

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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# IRAN: TESTIMONIES PROVIDE A FRIGHTENING GLIMPSE INTO THE DAILY REALITY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

This document features excerpts from the testimonies of 17 women, one girl,<sup>1</sup> and two men<sup>2</sup> in Iran gathered by Amnesty International in February 2024. These testimonies provide a frightening glimpse into the Iranian authorities' intensifying persecution of women and girls, designed to wear down their courageous resistance to the country's abusive, degrading and discriminatory compulsory veiling laws.

The testimonies featured are part of a broader investigation by Amnesty International which involved obtaining and analyzing testimonies from 46 individuals: 41 women, including a trans woman, one girl and four men. Amnesty International conducted interviews with 31 of these 46 individuals who included victims, and victims' relatives, friends and colleagues. The remaining 15 individuals sent their testimonies to the organization in writing. The vast majority of the sources reached out following the organization's 13 February 2024 [public call](#) for information on the enforcement of compulsory veiling laws and a few subsequently connected the organization to the remaining sources.

Based on these 46 testimonies, Amnesty International documented the cases of 54 victims - 52 women and two girls, aged 16 and 17 – who were targeted solely for exercising their rights to bodily autonomy, and freedom of expression, religion and belief through their defiance of compulsory veiling laws. Some of those interviewed shared information about more than one victim.<sup>3</sup>

Since January 2023, these 54 women and girls have been subjected to police stops and/or criminal prosecution and other abuses resulting in arbitrary car confiscations, fines, forced "morality" classes as well as flogging and imprisonment sentences and threats. Many have also been denied access to education, employment, public transport and other public services.

As part of its investigation, Amnesty International reviewed official documents including court verdicts, prosecution orders, car confiscation documents, Ministry of Intelligence and police reports, and text messages sent by the police to women and their male relatives warning them of car impoundments for non-compliance with veiling laws.

Amnesty International has removed all identifying details, including dates, exact locations and, in some cases, provinces, in order to protect the victims and their families against reprisals. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the document. Amnesty International has also removed the names and/or locations of police stations, prosecution offices, courts, and officials mentioned in victims' testimonies or noted in official documents. Throughout the document, footnotes indicate where such information is on file with the organization.

The analysis of the patterns of human rights violations that emerge from these testimonies is documented in a press release titled, [Iran: Draconian campaign to enforce compulsory veiling laws through surveillance and mass car confiscations](#), that Amnesty International issued on 6 March 2024.

The documented violations took place in 10 provinces: Alborz, Esfahan, Fars, Hormozgan, Kurdistan, Khorasan-e Razavi, Qom, Semnan, Tehran, and West Azerbaijan.

State bodies enforcing compulsory veiling laws and involved in these violations include the Moral Security Police (*police amniat-e akhlaghi*),<sup>4</sup> traffic police (*police rahnamaie va ranandegi*), prosecution offices, courts, the Ministry of Intelligence,

<sup>1</sup> The testimony of this 17-year-old girl, referred to with the pseudonym Golnar, is recorded under entries No. 20 and No. 31.

<sup>2</sup> The testimonies of these two men concerned the persecution of their daughters, who are referred to with the pseudonyms Negin, aged 16, and Darya, under entries No. 23 and No 25, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International interviewed three women who provided information about their own cases as well as those of six additional women. Additionally, one of the men shared details about the persecution of his two daughters, and another man provided information about the persecution of two female colleagues. As a result, based on the 46 testimonies obtained by Amnesty International, 54 cases were documented.

<sup>4</sup> The Moral Security Police is a subdivision of the Public Security Police (*Police Amniat-e Omoumi*), which itself is a subdivision of Iran's police force, the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (known by its Persian acronym FARAJA).

the Revolutionary Guards, the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*), as well as the Basiji paramilitary force and other agents in plain clothes.

For ease of reference, the testimonies have been organized by theme, with some accounts featuring under multiple themes. Editorial changes were made to the excerpts of testimonies featured in this document for clarity.

## **INTIMIDATING TEXTS AND CALLS INFORMING WOMEN OF ARBITRARY CAR CONFISCATION ORDERS**

### **1. MARJAN, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

“Each month, I had received one text stating that a confiscation order had been issued against my car for failure to comply with compulsory veiling. I went to the Moral Security Police and spoke with a senior commander there.<sup>5</sup> I submitted a formal inquiry about the reports that had been registered [against me] in the system and which had formed the basis of the confiscation order. In the system, it was written that the reports were from “*amer mardomi*” [state affiliated vigilantes tasked with preventing vice], Revolutionary Guards, and the Basij. The reports had no photographs, images or documents at all. I insisted that ‘Your conduct is illegal’. They laughed at me and said ‘Go tell it to the Minister [of Interior]’.”

### **2. NOUSHIN, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

“My car had broken down one time and I was in tears. I had stepped outside the car and was not wearing a headscarf. A man in plain clothes phoned the authorities and sent an agent for me. This man does this job all day in this area, which is near a mosque and a base belonging to the Basij [paramilitary force]. This man constantly patrols, writes down license plates, and calls agents to come. A Revolutionary Guards agent in uniform arrived on one of those heavy motorbikes without a license plate, and with shouts and threats, ordered me to put on my headscarf. He wrote down my registration number and I immediately received a text message stating that my car had been marked for impounding and that I should wait for the police to contact me. Over the past year, I have received five or six text messages. I try to avoid parking my car in busy places on the side of the street and prefer to use online taxi services to avoid harassment.”

