

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** IRN35006  
**Country:** Iran  
**Date:** 24 June 2009

**Keywords:** Iran - Women – Islamic dress code – Enforcement – Employment

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

---

**Questions**

- 1. To what extent are women in Iran required to observe rules with regard to matters such as dress and make-up?**
- 2. What are the penalties for failure to observe these requirements?**
- 3. To what extent are these requirements enforced?**
- 4. If possible, please provide information on the situation in Babol in this regard.**
- 5. Are there any reports of women having to wear “full cover” in order to access employment opportunities?**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. To what extent are women in Iran required to observe rules with regard to matters such as dress and make-up?**
- 2. What are the penalties for failure to observe these requirements?**
- 3. To what extent are these requirements enforced?**

An article published by the Middle East Report Online in Spring 2009 provides detailed information regarding the regulation of dress in Iran. The article refers to the regulation of dress as part of a project “based on the Qur’anic verse ‘commanding what is just and forbidding what is wrong’ (*amr-e be ma‘ruf va nahy-e az monkar*), a basic tenet of Islamic jurisprudence and a moral obligation for every Muslim”. According to the article:

Article 8 of the Islamic Republic’s constitution refers to *amr-e be ma‘ruf* – the shorthand term for public morality – as a key basis of social relations and a mutual obligation of ordinary citizens and government. In practice, enforcement of *amr-e be ma‘ruf* has been directed overwhelmingly at the citizenry – and in particular at women.

A overview of the mandates and laws relevant to the regulation of dress is provided in the article, from which the more relevant excerpts follow:

[In 1981] the Islamic Republic mandated that women must wear modest “Islamic” attire. (Contrary to persistent myth, the law in Iran has never required women to don the full chador, though they are strongly encouraged to do so. In practice, “Islamic” attire has meant a variety of manners of dress, typically a manteau covering the arms and a headscarf. The chador is enforced, however, in mosques, judiciary buildings and other public spaces, including on some university campuses.)

At first, the power of the morality court was absolute. Then, in 1982, the first Islamic penal law was ratified by Parliament. The law codified the prohibition of “non-Islamic” dress for women. Article 102 declared that women dressed “improperly” in public would receive up to 74 lashes, a penalty only softened in 1996, when it was changed to jail time or a fine. This clause of the penal law remains the only legal instrument for implementing *amr-e be ma’ruf*. With codification, the bureaucratic state sought not only to restrain judicial autonomy, but also to construct an Islamic identity through threat of sanction. In the 1980s, the state promoted a culture of self-sacrifice and obedience, and any resistance on the part of women to strictures upon dress was treated as counter-revolutionary treason...

In the late 1980s, morality policing entered a second phase with the formation of a new state “headquarters” (*setad*) for enforcing *amr-e be ma’ruf* and the return of thousands of *Basiji* (voluntary militia) activists from the war front. The *Basij*, initially created to shield the Islamic Republic from internal security threats, was now assigned the role of ensuring that Islamic ethics were observed. *Basiji* checkpoints in the streets gradually turned to the task of imposing Islamic codes, peaking in 1993, when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Khomeini’s successor as Supreme Leader, espied a “cultural invasion” of Western, secular and counter-revolutionary influences. The state-owned press put the number of *Basijis* thus engaged at anywhere from 230,000 to 3.5 million.

...

The ascendancy of the reformist bloc in Parliament, and the associated intellectual and cultural ferment, effectively ended the second stage of moral policing in the name of *amr-e be ma’ruf*. From 1996 to 2005 the *Basij* checkpoints were fewer and further between, and the government told the *setad* it lacked legal authority for its indiscriminate patrols.[11] *Setad* authorities also lost their control over believers in faraway cities...

