

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Open Letter

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International Women's Day: Irene Khan and Shirin Ebadi call for end to discrimination against women in Iran

On the 98th annual celebration of International Women's Day, we call on the Government of Iran to abolish urgently laws that discriminate against women.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes human rights as being fundamental to the dignity and development of every human being, denounces discrimination on grounds of sex.

Yet in Iran, women face serious and widespread discrimination under the law, which excludes women from critical areas of political participation, treating women as if they were second-class citizens. The women of Iran are entitled to equal status with men under the Iranian legal system. The time is long overdue to make this a reality.

Iranian women's rights activists have launched the "Million signatures campaign" which aims to gather widespread support for their demand for equality before the law. The time has come for the Government of Iran to pay heed to these voices and put an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran.

As Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, we know there is a direct relationship between peace, justice and respect for human rights. As long as women are denied human rights, anywhere in the world, there can be no justice and no peace. Recognizing women's equal rights, therefore, is an essential requirement for the creation of strong, sustainable and stable societies and ensuring that women enjoy equality with men in all areas of life is a key step to making human rights a universal reality.

Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International, which was awarded the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize

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