### **3. ORKIDEH, WEST AZERBAIJAN PROVINCE**

“Each time, they [the authorities] sent a text message, the same day they would call me on my phone, but I did not [initially] pick up. More than eight text messages related to ‘unveiling’ were sent to me from the contact number of the police... In January 2024, I picked up when the police called me again. They said either come and hand over your car or the first place an agent sees your car, they will confiscate it. I went to the Moral Security Police, and they confiscated my car for a week.<sup>6</sup>

To release the car, I had to go to the Moral Security Police again, and there, they forced me to give a written commitment. The way they treated me was very bad as if I had committed a very wrong act. It was humiliating. They take your phone and bag. The first thing they say is, ‘What kind of appearance is this, fix your headscarf.’ They criticize the colour and type of your clothes and even your nails and makeup. They say, ‘Do you think you can do whatever you want, as if there are no laws here? Do you think you can dress however you want, disregard the hijab, and present yourself to men?’ I reminded them several times that their behavior is an insult to human conscience. They said, ‘If it happens again, you will regret it, and there will be severe consequences like fines, imprisonment, and even a travel ban’.”

### **4. FIRUZEH, KHORASAN-E RAZAVI PROVINCE**

“The Moral Security Police called and deceived me, saying that they just wanted to talk and that nothing would happen. However, once I went there, they said that everyone had to go through the confiscation process. There were many other people there just like me. There were even several men there who had long hair and had been mistaken for women [by those who had reported their license plates]. The head of the Moral Security Police<sup>7</sup> said, ‘Now that you have received a car confiscation order, your car must be impounded.’ They did not present any photographs, documents or evidence. The only favour they showed me was, instead of towing my car away and impounding it in a parking lot, they agreed to send an agent and a member of the Moral Security Police to my house to lock the wheels.

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<sup>5</sup> The commander’s last name is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International reviewed an official document bearing the name and signature of a senior commander at the Moral Security Police of West Azerbaijan province who authorized the car confiscation.

<sup>7</sup> The commander’s last name is on file with Amnesty International.

Recently, several agents in plain clothes on a motorbike pulled up next to our car. They shouted to each other to write down our license plate, even though I was wearing a headscarf. They just wanted to harass us. They had covered their license plates and were wearing masks.”

## **5. SHEYDA, FARS PROVINCE**

“Recently, I received a text message regarding my car, stating that for the 11<sup>th</sup> time, I had violated compulsory veiling laws and that I should take my car for impounding within the next 48 hours to one of the parking lots identified in a link that was included at the end of the text message. The authorities say that [the confiscation orders] are based on pictures from CCTV cameras, but I see people in many places recording license plates.

My cousin and her husband were at home when police agents came to their door and warned that they could either take their car willingly for impounding or the authorities would forcibly remove it. Her husband drove the car with them to a parking lot. Their car was impounded for several weeks.”

## **6. JALEH, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

“The first time I received a text message, I was stuck in traffic. It said, ‘Unveiling has been witnessed in your car’, and gave the details of the time and location where this happened, which was exactly where I was at that time. I looked around me to see if there was someone suspicious who would have reported me. Another time, I drove to a mosque to pick up my mother and received a similar text message. I received another text message outside this mosque on another occasion too. I have received three text messages, but a friend of mine knows someone who can access the official system to see how many messages people have received, so my friend checked and told me I have four text messages on my record and my car has been marked for confiscation. Consequently, most of the time, I try not to go out with my car because I am not in a situation where I can afford to pay the fine and face trouble. The last message I received noted that the police will contact me, but the authorities have not contacted me so far.

I am always without a headscarf in my boyfriend’s car, but he did not receive a text message until a couple of weeks ago. We were in a side road talking in his car when another car, travelling with a man and a woman inside, slowed down as it passed us. My boyfriend immediately received a text message.

A friend of mine had three text messages and took her car in herself for impounding to avoid towing costs and possibly reduce the impoundment period. Her car was impounded for three days. Shortly after her car was released, she was stopped by the police and told that she had four text messages on her record and her car was marked for confiscation, even though she explained that she had just had her car released and presented the parking receipts. It is as though the text messages do not get deleted from your record and we get a criminal record. The authorities are making money from this.

## **MASS RANDOM POLICE CHASES AND STOPS, AND SUDDEN CAR IMPOUNDMENTS**

### **7. MONIREH, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

“First, [the police] send message a text saying the car has been subjected to ‘systemic impounding’ for 15 days, which means that for 15 days, you must not use your car and, during this period, it is not possible to buy or sell a car. If you are reported as having been seen again in your car without a headscarf, they send follow up text messages ordering the car to be confiscated and impounded in a parking lot.

In Iran, there is no integrated transport system and many routes lack metro, bus, and sometimes even taxi services. If you are on the highway and the police force you out of your car, you are almost without any means of rescue.

When I received the text message indicating that a confiscation order had been issued against my car, I had undergone major surgery. I was constantly worried that, while I still had many stitches, they [the authorities] would force me out of my car and leave me stranded in the middle of the highway in the cold.

You live with the constant stress of your car being impounded. Sometimes, I thought about handing in my car for impounding myself just to be rid of this constant stress.

I had heard the accounts of my friends and colleagues about how police officers on motorcycles had chased them and other women and I developed a phobia of motorcyclists. I was distracted by all motorcyclists and I was worried that I would have an accident. In Enqelab Square in Tehran, there is a large police force on standby with motorcycles for chasing car drivers. I have witnessed the same situation in Tajrish Square. A chase led to my friend’s vehicle being impounded. She said that two motorcyclists swerved in front of her car in such a way that she had to brake hard to avoid

a collision with them. She thought they were robbers, but they were police agents. She was in the middle of moving house, so she was forced to leave boxes of her belongings on the side of the road until she found a car to transport them. No matter how much she pleaded with the police agents to allow her to use her car to move her belongings, they refused.

