**In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful**

**1. To what extend has there been an increase of violence against women, especially domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown? Please provide all available data on the increase of violence against women, including domestic violence and femicides, registered since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis?**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has channeled its efforts into raising awareness about different methods of reporting cases of domestic violence to the related and competent authorities. We are also pleased to announce that, with respect to official statistics, there has been no significant spike in domestic violence.

**2. Are helplines run by Government and/or civil society available? Has there been an increase in the number on calls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

**YES.** Having launched several websites and sufficient helplines to provide free and unhindered counseling for women, the State Welfare Organization (SWO) of the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to exert all efforts in order to prevent domestic violence, and give an effective response thereto during the coronavirus pandemic. The SOW’s launching of 4030 Call Center was an initiative by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education. Thousands of experts including doctors, nurses and psychologists are working full-time to assist anyone seeking help via 4030 hotline. Several hotlines including 123, 129 and 1480 remain active to provide free, online and accessible services for rapid intervention, providing legal and psychological consultations and advice to the citizens particularly women and children. The 1480 hotline has provided 63,000 hours of free specialized telephone counselling to 152,000 people from the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak by the end of April.

**NO.** In general, there has been no significant spike in the number on calls to 123, 129.

**3. Can women victims of domestic violence be exempt from restrictive measures to stay at home in isolation if they face domestic violence?**

The Islamic Republic of Iran has imposed no mandatory restrictive measures to force people to stay at home during the pandemic. Measures taken to reduce the presence of people in certain areas of geographic interest aim to encourage people to stay indoors. Victims of domestic violence or witnesses of abuse can call hotline (123) or refer to police stations.

**4. Are shelters open and available? Are there any alternatives to shelters available if they are closed or without sufficient capacity?**

**YES.** All shelters and Social Emergency Centres remain open. They offer and provide comprehensive services to the people all over the country during the novel coronavirus crisis with full respect for protocols and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

**5. Are protection orders available and accessible in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic?**

**YES.** (Explained in question No. 6)

**6. What are the impacts on women’s access to justice? Are courts open and providing protection and decisions in cases of domestic violence?**

Courts remain open in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Fully operational, the courts issue protection orders in cases of domestic violence. When women victims of domestic violence refer to Social Emergency Centres or shelters, the social workers accompany them to the court. The Judiciary and the SWO have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate and expedite judicial inquiries in cases of domestic violence.

**7. What are the impacts of the current restrictive measures and lockdowns on women’s access to health services? Please specify whether services are closed or suspended, particularly those focusing on reproductive health.**

 Women, including those living in shelters, enjoy full, unbiased and unhindered access to health services. The Islamic Republic of Iran has not cut or put in abeyance health services during the pandemic.

**8. Please provide examples of obstacles encountered to prevent and combat domestic violence during the COVID 19 lockdowns.**

The world is living extraordinary circumstances in the face of the deadly coronavirus, which is straining national and international resources. In the case of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the efforts to confront this disease and prevent its spread are further undermined by the unilateral coercive measures the Government of the United States of America continues to impose for years now. The unilateral coercive measures could adversely affect efforts to prevent and combatdomestic violence in two ways:

- Violence within families could increase as a result of the economic pressure.

- Financial hurdles could resist all the efforts to enhance domestic violence response.

**9. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by Governments.**

- The responsible bodies have done an excellent job in the awareness raising campaign. They send text messages to mobile phones and make announcements on social media platforms to introduce ways to report, prevent and combat domestic violence against women, children, and persons with disabilities.

- The SWO has, in an uninterrupted manner, been distributing protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizers among street and labour children, as well as at-risk girls and women.

- The SWO has sought help from eminent sociologists, psychologists, counsellors and psychiatrists to prepare pedagogical content to broaden women’s knowledge and improve their skills in order to prevent domestic violence.

- Providing training, residential care, hospitality and a comprehensive rehabilitation pathway to drug-addict women referring to Social Emergency Centres and shelters. The responsible bodies continue to disinfect and deliver healthcare and food packages to the aforementioned group in their haunts.

- The Islamic Republic of Iran has been providing women entrepreneurs owning micro home-based jobs and women workers affected by the pandemic with a comprehensive supportive plan.

- Ensuring the full cooperation with e-commerce platforms within the framework of the National Plan for the Development of Domestic Job and the National Plan for the Economic Empowerment of Women Heads of Households.

- Introducing protective measures under which vulnerable employees, individuals and businesses could defer tax payments, postpone VAT returns, and enjoy payment forbearance as well as unemployment insurance.

- Providing necessary support to women heads of households through identifying jobs managed by this group.

- Approximately 1,200 women heads of households have received necessary training, maximizing their chances of better market integration.

- Entrepreneurship training was oriented to job opportunity related to detergents and health products. For example, two clothing production workshops in the southern city of Bushehr were held within the framework of National Plan of Female-headed Household’s Economic Empowerment. The result was the employment of 20 people, 70% of whom are women heads of households with a daily production of 3,000 masks.

**10. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of COVID-19 pandemic by NGOs and NHRIs or equality bodies.**

NGOs and social activists have played a crucial role in combatting the Covid-19 pandemic. The Vice-Presidency for Women and Family Affairs (VPWFA) has made efforts galore to enhance and coordinate their activities, some of the most important of which are listed hereunder:

- VPWFA has held special courses to empower 1, 200 NGOs on issues appertaining to

Coronavirus.

- The Imam Musa Sadr Dialogue Centre, in cooperation with the VPWFA, has implemented the "spring at home" program available to everyone via www.dialogcenter.net. The program presents a package including exercises to enhance three basic skills with regards to conversation and family resilience, namely "listening", "respect" and "expression", each of which is addressed on a weekly basis.

- The VPWFA, in cooperation with NGOs, has made 7 podcasts entitled "Our Home", an audio file aimed at raising awareness about social challenges during quarantine period.

- A working team, in cooperation with a number of social activists and NGOs, has been organized in to execute cultural activities and better engage NGOs across the country to provide public education in order to control and prevent the outbreak.

- 31 postcards (one postcard for each province) with the theme of "Let's Stay at Home This Year" were published by social activists with the support of the VPWFA in order to encourage people to stay indoors during the Nowruz holidays.

- Social activists, with the support of the VPWFA, have prepared 6 audio files entitled "Mercy" in order to help those who lost their dear ones to the novel Covid-19.