Conservatives took over Tehran’s city council in 2003, Parliament in 2004 and the presidency in 2005. From their first move back into power, they upped the volume of their demands for aggressive policies to control public life, directing harsh criticisms at the laxity of the reformists to prepare society for the coming retrenchment in cultural policies. The judiciary announced another initiative to create a force responsible for policing “moral crimes” in November 2004. Committees answering the force’s national command were to be formed in each mosque, neighborhood, factory, school and government office, with the task of implementing *amr-e be ma’ruf*. Several clergymen, including teachers in the Qom seminaries responsible for training judges since the revolution, mildly protested the idea of placing such a body under judicial supervision.[13] Independent lawyers also pointed to the clear conflict of interest, as well as the lack of parliamentary approval for the plan.[14]

As the 2005 presidential campaign got underway, the leader of the hardline coalition, Ahmadinejad, promised his followers a new age of economic justice and Islamic piety... At the same time, he stoked resentment of the reformists among the more ideological sectors of his base, such as war martyrs’ families and *Basiji* families, by decrying reformist disregard

for amr-e be ma'ruf and vowing as well to crack down on conspicuous consumption. The 2005 presidential election was the first since the revolution in which candidates felt compelled to declaim a "mild" position on veiling. Wary of being labeled a fundamentalist, Ahmadinejad promised that he would not "interfere with the choice of hairstyle of young people." But after he won, and all the branches of government were back in conservative hands, the conservatives resumed attempts to discipline public behavior with the language of amr-e be ma'ruf.

In May 2005, Tehran's conservative city council called in the police commander and blasted him for excessive tolerance of "inappropriately veiled" women in public. A few days later, special morality patrols reappeared in the streets, for the first time employing women officers...

[In August 2005] the city council ratified a document called "Strategies to Extend Piety," mandating still more bureaucratic organs, including a coordination committee drawn from various ministries and executive bodies, that would cooperate with police to punish violators of "moral codes." By the spring of 2006, the morality police were once again ubiquitous, arresting or intimidating young women and men for their dress and conduct, confiscating satellite dishes and punishing shopkeepers who were selling "inappropriate" articles of clothing...

In the spring of 2007, the most extreme conservatives in the Tehran courts designed a "public safety program" (tarh-e amniat-e ejtema'e) aimed at allaying public fears about increased consumption of drugs, thuggish behavior among youth, rape and burglary – but also at enforcing amr-e be ma'ruf. As it was nominally a normal anti-crime initiative, the program was assigned to the regular municipal police by the president. The move was in keeping with Ahmadinejad's "stealthy radicalism" during the campaign, for he sought to assure Tehranis that the regular police, not the notorious Basij, would be the enforcers. As a police commander told the Fars News Agency, "We didn't use Basij forces, because we assumed there would be more resistance from the people."

The Basij, however, criticized police for their "mild" methods. By August, the Basij had been invited to take over operations targeting drug dealers and gangs of robbers. Basij commanders, embedded in the state bureaucracy, used the chance to proclaim themselves the saviors of political stability of the Islamic Republic in the cities. They inveighed against a "cultural NATO" and a "conspiracy of foreign forces" seeking to overthrow the Islamic Republic through the propagation of "non-Islamic" behavior among youth and women. The mix of cooperation and competition between the Basij and police ended in a kind of military occupation of cities in the spring of 2008. Patrols criss-crossed each of Tehran's 23 main thoroughfares, where confrontations between police and citizens over "moral issues" were a daily occurrence.

The fresh campaign was vicious in its treatment of young people dressed in "non-Islamic" fashion and its harassment of alleged arazel va obash, a derogatory phrase meaning drug dealers, addicts and thieves. In the first four months, nearly 1 million people were publicly humiliated, or "instructed," in the streets and 40,000 were arrested...

This new puritanism disguised as a "public safety program" lifted the most fanatical elements of the hardline conservative firmament to the commanding heights of cultural policymaking in the Islamic Republic, and turned amr-e be ma'ruf into a major challenge for the government, at a time when it already faces crises in economic and international policy. Human rights lawyers and activist women started a round of protests against the "public safety program" in 2007. The feminist website Meydan Zanan took the initiative, publishing news of street demonstrations, human rights activities and government debates on the issue.

