

September 2022

IRAN PROTESTS

Feminists & WHRDs Detained



Introduction

Since the start of mass protests following the death in custody of **Mahsa Amini**, who was arrested by "Morality" police for improper hijab, scores of ordinary citizens and rights defenders have been arrested.



These protests are significant because this is the first time the nation has protested to demand rights for women and accountability on the death in custody of a woman. Those protesting Mahsa's death have expressed several demands, including accountability by the police for her death in custody, the dismantling of the "morality" police and an end to mandatory hijab laws.

As the protests have grown, others with different demands and grievances have also joined, including those with economic demands, citizens fed up with corruption and state violence and those demanding democracy and political change.

However, the large number of women present in these protests and the main slogan of protesters, "**Woman, Life, Liberty,**" reflect their feminist nature.

Following protests, an unprecedented number of human rights defenders, journalists, and political, civic and community activists have been arrested as a preemptive effort to control the spread and continuation of national protests. Because the demands of the protesters are feminist and woman centered in nature, feminist activists and women human rights defenders (WHRDs), have been especially targeted and arrested during the last few days. Among them are also student activists who have held protests in university settings. The continued arrest of WHRDs and this mass crackdown is especially alarming given the high number of women human rights defenders already in prison serving long prison terms or awaiting the implementation of prison sentences..

In this report, **FEMENA** has compiled an initial list of detained WHRDs based on credible reports, including news reports or social media posts from trusted individuals, family members and colleagues. We recognize that already the numbers are much higher than what is documented in this report, but reporting and documentations processes are slow, especially for those WHRDs who are lesser known. We also anticipate that these numbers will grow.

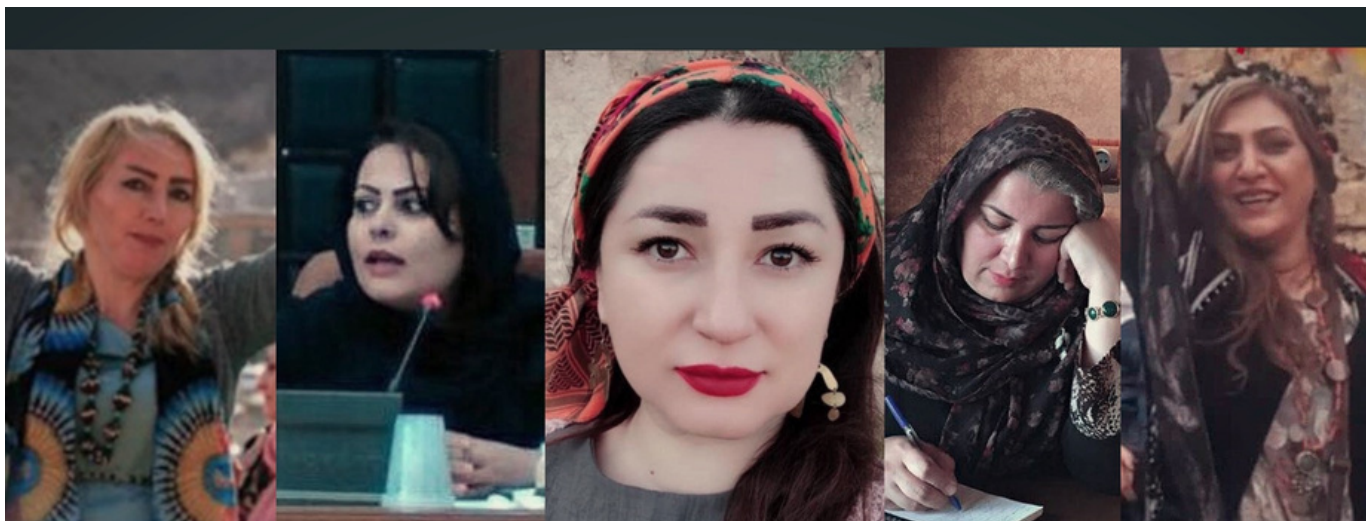
It is especially important to compile lists early on as a way of highlighting the arrest of lesser known WHRDs. In this way international human rights organizations can be aware of arrests and remain committed to following up on their cases in the weeks and months to come.

