

MARYAM RAJAVI IN PARIS CONFERENCE
THE EVE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
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Honorable friends,

Dear sisters,

Distinguished guests,

Honorable representatives, intellectuals, and eminent personalities for the movement of parity!

In a few days, we will be celebrating the International Women's Day. March 8th calls for lauding women who strive for equality and freedom. We pay tribute to women who have risen up for a glorious tomorrow and a better world that will not know the meaning of giving up, despair and incapability.

Today, the courageous women of Iran who are languishing in prisons and the brave mothers who have been relentlessly staging protests in front of Evin Prison are celebrating this day with us.

We also salute the women who pioneered the struggle against two dictatorships in Iran: the Fedayeen, the Mojahedin and other combatant women such as Fatemeh Amini, Marzieh Oskouii, Ashraf Rajavi and all the women who rose up against the religious dictatorship in Iran. I pay special tribute to Zahra Rajabi, on the 20th anniversary of her martyrdom. We pay homage to Zohreh Qa'emi, Gity Givch Chiniyan, Saba Haft-Baradaran, Asiyeh Rakhshani, Mahdieh Madadzadeh, Nayyereh Rabii and my other valiant sisters who were slain in camps Ashraf and Liberty.

And hail to the oppressed women of Syria who are steadfast despite their great pain and suffering under Russian bombardments, or in ISIS criminal attacks, or in foreign lands without any shelters.

So far, more than 400,000 Syrians, including countless numbers of women and children have been killed. Indeed, why must so much suffering continue?

For those who strive for the cause of gender equality, what duty is more urgent than solidarity with millions of women whose lives are on fire in Syria?

For our sisters all over the world, what struggle is more important than confronting the source of war and bloodshed in the Middle East, namely the Velayat-e Faqih regime ruling Iran?

Therefore, I call on every one of you and all activists of the equality movement the world over to rise to the aid of the suffering women of Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

The elections: A rivalry between the incumbent and former officials in charge of torture and executions
Dear friends,

Yesterday, February 26th, the mullahs held a sham election. The so-called election was not about electing the people's representatives; the list of names of the rival faction shows that the incumbent and former officials in charge of torture and executions and exportation of terrorism were in fact running against one another.

This puts an end to the myth of moderation in this regime. No wonder that this sham election was rejected by most of the Iranian people particularly by the youth.

By holding this election, Khamenei seeks to further concentrate his regime on the war in Syria and on the misogynous suppression in Iran. However, the post-election era will be the beginning of an era of unprecedented fragility and demise of the Velayat-e Faqih. Khamenei cannot escape the consequences. Yes, now is the turn for the people of Iran and we call on our compatriots inside Iran, especially the brave women and youths, to expand their struggle.

Institutionalized violence against women

Dear friends,

Fundamentalism is a proliferating cancer threatening every one. Extremism under the banner of Islam – including Daesh -has spread all over the world from the coasts of the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. And the main victims are women. It is, therefore, necessary to recognize the epicenter of this great calamity, how to uproot it and determine the role of women in this endeavor.

For this reason, I would like to elaborate on an issue today about which there is little awareness: the suppression of women in Iran and the Iranian women's resistance against the regime.

A fundamentalist regime has been ruling Iran for more than three decades. Its main character is enmity to women. In the past three, four decades, nowhere in the world have women been tortured and executed in such great numbers or assaulted in prisons as they have been in Iran.

Misogyny in the mullahs' laws and Sharia

Let us first address this situation in the regime's laws and basic elements of its Sharia.

Article 167 of the Iranian regime's Constitution, stipulates: "The judge must try to base the verdict of each dispute on the codified laws. If his attempt fails, he should issue the verdict on the case by referring to reputable Islamic sources or religious rulings (fatwas)."

The article grants judges freedom of action to cite religious rulings in issuing their verdicts. These fatwas, however, are nothing but those contained in Tahrir-olVasileh, a book on Khomeini's decrees. A considerable portion of this book is devoted to the means and methods of male domination, imposing inequality on women, sanctioning polygamy and even legitimizing anti-human treatment of women and girl children.

The book contains a number of fatwas on taking female slaves and justifies slavery of women in the mullahs' Sharia. In another words, Khomeini defended slavery in the 20th century.

In dozens of other decrees, Khomeini has permitted men to have countless number of temporary wives. Again in the 20th century, he has allowed the mullahs' followers to take women as war booties and own them as their property.

