



# The Role of Iranian Women in the Sacred Defense



## Introduction

Historical texts often speak of the status of women in the harems of Iranian kings and the influence of western and eastern women, or the so-called intellectuals, on social change. However, the Iranian women who participated in the Gribayedov incident, the tobacco movement, the constitutional movement, the uprising against the compulsory unveiling of hijab, and the uprising of July 20, 1952, etc. were the mass of Muslim women who abided by the orders of the Maraaje' (religious authorities) and set foot on the battlefield in order to perform their religious and divine duties.

From the 1940s until the victory of the Islamic Revolution, these women showed a wider and more continuous presence. The reason is, firstly: the greater self-confidence that Imam Khomeini (ra) created in women; and secondly: their response to the invitation of the Imam for a socio-political presence. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution, women were still helpless and tired of a long struggle against the Pahlavi regime. Therefore, they considered it their duty to participate in the crises that arose in different parts of the country, especially in Kurdistan. But what called on women for more help, after about a year and a half after the victory, was the sacred defense, which witnessed the bravery of the men and women at this frontier for eight years. However, and because of the extent of women's sacrifices in the field of sacred defense, it is not possible to enumerate all those sacrifices, and in every article and in this article, only a small part of it

can be mentioned.

## Combating the Enemy

The first responsibility that women spontaneously took on, was to fight the Ba'athist enemy in the southern part of Iran and the internal mercenaries in Kurdistan. They even made Molotov cocktails to fight the Iraqi tanks that were going to cross the Shalamcheh border. Of course, preparing and using Molotov cocktails was the most basic martial work of the sisters and women, as they later on equipped themselves with weapons to fight the enemy. In the Khorramshahr cemetery, I saw a 51-year-old woman carrying a rifle. I said: Mother, what are you doing? She said: My son and daughter fought until they were martyred, and they are buried here. I am going to continue their path. She did not accept everything I said and responded by saying: I must defend my religion. This is not only your duty, my son, but also my duty, she fought and finally she was martyred by a mortar shrapnel.

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Women fighters in Khorramshahr were also responsible for other tasks, including taking care of weapons, arming fighters, guarding the bodies of martyrs, and distributing weapons among fighters. The situation was the same on other fronts. For example, in West Gilan, a woman captured several Iraqi soldiers, and in Shadegan, four females captured eight Ba'athist soldiers. Ms. Fatemeh Nawab Savavi, along with the irregular troops group of Shahid Chamran in the Susangerd area, took up arms and fought the enemy. A Susangerdi woman baked bread with poisoned flour and killed several Iraqis with it. And again, in this city, the mother of Martyr Al-Hani invites eleven Iraqi soldiers to her house, feeds them, and when they have rested and fallen asleep, locks the door and informs the Basijis who capture all of them.

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Although the scenes of women's warfare were small, but they continued until the end of the Sacred Defense, and secondly, had a profound effect on the morale of the warriors. Women also performed many intelligence combat roles.