One of my colleagues had her car impounded while on a trip outside Tehran and had to make another trip there to get it released.

Another colleague had her car impounded while on a trip in northern Iran, forcing her and her family to cancel their trip and take a taxi back to Tehran.

I was driving when a conscript soldier<sup>8</sup> came in front of my car in the middle of traffic, spread his arms out and said, 'I will not let you go, we need to check if there is a confiscation order against your car'. When impounding my car, the soldier said in a shameless and humiliating way, 'If you had begged and pleaded with me, maybe I would have turned a blind eye and let you pass.'

The supervisor of the soldier then got into my car and told me to drive to a nearby police station.<sup>9</sup> There, officials told me to remove all my belongings in the car, including the spare wheel, noting that if anything was stolen during the period that the car was being held in a parking lot, they would not be responsible. I could not carry a heavy spare wheel with 15 stitches in my chest. The parking lot owner then arrived at the police station, took our car keys, and drove each car one by one to a parking lot near the police station. It was only a 10-minute drive but, at the parking lot, they falsely claimed that we had to pay towing fees, which were determined arbitrarily by the owner. The cars had to be kept in the parking lot for periods ranging from a week to a month, depending on how many text messages you had received for dress code violations.

While at the police station, I met a taxi driver whose car had been confiscated [for carrying women passengers without mandatory headscarves]. The driver was upset, saying, 'I have to sit at home for a month without earning a living because I consider it beneath my dignity to tell a woman how to dress?' But no one listened...

At the parking lot, I saw a man who showed his 9-year-old daughter to me and said 'I have been fined multiple times because of this child's long hair'.

My car was impounded for a week. During this time, I had to spend a lot of money on commuting and sometimes walked long distances. My work requires going to different places during the day. Switching taxis frequently and walking made me feel physically worse, forcing me to work remotely and cancel some appointments."

## **8. MARJAN, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

"Each morning in our neighborhood, agents from the local police station<sup>10</sup> stop and check the cars. The police patrol the streets or position themselves on busy roads and order cars to stop and pull aside. Sometimes, they stand in spots out of sight and suddenly appear and say, 'Pull over'. They have devices in their hands which they use to check if the license plate has been marked for confiscation. They stop and check any one they suspect might have violated the dress code. For instance if the driver is a woman, if they are young, or if they are stylish and look like someone with family members who do not observe compulsory veiling. I personally witnessed a police official [pointing out a woman driver to another official], saying she looked like someone [who might have previously flouted compulsory veiling laws in her car] and asking for her license plate to be checked.

Recently, I went to my local police station for another matter. They had stopped and brought a woman to the police station with her primary school child and the child's grandmother. The mother and the grandmother were both wearing headscarves [hijabs] but because of the little girl [travelling in the car without the mandatory headscarf], their car had been marked for confiscation and they had received text messages."

## **9. SHABNAM, TEHRAN PROVINCE**

"I was on my way home when police agents on motorcycles stopped me. They carried out a search and discovered that a confiscation order had been issued against my car and I had received four or five text messages related to this. The agents took my driving license and instructed me to go with them to a nearby police station.<sup>11</sup> They said I would only have

<sup>8</sup> Young men who reach the age of 18 must generally spend about two years of compulsory military service. In some cases, conscripts are assigned to work as traffic police officers.

<sup>9</sup> The name and location of the police station is on file with Amnesty International. The organization reviewed an official document bearing the names of senior officials at this police station who authorized the confiscation of Monireh's car.

<sup>10</sup> The name of the police station is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the police station is on file with Amnesty International.

to sign a written commitment statement and could then leave. When I asked how I could trust that they were the police, they threatened to call for a crane to come immediately and tow my car away. They deceived me, and when I arrived at the police station, they confiscated my car. The officials told me to remove all my belongings from my car before it was towed away because they said they are not responsible [for missing items]. They treated me in a terrible and humiliating way. One agent told me, 'Miss, pull your headscarf forward so that we don't have to be stuck [with your case] first thing in the morning'. They said, 'If you talk too much, we will extend the confiscation period'.

My car was impounded for a week. Officials at the police station instructed me to go to the intelligence department of the police station and talk to its head (*ra'is*)<sup>12</sup> about the release process. They said if I received more text messages, my car would be impounded again. The authorities charge women varying amounts for the tow trucks and impounding. They charge whatever they want.

As spring approaches, they [the authorities] have increased peoples' stress. We constantly carry this stress about what might happen to us each time we leave our homes.

Security forces stand in busy junctions and, wherever possible, they stop the women passing by car and check if there is a confiscation order against them in the system. They target all sorts of women, with or without headscarves, as they suspect that the women might have been the subject of [confiscation] text messages. I know of a woman taxi driver who was stopped and the police did not even allow her to complete her ride for her customer."

## 10. PARVIN, TEHRAN PROVINCE

"My mother and I were in the car on our way to the hospital for a medical appointment when agents from the police on two motorbikes came in front of the car and blocked us. One of them came and said in a very harsh tone, 'When the police give you a warning, why don't you stop?' I asked him if I had committed a crime, but I knew exactly why I had been stopped because the same thing happened to my sister in the same area several months earlier.

The police officer asked for my documents, but I refused to give them to him and asked him to tell me what my crime was. He just replied, 'It is our duty. I have to check if the number plate has been marked for confiscation.' Every time I refused, his tone became harsher. My mother pleaded with him to let us go, explaining that we have a hospital appointment, but he insisted on seeing my driver's license. Eventually, he took my documents, sat in my car and said we had to go to a nearby police station<sup>13</sup> and sign a written commitment. At the station, they took my document and said my vehicle was impounded.

