere significantly with daily life, seeking professional support from a psychologist or psychiatrist may be necessary. Mental health also does not mean becoming indifferent to what is happening in society. It is possible to remain informed, stay sensitive to the suffering of others, and at the same time establish boundaries that protect one's own psychological well-being. Constantly following distressing news, particularly before going to sleep, can intensify the cycle of anxiety. Setting specific times for receiving news and creating distance between the news cycle and everyday life can be helpful.

Mental health also does not mean denying reality. On the contrary, psychological well-being means being able to face reality, acknowledge suffering, and at the same time prevent fear from taking control of one's entire life. Hope does not mean ignoring problems. It can mean preserving the ability to move forward, find meaning in life, and imagine the possibility of a different future.

World Mental Health Day is an opportunity to broaden our perspective—from illness to well-being, and from individual responsibility to social responsibility. Mental health is not merely a matter for the psychologist's office. Families, schools, workplaces, and society as a whole all play a role in either strengthening or undermining people's sense of psychological safety. For a society that has faced years of pressure, insecurity, and uncertainty about the future, speaking openly about mental health becomes even more important. People need more than individual coping skills to remain psychologically healthy; they also need safety, human dignity, social connection, and the possibility of maintaining hope for the future.

Mental health is not a luxury. It is an inseparable part of a healthy life—and one of our most fundamental human needs.



The Psychological Dimensions of Breast Cancer; From Diagnosis to Recovery

By Mahshad Fadaei from Health and Wellbeing Department

Breast cancer is, in many cases, not merely a medical event but a profound psychological crisis that affects the totality of a person's existence. While remarkable advances in medicine over recent decades have significantly increased survival rates, the psychological dimension of this disease continues to receive insufficient attention. Understanding these dimensions — both for the patient and for those around her — is a prerequisite for providing effective support and improving quality of life throughout the course of treatment.



Research in psycho-oncology indicates that receiving a diagnosis is accompanied by a spectrum of psychological responses. Denial, as the first line of psychological defense, is a natural reaction to confronting information whose immediate processing exceeds the individual's psychological capacity — not a sign of unawareness, but a form of temporary distancing to preserve equilibrium. Anxiety and fear emerge in subsequent stages, centering on concerns such as fear of death, pain, the future of one's children, and the continuity of social roles. Depression, however, may be the most complex challenge; feelings of meaninglessness, withdrawal from relationships, and the loss of the ability to derive pleasure from daily life — these are expected responses to a genuine crisis, and they require a clinical and empathetic approach, not judgment.

Interventions such as mastectomy, hair loss, and changes in physical appearance can fundamentally disrupt a person's sense of connection to her own body. This experience carries particular weight within the Iranian cultural context, where feminine identity is often deeply intertwined with physical appearance. Neglecting this dimension can lead to social

isolation, diminished self-worth, and the weakening of intimate relationships — consequences that directly impact the course of recovery.

The quality of a patient's social support network is one of the strongest predictors of psychological adaptation in cancer patients. Yet effective support does not necessarily accompany good intentions — the way it is expressed is of fundamental importance. Minimizing a patient's feelings with unrealistic reassurances, imposing compulsory optimism, or emotionally overwhelming reactions that inadvertently cast the patient in the role of guardian of others' feelings — all of these, despite benevolent intent, place an additional burden on the patient. Genuine support means being present without insisting on the immediate resolution of pain, asking rather than assuming, and sustaining companionship over months — not only in the first weeks following diagnosis.

Accessing specialized psychological support — consulting professionals in psycho-oncology is not a sign of weakness, but a conscious decision in service of mental health. Accepting emotions as natural responses — anger, grief, and fear are appropriate reactions to crisis, and suppressing them leads to exhaustion over time. Participation in peer support groups reduces the sense of isolation and conveys practical coping strategies. Maintaining healthy psychological boundaries — the patient has the right to limit visits and make independent decisions about her time and energy. And finally, preserving small daily routines — light physical activity, moments of solitude, writing — serves as a mental anchor in the face of instability.

Attention to mental health throughout the course of breast cancer treatment is not a peripheral concern, but an inseparable part of a comprehensive approach to care. A society that genuinely wishes to support its patients must complete the medical narrative with the human one — the narrative of a woman who, while fighting her illness, remains committed to the preservation of her dignity, her identity, and her psychological wellbeing.



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Sepidar
Woman Iranian Party

Friday, October 9, 2026

The Repression Machine Against National Justice

By Leila Kharazi

October 10th, the World Day Against the Death Penalty, serves as a reminder of the human community's commitment to protecting human life and standing against state violence. In this context, Iran's geography and society remain at the center of global attention due to the regime's systematic and widespread execution of this inhumane punishment. The exclusive and unchecked use of deprivation of life as a tool for regulating political and social affairs reveals the incompetence and moral decay of a structure that relies on the physical elimination of citizens for its survival. This day presents an opportunity to expose the full scale of this organized crime.



Within the authoritarian structure ruling Iran, the death penalty is not a legal instrument for justice, but a security measure designed to instill public terror. A tragic and striking example of this trend is the recent execution of Alireza Sepahi, a 25-year-old protester from the Isfahan Alikhani Square case, carried out just this week. The regime's judiciary has transformed the judicial process into a political circus through show trials, denial of the right to defense, extraction of forced confessions under torture, and the swift issuance of sentences. This systematic practice uncovers the regime's profound fear of widespread public protests reigniting and the eruption of societal anger.

