

Ideological Tyranny in Iranian Women's Studies: A Response to Shahrzad Mojab¹

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November 14, 2005

Feminist research or women's studies is a methodological perspective that criticises societal inequalities, with an emphasis on gender disparities. As a secular feminist I initiated a re-debate over the crisis in Iranian women's studies/activism² (intertwined) so that our scholarship and activism embraces more lives inside Iran. I did not in any way offer a fixed agenda for achieving a gender-equal state in Iran. As someone who has spent most of her life outside Iran, it perplexes me still that some senior Iranian intellectuals deconstruct one's arguments as if it was a clear-cut programme to overthrow a whole government and create a revolution.

My major concern today is in gathering the scattered efforts, good-will and resources which we Iranians have an abundance of, and lend a helping hand to the women's and progressive movements, the impoverished NGOs, the oppressed, the marginalised, the hungry, the dispossessed, the prisoners, the censored intellectuals, the activists, and the students inside Iran (regardless of their religious and political convictions).

I would like to thank Dr Shahrzad Mojab, Associate Professor and Director of the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto, in Canada for her contribution in this debate (in *Ideological Crisis in Iranian Women's Studies: A Response to Golbarg Bashi*³, posted on 21 August, 2005). It has helped me strengthen and refine my own position. As one of our wonderful Iranian feminists, Elahe Amani (at Fullerton, USA) advised me: "Crises refine life. In them you discover what you are"⁴. I am very grateful for her and other pacifist Iranian women and men's support and wisdom (whether they are secular or religious)⁵.

It gives me as much hope in an egalitarian future for Iran in reading Sa'adi Shirazi's poetry, Hojjat-ol-Eslam Mohsen Saidzadeh, Professor Ghari Seyyed Fatemi and Dr Mohsen Kadivar's work as it does reading Mehrangiz Kar, Parvin Paidar, Zanaan Magazine, Simin Behbahani and young pacifist and anti-racist Iranian web bloggers⁶ writings. It is my privilege as a student to have access to the fruits of their hard-work, work which was/is often carried out under intense fear of prosecution, solitary confinement and ruthless avenger. Yet, I do not see theirs or anyone's work as providing all the answers to the ills of humanity, or being in any way sacrosanct and free from criticism (I may even have major objections to their framework). I do not think that any given text, declaration or political manifesto is the 'Holy Grail'. The struggle goes on, and it is the responsibility of us all to utilise our limited knowledge and resources in places we deem indispensable, and without violating others' human dignity (even those of scholars and students).

¹ Shahrzad Mojab's essay can be accessed at, <http://www.8mars.com/english/mojab.htm>

² As observed between 2001 - 2005 in the Iranian Women Studies Foundations' (IWSF) annual conferences.

³ Accessed at, <http://www.8mars.com/english/mojab.htm>

⁴ A quote by Allan K. Chalmers.

⁵ I am above all very grateful for the support I have received from many of our Iranian women's studies scholars, especially Nayereh Tohidi, Haideh Moghissi, Valentine Moghadam, Elham Gheytaichi, Halleh Ghoreyshi, Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Nahid Tohidi (in Iran) (to mention a few), young Iranian web bloggers and the generous and unconditional space given by *Iranian.com*, *Irاندokht.com*, *Parstimes.com* and *Gooya News* in allowing me and others in expressing our views. I am very grateful to the IWSF board and Ms Golnaz Amin for agreeing to publish the 15 essays that have so far been written in response to some of the questions that I have raised, in the form of a book. I am also thankful to Yasmine Mather for patiently organising *Pal Talk* sessions in the 'Iran Socialist Forum' (<http://www.socialist-forum.com/>) so that the debate could reach other audiences. I feel very humbled but immensely inspired by these generous acts of good-will and acknowledgment in the Iranian scholarly and activist/web community.

⁶ For more about the Iranian 'blogging' phenomena, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iranian_Blogs

I believe that Professor Haideh Moghissi's response to Mojab (in *About Ideological/Behavioural Crisis in Iranian Women's Studies*⁷, posted in August 2005) deals with the overall failings of the latter's arguments. Below, I aim to propose questions to Shahrzad Mojab in response to her criticism of my approach.