In the parking lot where the police took my car, there were many other women – young women, others the same age as my mother wearing headscarves who had done nothing. The police check the number plate of any woman who passes that area before letting them through, and if the women have text messages against their cars, their cars are impounded by the police immediately.

I think the police have to meet a certain quota because it was late afternoon and the same police officer who stopped me walked over to his commander and said, 'We have reached 15, it's enough now. Can we leave?' Their parking lots do not have much space. They keep releasing cars and impounding other cars.

It is not important for the agents [how this impacts women's lives]. They just laugh. When they impounded my car, there was another woman who pleaded with the agents that she had something important to take care of and said that she would deliver her car for impounding herself the next day, but they replied, 'No, this is what we want. We want this to negatively impact your life and work so much that you do not commit any wrongdoing.'

They just want to harass us. It is not important even if you are dying. They would still tell you to leave your car and then go to the doctor. They do not care what situation you find yourself in that moment, if you are on the way to the hospital, if you are unwell, it is not important to them. They do not have an ounce of humanity. Our voices have not reached anywhere inside this country, no matter how much we have screamed and protested. There is no institution in Iran to hear our voices.

When I went to the parking lot to collect my car, I met a woman who was in tears because she said the authorities had marked her car for impounding but told her that she herself had to find a parking lot that had space to impound her car. She had been to four parking lots already to try and find a space for her car. The situation is so bad that when the authorities are unable to find spaces in parking lots, they force people to go around and find space themselves."

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<sup>12</sup> The last name of the senior official is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>13</sup> The name of the police station is on file with Amnesty International.

## 11. LEILA, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“My car has been impounded four times so far. The last time was outside my hometown, in another city. My daughter, who has a disability, was ill in hospital. I parked in front of a pharmacy, picked up some medicine, and was about to get back in my car to return to the hospital when the police officers took my car and impounded it. I told them that my daughter was in hospital, and I needed to urgently deliver the medicine to her. As if they were doing me a favour, one of them got into my car and I drove to the hospital with him accompanying me. I went into the hospital with the medicine but handed them the keys and they took my car. They kept my car in that city and I had to travel back and forth several times from my own city to that one, causing me to miss several days of work. I also incurred significant expenses.

I am not a wealthy person. I am the head of my household and have a sick daughter. When I am without a car, I suffer greatly, and the costs of getting around without a car add up. Additionally, every time the car is impounded and released, one must stand in line for many hours and days and go from one place to another. They also charge extra fees. For example, even if they [the authorities] do not tow the car with a crane, they still charge a crane fee. All of this disrupts peoples’ lives, and they are using this tool to keep a headscarf on women’s heads.”

## 12. NOUSHIN, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“I was driving when I came to a place where the police had stopped many people for impounding. There was heavy traffic. In general, there are always a lot of agents from the Special Forces of the police and Revolutionary Guards standing there. The police were checking license plates to see if they had confiscation orders against them. The tow trucks were standing by and taking away several cars. They told me to park further up and wait for a crane to arrive because I had an automatic car and it could not be pulled with a van. While they were busy with other cars, I was able to escape and, because I was near my home, I managed to quickly park inside.”

## 13. ROYA

“I received seven text messages in the past year regarding violating compulsory veiling laws while travelling in a car. Mostly, the agents stationed on the streets report the license plate numbers, and then the text messages follow. Sometimes the messages are sent based on pictures from CCTV cameras. Most of the agents reporting vehicles wear black clothing and are on motorcycles.

My husband was on his way to the airport when the police stopped him and said the car was marked for impounding in connection with compulsory veiling laws. A tow truck took the car, leaving my husband stranded on the road. The car was damaged, costing us a lot in repair fees. The car was impounded for three weeks.”

## DENIAL OF ACCESS TO TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC SERVICES

### 14. SHEYDA, FARS PROVINCE

“We [unveiled women and girls] are not allowed on the metro. I managed to evade the agents enforcing compulsory veiling and enter a couple of times, but they prevent entry if they see you are not wearing a headscarf. My first experience was in April 2023. I had a doctor’s appointment, and the enforcers would not let me pass. Eventually, the intelligence department of the metro (*herasat*) came and told me that I had to put on my headscarf in order to pass. Verbal threats such as ‘We will arrest you and teach you a lesson’ are common.

There are also many restrictions when entering the airport. During a recent trip, my sister and I went to get our boarding passes while wearing hats instead of headscarves. The man at the counter treated us harshly, told us that hats were not acceptable, and that we had to wear headscarves or else we would be denied our boarding passes. An official said that if they give a boarding pass to a woman without a headscarf, they would be reprimanded. He suggested that we put a t-shirt over our heads. We took out our father’s towel from our hand luggage and put it over our heads and finally got our boarding passes. Once we entered another area to have our boarding passes checked, the official checking our passes pointed to a Revolutionary Guards agent sitting nearby and told us to put something on our heads otherwise it would cause trouble with the Revolutionary Guards agent.

I have also gone to the bank without a headscarf, but they would not serve me. The deputy manager of the bank said [the authorities] review the bank’s cameras and the staff would be reprimanded for serving unveiled women.”



## 15. FIRUZEH, KHORASAN-E RAZAVI PROVINCE

“The authorities are very strict at airports. They say things like ‘Your overcoat (*manto*) is short. Your trousers are short. Your ankles are visible. Your wrists are visible.’ They are very strict about short overcoats (*mantos*). In trains and shopping malls, agents frequently come up to you and order you to pull your headscarf forward. In Mashhad Railway Station (*Istgah-e Rah Ahan*), agents in plain clothes stand at the entrance. Inside the metro trains, there are significant numbers of female agents wearing chadors who harass women.”

