

## ***Towards 8th March, International Women's Day!***



**NO to women's oppression!  
NO to gender apartheid!  
NO to Islamic veil!**

**Long live equality between men and women!**

**We urge all activists of movement for women's liberation, socialists and workers' movement to celebrate the International Women's Day! Join Organisation for Women's Liberation!**

***8<sup>th</sup> March 2007***

## **No to women's oppression**

8<sup>th</sup> March is a day against women's oppression. On this day, people through out the world have protested and shown their hatred of gender discrimination, violence and inequality. They have achieved gains too. However, women every where still suffer inequality. In parts of the world women are denied their basic rights and live under medieval, religious, backward and reactionary laws and values. This is why women all over the world gather on this day to claim their rights and declare that the world is not free unless women are free.

The movement for women's liberation in Iran has been struggling for its basic rights for nearly three decades. This movement is struggling under one of the most anti women regimes in the world that has imposed medieval male chauvinist laws and Islamic culture and traditions. Women's liberation movement in Iran is gaining momentum and is undermining the Islamic regime of capital. The youth movement is demonstrating the modern and progressive character of this movement in particular.

8<sup>th</sup> March is an important international and historical day. At the same time it occupies a vital position in women's liberation movement in Iran. The first resistance against the Islamic regime was on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1979. It was registered as a day of resistance and protest.

We are going to celebrate International Women's Day by organising gatherings, demonstrations and declaring "NO to women's oppression!" "No to the veil!", "No to gender apartheid", and "Long live women's liberation". These are the demands of the movement for women's liberation. Let's try and throw out the veil and break the wall of gender apartheid, and by doing this shake the foundations of the Islamic regime. Let's declare that we will not stop until our demands are met. And how true this expression is: "Women's freedom is the measure of society's freedom."

# 8<sup>th</sup> March Manifesto

## Iran: Stop Women's suppression!

8<sup>th</sup> March is International Women's Day. It was necessary to announce such a day because male chauvinist and anti women system rules every where. Women do not enjoy equal rights, are second class citizens and are victims of violence because of their gender.

The struggle for equality between men and women is as old as the male chauvinist system. As a result of this struggle notable reforms in favour of women have been gained in certain parts of the world. Unfortunately in other parts of the world women are still living in the Middle Ages. In countries under the rule of Islam, women are not even considered as second class citizens. In Iran, women are denied their civil rights, and officially are regarded as men's slaves. The ruling laws, values, traditions and ideology have turned women into slaves and inferior to men. Violence and suppression against women is outrageous. Limitations and deprivations have chained women even in their most private lives, like love and marriage. Forced veiling and gender apartheid have imprisoned women. Putting into effect stoning as a criminal law to punish women for practicing sex outside marriage has pushed the society back to the Middle Ages.

This is just one side of the story. The huge social resistance against all these limitations is the other side of the story. The movement for women's liberation is a massive social movement. Women's real position is far more ahead of the official and legal position. Women have not accepted such obedience or slavery. Especially the young generation has a strong presence and has challenged these limitations and lack of rights. The majority of women are demanding equality, economic

Women's liberation  
movement in  
Iran active on  
the net



[www.8march.blogfa.com](http://www.8march.blogfa.com)

independence, freedom of choice, freedom of clothing and freedom of deciding their own destiny. Women consider themselves equal to men and are not prepared to accept this inferior position. Thus we are witnessing a constant tension, publicly or hidden, between the current system and the society over the position of women.

8<sup>th</sup> March is a day which society declares; "Stop Women's suppression!"; "freedom of women is a measure of the freedom of society"; "society is not free unless women are free". 8<sup>th</sup> March is an important international day. On this day, women's movement declares that it will not rest till equality and freedom is achieved. This movement is not exclusive to women. It belongs to all people seeking freedom and equality.

