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| The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland  Email: registry@ohchr.org | Date:29 January 2017 |

**Subject: Submission on ways to bridge the gender digital divide from a human rights perspective.**

*Pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 32/13, and at the call of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) has concluded its revision on Iran as following:*

1. On Iran, the topics of internet and social media are controversial as there aren`t any common understanding of it amongst different ideological streams within the country; Some believe that internet and its capacity is vital to our today's life as it is a pathway to development, freedom of expression, access to information, education and etc but on contrary some others focus on the cons of the internet including the spread of lie and invented matters, angling to down the government by promoting the opposition`s messages and notes, penetration of the west culture into the local one, and as a result they demand filtering and creation of local-made contents as a solution.
2. The legal landscape surrounding social media and the Internet in Iran are: the Article 24 of constitutional law, cyber crime law, laws of Islamic punishment and other related rules and regulation.
3. The authorized intuitions dealing with internet and social media`s issues are as following:
   1. The council of social media formed by the Supreme of Iran: in this section, the governmental officials from various branches will work under supervision of the country's president, on the terms and regulations of internet and social media in Iran.
   2. The Ministry of Technology and Information: is responsible for all the technical spheres of the internet and social media throughout Iran, as well as controlling and facilitating the private sectors in this field.
   3. The Filleting Committee located in Judiciary branch of Iran.
   4. The courts` judges: they may give some orders related to social media and the use of internet.
   5. Cyber Police: they have the responsibility of protecting the cyber space from electronic attacks, and to assure people in all legal affairs such as economic, social and cultural activities.
   6. There are some other authorities whom may get involve in case of emergency; such as the Revolutionary Guards and security police.
4. Today, there are several programs associated with internet and social media which are enabling people to have greater access to internet especially at schools as well as increasing the amount of high speed internet even at the sub areas and small villages. Also these programs are trying to transform the old fashioned administrative departments into the e-generation mode. It should be noted that, today people can have access to internet via their cell-phones.
5. The governmental authorities over-watching the filtering process pay serious attention not only to the inhuman and immoral contents such as sexual and human trafficking related issues; but also they are highly sensitive about feminist anti-Islamic issues to be filtered as well. This prevents both feminists criticising Islamic view and those who follows such contents from free access to information; and even in some cases they may recognized guilty for breaking the law and accordingly face legal punishments. It should be noted that, on Iran people are so familiar with different approaches to overcome the filtering and find access to the filtered sources; as it can be seen there are massive number of users from Iran active on filtered social media such as Facebook or Twitter. This fact reflects the failure of filtering process within the country as even sometimes those filtered sources see more followers than that of others. But still the legal pay-off is remained exist.
6. In the last couple of months, as government declared, they haven`t allowed the spreading of filtering and limiting of people`s access to different social medias such as Telegram and some others which are said immoral mediums. This caused access of more than 45 million Iranian users both man and women to Telegram by which they can share information and data.

In general, it seems that by increasing in number of social media users, it won't be easy for authorised parties to apply filtering as then they have to pay a lot in public opinion. Regarding women`s participation in particular, it should be highlighted that now a days, they have been so active in reclaiming their rights. Therefore it can be predicted that women will pass all the challenges on their way and find their path into the accurate use of social media based on local culture `s and global village`s standards.

Yours sincerely

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**About us**

*Iranian Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) has more than two decades experience on human rights matters as an independent national institution within an Islamic society which has its own complicated social characteristic and since 2000 it has become the member of International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions. The IHRC has cooperated with National Human Right Institutions (NHRIs) worldwide, international and national NGOs to enhancing and boosting itself in becoming more effective mechanisms for the various developments in IHRC such as having a legal clinic for the benefits of those whose human rights is violated; localizing the universal values and norms with noting the national cultural values; publishing books and materials, translating recent worlds valuable writings on human rights, holding virtual and in person classes on the different aspects of human rights to educate and improve people`s knowledge on human right issue; observing the process on accurate implementation of Iran`s international obligations; creating national-wide networks of human rights advocates `volunteers; give advisory opinions to various governmental sectors and capacity building and empowering the society for fostering the human rights achievements, etc. Despite basic differences between NHRIs around the world, the fact remains that all NHRIs share common objectives formulated in the UN Paris Principles, and this commonality of objectives leads to common “effectiveness factors” that need to be in place.*