Khomeini emphasized in his book that "some human rights cannot be proven unless by a man's testimony and the testimonies of two women cannot replace one man's testimony."

In another instance, he wrote, "The testimony of a woman is not acceptable by itself. Even the testimonies of one man and six women cannot be accepted... Even the testimonies of eight women are not acceptable."

Still further, Khomeini has justified sexual abuse of girls under nine years of age and even infants. The book also contains a number of rulings on marrying minor girls.

In a number of rulings, Khomeini has degraded the value of a woman's marriage to a financial deal and has thus insulted women's worth and dignity.

This book is the main source cited in the regime's Constitution for issuing judicial rulings.

Common practice of rape and violence against women is a product of such Sharia. The UN Special Reporter on Violence against Women, Ms. Yakin Ertürk, provided a clear picture of this in her 2005 report on Iran.

Widespread addiction of women and their misery is yet another product of the mullahs' corrupt Sharia. This is why we say Velayat-e Faqih is the enemy of women.

Meanwhile, Khomeini and his mullahs have been injecting this ideology into the minds of fundamentalist groups in other countries over the past three decades. They have funded and organized many of these groups.

Over the years, and particularly over the past two years, this phenomenon has been permeating and spreading in countries across the Middle East and Africa and emerging in various forms, ranging from Daesh, the Taliban, and Boko Haram to the Iranian regime's militias in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon.

Look at Daesh's treatment of women today which is justified by invoking the implementation of Islamic edicts.

Look at how they take the Yazidi women and girls as slaves. These are exactly the same as the rulings written in Khomeini's book from which I cited a few examples.

Whether Sunni or Shiite, these groups share several basic elements:

- Imposing their religion by force;
- Carrying out the mullahs' Sharia laws;
- Ignoring borders and committing genocide and terrorist assassinations;
- Enmity toward the West;
- Using excommunication to eliminate opponents;
- Misogyny; and
- Establishing a tyrannical state under the name of a Caliphate, Islamic State or Velayat-e Faqih.

In his book entitled, "The Islamic State", Khomeini formally defined his desirable regime to be a Caliphate.

In fact, Iran's ruling mullahs, Daesh and like-minded groups have disguised this absolutely vicious and misogynous savagery as Islam, while:

Anything that promotes compulsion and force and denies people's suffrage and free choice, is not Islam; it is against Islam.

And anything that denies women's equal rights has no place in Islam.

We will not tolerate violation of women's rights under the guise of religion or under any other pretext.

We advocate democratic Islam in the face of extremism, fundamentalism and exploitation of religion.

With the emancipating word of "equality" and with women's active and equal participation in political leadership, we seek to turn this century in the name of women, into the century of emancipation of women and the humankind.

Assaulting and executing women

Dear friends,

Velayat-e Faqih is the enemy of women because it rules by constant violence and suppression against women.

In addition to 74 forms of torture practiced in the regime's political prisons, a large number of young women were raped before execution according to a shameful fatwa (ruling). Raping young men and women occurred on an extensive scale during 2009.

In addition, the regime has executed thousands of women for their political activities.

Here, at this very moment, I am thinking of Fatemeh Mesabeh, only 13 at the time of her execution. I am thinking of Mojgan Jamshidi, only 14 when she was executed, and Noushin Imami who was only 16. I remember women who died under torture and women who were pregnant when sent before the firing squads.

Not one, not 100, not 1,000, but thousands of women were executed, sent to the gallows or tortured to death, stopping

thousands of beating hearts who yearned freedom and equality.

The victims were thousands of determined human beings each of whom was a world of compassion and knowledge.

In recent years, a large number of women have been executed on alleged charges or for petty crimes. At least 64 women have been hanged in Iran under Rouhani. Reyhaneh Jabbari, that courageous young woman, and so many other Reyhanehs whose names are unknown.

These unheard voices, however, must not be underestimated. The tears that no one saw and the moaning that was suffocated must not be underestimated.

These are elements of a raging storm that will ultimately eradicate women's enemies.

Compulsory veil

Honorable friends,

Another area of violence and compulsion in Iran is the mandatory dress code or Hijab. Since the early days of Khomeini's rule, Iranian women protested against compulsory veiling. At the time, the PMOI women actively participated in demonstrations against compulsory veiling.