At the same time 20 independent lawyers filed a complaint against police with the highest court with jurisdiction over government agencies, claiming that the “public safety program” is illegal because it is not included in routine police tasks and it lacks parliamentary sanction. One year later, the court rendered its verdict that “there is no sanction or legal requirement” for the “public safety program.” In the summer of 2008, the main independent student organization, Tahkim Vahdat, initiated a series of public meetings on “violations of human rights by the public safety program” in Tehran and other cities. In most of these activities, there was reference to principles of human rights and the protections of personal freedom outlined in the constitution.[17]

In late January 2009, the new minister of interior and the deputy police commander suggested that the “public safety program” violates the citizenship rights of the people.[18] Regular police patrols have decreased markedly in the streets of the capital. At the same time, Basij commanders and others among the arch-conservatives dream of institutionalizing the agencies enforcing *amr-e be ma'ruf* as a separate ministry[19] and of making *amr-e be ma'ruf* the basis of the penal system. Already, toward the end of 2008, the Basij had declared that its enforcement activities would intensify in redress of the “retreat” of the municipal police.[20] The failure of the “public safety program” is another piece of evidence for the proposition that present-day Iran is de facto a post-Islamist society, a place “where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted even among its once ardent supporters.”[21] During the 2005 presidential campaign, Elahe Kolaei, spokeswoman for the reformist candidate Mostafa Moin, referred passingly to his opposition to mandatory veiling. In January 2009, the Coalition of Nationalist Religious Parties, a collection of liberals and social democrats with active “Islamist feminists” among its members, has published a statement calling for the “remedy of discrimination everywhere” and asking that obligatory veiling be abandoned. This is the first time since the consolidation of the Islamic Republic that a political party has taken this step. The events of early 2009 mark both the end of the third phase of the attempts of the state to impose *amr-e be ma'ruf* upon an increasingly recalcitrant population and an unprecedented degree of political fragmentation within the power centers of the Islamic Republic (Khatam, A. 2009, ‘Iran: The Islamic Republic’s failed quest for the spotless city’, *Middle East Report Online*, Spring – Attachment 1).

The US Department of State’s report on human rights in Iran in 2007 refers to both vigilante attacks and the government crackdown against “un-Islamic” dress:

Vigilante violence included attacking young persons considered too “un-Islamic” in their dress or activities, invading private homes, abusing unmarried couples, and disrupting concerts. During the year, the government intensified its crackdown on “un-Islamic dress” or “bad hijab.” In June, according to deputy police chief Hossein Zolfaghri, the government brought a total of 2,265 cases, against men and women, to the judiciary for trial on the charge of noncompliance with the Islamic dress code. According to a domestic press report, during the year the government warned more than 527,000 persons and arrested more than 20,000 persons, who were then released conditionally. Police denied the use of force in these instances, but there were reports that force was used, including one widely-circulated image of a girl’s face covered in blood after being beaten by police for un-Islamic dress. According to press reports, the Tehran police chief said that the girl had “instigated the incident herself.” (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Iran*, March, Section 1(f) – Attachment 2).

The US Department of State report on Iran for 2008 noted a continuation of the government crackdown:

According to press reports, morality police stopped or detained more than two million individuals during the year and in 2007 for “inappropriate hairstyles” or wearing headscarves that revealed too much hair. There were reports that police used force in these instances less frequently after an image of a girl’s face covered in blood following a beating by police for un-Islamic dress was circulated widely in 2007... In December, according to press reports, police in the northern city of Qaemshahr arrested 49 persons for “appearing in public wearing satanic fashions and unsuitable clothing.” (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Iran*, February, Section 1(f) – Attachment 3).

Further information on the enforcement of rules relating to “bad hijab” in recent years is provided in the following media reports.

In October 2006, an article sourced from *AFP/Middle East Times* reported on developments in the “checkered history in Iran of the veil”:

Wearing the veil in Iran means covering the head and the body’s contours but even chador-clad Iranian women do not cover all their face.

The niqab – a veil that leaves only a slit for the eyes and whose use has caused such controversy in Britain – is almost unseen in Iran although a variant can be seen on traditional Iranian women in the south.

The authorities prefer that Iranian women wear either the chador, an all encompassing garment swathed around the body or a combination of full hair-covering (hijab) headscarf and long body coat (manto).

However, under the presidencies of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and his reformist successor Mohammad Khatami, urban women began to interpret the rules more liberally, as authorities focused their efforts on fighting crime rather than rigidly enforcing dress codes.

