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## Iran's new hijab bill promises severe penalties for women

Iran's latest hijab legislation comes amid an intensifying crackdown on women a year after the death in custody of Mahsa Amini.



HOSSEIN BERIS/Middle East Images/AFP via Getty Images

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Iran's parliament approved a bill Wednesday that would toughen [penalties for women](#) found to be violating the Islamic Republic's dress code for a trial period of three years.

The so-called "Bill to Support the Family by Promoting the Culture of Chastity and Hijab" passed with 152 votes in favor, 34 against and seven abstentions, according to

the country's judiciary. The bill now requires the approval of Iran's Guardian Council, a 12-member body empowered to vet legislation.

The bill was first proposed in April and then amended by the Parliamentary Judicial Commission in July. Its approval coincides with the first anniversary of the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini and the ensuing protests against the ruling regime in Iran.

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Massive nationwide protests erupted last September in response to the death of Amini, who was arrested by the country's morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic dress code.

After coming to power following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini decreed that all Iranian women must cover their head and neck.

Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Code of Iran reads that "women who appear in public without a proper hijab should be imprisoned from 10 days to two months or pay a fine."

Under the new bill, which includes 70 articles, women who fail to adhere to the Islamic dress code could face prison terms of five to 10 years. Also, women found guilty of "nudity, lack of chastity, lack of hijab, improper dressing and acts against public decency leading to disturbance of peace" face severe punishments such as 60 lashes as well as prison time.

The bill also imposes fines or forces the closure of businesses that do not enforce hijab rules and gives public institutions the right to deny essential services to women violating the dress code.

The proposed law also calls for gender segregation in government offices, universities, hospitals and public parks.

The bill is the latest move by Iranian authorities as they [crack down](#) on protests and other activism. The United Nations and rights groups have expressed concerns over the proposed law.

"The draft law could be described as a form of gender apartheid, as authorities appear to be governing through systemic discrimination with the intention of [suppressing women](#) and girls into total submission," a panel of UN experts said in a Sept. 1 statement.

A group called Human Rights Activists in Iran also condemned the bill, saying in a Sept. 7 report that it "symbolizes a broader pattern of limited gender equality within the legal framework, reinforcing discriminatory practices against women."