In his memoirs, Rouhani has admitted how, as Khomeini's representative in the Army's politico-ideological bureau, he had initiated enforcement of veil in the offices of the Armed Forces and the fact that he personally went to all the offices to make the veil mandatory for all women.

A series of laws were also devised to deprive Iranian women from their individual and social rights. A number of agencies are in charge of suppression and especially tasked to counter improper veiling.

According to official reports, in a matter of only one year, regime agents confronted 3.6 million so-called improperly veiled women on the streets and put 18,000 of them on trial.

In fact, they have turned Iran into a great prison for women.

Two years ago, agents of the clerical regime splashed acid on faces of women in Isfahan and young women like Soheila, Neda and Sara are still burning and suffering from their wounds. Their pain and suffering exemplify the agony of millions of Iranian women.

For this reason, we reiterate that Iranian women must be free!

They must be free to choose what they believe in, what they want to wear and how they want to live.

And we repeat: NO to compulsory veil; NO to compulsory religion; and NO to compulsory government.

Destitution of women in Iran

Dear friends,

Today, in addition to inequality, oppression and repression, severe poverty has overwhelmed the lives of the majority of Iranian people, particularly women.

In Tehran, women sell their unborn infants for only 25 Euros and the number of women sleeping in cardboard boxes in the streets exceeded 5,000 in the capital.

Beyond such pervasive destitution, however, government policies restrict women's participation in social life more and more every day.

Eighty-seven percent of the nation's unemployed populace are women. The number of unemployed educated women has reached more than four million. And in the past decade, more than 100,000 women have been fired from their jobs every year.

Women's economic participation is less than 13 percent and women's political participation is meaningless in this regime. In nine rounds of parliamentary elections over the past 36 years, a total of only 50 women have been allowed into the parliament and their participation presently stands at only 3%.

Such restrictions constitute the most serious political decision and effort by the Velayat-e Faqih regime to deny women's participation.

So, I tell fellow sisters and daughters across our homeland:

You deserve to take your life and fate in your own hands in an Iran without Velayat-e Faqih. You and your sisters in Camp Liberty can and must sweep away the mullahs' religious tyranny and all the fundamentalist groups inspired by them. You can restore freedom in Iran, peace in the region and security in the world.

Resistance's achievements

Dear sisters,

After the overthrow of the mullahs' religious tyranny, we plan to abolish the death penalty and create a democracy based on freedom, equality, and separation of religion and state.

We seek to restore women's equal rights in all areas, including their equal fundamental rights and equality before the law, in the economy, and in the family, as well as their freedom of choice in clothing, and their active and equal participation in political leadership.

Women of the Iranian Resistance are fighting so that the people of Iran, and especially women, could be free and able to exercise their rights in determining their own destiny.

Velayat-e Faqih which is a hysterical monopoly of power, confronts this right with all its force. On the opposite side, we emphasize maximum participation of women, namely their equal participation in political leadership.

This is not just a motto or only a plan for future Iran, but a practical reality in the Resistance movement. Our Resistance movement has a leader who deeply believes in pure, democratic relations and, as such, has opened the way for the advancement and progress of the equality movement.

Over 50 years of our movement's struggle against two dictatorships with a leader who is deeply adherent to the monistic and just cause of equality, opened the way for the progress of the equality movement. The Resistance's enduring struggle is the product of such unshakable commitment to the cause of equality and freedom.

The PMOI has predicated all its actions and relations on the value of equality, particularly in the past three decades.

A generation of PMOI women, who have for years presided over all the major branches of this movement have made this happen. Moreover, a generation of men who believe in the cause of equality and have accepted women's equality and leadership, have entered into a new world of emancipation and responsibility.

The formation of the PMOI's Central Council comprised of 1,000 women to lead the Resistance has been a major stride in this path.

Now, they pave the way for passing their responsibilities to the new generations.

The message of the Central Council is simple:

Rejecting the notion of "me, first" when one is presented with the opportunity to lead, but accepting the notion of "me, first" when there is an opportunity to sacrifice and shoulder responsibility.

Instead of focusing on shortcomings and weaknesses of others, we must look at their strengths and build a new humane world.

My dear sisters,
Solidarity is our greatest asset.

Let us expand our chain of unity from Iranian prisons and infernos of fear in the Middle East to wherever there is oppression. Let us send a new message of emancipation to the world of humanity. We can and we must.

I thank you all very much.