



An Iranian woman without the mandatory hijab in Tehran

Iran's New Hijab Bill Faces Strong Public Rejection

Friday, 10/27/2023



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The reformist Shargh daily in Iran reported that 84 percent of the over 12,000 respondents to its poll on hijab are opposed to mandatory dress code and headscarves.

The online poll, completed over a period of one month, was conducted after lawmakers, mostly affiliated to the ultra-hardliner Paydari Party, ratified a bill in September that they have named "Protection of Family Through Promotion of Hijab and Chastity Culture".

The legislation, originally prepared by the government and later modified by the parliament's hardliners, proposed various penalties including heavy cash fines for women who do not abide by the prescribed dress code of the Islamic Republic. This dress code consists of a headscarf covering all hair and the shoulders, a loose long tunic with long sleeves, and trousers that cover the legs to below the ankles.

The constitutionally mandated 12-member Guardian Council which, among other things, has the final say in legislation, rejected the bill on Tuesday in a surprising move and asked the parliament to amend it.

The Council has found several formal shortcomings in the text including vagueness of some of the terms used in it, such as a term translatable as “unchastity” or “corruptness”.



Iranian women walk on a street during the revival of morality police in Tehran, July 16, 2023.

The Council’s rejection of the proposed hijab law has nothing to do with people’s objection to it, Asieh Amini, a Norway-based women’s rights activist, told Iran International. According to Amini, the reason for the Council’s rejection is based on the hardliners’ wish to make the legislation as watertight as possible.

Others believe the Guardian Council may have been apprehensive about increasing the **people’s discontent with the regime before the upcoming parliamentary elections** in March. The elections four years ago had the lowest participation rate in the four-decade history of the Islamic Republic.

“The outcome of this bill will be nothing other than increasing people’s discontent, decline [of belief] in hijab, and deepening of the rift between the government and the people,” conservative journalist Behrouz Mirzaei-**Shirmard tweeted before the Council’s rejection of**

the bill. He said he hoped “those in the system who are wise and care” would stop the bill, which “is in contradiction with citizen’s rights” from being approved.

In the past few months, hardliners have tried to impose strict hijab rules in government offices, schools and universities, hospitals and other public places. Nevertheless, many women are defying the hijab rules.

For instance, Habib Ilbeigi, the director of the supervision department of the Islamic Guidance Ministry’s Cinema Organization, said that actresses who have defied hijab standards **will be banned from acting.**



A mosaic picture of some of Iranian actresses who were banned for defying mandatory hijab

The department has released a list of banned actresses that includes many popular actresses including Baran Kowsari, Vishka Asayesh, Taraneh Alidoosti, Katayoun Riahi, Pantea Bahram, Hengameh Ghaziani and Pegah Ahangarani.

The organization is mandated with the approval of public screening and streaming of all films produced in Iran, and very often implements censorship by rejecting scripts or modifying them.

Sources in Iran say in many places, wearing the hijab now is stranger than not wearing it, as the number of women wearing ordinary clothes and no headscarf has hugely increased.

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