## 16. PARVIN, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“Everywhere you go, you face the same problem. Banks and public buildings have intelligence departments (*herasat*) who do not allow you to enter, let alone serve you. In the entrance of the metro, there are female officials who do not allow you to enter. We prefer to use our cars rather than using public transport in order to avoid such problems, but our cars now get impounded and we have to pay fines to get them back.

Several months ago, I went to a government building and they treated me in a terrible manner. It was as if I had committed a crime. The intelligence department (*herasat*) ran after me, said insulting words to me, and ordered the staff not to serve me.

They even bar you from department stores. When my sister and I tried to enter a shopping centre, a female official said, ‘This store is under the supervision of the authorities and we are not allowed to let you enter.’

It even affects us in our employment as I have been denied admission to industry conferences by the intelligence departments (*herasat*) because I was not wearing a headscarf.”

## 17. NEDA, ALBORZ PROVINCE

“A few months ago, the deputy head of my bank confronted me and said I had to wear my hijab, otherwise he would not proceed with my banking needs. Around October 2023, a hijab enforcer at a metro station in Tehran physically assaulted my cousin who is 21 years old and punched her in the chest.”

## 18. NOUSHIN, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“When I was exiting the metro station, a police agent in uniform pulled me from behind, while a female agent in plain clothes hit my back and yelled, ‘Stop. Where is your headscarf?’ As this was happening, several agents from the Special Forces of the police (*yegan-e vijeh*) put a camera in my face and filmed me. Several plain clothes agents also filmed me. The police agent who grabbed me said, ‘Stay here and put your headscarf on and then go. We know what you are after.’ There were many people there and I did not want to be arrested so I put my headscarf on and left.”

## 19. MITRA, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“I went to the gas company one time and its intelligence department (*herasat*) treated me in a terrible manner. They told me to leave in a very insulting way. I was forced to leave without completing my errand.”

## 20. 17-YEAR-OLD GOLNAR

“Our school has always had CCTV cameras, but this year, the number of cameras doubled. We had just finished our exams. We were still in the classroom and were in recess. We felt very happy about doing well on our exams, so we began dancing. One of our friends came into the room but left the door open while we were still happy and dancing, and the camera in the hallway recorded a few minutes. Several of the cameras are directed at classrooms. The representatives of the Basij in our school, who review the CCTV footage every day, recognized my face. The school headteacher subsequently forced me to sign a disciplinary written commitment statement and suspended me from school for several days as a punishment for the removal of my headscarf for several minutes. She threatened that if this happens again, she will prevent me from continuing my education. Disciplinary written commitment statements stay on our records and could negatively affect our ability to be admitted to university.

The headteacher told me that if we remove our Islamic headscarves, it shows that we are against the Islamic Republic of Iran and, if this continues, they will transfer me to the custody of the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards where horrific things take place, especially for women.”

## 21. ROYA

“Around six months ago, my daughter went to the airport. The agents at the entrance who enforce compulsory veiling laws told her that she could not enter the airport as she was not wearing socks [and her ankles were showing]. She had to go and buy socks. They took her ID card and said they would return it when she comes back with socks. We thought the issue was resolved, but just a few days ago, she received a phone call from the authorities summoning her to the Moral Security Police and threatening that if she failed to show up, they would issue an arrest warrant for her.

Once, my sister had tied her headscarf in a different style in the metro. The agents enforcing compulsory veiling laws asked her why she tied her headscarf that way. The authorities subsequently summoned her to the prosecutor's office. It appears that the agents at the metro had taken her photograph and reported her to the prosecution authorities. At the prosecutor's office, they said she must attend a 'morality' class. They also told her that if this happens again, she would be prosecuted and sentenced to a fine.

Hijab patrols are present on the streets and in front of shopping malls and harass women. The situation has become such that if we do not wear the mandatory headscarf, the authorities open a [criminal] case against us. They know what they are doing and how to stop defiance of compulsory veiling – by sowing fear into people.”

## 22. JALEH, TEHRAN PROVINCE

“I had to go to my old school to get a copy of my school certificates. A female official in the school shouted at me and ordered me to wear a headscarf, despite there being no men in the vicinity. She shouted at me that 'schools have laws'. I protested and at the end, the official said she would not do my work. Another female school official who did administrative work took a copy of my documents. Several days later, when my documents did not arrive, I went to the Department of Education follow up. A male official there phoned the school and I found out that the school officials had deliberately not sent my documents. The male official said to me 'Why did you create a scene at the school? You should have just worn the headscarf'. I replied to him, 'It was not her place to tell me to wear a headscarf. If I knew what my rights were when I was seven years old, I would not have allowed [the authorities] to put [the hijab] on me and force me to get accustomed to it.' It is like the story of the baby elephant who is tied up. Even though it grows up and can tear the rope, it still keeps itself tied up to the tree [because it has become accustomed to it]. [The authorities] have disciplined us [in the same way].

On another occasion, I went to a police office<sup>14</sup> to run some administrative errands. I was wearing a headscarf but there was a woman there whose headscarf kept falling down. The officials would not serve the man who accompanied the woman until she went outside. The officials said there were cameras there that are under the supervision of the judiciary and [the footage] was being watched.

There was also a young girl in the same police office, maybe 16 or 17 years old, who had no headscarf at all. The officials brought a dirty kitchen towel for her to put over her head. It only covered a bit of her hair; it was merely symbolic.”