Mojab starts her critique of my two essays⁸ by informing about her own work with women's issues and discussions with women at "grassroots, ministerial, and professional levels" in "Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, and Iraq" (Mojab, 2005). By doing this she signifies that cooperating and working in these nations (even at ministerial level) does not automatically render one a criminal or accomplice with criminal regimes. I refer to Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, and Iraq's abysmal human rights records here, and the label and vote of non-confidence given, by factions of the Iranian exiled groups (including Mojab) to Western-based Iranians who do similar research inside Iran and do not dismiss the positive contributions of reformists and Islamic feminists inside Iran under its present theocratic structure.

Having lived for one year in Jordan myself, while based at the University of Jordan in Amman, I know from first-hand observations that sitting around the same table with Jordanian male aristocratic ministers (several of whom I met in June 1999) and working with NGOs in Amman under the gaze of the Jordanian monarch requires much 'negotiations' and 'considerations'. So, I applaud Mojab for trying to advise governments in the Middle East on how they could emancipate women in these societies. I hope Mojab's tireless efforts can help end hundreds of honour killings alone that occur annually in the Jordanian Kingdom, as much as I hope Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Shahla Haeri, Nayereh Tohidi, Mehrangiz Kar and Shirin Ebadi's work in Iran, can help end present-day's abuse of innocent young girls and women. It is wonderful to see academics working with "real people" in a "real world" rather than spending their time with abstract clichés. I see how these women are working inside nations they do not necessarily 'represent' or 'back'. They are not 'plotting' or acting as its 'secret agents' for 'negotiating' with its 'ministers and professionals', they do this for the higher sake of saving and helping human lives. I see their work as a sincere effort to emancipate women from 'patriarchal and feudal oppression' (Mojab, 2005) under terrible regimes and circumstances, using the current available tools: *negotiating, demanding democracy and rights*. I have much respect for Mojab's efforts in bringing forward the plight of Kurdish women onto to the international arena.

Mojab claims that my calls for 'dialogue', 'tolerance' and 're-negotiation' in the Iranian women's circles/meetings/conferences are "(neo-)liberal feminist politics which promotes local and global 'sisterhood,' 'inclusion,' 'empowerment,' and notions such as 'authenticity of voice,' 'representation,' 'location,' 'positionality,' and 'identicalness'...[stating]...We are disciplined by "accented feminists" to believe that the systemic violence perpetrated against women, in the West and the East, in and out of state and home prisons, can come to an end through appropriate rules of behaviour and in the course of "negotiations" with the ancient patriarchal order" (Mojab, 2005).

It goes without saying that systematic violence perpetrated against women will (of course) not end through "appropriate rules of behaviour" and only through the course of "negotiations" with the ancient patriarchal order.

But I am still curious to know how Mojab defines "tolerance" and "negotiation" as she works within a liberal democracy (Canada) a state like all others that has not achieved women's total emancipation, and she also works with national bodies and governments in Middle Eastern "ancient patriarchal capitalist orders" (Jordan, Palestine, Turkey, and Iraq). I would like to know how Mojab explains this inconsistency and contradiction in her arguments and practice?

⁷ Haideh Moghissi is Professor of Sociology, at York's School of Women's Studies and the Faculty of Graduate Studies, in Canada. Her response can be accessed at, <http://iftribune.com/enews.asp?id=14&pass=36>

⁸ *'Crisis in Iranian Women's Studies'*, posted on Gooya News on July 15, 2005, can be accessed at, <http://news.gooya.com/english/archives/033176.php> and Iranian.com at, <http://www.iranian.com/Women/2005/July/Crisis/>. My second essay *'Muddy Waters'* can be accessed at, <http://www.8mars.com/english/GOLBARG.htm>

If “negotiation” (aided with other strategies) is such a shameful and disgraceful act (with aristocrats, patriarchal ministers, Muslim veiled women in Kurdistan and Palestine etc), I would like to ask Mojab if she can show me cases of successful feminisms in successful socialist countries that have worked through a non-negotiated revolution? I would also like to know if “negotiation” does not work, which other avenues do work? I would be grateful if Mojab could give concrete examples of such avenues.

