



### Call for Solidarity: Freedom and Gender Equality in Iran

We (a group of Iranian feminists and women's rights activists) demand an end to state-led violence and repression, as well as the immediate release of all political detainees in Iran. We invite all women's rights defenders, activists, organisations, and networks worldwide to demonstrate their solidarity with the Iranian women's movement and the broader movement for democracy in Iran by organising initiatives under the slogan "freedom and gender equality in Iran" throughout March 2010.

Over the past thirty years, the Iranian women's movement has been at the forefront of the struggle for freedom and equality in Iran. Gender discrimination intersects with other forms of subordination – whether based on class, ethnicity, political orientation, religion, and so on. Thus, the peaceful resistance of women and men in defence of gender equality in all social spheres – legal, political, cultural, economical, etc. – has profoundly impacted the Iranian movement for democracy. Iranian women have long demanded freedom and gender equality; they have employed both individual and group strategies, initiated various campaigns, and faced insults, threats, arrests and imprisonment in the process. Many of these women are currently in prison.

Over the past eight months, the grass-roots protest movement that emerged following the disputed presidential elections has been suppressed by mounting violence. Physical and psychological violence – through arrest, torture, rape, extended imprisonment, and even execution – has been exercised against civil and political activists in Iran. As of now, numerous women activists from various movements – women's, workers, students, civil, and political – are detained and/or have received heavy sentences. The list of detainees grows everyday.

These circumstances, along with a new wave of arrests of women activists, have granted the authorities space enough to expedite legislations of a further gender-discriminatory nature, such as the "Family Support Bill," which aims to further limit women's rights in the name of 'strengthening' the family. For the past thirty years, Iranian women have been subjected to a range of discriminations justified by the Sharia-derived laws. On the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Iran is not a signatory, the women of Iran are facing increased discrimination. Fifteen years after the Fourth World Conference on Women and the drafting of the Beijing Platform for Action, in which the government of Iran participated, the Iranian government has yet to abide by its international obligations and work towards the elimination of discrimination against women.

During these critical times, the transnational solidarity of feminists and women's rights activists with

their Iranian counterparts is not only limited to the struggles of women; it also supports the broader movement for democracy in Iran. Various civil rights movements in Iran have long been in communication with both the transnational Iranian and the international communities. Global solidarity is crucial to giving voice to their repeated calls for freedom and equality in Iran.

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#### Suggested Strategies for Action

Below, please see some of the ways in which you can show solidarity with Iranian women. These are only examples; please feel free to be creative in your expression of solidarity.

- Mark the 8th of March by focusing on the situation of women in Iran in publications, blogs, public lectures, demonstrations, and community gatherings;
- Organise local events that focus on the current struggle in Iran as part of the World March of Women;
- Feature the slogan "Freedom and Gender Equality in Iran" on websites, Op-Eds, flyers, advertisements, public demonstrations, as well as in other innovative actions taken by activists, artists, feminists, and intellectuals;
- Keep in touch with us through our email [iran.genderequality@gmail.com](mailto:iran.genderequality@gmail.com), blog, Facebook group <Gender Equality>, and Twitter page, where we will cover the news and reactions regarding the worldwide "freedom and gender equality in Iran" initiatives. Our goal is for these pages to also become virtual spaces for debate and engagement between feminists and women's rights activists worldwide and those in Iran;
- Make short films and take pictures of your local "freedom and gender equality in Iran" actions. We will gather these and publish them on the internet pages mentioned above. A YouTube channel dedicated to these footages might be set up in the future.