On the occasion of 8<sup>th</sup> March, the movement for women's liberation in Iran demands:

- 1- Abolition of all discriminatory laws (economic, social, political and cultural).
- 2- Complete equal economic, social, political and cultural rights between men and women.
- 3- Equal right of women in family, marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance.
- 4- Freedom of clothing.
- 5- Abolition of gender apartheid.
- 6- The right to participate in national and international sports.
- 7- Combating violence (domestic and state) against women.
- 8- No war, no nuclear bombs!

We strive to organise public meetings to raise the banner of freedom and equality. Support us. Join us.



# No to women's oppression is our slogan for 8<sup>th</sup> March 2007!

## Interview with Azar Majedi

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### **What is the position of movement for women's liberation in Iran?**

Azar: There is a mass movement in defence of women's rights in Iran. This is particularly true amongst the youth. This movement was in its infancy after the 1979 uprising. Women's movement did not have a social dimension then. Its activists were mainly part of the left movement in Iran. Following the establishment of the Islamic Republic and the decree about the veil, we witnessed the emergence of this movement in a social scale, but it was suppressed after 2 years. During the following decade (the 80's) a movement was formed against the Islamic Republic against the veil and gender apartheid, which at first was mainly manifested as an individual defiance.

The wave of suppression in 1981-2 by the Islamic regime against people had its impact on the women's movement too. The women's rights movement had to resort to underground activities, as any other opposition movement. Despite all the limitations and bloody violence committed by the Islamic regime, women's resistance movement continued its protests. At this stage many women activists started to challenge the regime by publishing research and

historical literature about women's movement in Iran and the world. This is towards the end of Rafsanjani's presidency and beginning of Khatami's. Those who claim that "DO-Khordad" (pro Khatami movement) or Khatami gave more freedom to women are reversing the course of events in history. In fact it was women's and other social movements that created an atmosphere that lead to birth of a so-called reform movement from inside the regime. In order to save the Islamic Republic, a faction of the regime talked about minor reforms. People saw this as a move toward a freer society, so Khatami became president. Women's rights movement played an important role in this political transformation.

During this era the main leading figures of the movement were that of "national-Islamists", who due to their social position and their pragmatist approach did not have any critical views towards Islam and sought reforms within the framework of existing laws. However, as all illusions about Khatami and his "Do-Khordad" movement diminished in the society at large, a more radical women's movement emerged that did not compromised with the ruling power. This new movement which I rather call movement for women's liberation is more radical and in line with Worker-communism.

Currently, the mass movement in defence of women's rights has two main characteristics: One is the National-Islamist and the other Worker-communist. In other words the political tendencies within the women's

movement are reflection of the political tendencies in the society at large.

The latter tendency is strong and needs organisation and unity. One way of achieving this is to combine public and clandestine activity. In my view the Iranian society is polarising daily. We are witnessing radicalisation of the movement for women's liberation. Our slogans and aims and our differences with other tendencies are far more evident now. I just hope that this year's 8<sup>th</sup> March we can play an important role in radicalizing the society further.

### **What are the key issues of this year's 8<sup>th</sup> March?**

Azar: The key issue is to make 8<sup>th</sup> March events happening in Iran. The Iranian regime is an anti women regime. It will do all in its power to stop any events taking shape. Thus, organising events in itself is an important issue.

The other issue is the slogan of "No to women's oppression!" which is a unifying slogan. Other slogans like "long live women's liberation", "No to gender apartheid" and "No to Islamic veil" are all key slogans which we hope will decorate the 8<sup>th</sup> March events.

### **The first 8<sup>th</sup> March in 1979 was about opposition to the veil. What do you think has happened to this movement?**

Azar: 8<sup>th</sup> March demonstration in 1979 in Tehran was a historical day. Women in their thousands came to the streets chanting their opposition against the veil, demanded freedom equality and



**Drawing by Azita Ebrahimi**

declared that women's rights are universal. It was the beginning of a movement against political Islam.

