Three Women Sentenced To 55 Years For Defying Compulsory Hijab In Iran

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Three women held in custody for "disrespecting compulsory hijab," or the so-called Islamic dress code, have been sentenced to a total of 55 years and six months.

A "Revolutionary Court" in the capital city of Tehran delivered the verdict to Monireh Arabshahi, Yasamin Ariany, and Mojgan Keshavarz who are behind bars in the notorious Qarchak prison.

Arabshahi and Ariany's legal counsel, Amir Raeesian, told Ensaf News website August 1 that if the verdict is upheld, his clients would be sentenced to ten years to serve, each.

In Iran if a prison term is unusually long, a shorter sentence is set to be served. Usually, the shorter sentence to be served is a little more than half of the original long prison term.

In an interview with Radio Farda, Mojgan Keshavarz's attorney, Mohammad Moqimi, also verified the news but said that her client would appeal.

The verdict was delivered to the prisoners in the absence of their lawyers, Human Rights Activists News Agency, HRANA, reported.

The three had been charged with "assembly and collusion to act against national security," "propaganda against the regime," as well as "encouraging and preparing the grounds for corruption and prostitution."

However, Moqimi told Radio Farda that his client, Mojgan Keshavarz, had merely protested compulsory hijab and had nothing to do with other charges claimed by the prosecutor.

Ironically, none of the attorneys were allowed to represent their clients during different stages of issuing the indictment, interrogation, and trial.

Amnesty International (AI) had earlier also protested depriving the accused of the right of having access to legal counsels.

According to AI, "In April 2019, Yasaman Aryani, her mother, Monireh Arabshahi, and Mojgan Keshavarz were all arrested after posting a video that went viral on International Women's Day. In it, they are seen walking without headscarves through a Tehran metro train, handing flowers to female passengers. "The day will come when women are not forced to struggle," Monireh Arabshahi is heard saying while Yasaman Aryani hands a flower to a woman wearing a hijab, saying she hopes to walk side by side in the street one day, "me without the hijab and you with the hijab".

Sources say that because of this video, Yasaman Aryani and Monireh Arabshahi are facing charges that include "spreading propaganda against the system" and "inciting corruption and prostitution."

Furthermore, AI reported that the detained women were under heavy pressure to make self-incriminating testimony in front of TV cameras.

Branch 28 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court that condemned the three is presided by a notorious judge, Mohammad Moqisseh, who is well known for issuing harsh verdicts totally based on the reports compiled by intelligence agents.

Reportedly, while delivering the verdict, Moqisseh told the three, "I will make you suffer!"

Moqisseh is the same judge who on March 11 sentenced the prominent Iranian lawyer and defender of women's rights Nasrin Sotoudeh to nearly forty years.

A day later, Sotoudeh's husband, Reza Khandan, announced that only the longest sentence of the verdicts would be served, which is ten years imprisonment (for "encouraging corruption and debauchery and providing the means").