## PROSECUTION AND SENTENCING

### 23. 16-YEAR-OLD NEGIN

“I received three text messages stating that compulsory veiling laws had been violated in my car. The texts were based on agents reporting my car's licence plate after seeing my 16-year-old daughter without a headscarf in the car and on pictures captured by a CCTV camera. The third warning text noted that I would shortly receive a call from the police. Several days later, I received a call and was instructed to go to the Moral Security Police. When I went there, they impounded my car and took it to a parking lot. Several weeks later, when I went back to the Moral Security Police to release the car, they informed me that they had reported me and my daughter to the judicial authorities.<sup>15</sup> My daughter and I subsequently went to the criminal court [in our city]. There, the authorities instructed me to open an account for my daughter in the judiciary's online database (known by its Persian acronym *SANA*).<sup>16</sup> I protested, pointing out that she is under 18 years old, but they insisted it did not matter and that she should be registered within the system. The charge

<sup>14</sup> The name and location of this police office is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International reviewed an official document bearing the name and signature of a senior police commander who submitted the case to the judiciary.

<sup>16</sup> SANA is an electronic notification system introduced by the judiciary, which serves people with judicial documents and notices electronically, rather than through the postal service. Individuals need to register on the portal in the first instance to be able to access any documents issued to them by the judiciary. Once registered on the portal, individuals receive future notifications via text messages, informing them that they have a document or notification awaiting them and should log into the system to access it.



against me and my daughter was recorded as “the presence of women without Islamic hijab in the streets.” A judge at a criminal court then reviewed the case against us. He ordered that the charge brought against me should be dropped and that a juvenile court had jurisdiction over the case opened against my daughter.<sup>17</sup> At the juvenile court, the presiding judge aggressively questioned my daughter about her failure to observe the hijab. My daughter remained silent. The judge threatened to sentence her to a fine, but I objected, reminding him that she was just a child. Later that day, I received a text stating that my daughter been acquitted. The juvenile court provided me with a letter, instructing me to take it to the Moral Security Police and emphasizing that my daughter must accompany me there. At the Moral Security Police, the officials were disrespectful and spoke to me and my daughter in a harsh tone. They again reprimanded my daughter for not observing the hijab, saying that here is [under] the Islamic Republic system and you must follow the law. They threatened my daughter by telling her that the next time it would be a fine, and the third time imprisonment. They say these things to scare girls. They took a written commitment from me and my daughter to observe the hijab and then released the car.

Since then, my daughter is forced to observe compulsory veiling in the car, otherwise they will take pictures again, and we will have to face the same ordeal, the same disrespect, and the same hassle of trying to retrieve [the car]. It is not worth enduring all that trouble and facing multiple senseless people who treat us with disrespect. It is distressing to not have done anything wrong and yet be forced to endure two-three weeks of running around simply because of the hijab. I take my daughter to school. When the car was impounded for 17-18 days, I had to take taxis and faced numerous difficulties.

These events have greatly affected my daughter’s morale. Her spirit is not like before. She has become anxious and irritable. The events after [the death in custody of] Mahsa [Jina] Amini, the developments around veiling, and the chemical attacks on girl schools have all had a significant impact on young girls. They do not feel safe in Iran. My daughter has repeatedly said that we should leave Iran. At this age, she cannot bear it.”

#### **24. FIRUZEH, KHORASAN-E RAZAVI PROVINCE**

“After confiscating my car, the Moral Security Police said that, as I had received four text messages, I had to be referred to the prosecution authorities. I went to the prosecutor’s office<sup>18</sup> three or four times. Each time, the investigator of my case in the prosecutor’s office took me into a room and interrogated me for about 30-40 minutes. There were a lot of people there like me and it was very crowded. They set a date and said I had to attend a ‘morality’ class. In the class, about 40 of us women stood for around three hours while a senior prosecution official talked nonsense to us. He told us, ‘You leave your head naked so that men can look at you. And you wear lipstick so that men do things to you. You leave your head naked to show off. If you leave your head naked, divorce rates will increase.’

After the morality class...they issued an order,<sup>19</sup> which suspended the prosecution proceedings against me for the charge of ‘appearing in public without a religious hijab’ for one year and stated that if during this period, I commit another ‘crime’, the criminal proceedings will resume. The order further stated that I have to read a specified book and send an audio file summarizing it to the authorities within the next year. Both the investigator of my case and other administrative officials at the prosecutor’s office threatened me extensively not to set foot there again, otherwise I would be sentenced to imprisonment and flogging. I was also forced to sign a written commitment. They caused me a lot of mental anguish. Every time I went there, I cried for two days afterwards.”

#### **25. DARYA**

“My daughter Darya was subjected to prosecution for posting photographs of herself without a headscarf on Instagram. She received several phone calls from unidentified numbers, which she did not answer. One morning, several Ministry of Intelligence agents wearing masks suddenly came to our house, confiscating her laptop and phone. She was subsequently summoned to the Ministry of Intelligence for interrogation and was held there for several hours. Ministry of Intelligence agents asked her many questions to scare her and confiscated her phone and other belongings. The agents wore masks and did not reveal their names. They all called each other ‘Haji’.<sup>20</sup> They asked questions like ‘Who do you work for? Who are your contacts? How much did you get paid?’ In the end, they forcibly took a written commitment from her that she would observe Islamic decorum and the laws of the Islamic Republic on social media. Her case was then

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International reviewed a copy of this verdict.

<sup>18</sup> The details of this prosecutor’s office are on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed this official document.