To some extent, women succeeded to impose their will on the regime by wearing non-Islamic clothing in non-Islamic colours. Obviously it all came at a cost. They were arrested, beaten up, acid thrown at their faces and imprisoned.

An important factor in advancing women's movement in Iran has been the influence of Worker-communist movement. In 1979 the left was what we call a populist and "anti-imperialist" movement. It belonged mainly to the Nationalist-Islamic movement. It adhered to *Easternism* in its outlook and its "anti-imperialist" thinking was translated into anti Western culture and trends. They even boycotted women's protests after the US embassy siege. However, with the emergence of Worker-communism, the banner of unconditional equality and freedom of women was raised. This has played a very important role in advancement of movement for women's liberation.

**How can the demand against the veil represent itself in this year's 8<sup>th</sup> March?**

Azar: No to the veil is one of the main demands of the movement for women's liberation. The veil and gender apartheid are two main core elements of Islamic Republic's identity. Thus these slogans play a major role in weakening the regime in Iran. However, considering the balance of forces in Iran, I am not sure

if women are allowed to throw their veil or many women dare do this. We should try to throw the veil any where possible, because this is an important act against the Islamic Republic. However, we have to focus on organising massive events round slogans like "No to women's oppression" and "long live women's liberation". Obviously "no to veil" and "no to gender apartheid" must be our slogans on this day too.

**Why do you make such a big deal of the veil? Is it that important to women in Iran? Don't they have more important issues to worry about?**

Azar: The veil is important because:  
 1- It is symbol of women's oppression and slavery. As long as women are covered by the veil they are not free.  
 2- It is a symbol of women's humiliation.  
 3- A system that imposes this symbol of humiliation and slavery is a deeply misogynist system. We must oppose it.  
 4- The veil and gender apartheid are the basic ideological characteristics of political Islam. Thus a struggle against the veil and gender apartheid is an important political battle in Iran.

In other words, the struggle against the veil goes much further than the veil. It aims at the overthrow of the Islamic regime in Iran. People, who say that women in Iran have other, more important issues, are wrong. The veil in reality is a pain for women in Iran. Obviously women do have other issues that they are fighting for. If you ask them what pains them most, poverty or the veil, they would rightly respond poverty. However we can not say lets forget about women's issues and just concentrate on general social issues. The struggle against poverty, oppression and for defence of women are all interlinked.

**"Women's freedom is a measure of society's freedom". This is an**

**old socialist expression. Do you think it reflects today's society?**

Azar: This expression was said by Fourier, the socialist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Karl Marx referred to it too. Marx gives an interesting philosophical interpretation of it. He says that human slavery is mostly manifested in women's slavery. women are "men's slaves", so to speak, hence we can envisage that the women's freedom is a measure for society's freedom. It has been tried to over philosophize this statement, or try to analyse it in the context of Marxist class analysis, I think by doing this the statement loses its actual meaning. This is a very sharp and at the same time simple observation of social relations.

Look at women in Iran. Women are not even second class citizens. Women's de-facto position in society is much different than the official position they are given. Women in Iran are brave and make a mockery of the Islamic regime. They disobey the rules. The regime tries to suppress them. The balance of forces has changed. More than 60% of university entries are women. Mansoor Hekmat once said "the Iranian revolution can be a women's revolution". How true! It shows the position of women's liberation movement in Iran. There are different interpretations of freedom and equality. The Nationalist-Islamists think women's freedom brings corruption! We demand unconditional freedom and equality of men and women in all aspects. Women's position is not defined by her association with men. Freedom of human beings and women's liberation are so intertwined. People are equal because they are humans. Gender has no relevance.

# Nazanin Fatehi freed!

## Long live freedom!



Nazanin as she walked out of the prison door



Capital punishment  
is murder!

Stop women's  
suppression!

Long Live Women's  
Liberation!