## Emotional Support

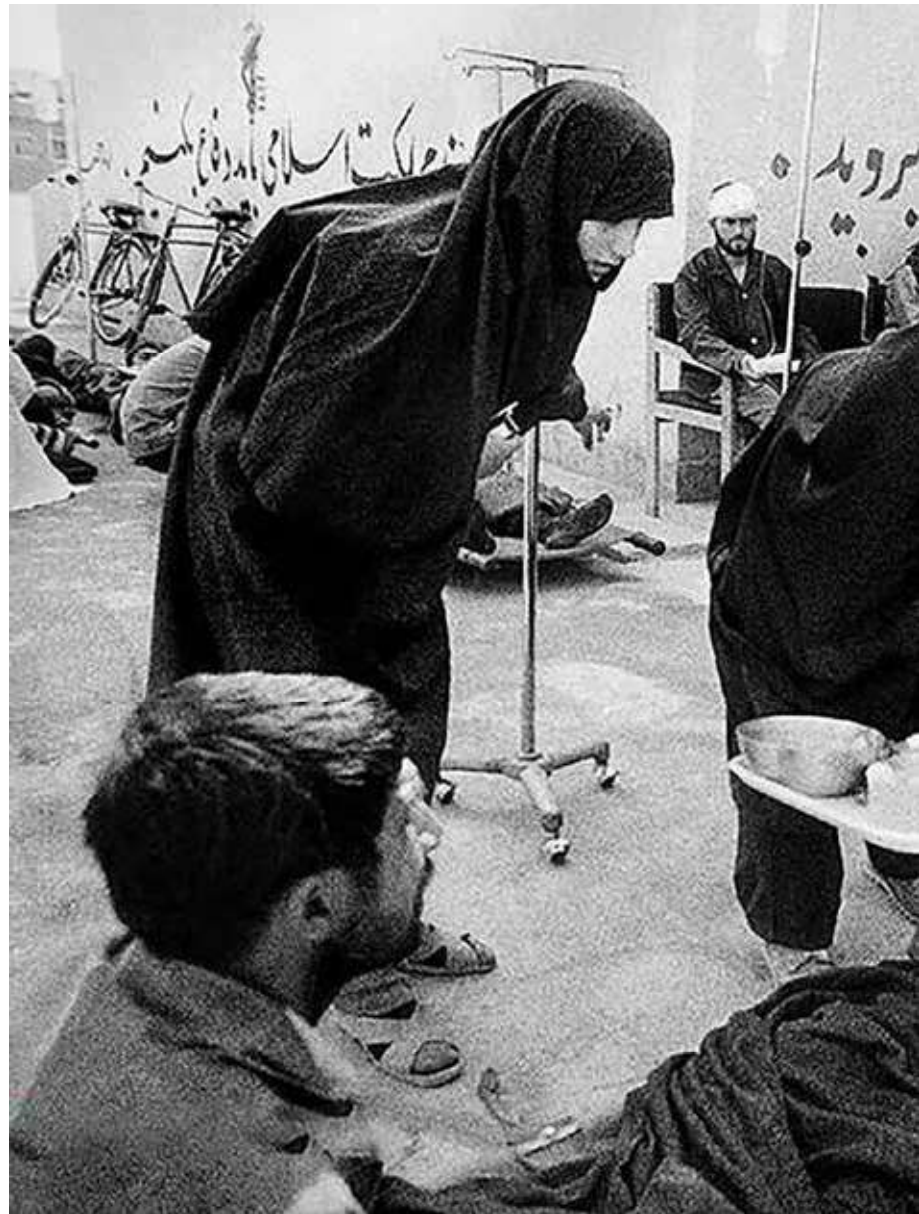
In the war, women were given the role of providing psychological and emotional support to the fighters so that the war could end success-

fully by encouraging the soldiers. In the imposed war, Iranian women spontaneously took on the role of providing moral support to the fighters, and as Imam Khomeini (ra) said: because of the emotions expressed by the women, they did very useful work for the front. Thus, the Sacred Defense has recorded countless and at the same time unique examples of the spiritual support of Iranian women, such as: In West Gilan, the commander of a combat battalion, seeing the bravery of a rural woman, He retreated and returned his forces to the city despite Bani Sadr's order. Part of the emotional and spiritual support of women has been expressed through poetry and by female poets, and these poems have influenced the presence of more warriors on the fronts.

**Support Centers**

Other manifestations of the companionship of Iranian Muslim sisters, wives and mothers should be seen in the preparation of goods and items needed by warriors and soldiers. Women devoted their lives and property in material and logistical support on the southern and western fronts, creating many memorable and unforgettable scenes. They wove scarves and hats for the warriors, sewed clothes and sheets for the soldiers, and cooked hot food for them.

Ms. Khakbaz goes to the front with a group of sisters, and on the night of Nowruz, she prepares rice and fish (customary Iranian dish made for the occasion) for the warriors. Most of the kitchen activities of the front, which fed 50,000 people daily, were carried out by women.



Another example is Ms. Fatemeh Zarei with 60 years of age, who baked bread 24 hours a day behind the front lines during the operation and stopped working only to perform her religious rituals. During the imposed war (sacred defense), women collected, packaged, sent, and provided other services in mosques, homes, schools, and any other place where a support center could be established.

These efforts were so valuable and decisive that Imam Khomeini (ra) thanked them in simple but spiritually inspired words: When I see these honorable women on TV, who accompany and They are supporting the army and the armed forces, I feel a value for them in my heart that I cannot value anyone else like that. What they are doing is not looking for an expectation of a position or a



job or something they ask of the people, but they are anonymous soldiers who are said to be engaged in jihad on the fronts. This is a divine gift, we should appreciate this blessing and follow these women and children behind the front and those who are present in the half-ruined cities, we should benefit from their Islamic morality, faith and attention to God.

#### **Relief and Treatment**

From the first attack of the enemy that martyred and wounded several people and fighters, the women of this land realized that they had to help treat the wounded and war veterans. Without any expectation, they went to the fronts only with the intention of gaining God's approval and obeying their leader, and at some point, they themselves were wounded and some-

times joined the many martyrs of the revolution.