There are indeed countless problems in actually existing liberal democracies (we can cite hundreds of credible feminist findings confirming this) but I would like to know what actual Marxist models have been accomplished, and also if Mojab’s version of Marxism has been practically implemented anywhere?

By asking these questions, I am not defending capitalism. I am only posing these questions as Mojab suggested that my proposal for an expanded and peaceful Iranian women’s movement was an unashamed paternalistic and bourgeois request which has no hope of creating an emancipatory, positive or empowering impact - ever. So I am merely curious if hers which is clearly an all-encompassing political ideology does.

I am much interested to know if which/what women’s group or feminists in Iran Mojab is supportive of? Inside Iran, there maybe no movements that fall under her definition of “true feminism” as Iranian activists are mostly either liberal or Islamic or secular Muslim or socialist leftists like Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani⁹. Does Mojab see my possible reaching out to any of these groups or NGOs as the same as being a neo-liberal, or a criminal or accomplice with a criminal regime? I would like to know how someone like me who yearns for involvement in feminist developmental work inside Iran should go about helping the Iranian people according to Mojab’s Marxist position. I want to help Iran achieve democracy, and strengthen the Iranian women’s and progressive movement, so whom am I allowed to cooperate with, and see as worthy comrades? Should I dismiss religious women or those who work within the current framework all-together? Is there no hope -ever- of finding consensus with this group? They are Iranians too, and I want to be able to live next door to them one day in peace, so tell me, Dr Mojab is there a prescription for this? Or is forceful conversion to Marxism a tangible possibility?

I would like to see Mojab’s approach to democracy, human rights, and women’s rights and even Marxism (or is it Maoism?). It occurs to me that she sees democracy and human rights discourse as “liberal bourgeois” constructs and not adequate for helping Iranian women and men as it does not automatically diminish class stands. I can understand that Mojab does not appreciate the project of Enlightenment and with it the liberal rights discourse. Yet, I have to remind her that the emancipatory thrust of feminism is rooted in the 18th century European struggle for democracy (Enlightenment). Hence, isn’t a peaceful path towards democracy the first step we can take towards liberation, human rights and dignity before we finally achieve our class-free egalitarian society?

I would say that ‘Third world’ feminists have mainly welcomed the liberal rights discourse and in it the human rights model as a means for women’s empowerment and the elimination of gender inequalities and violence against women. The gaining of legal rights has globally played a central role for the empowerment of women,

⁹*Shahzad Mojab (2001) Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds.* MAZAD Publishers, Costa Mesa, California.

¹⁰ Noushin Ahmadi Khorasani collaborates with liberal and Muslim feminists while never putting aside her critical view of the shortcomings of liberals nor has she failed to be silent against the ultra leftists. Ahmadi Khorasani was born in Tehran in 1969. She completed her education in health and environmental studies at Tehran University, and started her publishing career in 1992. Her articles deal mostly with women’s issues, but she has also translated several books for children and young adults. She published *Jens-e Dovom [Second Sex]* in 1998, a journal that includes articles on literature, history, as well as social and legal matters related to women. For more about Ahmadi Khorasani, see: <http://www.irandokht.com/news/readnews.php?newsID=11932> and <http://www.socialrights.org/spip/article1180.html> (both sites accessed on 12 November 2005)

and marginalised groups, for instance for African-Americans through Abolitionists and the Civil Rights movement in the United States. But this is not the same as concealing the fact that human rights are historically “built upon a false notion of a universal human subject, who is not just contingently a man. [But]...the plea to extend his rights to her...has to be accompanied by a close deconstruction of the manner in which these rights may have built into them the maleness of the ‘human’ subject, [as]...winning them on the same terms for women may have unexpected and unwelcome consequences. All selves are embodied, and therefore...human rights must be identified in sex-specific terms”¹⁰