Gradually women – especially in Tehran – began to expose the front of their hair under their scarves, wear make-up, and trim the length of their mantos.

Sometimes they push the boundaries too far and every summer, as coat lengths become shorter and dressing skimpier, the authorities crack down on women whose clothing is deemed un-Islamic.

By the end of August this year, the Iranian police said that they had handed out 64,000 warnings to women for poor wearing of the veil (Williams, S. and Pouladi, F. 2006, ‘Iran veil obligation masks colourful diversity’, *AFP/Middle East Times*, 26 October – Attachment 4).

On 24 April 2007, it was reported on the WorldWide Religious News website that :

With the arrival of spring, Iranian police have launched a crackdown against women accused of not covering up enough, arresting nearly 300 women, some for wearing too tight an overcoat or letting too much hair peek out from under their veil, authorities said Monday.

The campaign in the streets of major cities is the toughest such crackdown in nearly two decades, raising fears that hard-liner President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad intends to re-impose the tough Islamic Revolution-era constraints on women's dress that had loosened in recent years.

The move highlighted the new boldness among hard-liners in Ahmadinejad’s government,

which has used mounting Western pressure on Tehran over its nuclear program and Iraq as a pretext to put down internal dissent.

But it could bring a backlash at a time when many Iranians resent Ahmadinejad for failing to boost the faltering economy or halt spiraling prices and blame him for isolating Iran with his fiery rhetoric. The two-day-old crackdown was already angering moderates.

...Police could be seen Monday stopping and giving warnings to other women who were showing too much hair or even wearing too colorful a headscarf.

Looser dress codes are one of the few surviving gains from the era of Ahmadinejad's predecessor, reformist President Mohammad Khatami, who was in power from 1997 to 2005.

During that time, many women, particularly in cities, shed the dress code imposed after the 1979 revolution – veils completely covering the hair and heavy coats or the black or gray head-to-toe chador hiding the shape of the body.

Now it is common to see women in loose headscarves – some as narrow as a ribbon – that show much of their hair. Many women also wear short, colorful, formfitting jackets that stop at the knee – or even higher – showing jeans underneath. Even under Ahmadinejad in the past two years, women can be seen wearing pants that leave the bottom of their calves bare.

Any of those styles could bring warnings or detention from the anti-vice police in the current sweep, which began Saturday. So far, 278 women have been detained, 231 of whom were released after they signed papers promising they wouldn't appear "inadequately dressed in public," police spokesman Col. Mahi Ahmadi told The Associated Press Monday.

Another 3,548 women have been given "warnings and Islamic guidance," without being detained, Ahmadi said. Twelve men have also been detained for "not observing the proper Islamic dress code" by wearing tight pants or short-sleeve shirts, he said.

Every spring, there are calls by clerics for a crackdown, and the past two years have seen minor, localized sweeps. But this year's campaign is the first since before Khatami's presidency to result in so many arrests and be given such high prominence in the government media, with warnings for women to adhere to Islamic dress.

Ahmadi said the sweep would go on "as long as necessary," but it wasn't clear whether it heralded an all-out, permanent campaign to bar looser dress codes (Dareini, A. A. 2007, 'Iran Cracks Down on Women's Dress', WorldWide Religious News website, 24 April <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=24872&con=33&sec=59> – Accessed 24 June 2009 – Attachment 5).

An article dated 30 April 2007, sourced from the Women's Forum Against Fundamentalism in Iran website, reported that, in the previous week, "Tehran's regime has launched an extensive and brutal crackdown on women for 'promoting virtues and combating vice.' Thousands of women have been beaten, arrested and warned to follow the strict dress code of the Islamic Republic" ('Sever and systemic crackdown against Iranian women' [sic] 2007, Women's Forum Against Fundamentalism in Iran website, 30 April – Attachment 6).

An article dated 2 May 2007 sourced from the Adnkronos International (AKI) website indicates that:

An Iranian judiciary spokesman said Wednesday that 100 women have been ordered to stand trial after the first week of a moralisation campaign imposing stricter Islamic dress code rules.

Alireza Jamshidi said the women were charged with breaking the law on the veil and instigating prostitution with their dress style. Jamshidi added that thousands of others stopped by police on the street over the past week for failing to respect the Islamic dress code would not be tried because “they were not covered by the veil properly, but not in an evident matter and not intentionally.”

