

## Recent suicides highlight ongoing Iranian human rights abuses

By Soona Samsami, opinion contributor - 03/05/17 03:00 PM EST



In January, a young woman in Iran committed suicide. Now, sadly, suicides have become increasingly common among Iranian women due to a variety of social ills, including state-mandated misogyny. But, in Mahdis's case, it happened one day after she was released from prison. She was sexually abused by Iranian suppressive forces.

At only 26, the aspiring engineer was taken into custody by intelligence agents on Jan. 24. She was not the same after being released. Her fate resembled that of a 23-year-old political science student who also took her own life after spending four months in prison.

These heart-wrenching stories are but a small portion of the gross human rights violations committed by the religious fundamentalist rulers of Iran. Raping female prisoners is a common practice in Iran.

Recently, Amnesty International released a damning report, condemning Tehran for "heavily" suppressing "the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religious belief."

"Women and girls," it added, "faced pervasive violence and discrimination."

The report went on to highlight the regime's "extensive use of the death penalty, carrying out hundreds of executions, some in public."

"At least two juvenile offenders were executed" in 2016.

Since the start of 2017, the theocracy has been conducting an execution every 8 hours, on average. In the first two weeks of February, 25 youth were among the victims, all under the age of 30. There are officially 160 juveniles on death row in Iran, but the real figures are much higher.

All this is happening under the regime's so-called "moderate" president Hassan Rouhani, who has managed to captivate some western businesses with trade opportunities after the Iran nuclear deal.

Meanwhile, the regime's assortment of suppressive forces have been unleashed to quash basic freedoms. Recently, a 14-year-old girl was beaten and arrested by "morality police" for wearing ripped jeans on her birthday.

Two women in the city of Dezful were arrested for riding a motorcycle. A local police commander told the state-run news agency that the women "committed an action against revolutionary norms and values by riding a motorcycle."

The mullahs have spent close to four decades suppressing dissent, torturing or killing people for their beliefs, legalizing and institutionalizing misogyny, executing opponents on the streets, chopping off limbs and stoning women to death.

But, the vast scale of their crimes does not stop there. In the summer of 1988, the Iranian regime executed as many as 30,000 political prisoners, most of whom were young supporters of the main opposition, Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK).

In an audio tape published for the first time last August, the regime's former no. 2 official, Hossein-Ali Montazeri, is heard telling other regime officials that the executions amount to "the biggest crime in the Islamic Republic, for which history will condemn us."

Montazeri, who died in 2009, had also admitted that girls as young as 15 and pregnant women were among the victims of the 1988 massacre.

On March 1, Six human rights groups with consultative status to the United Nations human rights body joined together to issue a statement to the current session of the Human Rights Council condemning the 1988 massacre.

These rights groups recommended that the UN high commissioner for human rights and the UN Human Rights Council appoint an international commission to investigate the massacre.

They also called on the special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Asma Jahangir, and the special rapporteur on the promotion of truth, Pablo de Greiff, to conduct separate inquiries into the massacre.

In light of the regime's abhorrent human rights abuses, western governments cannot morally or strategically engage the mullahs. The United States should adopt a firm and principled policy that holds Tehran accountable for its crimes and terrorism and embraces the democratic aspirations of the Iranian people, the West's true allies.

Too many of Iran's young girls have been mistreated, abused, tortured and killed. Mahdis, should have been alive to rebuild Iran. If the thousands of young women and men were not massacred by a brutal regime in 1988 or throughout the past 40 years, they would have had an opportunity to create a democratic, peaceful, non-nuclear and generous Iran.

It is time to stop being silent about human rights abuses in Iran. Enough is enough.

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