

## **Iran Politics Report**

**December 27, 2018**

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### **Hashemi Shahroudi's Death; Fate of Iran's Next Leader**

Source: Excerpt from RFE Persian, December 26, 2018

With Hashemi Shahroudi's death, Khamanei's potential successors are now mostly categorized under hardliner conservative figures. Despite Shahroudi's apparent conservative views, he enjoyed relative independence and his high religious rank shielded him from powerful institutes' influence. He used to maintain minimum interactions with moderates and reformists. With the exception of reformist Mohammad Khatami's presidency, he stuck to his agenda of removing tensions.

After his death, it is now significantly difficult to imagine that the next leader of Iran would be someone upon whom the reformists and conservatives would agree. None of the potential candidates hold the same credibility and mastery of religious issues to the same level that Shahroudi did. It is hard to imagine that the potential successor would enjoy the same level of proximity that Shahroudi used to have with the reformists and moderate camp.

It is predicted that the Assembly of Experts wouldn't go through much change.

### **Faezeh Hashemi: Content of Establishment Disintegrated**

Source: Mostaqel (Independent) Daily, December 27, 2018

Former MP and political activist, Faezeh Hashemi has said that the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran's content has been disintegrated and the reason why a physical disintegration has not happened is because of people are concerned about the next figures and their ideology to rule Iran.

"I believe the content of the establishment has been torn apart and I believe the possibility of a physical dismantling is highly possible in near future. The pillars of the establishment are firm because of their mastery of tactics instigating fear in people." Said Hashemi in an interview with a little known Iranian newspaper.

*Comment: it is not the first time that the daughter of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani is expressing such ideas on wrong governance in Iran. In another interview, Hashemi had stated that the policies of the Islamic Republic would lead to regime change.*

*The boldness of Hashemi's remarks increases the possibility of judicial punishment against her, since such rhetoric has been barely tolerated inside the Islamic Republic Establishment.*

Hashemi admits that the establishment has implemented a more lenient policy toward protests that has erupted in different parts of the country. Hashemi continues to say that protesters from different careers and backgrounds are serving prison time and are subject to sever punishments.

“The possibility of a physical disintegration is not very high since people are concerned with the next ideology or figures that would govern the country after the Islamic Republic,” said Hashemi adding that “ all the institutes and organizations suffer from lack of proper management and mentality and there's no sign of the betterment of the situation.

Faeze Hashemi is the second daughter of former head of the Assembly of Experts. She served 6 months in prison after the 2009 turmoil in Iran. Two years ago, another court sentenced Hashemi to two years in prison because of her interview about the “private bank account” of the head of Iran's Judiciary.

### **Doubts about Participating in Election**

In another part of the interview Faezeh Hashemi told the reporter that she is in doubt whether she would participate in the election anymore.

*Comment: in another interview conducted on June, 2018 Hashemi said that the policies of the Islamic Republic lead Iran to the toppling of the system. Hashemi added that current pressures on the country come at the result of Iran's foreign policy in the Middle East not the issues associated with the JCPOA.*

*Hashemi is among the people who have believed that Iranian politicians follow a strategy of aggrandizing the ill wishes of the so-called enemies in order for themselves to be able to cling on to power. Hashemi also advocates staging a nationwide “free referendum” to determine the fate of the Islamic Republic.*

### **Tehran Held Talks with Afghan Taliban, Say Iranian Media**

BBC Persian, December 26, 2018

Iran has been holding talks with the Afghan Taliban with the knowledge of the Afghan government, Iranian media quoted a top Iranian security official as saying. The news comes just days after the militant group attended reconciliation talks with a U.S. peace envoy in Abu Dhabi.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, made the announcement during a visit to Kabul on December 26, according to the Fars and Tasnim news agencies.

According to IRNA, Shamkhani said the talks between Iran and the Taliban were held "to help curb the security problems in Afghanistan."

"The Afghan government has been informed of the communications and talks carried out with the Taliban, and this process will continue," Shamkhani added. The reports provided no details on where and when the meetings took place. Shamkhani said that "cooperation between [Iran and Afghanistan] will certainly help in fixing Afghanistan's security issues of today."