**Together we can  
save Kobra!**

*Kobra needs you! Participate  
in our protest meetings, or  
organise your own meetings.  
Download her picture, print  
it and distribute it where ever  
you can. Participate in our  
campaign by asking all to  
sign our online petition.*

[www.petitiononline.com/  
mod\\_perl/signed.cgi?kobra](http://www.petitiononline.com/mod_perl/signed.cgi?kobra)

### Maryam Kousha

Following a long and massive international campaign, Nazanin Fatehi was freed from jail on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2007.

Nazanin Fatehi is a young girl who was only 17 when she was arrested and sentenced to death for murder. On January 3, 2006, Nazanin was sentenced to death for murder by court in Iran after she stabbed one of three men who attempted to rape her and her 16-year-old niece in a park in Karaj (near Tehran) in March 2005. On 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007 her case was reviewed by court of appeal that decided to suspend the execution for the time being.

An international campaign was carried out to protest against the execution order and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The campaign led by many human rights organizations such as Organization for Women's Liberation, International Committee against Execution, Amnesty International and Save Nazanin.com brought the case of Nazanin to the attention of the public in Europe and North America.

This is a great news and an important event for Nazanin, her family and the campaign to free more women who are still in jail in Iran. There are hundreds of people in Islamic Republic's jails who must be freed too. Delara, Shahla, Malake and Kobra Rahmanpoor are only a hand full of women awaiting execution.

There are so many "Nazanins" under severe conditions in Iran. They are all victims of Islamic rule and values. Capital punishment must be outlawed everywhere. The Islamic regime has turned Iran into a huge prison and has a record of more than two decades of brutality, torture and execution of minors and adults.

For more information about the campaign to free Nazanin, please watch the documentary about the campaign where *Nazanin Afshinjam* and *Mina Ahadi* report on the events surrounding Nazanin Fatehi:

[www.bodog.tv/media/naz-fatehidoc](http://www.bodog.tv/media/naz-fatehidoc)  
[www.adpi.net](http://www.adpi.net)

# Against Gender Apartheid



*Drawing by Azita Ebrahimi*

## AIMS

Gender apartheid discriminates against women because of their gender. It is practiced in Iran by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Women are denied their most basic rights.

Women are banned from a wide range of social, economic and political activities; Islamic veil is compulsory. Women are separated from men in busses, universities, and many public places. Husbands and fathers are their guardians, at home and outside. Women cannot travel, even within the country, without permission from their male guardians. They have no right to divorce, or custody of their children. The list is endless.

Our aim is to strengthen the “against Gender Apartheid” movement in Iran and internationally in order to ban gender apartheid and stop all its manifestations in Iran. We need your support.

Women’s oppression is inherent in Islamic Republic of Iran and its laws and values. Gender apartheid consolidates this oppression. How?

- Women are required by law to be separated from men in public places;
- Classes for pupils and students

are segregated at all levels;

- Women are forced to wear the Islamic veil;
- Women are not allowed to take part in certain sporting activities like cycling;
- Women are not allowed to watch male sporting games like football. They are banned from entering the stadium;
- Public transport is segregated according to gender. Women use one door when getting on the bus, men use another;
- Even the beaches are divided according to gender by a massive partition!
- Women do not have the right to divorce;
- In case of divorce they do not have the custody of their children;
- Women are not allowed to study certain courses;
- Women do not have equal civil rights; they are not allowed to be judges or president!

## What is the movement for women’s liberation is doing in Iran?

The Islamic Republic of Iran has imposed the most reactionary and suppressive rules against women in Iran ever since it came to power in 1979. From the very first day women defied these rules. They never accepted the Islamic regime. Women have fought hard and paid a bloody price for resisting these pressures and violation of their human rights.

One can say women in Iran have double lives. One public and one personal. In public they do their utmost to break through the gender apartheid. They find ways of altering the Islamic hejab (veil and dress code). They wear their veils in different ways to show their hair. They do not accept the dress code as a condition for university acceptance. They protest against gender apartheid by staging demonstrations. Privately they do not comply with Islamic laws.