Iranian authorities said last Friday they had arrested 150,000 women for breaking dress codes in the first week since the new rules were implemented.

Under the new regulations, women found guilty of infringing Islamic dress rules can be sentenced to jail (‘Iran: 100 women to stand trial over new dress rules’ 2007, AKI website, 2 May – Attachment 7).

A *BBC News* article published on 12 November 2007 mentioned “wearing make-up” as one of the “vices” reportedly being targeted by police:

Iranian newspapers have printed a list of moral vices that the police are targeting, including wearing make-up and hats instead of headscarves.

...

This year has seen one of the most ferocious crackdowns on un-Islamic behaviour and improper Islamic dress by the authorities for at least a decade.

But it has now emerged the current campaign has the overt backing of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

...

In the last six months, tens of thousands of women have been warned or arrested because of their clothes (Harrison, F. 2007, ‘Iran launches anti-vice crackdown’, *BBC News*, 12 November – Attachment 8).

Somewhat at odds with other sources (such as Khatam, A. 2009, ‘Iran: The Islamic Republic’s failed quest for the spotless city’, *Middle East Report Online*, Spring – Attachment 1) which indicate that violation of the dress code is no longer punishable by lashes, a *Reuters* report dated 24 September 2008 stated that violators of the dress code “can receive lashes, fines or imprisonment, although most usually receive a stern warning by street patrols”:

Iran has doubled the number of police assigned to its more than year-long crackdown against women flouting Islamic dress codes, Kargozaran newspaper said on Wednesday.

The daily gave no figures but the report, as well as remarks made by a police official to Reuters on Wednesday, indicate the authorities’ determination to press ahead with the longest clampdown against “immoral behaviour” in recent years.

...

The dress code requires women to cover their hair and wear long, loose clothes to disguise the shape of their bodies.

Violators can receive lashes, fines or imprisonment, although most usually receive a stern warning by street patrols looking for women with veils that are pushed back to show too much hair or coats which are not long enough or too tight.

Kargozaran quoted the head of Iran’s airports police as saying 128 women had been prevented from taking their flights because of “bad hijab”. It did not give dates and said the figure for those stopped had been published previously.

Enforcement of strict moral codes governing women's dress became more strict after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad swept to power in 2005 with the backing of revolutionary loyalists, such as the Basij religious militia.

Analysts say the authorities are wary of outward expressions of defiance against the system, particularly when the country is under Western pressure over its disputed nuclear programme.

Dissent has been swiftly stamped on – whether by students, women activists or labour union officials – for fear that opposition could gain momentum, the analysts say.

Tehran prosecutor Saeed Mortazavi said this month the crackdown will intensify after the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, although he did not elaborate ('Iran steps up policing of Islamic dress – report' 2008, *Reuters*, 24 September – Attachment 9).

In December 2008, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* reported on the role of the Basij in enforcing the wearing of the hijab:

The mission of the Basij as a whole can be broadly defined as helping to maintain law and order; enforcing ideological and Islamic values and combating the “Western cultural onslaught”; assisting the IRGC in defending the country against foreign threats; and involvement in state-run economic projects.

In terms of maintaining law and order, Basij members act as “morality police” in towns and cities by enforcing the wearing of the hijab; arresting women for violating the dress code; prohibiting male-female fraternization; monitoring citizens' activities; confiscating satellite dishes and “obscene” material; intelligence gathering; and even harassing government critics and intellectuals. Basij volunteers also act as bailiffs for local courts.

During this year's Basij Week, one of the commanders of the IRGC, Abdollah Eraqi, stressed that after a long lapse, the Basij will again start patrolling the streets of Tehran to help police maintain the Islamic dress code and arrest hardened criminals (Aryan, H. 2008, 'Iran's Basij Force – The Mainstay Of Domestic Security', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 7 December – Attachment 10).

On 31 May 2009, in the run-up to the June presidential election, it was reported that presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi had “said he would work to towards taking the moral police patrols off the streets if elected in the June 12 poll” ('Iran's Mousavi vows to review “unfair” women laws' 2009, *Agence France Presse*, 31 May – Attachment 11).