Abas Aslani, a Tasnim reporter, tweeted that it was the first time talks had been officially confirmed between Iran and the Taliban.

### **Iran's Discriminatory Laws against Women: Three Reactionary Parliaments**

Source: Iran Wire, 17 December 2018

Most discriminatory laws against Iranian women were passed in the early years following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The new Islamic Republic authorities sought to replace laws they had inherited from the monarchy with new legislation that would reflect the entire body of "Islamic principles."

The first three Islamic parliaments, from 1980 to 1992, made wholesale changes in the country's civil laws and passed new laws, including an Islamic Penal Code that in many cases specifically targeted women, aiming to adjust their lives and their lifestyles to correspond with the new government requirements and the worldview of the extremist clergy. Part of the "Islamization" of the society was entrusted to the members of the parliament, but when the process of legislation proved to be time-consuming, the Islamic Revolution Council took over, or the directives of Ayatollah Khomeini, as the founder of the Islamic Republic, became the rule.

The first, second and third parliaments that followed the revolution passed the highest number of anti-women laws. Here we review the legislation passed by the seventh, eighth and ninth parliaments, from 2005 to 2016, which returned to the extremist post-revolutionary positions.

The seventh parliament (2004-2008) passed 20 pieces of legislation related to women and family. The number was 23 for the eighth parliament (2008-2012) and 20 for the ninth parliament (2012-2016).

Below we review the most important laws passed by these three parliaments under the headings of punishments, social freedoms, family, education and employment.

#### **Punishments**

The most infamous law that the parliament passed in the period under study was stoning to death for adultery. When the bill was sent to the Guardian Council, which must approve all legislation before it becomes law, Hamid Reza Tabatabai, the Deputy Chairman of the Parliament's Judiciary Committee, told Fars News Agency that the punishment of stoning had been removed from the code because of the international community's "biased" reaction to it.

But then the Guardian Council rejected the reform, after which members of the parliament slightly changed their stance and said that stoning had not actually been removed, but that the way it was to be implemented had been changed.

Provision 3 of Article 132 of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code states: “If a man and a woman commit adultery together more than one time, if the death penalty and flogging, or stoning and flogging, are imposed, only the death penalty or stoning, whichever is applicable, shall be executed.”

### **Social Freedoms**

The seventh, eighth and nine parliaments passed a relatively high number of laws restricting the social freedom of women. The seventh parliament approved the “Fashion and Dress Reform Law” to “protect and promote Islamic-Iranian culture and identity.” The law ordered businesses that make or sell clothing “to follow domestic patterns and design and avoid choosing and using patterns that are alien to Iranian culture and identity.”

In Article 5 of the “Management of Government Services Law,” approved by the seventh parliament, all government agencies were told to gather data on “gender justice” and determine the leading indicators in this regard. It also passed a law, the “Law to Support Women’s Rights and Responsibilities in Domestic and International Arenas,” which was supposed to codify women’s rights and responsibilities in the family and in society, “inspired by the all-encompassing Islamic sharia and its legal system.” However, the law did not lead to any particular action being taken, or any particular changes being introduced.

In Article 196 of the Fifth Development Plan, the eighth parliament emphasized that the “Basiji elite” must be engaged “to advise, come up with ideas and promote the culture of chastity and hijab for the strengthening of the foundations of the family.” In Article 209 of the same law, government agencies were given the task of carrying out a “comprehensive plan” for chastity and hijab and making the workplace an environment that would be in line “with the requirements of an Islamic Society.”

With the creation of a “Hijab and Chastity Caucus,” the ninth parliament (2012-2016) passed the controversial bill for “supporting promoters of virtue and preventers of vice.” The bill, which allows any citizen to act as a **self-appointed morality inspector**, became law, despite the fact that the government opposed it.

In 2014, women were banned from entering a stadium to watch a volleyball game between Iran and Italy. This led to widespread criticism—but the Women’s Caucus defended the action, calling any opposition to the move “a political exploitation” and a means of undermining the regime. The caucus even introduced a bill to turn the ban on the presence of women in stadiums into law.