Women’s movement in Iran has a great momentum. One of the main pillars of the Islamic Republic is its anti women policies and regulations. The regime knows that. So do women! Any protest or so called disobedience on

women's rights jeopardizes the entirety of the Iranian regime. Women in Iran demand freedom, liberation, equality and a secular state. They demand universal human rights.

### **What can we do?**

The best way to show how in practice we can make a difference is to compare the fight against gender apartheid in Iran to the massive international campaign against racial apartheid in South Africa during the 70's and early 80's.

International solidarity with the struggle of movement for women's liberation in Iran is the key. Women in Iran are fighting a hard battle. They are facing a brutal and criminal state. International campaign against gender apartheid can and will boost this movement to victory. Build your "Solidarity Groups against Gender Apartheid in Iran". Any advance in women's position in Iran has a direct impact against the pillars of the Islamic Republic in Iran and political Islam in the Middle East. We can change the position of women in the region.

### **Solidarity Groups against Gender Apartheid in Iran**

Do you want to join us in ending: Sexual apartheid in Iran? Executions in Iran? Gender inequality in Iran? Women's suppression in Iran?

Build solidarity groups in your area. Contact us for more information. Let's build a strong network of solidarity groups to strengthen the movement for women's liberation in Iran. Together we can make a difference. Adopt and sign our manifesto against gender apartheid.



**Maryam Kousha**  
kousha.maryam@gmail.com

## **Manifesto against Gender Apartheid in Iran**

Gender apartheid and segregation of people according to their gender is one of the ugliest faces of anti women acts and discrimination between people in some societies, in particular Islamic Republic of Iran.

Gender apartheid is a system by which governments and especially political Islam currents impose suppression on people. Sexual apartheid, the same as racial apartheid, is despicable and must be destroyed in the same way.

Men and women must enjoy equal economic, political, social and cultural rights. The civilized humanity must not allow such criminal behavior being exercised against people any where in the world. Thus, we the undersigned demand:

- \* **Condemnation of gender apartheid by the international community and human rights authorities.**
- \* **Condemnation of Islamic Republic of Iran as the symbol of the system of gender apartheid in the world.**
- \* **Expulsion of all governments ruling on the system of gender apartheid from the international community.**

**Long Live 8th  
March,  
International  
Women's Day**



# Let's build an international secular movement

## The civilized world needs it!

Paris, 10-11 February 2007

**An international conference was held in Paris on 10-11 February by USF ([www.laicite-republique.org](http://www.laicite-republique.org)) and Association of Algeria Together with the aim of building an international secularist movement in defense of equality between women and men, freedom of speech, and against racism.**

**30 speakers talked about the above issues. Azar Majedi, chairperson of Organization for Women's Liberation was one of the speakers. The text of her speech as follows:**

I am very pleased to be part of this movement. Coming from the Middle East, living under the Islamic Republic in Iran, one of the most brutal regimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I feel very passionate about the aims of this movement. As a first hand victim of political Islam, as a woman who has lived under the rule of Islam, I have experienced first hand the brutality and suppression of an Islamic regime and political Islam. As a left activist fighting for freedom and equality I experienced this brutal regime and this reactionary political force, losing many friends and comrades.

I have devoted my life to fight for a better world, a free and egalitarian society, where there exists unconditional freedom of expression and criticism, unconditional freedom for women and equality among all human beings, regardless of their gender, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion or beliefs.

Religion is not only an oppressive institution, suppressing freedom of thought, speech and criticism and oppressing women. It is also the machinery for terrorizing societies. In the history of mankind, more people have died under the name of the God, than any other ideology or cause. In fact religion is a mafia-like institution.

As it regards women, all religions are very oppressive and Islam particularly is well-known for its oppressive nature towards women.