FEMENA will update the list to the extent possible to include names of additional WHRDs arrested and info on any WHRDs released.

We ask international human rights organizations and UN mechanisms to commit to following up on the cases of these defenders and pressing the Iranian authorities to release rights defenders as well as ordinary citizens arrested as a result of protests.



Arrest of Five WHRDs from Jivano NGO



Faranak Rafiee

Bahar Zangiband

Azadeh Jama'ati

Mahroo Hedayati

Baran Sae'di

According to reports, 5 WHRDs, **Faranak Rafiee, Bahar Zangiband, Azadeh Jama'ati, Mahroo Hedayati, Baran Sae'di**, all members of Jivano Women's Organization were arrested on **September 19, 2022**, after being summoned by security forces in the city of **Sanandaj in Kurdistan province**.

This independent group has been implementing activities since 2020 with a focus on prevention and **elimination of violence against women** and **promotion of equality**. Over the last two years the members of this NGO have organized feminist gatherings, study groups on feminism and gender equality, and conducted awareness raising activities on a range of issues, especially violence against women and femicide.

Jivano Women's Organization is an independent initiative focused on promoting gender equality in Kurdistan province.

Targeting of Kurdish WHRDs



Kurdish WHRDs have especially been targeted in the crackdowns following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, who was Kurdish. Protests first broke out in the city of Saqqez, Mahsa Amini's home town, quickly spreading to other Kurdish cities and then going nationwide.



Evin Rasti, women's rights activist in **Marivan** was arrested on **September 19, 2022** and taken to an unknown location. Security forces confiscated the mobile phones of all her family members at the time of Evin's arrest.

WHRDs Surveiled and Vulnerable

Protests following the death of Mahsa Amini have spread to even smaller and conservative cities, some with little history of engaging in protests.

WHRDs participating in protests are vulnerable because they are regularly surveilled. But those in small cities face greater risks.



Leila Abbasi a WHRD in city of **Bijar in Kurdistan** province, was arrested on the **20th of September** at her home. She was arrested following her participation in a protest.

Mansoureh Mousavi, university professor, sociologist and WHRD was arrested on **September 20, 2022**, in her home city of **Mashhad**, after security forces stormed her home and confiscated her laptop and writings. It is unclear where she is being held. Mansoureh Mousavi's research was focused on the sociology of the body, covering issues such as sexuality of adolescents, teenage mothers, sexual relations, menstruation, repression of sexual desires, etc.



WHRDs Face Regular Threats & Pressure



On **September 21, 2022** prominent **Kurdish Iranian WHRD, Zhina Modares Gorji** was arrested in the city of **Sanandaj** by the **IRGC**.

In a call to her family on September 25, Zhina explained that she and ten others were being held in a youth detention center in Sanandaj, with abhorrent conditions. In objection to ill and violent treatment and poor prison conditions she announced that she plans to go on hunger strike.

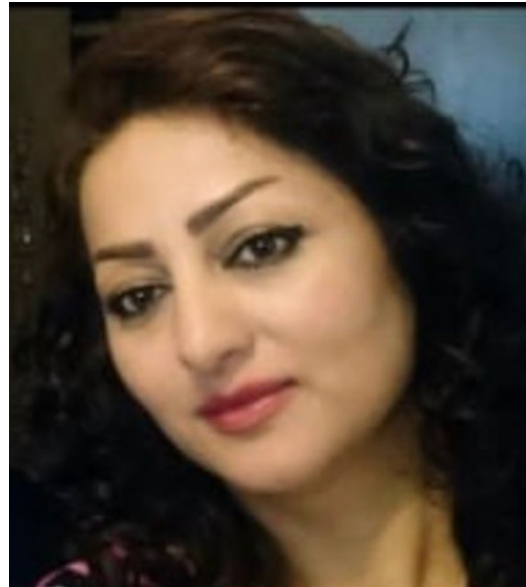
Zhina is a long time activist and her work has focused on **prevention of violence against women**. Zhina runs a bookstore in her city and was an active member of the One Million Signatures Campaign in Sanandaj.

