

JIHAD WATCH

Sharia in action in Iran: 850,000 female children are married

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“The Prophet wrote the (marriage contract) with ‘Aisha while she was six years old and consummated his marriage with her while she was nine years old and she remained with him for nine years (i.e. till his death).” — Bukhari 7.62.88

Muslims take this seriously and imitate Muhammad in this. Article 1041 of the Civil Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that girls can be engaged before the age of nine, and married at nine: “Marriage before puberty (nine full lunar years for girls) is prohibited. Marriage contracted before reaching puberty with the permission of the guardian is valid provided that the interests of the ward are duly observed.”

The Ayatollah Khomeini himself married a ten-year-old girl when he was twenty-eight. Khomeini called marriage to a prepubescent girl “a divine blessing,” and advised the faithful: “Do your best to ensure that your daughters do not see their first blood in your house.”

The Qur’an also allows for marriage to pre-pubescent girls, stipulating that Islamic divorce procedures “shall apply to those who have not yet menstruated” (65:4).

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“Gender and Society In Iran — Part 1: The Debate Over Child Marriage, Including Child Brides Wed To Adult Men,” by Y. Mansharof and A. Savyon for [MEMRI](#), April 24:

“ ...Under Iranian law, girls may marry at 13 and boys at 15, and children under 10 may marry with the approval of their guardian and the court.[1]According to official statistics, about one million children, even under age 10, are married. The statistics also show that 85% of these one million married children are girls — meaning that most of them are married to grown men.[2]

Child Marriage Is Growing, And Poses Great Risk To Society — But It’s Permitted By Islamic Law

Public figures — sociologists, Majlis members, activists, and others — have warned that the number of children marrying is on the rise, and with it the great health and social risks this poses for society, and have called on the regime to tackle it with legal and cultural reforms.[3] According to one sociologist, arranging marriages for children, especially girls, is common among poor and uneducated urban families that seek a way out of dire financial straits; he adds that the girls themselves are severely damaged both physically and psychologically.

Regime spokesmen have denied the extent of the phenomenon, and have also shrugged off the matter, saying that child marriage is legal and that preventing it is against Islamic law.

The following are facts, figures, and main arguments in the debate on child marriage in Iran.

The Statistics On Child Marriage In Iran

Marriage At Ages 10-15

According to regime statistics, from March through June of 2012, 1,805 children under the age of 15 were married legally and with the permission of the court; that number for the period from March 2011 to March 2012[4] was 7,440.

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Expressing concern about the increase, anti-child-bride activist Farshid Yazdani, a member of the Association for the Defense of Children's Rights in Iran, noted that while in 2006 child marriages constituted 2.3% of all marriages, by 2010 that figure had grown 45%, to 4.9%. He warned the regime about the ramifications of child marriages, including divorce and domestic violence, and noted that in 2006, statistics showed that Iran had 25,000 divorced children aged 10-15.[5]

Marriages Under Age 10

According to Islamic law, girls reach maturity at age nine; in 2011, in Tehran province alone, 75 girls and boys under 10 were married.[6] Warning about the increase in marriages of children under 10, Yazdani noted that in 2010, in all of Iran 716 children under 10 wed — twice as many as in 2007.[7]

In an attempt to explain the increase in child marriages in Iran, Amanollah Gharai-Moghadam, who heads the Sociology Association of Iran, pointed at the economic difficulties afflicting Iranian society. He said that in Tehran province many destitute families accept any marriage proposal for their daughters regardless of the girls' ages — and regardless of their rights — so as to reduce the family's expenses. He added, "In some cases, poor families are forced to sell their daughters; in others they are forced to marry off their sons and daughters after the children conduct relations that are forbidden... and in still others, the girl is given to an elderly man in lieu of payment of a debt... In a society rife with poverty, [large] gaps in status, inflation, and unemployment, people act crudely." [8]...

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