In summarizing campaign issues, a *Reuters News* article dated 11 June 2009 noted that presidential candidates “Karoubi and Mousavi have opposed Ahmadinejad's drive to enforce what hardliners define as Islamic dress and social behaviour” (Hafezi, P. 2009, 'Factbox – Issues in Iran's presidential election race', *Reuters News*, 11 June – Attachment 12).

On 21 June 2009, a *CNN* report on demonstrations following the presidential elections made reference to the Basij being “not much liked by many women in Iran because they often will use force against women who they judge do not dress appropriately”:

IVAN WATSON, CNN CORRESPONDENT: T.J., let's take look at some video that around sunset last night in Tehran, what appeared to be clashes around of the stations of Basiji militia – fierce clashes, you see fire, you see explosions.



And the Basiji – they were important fighters, defending Iran in the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s. But in the time since then, these government-funded militia forces and government-trained and armed forces have deemed themselves kind of the enforcers of moral codes. And they are not much liked by many women in Iran because they often will use force against women who they judge do not dress appropriately, not conservatively enough, not according to the standards of their version of Islam.

So, I'm going take you to some other video and show you how this phenomenon that women have been at the vanguard of these demonstrations yesterday. And we can see here women picking up stones, actually, in the streets, preparing to confront the security forces. It's not just men. It's women who are also very much a part of this action.

...We also have video of women caught in the crossfire here, in these clashes. You can see these pictures of girls being taken away. Of course, the women have to wear, have to cover their hair. They have to wear this manteau, this type of smocks, that's according to Iran's regulations (Nguyen, B., Holmes, T.J., Watson, I., Bolduan, K., Nasr, O., Desta, S. and Steinhauser, P. 2009, 'Unrest in Iran', *CNN*, 21 June – Attachment 13).

#### **4. If possible, please provide information on the situation in Babol in this regard.**

Amongst the sources consulted, very limited information was found relating to Babol.

An article dated 6 June 2007 on the AKI website regarding the suspensions “imposed on female students who did not fully cover their hair with the veil or wore makeup” at the University of Karaj, also mentions protests by students in Babol:

The disciplinary board of the University of Karaj, about 100 kilometres north of Tehran, has suspended 93 students for not abiding by a strict new Islamic dress code. Under the measure which became effective late April, women as well as men can be arrested for not dressing according to the rules. The suspensions which will last for up to two months were reportedly imposed on female students who did not fully cover their hair with the veil or wore makeup.

...

In the past few weeks, students in Tehran, Lorestan, Babol near the Caspian sea, and Shiraz in the west, have been staging protests against new government measures imposing the strict new dress codes and opening hours on campus as well as restrictions on political activity ('93 University students suspended for not respecting Islamic dress code' 2007, AKI website, 6 June – Attachment 14).

#### **5. Are there any reports of women having to wear “full cover” in order to access employment opportunities?**

Amongst the sources consulted, limited information was found specifically on whether women have to wear the chador in order to access certain employment opportunities.

However, an article from 2003 on the website of the Iran Chamber Society noted that “in the area of employment, an individual's preferences and abilities are often ignored in favor of a test of the candidate's loyalty to the regime” and examination of the candidate's private life may extend to “the kind of hejab of the women of the candidate's family”:

All Iranian citizens live under a system that determines opportunities for social advancement on the basis of appeals to legal and religious authorities. Thus, in the area of employment, an individual's preferences and abilities are often ignored in favor of a test of the candidate's loyalty to the regime – a test that is carded out by examining the individual's private life. The undercover agents conduct a thorough background check that includes visits to all places that the candidate has lived during his or her life and interviews with all the candidate's local contacts. The local investigation even includes the kind of hejab of the women of the candidate's family (Kar, M. 2003, 'The invasion of the private sphere in Iran: individual, family, community and state', Iran Chamber Society website [http://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/iinvasion\\_private\\_sphere\\_iran.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/iinvasion_private_sphere_iran.php) – Accessed 24 January 2009 – Attachment 15).