Following the killing of **Mahsa Amini** Zhina had been threatened by security forces on multiple occasions, who contacted her by phone and showed up at her place of work. They had warned her not to continue her activism, and not to participate in protests otherwise she would face arrest.

Zhina wrote a moving piece about the death of **Mahsa Amini** and declared that she would protest this unjust killing and continue to amplify the demands of women. She was arrested shortly after.

WHRDs Targeted for Arrest at Protests

Leila Saqezi (also known as Leila Pahsai), a WHRD from Kurdistan, was arrested on Friday, **September 22, 2022** at Azadi Square in **Sanandaj**. It is not clear where she is being held. Leila has a Master's degree in sociology and works on women's rights and women's civic activism.



Mozhgan Kavusi, a Kurdish researcher, writer and documentary filmmaker was arrested on **September 22, 2022** in her home city of city of Nowshahr in Mazandaran province.

Mozhgan Kavusi was arrested during protests in November 2019 as well. She was charged with propaganda against the state, disrupting the public order, and membership in anti-state groups, and sentenced to 30 months in prison.

Mozhgan has published two books and has directed a documentary called "Hiva."

Journalist Breaking Mahsa's Story Arrested



Niloufar Hamedi, Iranian WHRD and a prominent journalist at Sharq daily, was arrested at her **home in Tehran on Thursday, September 22, 2022.**

In recent years, Niloufar has written important reports on the violation of women's rights. Her reports have been critical in shedding light on the challenges faced by women in Iran.

In her reporting Niloufar has covered topics such as banning women from entering the stadiums, femicide, the bill on the rejuvenation of the population, women's bodily autonomy, and mandatory hijab.

Niloufar also reported on the violent encounter of the "morality" police with a woman and her family as they were taking a morning walk in Pardisan park in Tehran. Following this confrontation, the morality police fired ten bullets and injured the husband.

Niloufar's report on the incident triggered a public outcry on the issue of mandatory hijab and violent tactics used by the "morality" police.

Niloufar was the first journalist to report on Mahsa Amini's situation from Kasra hospital when she was in a coma and posted the first pictures of Mahsa and her family on social media.

Demanding Police Accountability

The death of Mahsa Amini in sparked widespread anger resulting in mass protests across the country, partly because so many women have had similar experiences of arrest, humiliation and violence at the hands of the "morality" police who treat citizens violently and even kill them with impunity.

The coverage of Mahsa's story by news media inside Iran helped spread the word. Despite facing threats, her family, spoke to news media inside and outside the country and consistently denied claims by officials that Mahsa died as a result pre-existing health problems causing her to have a heart attack. The Amini family has y have consistently called for police accountability.

In response to people's anger, the police has been using violence to quash protests, injuring and even killing protesters. As such, we anticipate that the issue of police accountability for excessive use of violence and the killing of protesters will remain an important demand, which must be amplified by rights defenders and their organizations inside the country and internationally.



The above picture depicts Mahsa Amini's parents embracing in an empty hospital corridor following news of her death. The picture was published on social media accounts of Niloufar Hamedani who broke the story about Mahsa's death. Niloufar has since been detained.



FEMENA supports Woman Human Rights Defenders, their organizations and feminist movements through analysis of trends and policy, documentation, fostering development of regional communities of practice and advocacy.

FEMENA's work is primarily focused on contexts of shrinking or closed civic space and contexts complicated by growing extremism and conflict.

<https://femena.net/> 

Info@femena.net 

FemenaNet 

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