So while I support those who have identified and the male¹¹ and bourgeois bias in the rights discourse and are aiming at finding other ways for the liberation of women, I do not stop or ridicule women’s rights NGOs and activists (Kar, Ebadi, Mir-Hosseini, V. Moghadam, Sherkat, and Tohidi) from using them to bring to an end gross violations of people’s dignity and bodily integrity (death penalty, lashing, unequal laws, cruel and inhuman punishments etc). Feminists have widely criticised the mainstream human rights discourse for its inadequacies to defend and grasp all humans’ rights (ranging from defending the female infant’s right to food, education and bodily integrity along with the freedom of thought and protection against persecution for the political activist). But, their criticism of human rights has successfully forced a rethinking that takes the ‘issue’ of women’s rights as human rights. Feminists have been continuously demanding a much stronger enforcement and protection mechanism for human rights than witnessed today. Today, considering domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), right to education/employment, freedom from malnutrition and female infanticide as mainstream human rights issues, among many other ‘female’ and ‘private’ issues owe much to the efforts of feminist and women’s NGOs¹². The majority of feminists would argue that human rights provide an authoritative platform from which to press for greater equality. But this does not mean that feminist scholars of our era are not engaged in critically analysing the androcentric nature of law; its preoccupation with male and ‘public’ interests, the philosophy of the Enlightenment and human rights from different perspectives. Shouldn’t then scholars, students and activists be able to peacefully meet to discuss their shared interests (women’s emancipation through various means)?

In Iran we have some popular cultural and religious codes associated with the human rights model. Hence one would think that in view of the country’s present violent theocentric state of affairs, striving to peacefully and maybe painfully slowly resonate (not through a violent revolution) Iranian life with a practical human rights model is not such a bad idea.

I am sure Mojab appreciates and benefits from living under the individual rights protections which the Canadian state offers so why is it so terrible that millions of women inside Iran would want the same? Are they so backward for wanting it? Would I and other feminists be so terrible for reaching out to them and holding them as intellectually equal?

I think a premature abandonment of the Enlightenment project in feminism¹³, and in it the human rights discourse in particular is detrimental for women in Iran at this moment in history. The virulence of violence and oppression across the globe “shows no sign of abating, and while the language of equal rights...does not necessarily imply any substantive or even formal commitment to egalitarianism - quite the contrary - it does nevertheless provide a platform on which to fight some of the worst abuses of human rights”¹⁴. On this Radhika

¹⁰ Andermahr, Sonya, Lovell, Terry and Wolkowitz, Carol (1997) *The Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory*. London, Arnold. p. 65.

¹¹ Marxist and communist modes of thought also started out as patriarchal and male-centric.

¹² Since the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference on Human Rights, it is now the norm that there cannot be human rights, without the equal human rights of women: ‘The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community’. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, U.N. Doc. A/Conf. 157/24, (1993) Para. 18.

¹³ See Benhabib and Cornell (1987) (eds.), Felski 1989, Lovibond 1989, Soper 1989-1990. Cited in Andermahr et al, 1997, p. 65.

¹⁴ Andermahr et al., 1997, p. 65.

Coomaraswamy, the Sri Lankan feminist academic and UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, sheds some light on my very position and the dilemmas of 'Third world' feminists. Coomaraswamy notes,

“if the human rights doctrine has its origins in Enlightenment Europe and in North America, should women everywhere work toward its universalization?...On the one hand, there is the intellectual quest to understand and to criticise the colonial experience, including absorbing the structure of the Enlightenment as a colonial subject...there [is thus] a need to demystify the Enlightenment project...The colonial venture, imbued by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, led to the morbid structures and developments in post-colonial societies...I...have reservations about the ways that certain Enlightenment ideas served to define, classify and exclude large segments of the world's population. Nonetheless, I recognise that I serve in some sense as an active instrument of the Enlightenment, promoting human rights standards and urging people to discipline and punish the violators of those standards, especially those who perpetrate violence against women”¹⁵.

