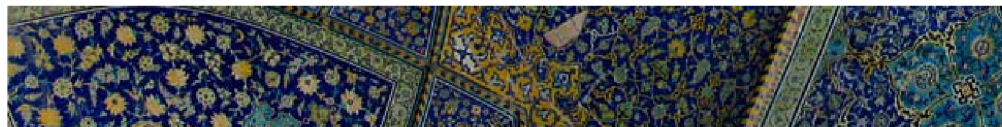


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2007 FAMILY PROTECTION BILL

A new proposed Family Protection Bill has been returned to the judiciary commission of the Iranian parliament as a result of backlash against the bill's most discriminatory provisions. The bill was on the verge of consideration by the full parliament, and if ratified would further erode women's rights in Iran.

Iran's current Civil Code is highly discriminatory, restricting women's custody rights and ability to divorce, lowering the minimum age of marriage for females, requiring the husband's permission for the wife to work outside of the home, and legalizing temporary marriages. The new proposed Family Protection Bill marks further regression. Among the most controversial provisions of the proposed bill:

Article 22 effectively removes any requirement to register temporary marriages (sigheh), which are viewed in Iran as a form of legalized prostitution. The removal of the registration requirement eliminates any financial or legal protections for women in these unions, and for children who are born into temporary marriages.

Article 23 authorizes polygamous marriages contingent upon the financial capacity of the man. It does not set specific parameters for adequate financial resources to support multiple wives, or define overall concepts of justice or equal treatment of multiple wives. Most notably absent from the Family Protection Bill is any effective requirement of consent of the first wife for her husband to enter into a second marriage.

Article 25 imposes a tax on the Mehr (dowry) paid to the wife. While this amount is legally owed to the wife at the time of the marriage, women often do not receive their dowries. Frequently it is only paid upon termination of the marriage, thus becoming a point of leverage for a husband against his wife if she desires a divorce. Taxation of the dowry reinforces a husband's financial power over his wife during marriage, and further inhibits a wife's potential for financial autonomy at the time of a divorce.

The Family Protection Bill imposes additional procedural impediments to divorce, particularly for women, who under the current Civil Code already have only limited access to divorce.

Article 46 criminalizes the marriage of a foreigner to an Iranian woman without proper authorization. The foreign man is subject to between ninety days and one year imprisonment, and the woman (if married at her free will), her father (if he gave permission), and the marriage officiant will be sentenced as accomplices.

First introduced in August 2007, the proposed Family Protection Bill was passed by the legal and judicial commission of the parliament on July 9, 2008. Intense opposition by numerous groups, including activists in the One Million Signatures Campaign, was instrumental in preventing the bill's ratification by parliament in its current form.


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