The following articles – which variously refer to enforcement of the dress code within small companies, the possibility of being barred from government buildings if wearing an “inappropriate” headscarf, and references to the “Islamization of universities” – may also be of interest.

An article dated 19 April 2007 on the AKI website referred to accusations that the dean of Tehran Polytechnic University was “wanting to extend to academia the sexual apartheid imposed by the government on Iranian society.” According to the article:

Female students at Tehran Polytechnic University, where students protested against Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during a visit last December crying ‘dictator go away’ and throwing firecrackers, are staging a major protest against new regulations enabling police as of 21 April to arrest women who do not abide by the Islamic dress code. A group of 700 female students organized a rally on campus and signed a letter to the dean calling the new rules “an offence to the dignity of women” and accusing him of “wanting to extend to academia the sexual apartheid imposed by the government on Iranian society.”

Authorities immediately reacted on Thursday withdrawing the students' university ID cards which are mandatory to access campus and classes.

The students will now have to face a disciplinary commission which will decide whether they will be allowed to continue their studies or be expelled (‘University female students rebel against veil’ 2007, AKI website, 19 April – Attachment 16).

An article dated 31 May 2007, also on the AKI website, referred to the government's “moralization campaign in universities” and to student protests “against new government measures imposing strict new Islamic dress codes”:

The Iranian government will press on with its moralization campaign in universities despite nationwide students' protests, a minister has said. Sciences minister Mohammad Mehdi Zahedi told a meeting of university deans Wednesday in Isfahan, central Iran, that “our universities are incredibly distant from the values guiding president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and therefore the Islamization of universities is one of the top objectives of the ministry of sciences.”

Students in Tehran, Lorestan, Babol near the Caspian sea, and Shiraz in the west, have been staging protests in the past few weeks against new government measures imposing strict new Islamic dress codes and opening hours on campus as well as restrictions on political activity.

Students are also demanding the reinstatement of professors and deans fired by authorities for being too secular and the release of students' leaders jailed over the protests which are overall

against the president's campaign to purge the universities of all aspects of the reform movement of his predecessor, Mohammad Khatami ('Universities must become more Islamic' 2007, AKI website, 31 May – Attachment 17).

An article published by *Reuters* in April 2008 noted that police had the power to check adherence to the dress code within private companies and had the power to "shut them down":

Iranian police will launch a crackdown next month on small companies which fail to enforce strict religious dress codes, Mehr News Agency reported on Wednesday.

The move indicates an expansion of a clampdown on "immoral" conduct launched last year against women flouting rules to cover their heads and disguise the shape of their bodies in public, in line with Iran's Islamic system.

"In the first stage, police will only confront companies ... that are active in small buildings or complexes," the head of the moral security police, Ahmad Rouzbehani, was quoted as saying.

Mehr said the move was "to prevent social damage" and the hijab, or veil, "should be respected". It said the campaign would start from around May 4.

Iran's religious codes require women to cover their hair and wear long, loose clothing to disguise their bodies in public, including offices where they may work with male colleagues.

Police sometimes check offices to ensure the codes are upheld and can shut them down...

Those who violate dress codes are usually cautioned on a first offence, sometimes after a brief visit to a police station. But they can be held for longer, taken to court and required to have "guidance classes" after repeat offences.

Dress codes are most often flouted in wealthier, urban areas. Conservative dress is the norm in poorer, rural areas (Blair, E. and Hosseinian, Z. 2008, 'Iran launches new crackdown on dress code offenders', *Reuters News*, 30 April – Attachment 18).

*Radio Netherlands Worldwide* reported on 19 October 2008 that "an 'inappropriate' headscarf could mean... barred access to government buildings" in Iran:

By law in Iran, women are required to wear the hijab – a covering of the head that is intended to promote modesty. But the dress requirements are not popular with everyone, and some women choose to bend or break the rules to display their opposition to the government.

...

Going out in Iran, though, with an 'inappropriate' headscarf could mean unwanted attention from men, barred access to government buildings, and even harassment from the so-called fashion police (McGuire, D. 2008, 'Headscarves as civil disobedience', *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 19 October – Attachment 19).

