

## **Iranian Sociological Association issues a public statement on the recent sorrowful events that have caused public sadness and anger in Iran**

The tragic death of Mahsa Amini, which happened after she was arrested by the Iranian 'morality police' (*gasht-e ershad*), has caused sadness and anger among many Iranians. In objection to this sad event, several statements have been issued by political parties, civil groups and organizations, as well as cultural, social and religious figures in Iran. A large number of people have also expressed their sorrow and anger towards the actions of the 'morality police' through the various social media outlets. The extent and intensity of the public reaction to this painful event has been on par only with the reactions to massive natural disasters. This incident has saddened a large number of Iranians, has triggered an outpouring of sympathy for the victim's family, and has created a massive wave of fierce criticism directed at the 'morality police'. Unfortunately, this incident has been only the most recent link of a chain of past events and cannot be considered an isolated incident. This is not the first case of such events, but we hope that with the change of some policies and procedures, it can be the last.

Unfortunately, rather than trying to fix the root cause of these kinds of problems, the responsible authorities have done their utmost to present it merely as an unfortunate accident. Rather than giving convincing explanations to the public or trying to empathize with the victim's family, such authorities just add fuel to the fire of public anger. We hope that the government officials' promise to follow up this matter and to submit a report can shed light on the various dark corners of this incident and result in a clear and convincing answer to the public. This point should not be overlooked that the government's usual delay tactics and its efforts to make the whole story forgotten would not be effective, as is evident in the fact that none of the past similar incidents have been erased from the people's collective memory; instead, they resurface at every opportunity and serve as a basis for judging the integrity and effectiveness of the authorities' actions. Not only do such delays and evasiveness keep the main problems unsolved, but they destroy the remnants of people's trust in governmental institutions.

We, as an academic organization, encourage the government authorities to find the root cause of this and other similar incidents, instead of reacting to them only bureaucratically and formally. We believe that this is not an isolated accident; rather, it is the inevitable outcome of the approaches and policies that turn a blind eye to societal demands. Numerous videoclips distributed online clearly show a violent treatment of women and young girls in the public by the morality police. We do not have access to official documents and records on how such women are treated when they are detained by the 'morality police'; but, judging by the way they are treated in public, we cannot be too optimistic that they are treated any better in the absence of any surveillance and the public eye. One of the main roots of this type of verbally abusive and physically violent treatment is in the growing gap between the values

and norms of the state and those of the public. The more this gap widens, and the more the educational/cultural institutions and propaganda machinery prove to be incapable and ineffective in filling it, the more the state authorities desire to use coercive methods to reduce the gap.

Today, the level of public dissatisfaction with the way the country is run is higher than in the past. People are unable to make their basic needs met, and their living standards are deteriorating by the day. Our society is suffering from a myriad of problems, such as pervasive and widespread poverty and corruption, unemployment, unstoppably rising prices, government's ineffectiveness in managing the country's affairs, environmental crisis, and the like. Most people are dissatisfied with this situation and have expressed their dissatisfaction in whichever way possible. One reflection of this is the widespread desire for emigration among Iranians, particularly among the young and educated generation. People cannot find an answer for the question of why, instead of devoting their efforts and resources to solving these types of problems, the state authorities have prioritized non-issues such as monitoring women's *hijab*; something that not only does not solve any of the existing problems, but it adds to them by raising the level of tension and anxiety among many women, young girls, and their families. Unfortunately, the state officials and the responsible authorities do not make any effort in addressing such concerns and answering the questions on the minds of many people.

We unequivocally declare that the continuation of the 'morality police' operations and the use of coercive methods will only lead to the escalation of social tensions. We emphasize that the use of humiliating methods that are based on gender stereotypes will never help in reducing the gap between the values and norms of the government and those of the society. The authorities have to accept the fact that the path of social development cannot be stopped; but they may be able to give a sign of reconciliation to the society by stopping the operations of the 'morality police'. This is the sensible response to the public opinions that are angered by this tragic incident, and an expression of respect for the soul of the innocent Mahsa Amini.