

The Right to Health: Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women

Introduction

The information within this submission is drawn from investigations and reports published by Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRA), focusing on issues of sexual and reproductive rights in Iran. Stringent laws and discriminatory practices in Iran severely undermine women's rights and health, contravening international human rights standards.

Recommendation:

Engage with International Organizations: Iran should collaborate with international organizations to improve reproductive health outcomes and uphold women's rights, leveraging global expertise and resources.

Restrictive Legislation on Reproductive Rights

Recent legislation, including the 2021 Population Rejuvenation and Family Support Act and the 2023-2024 Population Youth Bill, imposes severe restrictions on access to contraception, abortion, and prenatal screenings. The Hijab and Chastity Bill includes provisions for gender segregation in hospitals, further complicating access to reproductive health services for women. These laws reinforce traditional gender roles and discriminate against women in the workplace, contrasting sharply with international standards.

Recommendation:

Repeal Restrictive Legislation: Iran should repeal laws that restrict access to contraception, abortion, and prenatal screenings, and ensure women have the right to make autonomous decisions about their reproductive health.

Clinic Closures and Arrests

January 2024:

A specialist doctor in Yazd has been indicted on suspicion of "providing means for abortion." Additionally, their license to practice was revoked by court order

Impact on Women's Health and Autonomy

The restrictive policies disproportionately affect rural and marginalized women, limiting their access to essential reproductive healthcare. Denied access to legal abortion, many women are forced to seek unsafe, illegal procedures, risking their health and lives. The elimination of prenatal screenings from basic healthcare services increases the risk of undiagnosed complications during pregnancy, further endangering women's health. This contravenes CESCR's guidance on ensuring access to safe abortion services and prenatal care as part of the obligation to uphold the right to health.

Recommendation:

Ensure Access to Comprehensive Reproductive Healthcare: The government must guarantee access to family planning services, safe abortion, and prenatal care, particularly for rural and marginalized women.

Discriminatory Workplace Practices

Legislation such as Bill 315 mandates preferential treatment for men in hiring processes, sidelining childless women and reinforcing gender-based barriers within the workforce. This systemic discrimination undermines women's economic opportunities and perpetuates gender inequality, violating the principle of non-discrimination as highlighted in General Comment No. 22.

Recommendations:

End Workplace Discrimination: Iran must eliminate discriminatory hiring practices and ensure equal employment opportunities for women, regardless of their marital or parental status.

Promote Gender Equality: The government should implement policies that promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender roles, ensuring women have equal rights and opportunities in all spheres of life.

End Arbitrary Arrests of Caregivers and Patients: Iran should cease the arrest and prosecution of healthcare providers and patients seeking or providing reproductive health services, ensuring that healthcare is provided in a safe and supportive environment.