Many feminists, especially from Iran¹⁶ and the 'Third world' agree that as long as brutal and gross abuses continue it is unwise to “jettison the politics and discourse of human rights without a powerful and effective alternative”¹⁷. I as a secular Iranian feminist therefore suggest that until a comprehensive feminist alternative has not replaced the liberal rights discourse, the most effective plan to stop coercions is through a revised human rights understanding and practical system, a process which is currently being undertaken, most successfully by NGOs concerned with women's human rights. I hope this does not render me a hopeless right-wing neo-liberal in the label-naming and abrupt dismissal game so common in some Iranian circles.

This brings me to ask Mojab if she doesn't agree that even Marx believed that one cannot have socialism without first having a successful liberal democracy and prosperous capitalism (even Lenin after taking power, realised that Russia had to go through a bourgeois stage, hence he pursued NEP before beginning socialist agenda, but Stalin and Mao thought they can jump over that stage by creating a “non-capitalist path” of development to socialism and both of them failed as we can see in Russia and China).

I would hence like to know if Mojab condones the way revolutionaries in Russia and China silenced, harassed, abused, persecuted, and even killed thousands of people, intellectuals, academics and feminists, not just ordinary people, but also members of the Communist Party that did not agree with the “dominant radicals”? How is the behaviour of “regular radicals” in Iranian meetings and conferences different from such tragic historical examples?

I would like to ask Mojab if she sees stormy and constant heckling at meetings and conferences as a successful form of resistance and/or empowering? Constantly breaking conferences in disarray even when we are allowed to have our say, helps no one but our own egos. How can brawling, and insulting be an emancipatory tactic (year after year)? How can bullying fellow human-beings ever be a good thing? If holding a peaceful meeting where we see factions of all Iranian society (even our so-called 'enemies') to discuss various contributions is “undermining Iran's real opposition” (stated before Berlin 2000 by a radical left faction)¹⁸, then I see *that* “real

¹⁵ Coomaraswamy, Radhika (1997) *Reinventing International Law: Women's Rights as Human Rights in the International Community*, paper presented in The Edward A. Smith Lecture Series, Human Rights Program, Harvard Law School. Accessed at, <http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/HRP/Publications/radhika.html> (4 June 2002).

¹⁶ For an Iranian feminist perspective, see Nayereh Tohidi (2003) “Women's Rights in the Muslim World: The Universal-Particular Interplay” in *Hawwa Journal on Women in the Middle East and Islamic World*, Vol.1, No. 2, 2003: 152-188. In this paper, Tohidi argues for the universality of the human rights convention.

¹⁷ Andermahr et al., 1997, p. 98.

¹⁸ For more about the Berlin 2000 conference, see:

- BBC News: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/719590.stm (accessed 12 August 2005)
- Iran's Green Party: <http://www.iran-e-sabz.org/news/berlin1.htm> (accessed 5 November 2005)
- Charles Kurzman (2001) *Critics Within: Islamic Scholars' Protests Against the Islamic State in Iran*. In *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*. Vol. 15, No. 2, Winter 2001, p. 352.
- Human Rights Watch (Trial for Conference Attendees): <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2000/11/02/iran610.htm> (accessed 5 November 2005)

opposition” and its ideological force as a rather weak one. How can allowing and listening to competing viewpoints, weaken and undermine one’s own? This is the very tactic conservative Islamists use in Iran to silence the masses.

We, be it liberal, neo-liberal, Muslim, Jewish or Marxist feminists have to condemn violence. Feminists have waged a powerful campaign for women’s emancipation precisely because they have used non-violence strategies. As Iranians, I believe we cannot afford to allow violence in our circles¹⁹.

Whatever our common criterion for coalition building or a constructive dialogue is, let’s find it, and let’s find it soon. I don’t care what label it may carry, even if universal human rights is a UN construct and seen by some as a global capitalist cop-out, it can save lives and may be a source for coalition building, there may be other common criterion. I would like to hear about them, hence why I have asked Dr Mojab so many specific questions.

Mojab claims that in my pleas for an inclusive and expanded movement, I was trying to “come up with an agenda for Iranian women’s studies, which at its best, does not move beyond the outmoded liberal feminist project, that is, the project of challenging structures of male power with “peaceful dialogue,” liberal education, and reform of the status quo” (Mojab, 2005).

