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Tehran Police Chief Warns Hijab Protesters Of Zero Tolerance

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Tehran Police commander Hossein Rahimi (R) and head of Iran's Police forces Hossein Ashtari, in a ceremony in Tehran, undated.

Tehran Police Chief Hassan Rahimi has warned Iranian women protesting the Islamic Republic's compulsory hijab rule of a zero-tolerance policy against protesters.

Speaking to reporters February 27, Rahimi outlined the police's "anti-hooliganism project," and said police officers have been told to "treat all of people according to the law."

He called on Iranians to observe "Islamic rules" regarding the hijab.

“The police will not tolerate this kind of behavior, and will deal with protesters firmly,” Rahimi said in reaction to the release of a video showing the police’s violent treatment of a young woman protesting compulsory hijab, adding, “We have told our officers to behave lawfully when dealing with anyone, including suspects. We hope that kind of behavior will not reoccur.”

The woman in the video, Maryam Shariatmadari, whose image is now famous in Iran and abroad after video of her protest and treatment by police went viral, had to undergo surgery to treat serious wounds she suffered when police forcefully brought her down from an electrical box where she was standing.



The first antihijab protest in Tehran quickly resonated with many women and even men, who publicly defied compulsory veil.

In the video, Shariatmadari stands atop the electrical box on a busy Tehran street and waves her hijab above her head. Police trying to remove her can be heard using vulgar language and threatening bystanders.

The video spurred widespread criticism both of Iran’s policy of compulsory hijab for women, as well as the treatment of protestors by police.

Meanwhile, Tehran-based journalist Jila Bani Yaqoub tweeted that Shariatmadari is still in serious need of medical attention at a Tehran prison.

Shaparak Shajarizadeh, another young woman who emulated Shariatmadari's protest, was beaten while in police custody, her family says.

Social media users reported another incident February 24 in which a plainclothes officer broke the arm of a young protestor named Hamraz Sadeqi's while arresting her.

"Although the sentence for not wearing a hijab is two months in prison, anyone encouraging others to take off their hijab will be jailed for 10 years," Iranian police announced February 24, according to Fars News Agency.

The statement is based on the police's interpretation of article 639 of the Iranian penal code, which calls for one to 10 years imprisonment for those convicted of "opening brothels" and "encouraging people to engage in prostitution."

In another development, Chairman of the Tehran City Council Mohsen Hashemi called on the authorities to observe ethics, laws, and religious values while dealing with those protesting the hijab.

He said veiling is a personal matter and individuals may or may not observe certain dress codes based on their personal beliefs, adding that it would be wrong to turn a social issue into a security concern.

Hashemi further warned that continued harsh treatment of women protesting the compulsory hijab may backfire by escalating dissent and opposition to religious rules.

In the meantime, power and telecommunications authorities have modified utility boxes in downtown Tehran to prevent protesters from standing on them. They attempted to justify the modifications as "purely technical."