

Yet Another Regressive Step

More of Gender Segregation and Censorship in Iran

Iran's Parliament Authorizes gender segregation of health services and censorship of women's issues

The Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, recently gave initial approval to a law requiring hospitals to fully segregate all health services offered to men and women. This move at widening the system of gender apartheid puts women's health in severe jeopardy because there are not enough women doctors in the country to attend to women's health needs. The regime must be stopped from putting in danger the health of 30 million women by taking away their access to healthcare.

Recently, the Iranian Parliament also passed a law that prohibits the press from carrying pictures of women, even when fully veiled, on the their front page. The law also makes illegal discussion of women's issues or rights outside of the requirement of the Shari'a (Islamic law) as interpreted by the ruling clerics. This law will endanger activists, journalists, writers, publishers, in fact, anyone who seeks to

improve women's status.

After the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979, it instituted forced veiling for women under the penalty of flogging and imprisonment, and gender segregation in all public places. It excluded women from numerous fields of study and employment, nullified the family protection law that gave women rights within the family, reduced the minimum legal age of marriage for women to nine, and passed a penal code that includes stoning of women suspected of adultery. Despite the regime's oppressive

measures, women resisted and forced it to withdraw certain laws. It has now begun once again to extend the parameters of its gender apartheid policies.

In 1997, President Khatami was elected to office by the overwhelming votes of women who expected him to ease the policies of gender apartheid. However, nothing tangible has yet occurred. On the contrary, the tension between civil society and the regime is increasing. The regime has consistently tried to limit women's freedom of movement and access to public institutions. Women have been resisting and fighting back. In the past, the regime has had to withdraw in many areas under pressure from domestic and international community. It is imperative that the international community makes its position known on this issue in support of Iranian women.

Please write to Iranian authorities expressing your support for the women of Iran, and urging them to rescind these laws which will reinforce gender apartheid in Iran.

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