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Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran: a capitalist, theocratic and patriarchal dictatorship

- IV Online magazine - 2022 - IV574 - November 2022 -

Publication date: Monday 28 November 2022

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The murder of Mahsa Jina Amini on 16 September by the “morals police“ for an ill-adjusted lock of hair triggered a vast popular movement of protest and rejection of the Islamic Republic.

This murder was the “last drop of blood” that broke the camel's back. For nearly 60 days, women, young people, national minorities (Kurds, Baluchis, Arabs, Azeris, etc.) have been on the front line of mobilizations. More generally, the assassination of Mahsa Jina Amini has once again brought to light the misogynist nature of the fundamental basis and laws of the theocratic dictatorship.

In 1979, introduction of laws relating to Sharia and Shiism

Basing itself on a patriarchal, unequal society and on the religiosity of a large part of the population, the power of the mullahs has, since 1979, instituted a set of laws relating to Sharia and Shiism. For Khomeini “everything must be Islamic”. Women are therefore the target of a set of discriminatory measures establishing men's total control over their bodies and their lives. The compulsory veil is “justified” by the fact that women's hair is a source of sexual provocation.

Thus, while women and men were shoulder to shoulder during the anti-monarchy revolution of 1979, the regime immediately mobilized its supporters to push women back into the domestic cell. Symbolized by the slogan *ya roussari, ya toussari* which can be translated as “either the veil or we knock you out”, a whole legislative and institutional arsenal was being put in place, accompanied by the creation of brigades responsible for enforcing this new policy. Of course, this was not done without resistance, and there was resistance from the advent of the Islamic regime. The massive demonstration of Iranian women (despite its prohibition), on March 8, 1979 against this phallocratic orientation and against the compulsory veil marked the beginning of an individual and collective resistance of women which has never been ceased.

The introduction of the compulsory veil was accompanied by other measures such as the dismissal of women from jobs considered to be reserved for men, segregation in the health system, in education and more broadly in the public space. All of these measures and many others aim to drive women out of the public sphere, to impose social and political control over them.

In 2017, the latest statistics from the Islamic Republic revealed that all the legal provisions of the regime form obstacles to women's equal access to the labour market. While women make up half of university graduates, only 14.9 per cent of them are employed, compared to 64.1 per cent of men. Officially, in 2017, the unemployment rate for women was 20.7per cent, twice that of men.

The civil code of the mullahrchy: a legal instrument of oppression

The civil code established by the theocratic regime determines that the husband is the head of the household. As

such, he can forbid his wife to work. In the same way, a passport application must be subject to prior authorization by the husband. Except in a few exceptional cases, women cannot obtain a divorce without the consent of their husband. Abortion is prohibited.

According to the laws in force, if a man or a woman has a sexual relationship outside of marriage, he or she is sentenced to be stoned to death. But simultaneously, the regime allows polygamy. A man can in fact marry for a limited time as many women as he wishes. He can also be married for an unlimited period to four wives. In practice, if he exceeds this number, he can always argue that it was a temporary marriage. For an identical offence, a man therefore has the possibility of escaping the death sentence by relying on the laws in force, whereas execution by stoning is applied to women.

The civil code considers legal the marriage of little girls aged eight and a half. For a boy, the legal age is 15. It also authorizes “the marriage certificate before puberty” with the agreement of the “legal guardian” of the girl. The father or grandfather can, for example, marry off his 2-year-old daughter or granddaughter to a 60-year-old man and receive in exchange a “dowry” called “milk rights”. The mother has no right to intervene.

It would take too long to detail all the discriminatory devices or all the physical, moral and social violence that women suffer.

The present wave of protest is part of the social, political, democratic and feminist resistance of the past 43 years. The movement today has made possible a considerable leap forward in the feminist consciousness of Iranian society, and whatever the outcome of the current confrontation, there will be no turning back. The Islamic Republic is a capitalist, patriarchal and obscurantist theocracy. More than ever, the peoples of Iran and above all the women, workers and oppressed national, religious and sexual minorities need the solidarity of the radical left, progressive associations and trade unions.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **I'Anticapitaliste**.*

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