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Iran: Enforcement of the Official Dress Code (2005 - Dec. 2007)
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Women in Iran are required by Iranian penal law to maintain "Islamic dress in public" (US 14 Sept. 2007; Denmark Apr. 2005, 12) and therefore must cover their hair and neck completely and wear clothing that does not reveal the shape of the body (ibid.; Reuters 18 Apr. 2006). Men cannot wear shorts and women cannot reveal their hair or ankles (RFE/RL 19 Apr. 2006). Sources describe violations of the dress code to include wearing colourful scarves or tight coats, men sporting "Western" hairstyles (RFE/RL 2 May 2007), women wearing loose-fitting scarves or shortened trousers which expose skin (*The Guardian* 20 Apr. 2006; BBC 21 Apr. 2006) and women wearing makeup (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 1.c). Detentions and other punishment on the basis of "un-Islamic appearance" have extended to "young men playing loud music in their cars" (RFE/RL 2 May 2007) and persons who walk pet dogs in public (*The Guardian* 20 Apr. 2006; RFE/RL 14 Sept. 2007; BBC 21 Apr. 2006).

While the Danish Immigration Service states that the Director for the consular office in the Iranian foreign ministry "reported that the clothing rules were no longer rigorously enforced" (Denmark Apr. 2005, 12), a number of other sources describe the enforcement of rules regarding Islamic appearance since April 2006 as being "harsher" than in previous years (US 14 Sept. 2007; see also *The Guardian* 20 Apr. 2006). Some sources indicate that a crackdown in advance of summer weather is common (RFE/RL 19 Apr. 2006; Reuters 20 May 2007). In slight contrast, recent reports indicate that the crackdown has continued into winter months (RFE/RL 13 Dec. 2007; *The Times of India* 2 Dec. 2007). Reports indicate that police in Tehran are targeting "winter fashions deemed immodest" (*The Times of India* 2 Dec. 2007) and that authorities have "launched a winter crackdown" enforcing the dress code (RFE/RL 13 Dec. 2007).

According to a report of the Danish Immigration Service, the legal basis for Iranian clothing rules is found in the penal code which "stipulates that women that show themselves in public places without Islamic clothing should be sentenced to from ten days to two months imprisonment or a fine" (Denmark Apr. 2005, 12). Other sources note that people who violate the dress code may have to sign "statements pledging not to violate the dress code" (RFE/RL 2 May 2007) or may receive verbal reprimands (UK 27 Feb. 2007), lashes (Reuters 18 Apr. 2006; UK 27 Feb. 2007) fines (Reuters 18 Apr. 2006) and/or up to three months' imprisonment (UK 27 Feb. 2007). One source refers to General Ismail Ahmadi Moghaddam, Iran's chief of police as saying that "an unspecified number of ... women taken into custody" for violations of the dress code were "forced to

undergo psychological counselling" (AKI 27 Apr. 2007). Corroborating information about women being forced to undergo psychological counselling could not be found among the sources consulted. Other sources refer to 7,000 people who "had to attend classes on respecting the rules" (*The Times of India* 2 Dec. 2007; Reuters 12 Oct. 2007). In one report, Reza Zarei, the commander of police in the province of Tehran, states that police in the region have warned 113,454 women and "'1,600 cases have been given to the judiciary' for further investigation" (AFP 10 Sept. 2007). He also states that "5,700 people - including 1,400 men - have been sent to 'guidance classes' on how to behave in society" (ibid.). In another report, Iran's chief of police is quoted as saying that "law enforcement agents detained 150,000 people" (HRW 17 May 2007) the majority of whom were required to sign "commitment letters" and 86 people were referred to the judiciary for prosecution (HRW 17 May 2007). In the same report, the police chief for airport security is quoted as saying that in the previous month, his agents had "detained 850 women, releasing them only after they signed 'commitment letters'," while another "130 people are being prosecuted by the judiciary" (ibid.).

Outside Tehran, one report notes that 15 women were arrested and others received warnings in Rasht, the provincial capital of Gilan in northern Iran for dress code violations (Iran Focus 12 May 2006). According to various reports, thousands of people have been "warned" or detained for violations of the dress code since April 2007 (AKI 27 Apr. 2007; Reuters 12 Oct. 2007; RFE/RL 2 May 2007). Amnesty International (AI) reports that in the context of the "security operation to enforce dress codes in Iran" 87 people were arrested at a party in Esfahan province (AI 21 May 2007). While most of the 87 were released on bail, some men who were "believed to have been wearing clothes generally associated with women at the time of their arrest" were still in detention on 21 May 2007 (ibid.). AI reports that some men may have been beaten (ibid.). Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports on the same incident and states that some of those who were arrested were also stripped to the waist and beaten (HRW 17 May 2007).

Enforcement includes punishing taxi agencies and drivers who transport "women dressed 'inappropriately'" (*The Guardian* 20 Apr. 2006), stores which sell certain kinds of clothing (RFE/RL 2 May 2007) and hairdressers who offer "western hair cuts," who tattoo eyebrows and pluck men's eyebrows (*The Guardian* 25 Aug. 2007; Reuters 20 May 2007).

According to two sources, new police officers have been assigned to enforce the dress code (RFE/RL 19 Apr. 2006; BBC 21 Apr. 2006). HRW reports that the *Basij* militia [a government volunteer paramilitary force] are involved in enforcing the "'morality' campaign" (17 May 2007). The *Guardian* reports that *Amaken-e Omoomi* "a police body for regulating businesses" is responsible for closing down barbers and hairdressers (25 Aug. 2007). The United States Department of State notes that:

The government relied on "special units" (*yegan ha-ye vizhe*), to complement the existing morality police, called "Enjoining the Good and Prohibiting the Forbidden" (*Amr be Ma'ruf va Hani az Monkar*) in an effort to combat "un-Islamic behavior" and social corruption among the young. These auxiliaries were to assist in enforcing the ... strict rules of moral behavior. (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec.1.c)

President Ahmadinejad has stated that "enemies" were encouraging youth to "hit the streets dressed in a vulgar manner to provoke police intervention ..."

(AKI 27 Apr. 2007). The head prosecutor of Tehran has been quoted as referring to women who violate dress codes as "criminals" who "threaten the security and decency of our youth" (ibid.). Similarly Tehran's police chief describes the campaign's intention as increasing security in society (*The Guardian* 20 Apr. 2006; AFP 10 Sept. 2007). Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei has encouraged police to ensure implementation by treating the campaign as continual rather than as a "seasonal" or "temporary" measure (AFP 7 Nov. 2007).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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