An article in *The Economist* on 19 March 2009 reported the purge of "numerous suspected liberals", including from universities:

Determined to reignite revolutionary fervour, Mr Ahmadinejad has purged numerous suspected liberals from universities, the diplomatic service and senior government posts, replacing them with like-minded ideologues. His reinforcement of chafing restrictions on civic freedoms has sent scores of dissidents to prison, including students, labour organisers

and feminists demanding equal rights... It has brought back the ugly spectre of police cruising city streets to harass and humiliate women they deem to be immodest in their dress ('It could make a big difference' 2009, *The Economist*, 19 March – Attachment 20).

The previously cited recent article from the *Middle East Review Online* noted that the chador is enforced "on some university campuses":

the law in Iran has never required women to don the full chador, though they are strongly encouraged to do so. In practice, "Islamic" attire has meant a variety of manners of dress, typically a manteau covering the arms and a headscarf. The chador is enforced, however, in mosques, judiciary buildings and other public spaces, including on some university campuses (Khatam, A. 2009, 'Iran: The Islamic Republic's failed quest for the spotless city', *Middle East Report Online*, Spring – Attachment 1).

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

#### **United Nations (UN)**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org>

#### **International News & Politics**

*BBC News* <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

#### **Topic Specific Links**

Center for Women & Family Affairs <http://www.women.org.ir/en>

#### **Search Engines**

Copernic <http://www.copernic.com/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

1. Khatam, A. 2009, 'Iran: The Islamic Republic's failed quest for the spotless city', *Middle East Report Online*, Spring. (CISNET Iran CX224861)
2. US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Iran*, March.

3. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Iran*, February.
4. Williams, S. and Pouladi, F. 2006, 'Iran Veil obligation masks colourful diversity', *AFP/Middle East Times*, 26 October. (CISNET Iran CX164284)
5. Dareini, A. A. 2007, 'Iran Cracks Down on Women's Dress', WorldWide Religious News website, 24 April <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=24872&con=33&sec=59> – Accessed 24 June 2009.
6. 'Sever and systemic crackdown against Iranian women' [sic], Women's Forum Against Fundamentalism in Iran website, 30 April. (CISNET Iran CX205633)
7. 'Iran: 100 women to stand trial over new dress rules' 2007, AKI website, 2 May. (CISNET Iran CX176588)
8. Harrison, F. 2007, 'Iran launches anti-vice crackdown', *BBC News*, 12 November. (CISNET Iran CX188254)
9. 'Iran steps up policing of Islamic dress – report' 2008, *Reuters*, 24 September. (CISNET Iran CX210961)
10. Aryan, H. 2008, 'Iran's Basij Force – The Mainstay Of Domestic Security', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 7 December. (CISNET Iran CX216099)
11. 'Iran's Mousavi vows to review "unfair" women laws' 2009, *Agence France Presse*, 31 May. (FACTIVA)
12. Hafezi, P. 2009, 'Factbox – Issues in Iran's presidential election race', *Reuters News*, 11 June. (FACTIVA)
13. Nguyen, B., Holmes, T.J., Watson, I., Bolduan, K., Nasr, O., Desta, S. and Steinhäuser, P. 2009, 'Unrest in Iran', *CNN*, 21 June. (FACTIVA)
14. '93 University students suspended for not respecting Islamic dress code' 2007, AKI website, 6 June. (CISNET Iran CX178745)
15. Kar, M. 2003, 'The invasion of the private sphere in Iran: individual, family, community and state', Iran Chamber Society website [http://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/iinvasion\\_private\\_sphere\\_iran.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/society/articles/iinvasion_private_sphere_iran.php) – Accessed 24 January 2009.
16. 'University female students rebel against veil' 2007, AKI website, 19 April. (CISNET Iran CX175821)
17. 'Universities must become more Islamic' 2007, AKI website, 31 May. (CISNET Iran CX178557)

18. Blair, E. and Hosseinian, Z. 2008, 'Iran launches new crackdown on dress code offenders', *Reuters News*, 30 April. (FACTIVA)
19. McGuire, D. 2008, 'Headscarves as civil disobedience', *Radio Netherlands Worldwide*, 19 October. (CISNET Iran CX213126)
20. 'It could make a big difference' 2009, *The Economist*, 19 March. (CISNET Iran CX223017)