Here Mojab gives me more credit than I am due, I did not proffer any solutions which can end Iran’s blatant gender-apartheid overnight, all I was and still am concerned with is the frightening lack of solidarity, the way individual activists and researchers from Iran (and those who do fieldwork there) are undermined. I see the mistrust, hate and abrupt/resolute labelling as crippling for a progressive successful movement.

Mojab states “To be polite does not mean to keep quiet and passively accept what we find questionable” (Mojab, 2005) exactly! Mojab thinks that “there is no purpose in a ‘dialogue’, if there are no consequences for changing the gendered status quo, if you state your point of view and I do mine, what have we achieved? Does not this mean the perpetuation of the status quo? What is the purpose of ‘negotiation’ if the two sides are unequal, and if it does not lead to a shift in the position of power?” (Mojab, 2005).

I can only wonder why Mojab is so pessimistic about a possible shift in the position of power. Mojab’s pessimism disregards people’s power and the fact that individuals not structures change history. The very minimum that could be realised from ‘dialogue’ and ‘negotiations’ is consciousness-raising and empowerment. It is simply in *dialogue* not *monologue* that we can reach a new level of consciousness, a new level of understanding (this is the very detail dismissed by religious fanatics thus resulting in violence and extremism). Dialogue can lead us – individuals – to change our own circumstance instead of waiting for a quick fix, a revolution or a saviour to liberate us. Power shifts not through violence but through dialogue²⁰. So I would like to ask Dr Mojab whether or not individuals should be given the opportunity to strive for diminishing violence?

Has not participation in IWSF’s²¹ conferences (when it’s been peaceful and inclusive), empowered insecure and oppressed women like myself? I spent my elementary schooling in Iran where I was constantly put down and harassed by my Hezbollahi and Chādorī²² teachers and principal because of my secular thus ‘tāghoti’²³ family background and my own ‘indiscreet’ and inquisitive behaviour (at the peak of Khomeinism and the Iran-Iraq war). One particular ultra-religious principal used to call me ‘Bāshī elāhi nabāshī’ as a terrorizing rime (translation: Bashi I pray to God that you go dead) in front of others and physically push me around in the

¹⁹ I am indebted to Elham Gheyntanchi, feminist sociologist at UCLA in the United States for this illuminating point.

²⁰ I am again indebted to Elham Gheyntanchi for her generous contribution in this question.

²¹ Iranian Women’s Studies Foundation’s annual conferences, <http://www.iwsf.org>

²² Strictly veiled from top to toe by a large blanket-like often black cover.

²³ The term ‘tāghoti’ was coined by Islamists to refer to anyone who is against the Islamic Republic. It refers literally to someone who is a pro-Monarch (supporter of the Peacock Throne).

school corridors. Throughout secondary school in Sweden, I was continuously bullied because of my 'refugee' status (at the peak of the Rushdie affair and the popularity of Betty Mahmoody's book²⁴) and once even physically beaten by several racist boys in my school, and had to *negotiate* my *right* to also attend school *peacefully*. I think one must give it a go, and let others do the same.

Meeting fellow Iranian and Middle Eastern women from various backgrounds²⁵ has helped me see that none of us are 'winners', 'better' or 'stronger', we all deal with very similar types of oppressions, which by only sharing and admitting to, can we find peace, forgiveness, love, hope and strength. It is through peaceful meetings and a meaningful 'dialogue' that the process of healing can begin and a shift/re-distribution of 'power' can happen. To me it seems that by belittling and excluding those we perceive as the 'enemy' (veiled women, clerics, reformists, researchers of reformism etc), we are not only perpetuating the enemy's own channels but we create more hate and resentment, and we only put more oil on its vicious cycle.