Toward the end of its term, the ninth parliament was preparing to pass a government bill that would have banned single women under 40 from traveling abroad without the permission of their guardian. However, the term ended before the bill was put to the floor.

### **Family**

The seventh parliament ratified many gender-related laws passed by previous parliaments with insignificant changes. One was that *mahriyeh*—funds and assets the husband promises the wife in a marriage contract—must be adjusted for inflation when the wife demands payment.

A law passed by this parliament regarding the children of Iranian women married to foreign men ruled that if these children have been born in Iran or are born in Iran within a year after the law is

passed, they can request Iranian citizenship when they reach the age of 18. Women representatives in this parliament presented a bill that would have given women equal rights with men in inheriting the assets of their deceased spouses in full, but the parliament rejected the bill.

The seventh parliament also made changes to the law that allows the husband to prohibit his wife from holding a job and passed other laws, including the presence of female legal advisors at family courts and measures to facilitate the marriage of young people.

The eighth parliament passed a law to increase the financial help and medical care to disabled people and women who are guardians and breadwinners of their families.

Article 946 of the amended 2008 Annual Budget Law ruled that “the wife inherits all properties of her deceased husband. If the husband had children, the wife [of the deceased husband] will inherit one-eighth of all his properties and assets.” In the same amended budget law, the eighth parliament allowed the president’s Center for Women and Family Affairs to carry out its activities using the government’s share of the budget and through other executive agencies. This law was passed in the budgets for the subsequent years as well.

The eighth parliament also amended the law of Family and Population Planning and expanded “lawful protection” to the fourth child of families who already have three children and the triplets of families who already have two children.

What angered many women and advocates for women’s rights was the article on “temporary marriage” (concubinage) and additional wives. According to an article in this law, men did not need the permission of their existing wife to marry a new wife and only needed to prove to the court that it was financially affordable for them. Eventually this article was removed from the Family Protection Law, but after adding a few conditions, Article 23 retained the man’s right to take additional wives or marry temporarily.

Members of the ninth parliament voted for the general outline of a bill to increase the rate of childbirth and put an end to the country’s population control policy. The bill provided for a prison sentence of two to five years for anyone carrying out surgeries to prevent pregnancy, such as vasectomy and tubectomy. The bill was sent to the parliament’s Health Commission but the commission shelved it.

Efforts to pass a law for the protection of children and adolescents during the ninth parliament were unsuccessful.

## **Education**

The seventh through the ninth parliament did not pass any legislation resulting in meaningful changes in education for women. The only law concerning women’s education was passed by the eighth parliament, which stipulated that the specialized medical fields of gynecology and obstetrics would become the exclusive domain of female doctors.

## **Employment**

The seventh parliament increased the leave of absence for childbirth — for up to and including the third child — from four months to six. Some years later, the ninth parliament increased this leave of absence from six months to nine within both the private and public sectors, ensuring the woman would receive full salary and benefits. The husbands of these women were also given a two-week period of leave as an “award.” Since these leaves of absence meant a financial burden to employers, the law was not made mandatory but optional.

Regarding the law on the early retirement of state employees, the seventh parliament set the minimum years of service for women before retirement at 20 and also amended sections of the regulations governing the pensions of retired women and the salaries of other employees. This parliament also passed a law that made children of deceased female government employees eligible to receive benefits from social security and pension funds, whereas earlier only children of deceased male employees were eligible for these benefits.

In its revision to the 2007 early retirement law, the eighth parliament set the minimum years of service before retirement at 25 years for men and 20 years for women.

In the 2011 budget law, the eighth parliament ordered the Social Security Organization to pay a pension — based on their years of service — to women who are at least 55 and have paid their insurance premiums for at least 10 years. The law also applied to women who were disabled while serving as employees, regardless of the reason.

One of the controversial bills introduced during the ninth parliament regarding the employment of women was that, during working hours between 7pm and 10am, women must be segregated from men. Nurses, medical doctors and flight attendants were exempted but for any other job that needed women’s services during the night, a police permit was required. In the end, however, the bill was not approved.