The main enemy of women's liberation movement in Iran and the Middle East is political Islam and we must fight it, push it back and create a secular society as a precondition for materializing women's liberation. Religion must be a private matter. We have to push the institution of religion to the margins of society, curtail its role and influence in society. This is a precondition for creating a free society.

Political Islam as a reactionary global force resorts to intimidation and terrorism to gain power. Depriving, degrading and humiliating women are enshrined in its ideology. The veil is

its political banner and gender apartheid a pillar of its movement. We have to fight against it.

As the world is increasingly becoming a global entity, we need more than ever to build an international movement. We need to build a movement around humanitarian and egalitarian values and goals. It is not enough to safeguard Europe from religious institutions and political Islam. As a matter of fact it is no longer possible. We need to reach the whole world. Our fight must be on an international scale.

The two greatest evils in today's world are the two poles of terrorism: state terrorism, led by the USA, and Islamist terrorism. We must fight against both. They reinforce each other. Look at Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, as well as September 11th, and Madrid, and London. We need to raise the banner against both and come together as the voice of the civilized world.

As president of the Organisation for Women's Liberation, I like to call upon you all to support our struggle for achieving women's equality and liberation in Iran. To do this we need to fight against the Islamic Republic and political Islam. Realising women's liberation in Iran will open the window to freedom for women in the whole Middle East and countries under the rule of Islam. The women's liberation movement is one of the main pillars of the movement against political Islam and for a free, egalitarian and secular world. If we topple the Islamic Republic in Iran, political Islam will be marginalized internationally.

I ask for your support and solidarity. Join us in our fight against Islamic Republic, against political Islam and for women's equality. We are building an international movement against gender apartheid, like the movement against racial apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s. Join this movement to recognise gender apartheid as an inhuman and reactionary system as racial apartheid was recognized. We should dismantle gender apartheid in the world as we once dismantled racial apartheid in South Africa.

# Our aims

Women's freedom is the measure of freedom in society. There is still a great deal left to accomplish in order to eliminate inequality between men and women, not only in Iran where misogyny brutally rules, but in the most advanced societies as well. The Organisation for Women's Liberation (OWL) sees itself as part of the immense historical and international struggle for women's liberation.

The OWL's aim is the unconditional liberation of women and complete equality between women and men in Iran. The OWL, therefore, must fight for the following demands:

- 1- *Complete equal rights for women and men; abolition of discriminatory laws, particularly laws in relation to family, marriage, divorce, and parental responsibility, for children;*
- 2- *Abolition of compulsory veiling and freedom of dress;*
- 3- *Complete abolition of segregation;*
- 4- *Access to equal resources in education, employment, sports and cultural activities;*
- 5- *Separation of religion from the state and education.*

## Women in Iran

**Women are banned from a wide range of social, economic and political activities; Islamic veil is compulsory. Women are separated from men in buses, universities, and many public places. Husbands and fathers are their guardians, at home and outside. Women cannot travel, even within the country, without permission from their male guardians. They have no right to divorce, or custody of their children. The list is endless.**

**We can change this. The Organisation for Women's Liberation-Iran is the organisation with the vision and dedication to make a difference in the life of millions of women in Iran. Progression in Iran will mean progression in the region.**

**Join us, make donation, distribute our paper, contact us. Together we can make a difference.**

### **Related links:**

Medusa, Journal of Women and Socialism  
[www.medusa2000.com](http://www.medusa2000.com)  
International Committee against Stoning  
[www.stopstoningnow.com](http://www.stopstoningnow.com)  
International Campaign to End Sharia Court in Canada  
[www.nosharia.com](http://www.nosharia.com)  
International Campaign in Defense of Women's Rights in Iran  
[www.irandwr.org](http://www.irandwr.org)

### **The Organisation for Women's Liberation-Iran**

[www.azadizan.com](http://www.azadizan.com)

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### **Financial contributions**

We need your support and donations. Please send your contributions to the following bank account and let us know by email. We urge all individuals and organisations to help us in our efforts to make a difference in the lives of women in Iran.

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