<sup>20</sup> A term used to address a person who has gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca, an older individual, or one deemed as religious. Victims in Iran have routinely told Amnesty International that many intelligence and security officials call each other ‘Haji’ in front of them instead of using real names in an apparent attempt to avoid identification.

referred to the prosecutor's office.<sup>21</sup> The behavior of the prosecution official<sup>22</sup> in charge of her case was very aggressive. He constantly threatened her, saying that some of the content she posted could result in the death penalty. He said, 'You are a tool in the hands of the enemy and are causing the promotion of corruption, and the religious people are upset.'

She now has a case against her before a criminal court<sup>23</sup> for 'appearing in public without a religious hijab' and 'injuring public decency through publishing obscene pictures and unveiling'. Her trial date is forthcoming. The authorities also opened a second case against her for 'insulting the Supreme Leader' and 'spreading propaganda against the system'. In this case, she was sentenced to a six-month prison sentence, suspended for five years, by a Revolutionary Court for 'insulting the Supreme Leader'.<sup>24</sup> Her trial lasted one hour and was full of insults and threats. She did not appoint a lawyer, as any lawyer we consulted advised against appointing a lawyer, noting that this would complicate her case and lead to harsher treatment."

## 26. NAJIEH

"Ever since the 'Woman Life Freedom' revolution, women and girls, from young to old, removed their hijabs and went everywhere unveiled. I was in a shopping mall one day and a plain clothes member of the security forces took a photograph of me. I had heard that [the authorities] are taking photographs of women but I thought these pictures were being taken by CCTV cameras in the city. A couple of weeks ago, I received a text message and a summons<sup>25</sup> stating that 'a complaint has been filed against you by the prosecutor's office', and that I had to report to the criminal court at a specific time. I got worried and guessed that it must have been due to compulsory veiling because I have not committed any other 'crime'. When I logged into the judiciary website to seek further information, my case information said that the case relates to the charge of 'the presence of women without Islamic hijab in the streets.'

I went to the court and discovered that a photograph had been taken of me. The authorities said that my overcoat (*manto*) was short and forced me to wear a chador in court.<sup>26</sup> I had to go and rent a chador from a shop near the court. A prosecution official<sup>27</sup> at the court told me that a member of the security forces had taken the photograph of me. I did not see anyone in uniform in shopping malls, so it must have been a plain clothes member of the security forces.<sup>28</sup> When I entered the courtroom, the judge<sup>29</sup> said to me 'Are you the unveiled woman?' He laughed in a mocking way as if to say 'We have more power than you. If you remove your hijabs, we will bring all of you to court'. There were many casefiles on his desk, maybe about 30 or 40 casefiles. He told me 'Those are all hijab cases, and we are processing them quickly'. As I was leaving the court, the judge spoke to me in a harsh tone saying, 'I hope I do not see you here again.' The judge then ordered me to go to another room to see another official, who I think was the deputy prosecutor.<sup>30</sup> He told me 'I hope this is not repeated again' and ordered me to go to another official<sup>31</sup> who gave me a document and forced me to write a commitment stating that 'I will comply with compulsory veiling and adhere to the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and I am requesting forgiveness and pardon.'<sup>32</sup> She told me that I had to write this written commitment so that the authorities would leave me alone and the incident would not stay on my record.

Ever since I came out, I have so much stress. The first time was a written commitment, the second time is flogging, the third time is imprisonment. I was so scared at the time, but I did not show it. I felt courageous, like I was resisting against the Islamic Republic.

Everywhere I go, I feel constantly stressed that the authorities are taking photographs of me and are filming me, and that if I go to court a second time, they will flog me and imprison me. I am constantly stressed. I try to wear a hat now since I do not wear a headscarf. If I do take it off sometimes, I constantly feel stressed. I keep looking around me like thinking that someone will take a picture of me again. I have developed a phobia of that shopping mall. I wear a winter hat. I get hot in the mall but I do not remove it because I am so scared that they will take a picture of me again.

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<sup>21</sup> The details of this prosecutor's office are on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>22</sup> The name of this prosecution official is on file with Amnesty International. The organization also reviewed an official order issued by this prosecution official.

<sup>23</sup> The details of this court are on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>24</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed a copy of this verdict.

<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed a copy of this official document.

<sup>26</sup> Chador refers to a long piece of cloth which covers the body from the head to the ankles and leaves the face and feet uncovered.

<sup>27</sup> The last name of this prosecution official is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>28</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed a copy of the official document through which a senior police official, whose name is recorded on the document, referred the case of Najieh to the judicial authorities.

<sup>29</sup> The last name of this judge is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>30</sup> The last name of the deputy prosecutor is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>31</sup> The name of this prosecution official is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed a copy of an official document on which Najieh was forced to write her commitment in writing.

Even my 15-year-old sister who also does not wear a headscarf is scared now. My friends are also scared and now wear either a hat or a headscarf. We are all scared.

The intelligence department (*herasat*) in my university has pulled me into their office many times, telling me ‘Your overcoat (*manto*) is short. Why don’t you wear a *maghna’eh*<sup>33</sup> in university?’ The [guard] saw me at the entrance of the university and said ‘What is this you are wearing? It is short. Why is your *maghna’eh* like this? Give me your student ID card and go to the intelligence department (*herasat*).’ The guard constantly harasses me. A few days ago, I was sent to the office of the head of the intelligence department (*herasat*)<sup>34</sup> who gave me a verbal warning and said ‘You have been seen without the *maghna’eh* around the university. This is not right. University is not the place for this.’ They did not refer me anywhere else, but I feel stressed because if they decide to refer me to a committee or to temporarily suspend me, I will have no recourse.

I also received two text messages sent to my father’s phone for being unveiled in his car. My father was driving and I was sitting next to him without a headscarf, as usual. We immediately received a text message which warned ‘There has been unveiling. If this happens a third time, your car would be impounded’. I thought my father would be angry at me but he was not.