The tragic loss of young individuals like Alireza Sepahi through torture and execution extends far beyond the direct victims, targeting the psychological and social layers of the entire society. Outraging public sensibilities and creating perpetual tension is a

strategy to drain hope and erode civil energy. However, contrary to the regime's calculations, this oppressive pressure has not resulted in submission; instead, it has fueled a new wave of national justice-seeking. The outrage sparked by these tyrannical execution sentences has become a unifying bond among diverse social strata to resist tyranny.

On the other hand, exposing these flagrant human rights violations on the international stage has imposed severe political costs on the repression machine. Continuous efforts by human rights activists, whistleblowers, and civil organizations have led global bodies to treat Iran's execution record as a clear instance of crimes against humanity. These legal and media pressures have deepened the regime's diplomatic isolation and significantly restricted its political maneuvering room in international forums.

Along this path, the guidance and diplomatic efforts of the national leader, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, have played a pivotal role in highlighting the anti-execution movement and supporting justice-seeking families. In his international engagements, he has consistently emphasized the urgent need to halt the regime's execution machine and hold the perpetrators and orchestrators of these crimes accountable. This strategic leadership has led the global community to recognize the Iranian people's justice movement as an inseparable component of the transition to democracy and the rule of law.

Today, democratic governments must move beyond token statements and adopt decisive action against the regime's machine of terror and executions. Implementing targeted sanctions against judges and interrogators, suspending diplomatic ties, and offering comprehensive support to justice-seeking institutions are the bare minimum requirements to stand with the Iranian nation. The international community must understand that silence in the face of such widespread destruction of life rewards criminals and undermines fundamental human rights standards worldwide.

The tomorrow of Iran's freedom will mark the end of judicial tyranny and the permanent abolition of inhumane punishments. With the establishment of national sovereignty and an independent judiciary, the human dignity of citizens will be restored, and all justice-seekers will achieve genuine justice. Under democratic leadership committed to human rights, our homeland will replace intimidation and violence with the rule of law and peace. The spring of lawful sovereignty is near, and tomorrow's light will erase the dark shadow of revolutionary courts and tyrannical sentences.



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Sepidar
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Friday, October 9, 2026

Iranian Women: An Epic Continuity Throughout Iran's History

By Salomeh Kia from Human Rights Department

If we are to speak of Iran, we cannot leave half of Iran's history untold. The half I am speaking of is the Iranian woman. During the Achaemenid era, women were not merely names on the margins of the royal court. The Persepolis Fortification Tablets speak of female workers, supervisors of work groups, and women who received official rations. Women such as Irdabama owned property and laborers and possessed their own administrative seal, through which they carried out economic transactions and orders. Records also show that high-ranking women of the royal court could possess independent wealth and economic establishments. And during the Sasanian era, the presence of women within the imperial structure became even more visible. The names of women from the royal family appear in official records, high-ranking women are represented in roles and works of art, and Puran-Dokht even appears on imperial coins as a reigning queen. These are not legends. They are the traces of women preserved in the historical records of Iran.



But modern Iran opened a new chapter. During the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi, modern education for girls expanded. The number of female students increased rapidly, and during the 1930s, women began, in a significant and sustained manner, to enter modern higher education. This transformation moved Iranian women beyond traditional boundaries toward schools, universities, and public life. Then, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, this movement expanded from education into citizenship and social and political participation. In 1963, Iranian women gained the right to vote. The Family Protection Law of 1967, followed by further reforms in 1975, transformed the legal position of women in areas such as marriage, divorce, and child custody. Girls' access

to education expanded. Women entered the fields of medicine, law, engineering, academia, the military, the police, and the civil service. By the mid-1970s, more than twelve thousand women were serving in the Literacy Corps in rural areas.

But history is not shaped by laws alone; it is moved forward by human beings. Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi became Iran's first female ambassador. Mahnaz Afkhami led the Women's Organization of Iran during some of its most active years. And countless women in universities, medicine, culture, the arts, education, and politics crossed the boundaries of their time. The Women's Organization of Iran, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, worked in areas including literacy, vocational training, career counseling, social welfare, and women's legal affairs. In 1975, following the establishment of the Rastakhiz Party and the first elections held under the new one-party political system, a significant number of women also entered parliament. This historical fact must be viewed within the political framework of its time; nevertheless, the presence of women within Iran's formal legislative institutions was also part of the broader historical process of expanding women's social participation. So, when we speak of the Iranian woman today, we are not speaking of someone who must find her place in history for the first time. She already has her place in history. From the woman standing alongside the economic apparatus of Persepolis, to the high-ranking noblewoman of the Sasanian court; from the Iranian girl who entered the world of education during the era of Reza Shah, to the physician, professor, engineer, ambassador, minister, and legislator of the Pahlavi era this is not a broken chain. It is a historical continuity. And the Iranian woman of today is the heir to this continuity. She is neither the shadow of man nor his rival. She is an independent thinker, a creative force, and an equal human being in the building of society.

Whatever an Iranian man can build for Iran, an Iranian woman can build as well with her own ideas, her knowledge, her art, her work, and her determination. And perhaps the greatest truth of all is this: The future of Iran cannot be built with only half of the nation. The Iran of the future will truly be Iran when the Iranian woman, just as she has been present throughout the pages of this country's history, is also present in writing its future—with knowledge, freedom, responsibility, and the strength of her own will. This is the epic of the Iranian woman an epic whose story has not yet come to an end.