One Million Signatures Campaign demanding changes to discriminatory laws in Iran

1. Shirin Ebadi 2. Simin Behbahani 3. Shahla Lahiji 4. Shahla Ezazi 5. Babak Ahmadi 6. Farzaneh Taheri 7. Tahmineh Milani 8. Manijeh Hekmat 9. Maedeh Tahmasebi 10. Narges Mohamadi

Iranian law considers women to be second class citizens and promotes discrimination against them. It is noteworthy that legal discrimination of this type is being enforced in a society where women comprise over 60% of those being admitted to university. It is generally believed that laws should promote social moderation by being one step ahead of cultural norms. But in Iran the law lags behind cultural norms and women's social position and status.

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According to Iranian penal codes, a girl at nine years of age is considered to be an adult. If she commits a crime which is punishable by execution, the courts can indeed sentence her to death. If a man and a woman become paralyzed as a result of an accident, the punitive damages provided to the woman according to law is half that of those provided to the man. If a man and a woman are both witness to a crime, the law does not recognize the woman as a witness, but the man can serve as a witness.

The law allows fathers, who obtain the permission of the courts, to wed their daughters even before the age of 13 (legal age of marriage) to a 70 year old man. The law does not allow mothers to serve as the financial guardians of their children, or to make decisions regarding their children, or to make decisions regarding their children, or to practice polygamy and gives them uncontested rights to divorce their wives at whim.

These are only a few examples of the inequities and discriminatory practices against women, which can be found in Iranian law. Without a doubt, women of lower socio-economic status or women from religious and ethic minority groups suffer disproportionately from legal discrimination. On the other hand, these unjust laws have promoted unhealthy and unbalanced relationships between men and women and as a result have had negative consequences on the lives of men as well. Specifically we can point to the high dowries, that many women demand as a condition of marriage, which in essence are reflective of the lack of a sense of security resulting from legal discrimination and their unequal status under the law.

On the other hand, the Iranian government is a signatory to several international human rights conventions, and accordingly is required to bring its legal code in line with international standards. The most important international human rights standard calls for elimination of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. The undersigned ask for the elimination of all forms of legal discrimination against women in Iranian law and ask legislators to review and reform existing laws based on the government's commitments to international human rights conventions.

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Sign the petition: International Support for Women's Campaign

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