The reinforcement of the concept of all individuals' worth and dignity, through dialogue at this very juncture in history is helping millions of human beings across the globe, and I would hate to see it abandoned, especially by Iranians. In the meantime, in the progressive Iranian movements, I think we need to meet more often, listen, note, criticise each other while being the very change (peace and non-violence) we desperately seek. I think we are not faced with a, 'You're either with Us, or Against Us' condition in the progressive movements. We need to find out as much as possible about each others works, ideas, problems and similarities. Let's remember that as I write this paper, women in Iran (and many other countries) are still forcefully married off, trafficked, starved, legally, morally and physically limited and humiliated. Akbar Ganji is being tortured in prison and thousands of reformist students are poor, jailed, harassed and psychologically scarred for life. Now where sits our priorities? Saving them or perpetuating political sectarianism? My primary concern is not regime change in Iran, although I'd love more than anything else for my beloved country of birth (indeed the entire planet) to overnight turn into a gender-equal, egalitarian, democratic, class-free, environmentally friendly, and peaceful state.

I look forward to your response.

With peace, Golbarg Bashi

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For a list on all the 15 previous contributions to this debate, see below:

### **September 2005**

Samira Mohyeddin (English),  
<http://www.iranian.com/Mohyeddin/2005/September/Women/index.html>

Leyla Pegahi (Farsi),  
<http://www.shabakeh.de/archives/individual/000489.html#more>

Shadi Amin (Farsi),  
<http://www.shabakeh.de/archives/individual/000481.html>

Maziar Shirazi (English),

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<sup>24</sup> Betty Mahmoody's best-selling book titled, 'Not Without My Daughter' caused a major racist backlash against Iranian Diasporic communities throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.

<http://www.iranian.com/Shirazi/2005/September/Oppression/>

Halleh Ghoreyshi (English),

<http://www.iranian.com/Opinion/2005/September/Ghorashi/index.html>

Forough Nayeri (Farsi),

<http://www.iran-emrooz.net/index.php?/zanan/more/4149/>

Golroch Jahangiri (Farsi),

[http://www.sedaye-ma.org/web/show\\_article.php?file=src/zanan/golrokhjahangiri\\_09192005.htm](http://www.sedaye-ma.org/web/show_article.php?file=src/zanan/golrokhjahangiri_09192005.htm)

Jamileh Davoudi (Farsi),

<http://www.pezhvak.com/archive.shtml> -- September 2005 (see pages 12 and 37)

[http://www.pezhvak.com/Pezhvakm/171/pezh171a\\_12.pdf](http://www.pezhvak.com/Pezhvakm/171/pezh171a_12.pdf)

[http://www.pezhvak.com/Pezhvakm/171/pezh171b\\_37.pdf](http://www.pezhvak.com/Pezhvakm/171/pezh171b_37.pdf)

### **August 2005**

Haideh Moghissi (English),

<http://www.iftribune.com/news.asp?id=14&pass=36>

Shahrzad Mojab (English),

<http://www.8mars.com/english/mojab.htm>

Golbarg Bashi (English),

<http://www.8mars.com/english/GOLBARG.htm>

Hamid Nowzari (Farsi),

[http://www.sedaye-ma.org/web/show\\_article.php?file=src/zanan/hamidnozari\\_08022005.htm](http://www.sedaye-ma.org/web/show_article.php?file=src/zanan/hamidnozari_08022005.htm)

### **July 2005**

Azar S (English),

not available online

Vida Kashizadeh (English),

<http://www.iranian.com/Letters/2005/July/july15.html>

Golbarg Bashi (English),

<http://news.gooya.com/english/archives/033176.php>

and

<http://www.iranian.com/Women/2005/July/Crisis/index.html>

Please note that the US-based web site dedicated to Iranian women's issues, *Irاندokht.com* have been covering the recent debates extensively, at:

[http://www.irandokht.com/forum\\_debate/forumarticles.php?forumID=11&§ionID=2&postingID=193](http://www.irandokht.com/forum_debate/forumarticles.php?forumID=11&§ionID=2&postingID=193)

Please also note that some of the essays have been published in more than one web site (such as in *Persianmirror.com* and *Iftribune.com*). I have only cited the web sites that were first to publish the essays and those which have provided the shortest links.