Prior to the ‘Woman Life Freedom’ revolution, we felt that the headscarf was simply a part of our clothing that we had to wear, but afterwards, we realized that we can actually remove our headscarves, that it should not exist. I have been to court once but, compared to people who lost their lives or those who are tortured in prison, this is nothing. The Islamic Republic has become so desperate that it is terrified of the absence of a piece of cloth like a headscarf and this is a manifestation of their utter cowardice.”

## 27. ROYA

“After our car was confiscated, the Moral Security Police said that, to secure its release, I must go to the prosecutor’s office.<sup>35</sup> There, a prosecution official<sup>36</sup> asked why my headscarf had fallen from my head and told me to sign three documents. The documents stated that if I committed any ‘crime’ in the next six months, I would be fined and flogged 40 times. I signed the papers to get our car released.

The official’s manner towards me was very humiliating. He said, ‘We are constantly having to deal with the cases of you women, and we have more important things to do.’ I protested that the authorities are persecuting women instead of addressing the many financial problems people are struggling with. I told the prosecution official that ‘You [the authorities] are holding Iranian women and girls captive.’

The prosecution official said that I must attend a ‘morality’ class. I have now been notified of a prosecution order<sup>37</sup> which states that I must attend five ‘morality’ classes at the prosecutor’s office within the next six months. I also have to read two specified books and send an audio file summarizing them to the authorities within the next three months. The order states that prosecution proceedings against me for the charge of ‘appearing in public without a religious hijab’ have been suspended for six months, but if I commit a crime during this period, an indictment will be issued against me.”

## 28. LALEH

“The police arrested me and my friends as we were exercising at the beach while wearing hats and took us to the police station. In the police station, they interrogated us. A female agent told us that we were ruining the country and she kept threatening us. One agent took us into a room, closed the door, and kept saying vulgar words to us. He was threatening us with sexual violence and laughing at us. He mocked us and said ‘You have probably heard that they arrest women and rape them in detention’. With a very bad gaze towards me, he said, ‘I can tell that you have a nice body’. He laughed at me, mocked me and said, ‘I like older women’. He was conducting himself in a way as if he was not a police officer. It was as if he was holding me hostage in a room. My family came to follow up on my case and the police agents told me that if they would make lots of noise about my case, they would arrest them too.

Until I went to court, we thought they were joking, but the authorities summoned me to court via a text message. In the court, I asked the judge to explain to me what my ‘crime’ was so that I would know how to defend myself. I told him I was just exercising. The judge said that I was accused of ‘being naked in public’. He said I had not been wearing clothes and that he would sentence me to 30 lashes and a fine. However, following the court session, an official informally told me

<sup>33</sup> This refers to a form of headscarf which covers the head, shoulders and arms down to the elbow, leaving only the face showing.

<sup>34</sup> The last names of the head and deputy head of the intelligence department (*herasat*) at this university are on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>35</sup> The details of this prosecutor’s office are on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>36</sup> The last name of the prosecution official is on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>37</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed this official document.

that if I immediately pay a bribe, my sentence will be confined to a fine. I complied and consequently received a verdict, which convicted me of ‘women’s presence in public without Islamic veiling’ and sentenced me to a fine.”<sup>38</sup>

### **29. NARGES**

“Several weeks ago, I received a text message from the judiciary notifying me that I had a notice. I had been sent a notice which said that ‘a complaint has been filed against you in relation to appearing in public without religious veiling’. The notice indicated a specific date and time that I have to report to court. I consulted some friends and acquaintances who said they know people who had received similar notices and, when they went to court, they [the authorities] showed them photographs that had been taken of them without hijab in public, and they were, consequently, fined.

For days after receiving this notice, I felt extremely distressed because I could not comprehend that I was being treated as a criminal for such a small matter. I even initially decided not to go to court but, after consulting with a lawyer, they told me that the authorities could close my bank accounts, put me on a travel ban, and block my national ID code which would stop me from being able to do anything, to force me to go to court.

Since the ‘Woman Life Freedom’ revolution started, 99% of the time I was in public, I did not wear a hijab. It has been a form of resistance because I thought nobody has the right to force me to wear a hijab. I had prepared myself for physical or verbal confrontations in the street, but I never thought they [the authorities] would try to silence and control us through this method. If I did not need to travel outside Iran, I would have refused to go to court and I would continue my resistance. I am very upset that I cannot continue. We have very little power here because the authorities heavily oppress us, but we try our best to resist.”

## **CALLS FOR SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

### **30. TAHEREH, KHORASAN-E RAZAVI PROVINCE**

“I urge world leaders to think about protecting the lives of the people of Iran... I urge states to not just focus on their own political interests, and to think of the people of Iran and save us from the hands of the Islamic Republic. Everyone is really suffocating... We see these injustices, but we are forced to remain silent.”

### **31. 17-YEAR-OLD GOLNAR**

“When our rights are being violated, why should we not let others know what we are experiencing... I want to tell the world that the new generation of young people in Iran is just like all the other youth in the world. Our lifestyle, our information, our level of literacy and knowledge, and our thoughts and beliefs are like those of children in other countries around the world. We are not the same as the Islamic Republic. We do not believe in compulsory veiling. We are forced to wear the veil. If our society was a free one, we would like to not have compulsory veiling, we would like to have a secular state... We want to be like young people in other countries. I want to tell the world that, if the current situation in Iran continues, they should support our generation and do something so that we, too, can have freedoms like young people in other countries – freedom of expression, freedom of clothing, freedom of thought.”

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<sup>38</sup> Amnesty International obtained and reviewed this verdict.