If the women volunteers did not come to the aid of the front and the war, the number of war martyrs would increase, and if the wounded were not treated in time, their subsequent treatment would impose a heavy cost on the state treasury.

Families and combatants, by seeing the relief and treatment of war wounded, felt more eager to continue their voluntary presence on the front. Even now, the beautiful examples and manifestations of self-sacrifice of nursing, creates a wave of love and enthusiasm to serve the people.

Ms. Yousefzadeh is an example of a nurse woman who was martyred due to chemical pollution.

#### **Financial Sacrifices**

Several Muslim women, in addition to being directly involved in the sacred defense, provided a variety of support for the fighters, one of which was to contribute financially to the battlefields. In fact, during the sacred defense, we witnessed the high tide of women's financial self-sacrifice, which Imam Khomeini (ra) has mentioned many times: "Every day, we see women who bring a gold coin and spend in the way of God and war.

#### **Sacrifice and Dedication**

In addition to woman encouraging their children, husbands, brothers, and fathers to participate in the sacred defense, they were very effective in welcoming men to be more present on the fronts, after hearing the news of the injuries and martyrdom of relatives and their loved ones showed unparalleled

patience and forbearance, which helped to strengthen the morale of the warriors to continue the war. While the mothers, saw their young children being martyred on the front, they were that the man and sons have been martyred in the way of Islam, and they still suggest that we have other young sons and want to dedicate them for Islam. The self-sacrifice of Iranian women has been so great that even the foreign media could not deny it.

**Propagation and Intelligence Cooperation**

The Western Front had features that were less common on the Southern Front, such as the enemy's attempt to create a dispute between Shiites and Sunnis, or the existence of counter revolutionaries collaborating with the enemy, It made intelligence and information surveillance inevitable. There are many examples of propaganda and intelligence activities of sisters and women in Kurdistan, such as: Female students were sent to the Kurdistan Region from the seminary in Qom and from other Islamic schools. From the very beginning, they were attacked, persecuted by enemies in various forms, such as the opposition Kurds and the MKO group. For example, the MKO hypocrites who told these women that if you go out with the Kurds and eat their food, they will poison you in your food and you will be killed. Instead, they said to the Kurds: They do not accept you and they will try to change your religion. When the MKO hypocrites saw that their psychological warfare was ineffective, they carried out assassinations, for example:

- Student, Sedigheh Roudbari was martyred an hour after finishing the Quran lesson in Baneh on August 19, 1979.

- Student, Fahimeh Sayari was martyred two days after being sent from Qom being shot by MKO hypocrites.

But women, regardless of the actions of the enemy, continued their propagational presence on the western fronts during the war, which resulted in 434 martyrs in Kurdistan. 71 of these martyrs were martyred by the counter revolutionary agents. The oldest of them was Ameneh Niki, who was assassinated at the age of 78 on September 7, 1980 in Sanandaj and the youngest of them was a 2-year-old girl named Ronak Mominifard, who was martyred on July 6, 1988, as a result of being hit by shrapnel from counter-revolutionary weapons. The conclusion that can be drawn is:

The imposed war, after the Islamic Revolution, created another campaign scene for women. From the

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first days of the war, they fought alongside the warriors against the enemy. Sometimes they fought hand to hand, and sometimes, by engaging in warfare, they maintained a direct presence in the sacred defense. Gradually, as the war dragged on, other service roles for women became needed.

Hence, the women turned to the support of the front behind the battlefield, went to the cities and the battle lines to help and treat the fighters. On the front and behind it, they tried to strengthen the morale of the fighters in various and wonderful ways. Of course, not all war services can be summed up in what we have enumerated, but the work of women who wrote poetry, stories, epics, made music, films and theater, provided photos, news, and reports, became martyrs, veterans, and captives. These are just some of their services to the war. What made women help the fighters or defenders of the country in the worst conditions with the least facilities, was the belief in the reward of good in the sight of God and the belief in the right path of the Imam Khomeini(ra) Otherwise, it was unlikely that after sacrificing their lives, property and children for the victory of the Islamic Revolution, they would have to once again sacrifice what was left of their property, lives and children to preserve the Islamic revolution. Undoubtedly, one of the most important reasons for the victory of the war was the sincere presence of these women in the field of defense, Even more than that, it can be said that a nation whose women are at the forefront of advancing Islamic goals will not be harmed.