

# FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO BE BEAUTIFUL

*In Iran, wearing make-up is punishable by torture, trousers are absolutely banned, even riding a bicycle is considered immoral. However, 10 000 women refuse to accept these male laws. So they gave up their lives, their families and are now in the Middle Eastern desert, training in all aspects of front line battle for the day when they will liberate their homeland. A thirty-seven-year-old Iranian woman tells her experience as one of the female combatants.*



The night before Parvin Firhusan left she stayed awake all night. She was looking at her fourteen-month-old son thinking about what sort of future he would have – would he be humiliated because he did not have a mother? Would she see him again?

It was not safe to take him with her because of the permanent threat of attack to the base. But she was decided, she had to go. When it was time for her to leave, she locked the front door for the last time, she got in a taxi holding her son in her arms. She instructed the driver to head for her mother-in-law's house. She had asked her to baby-sit. Of course, she didn't tell her she was going to join the Rebel forces, the National Liberation Army of Iran (NLA). She used the pretext of visiting friends.

This was not her only sacrifice. Her husband volunteered to join the army too. In the NLA the women know celibacy is inevitable. She knew she would have to divorce and this would be a very difficult choice because she loved her husband.

However she couldn't stand living any more in a country under martial law. There was no future for her. She had already spent her youth in prison because when she was eighteen and a member of the movement opposing the Ayatollah, she was condemned to nine years for distributing leaflets. She was tortured and saw many people slaughtered.

A woman was even taken just because she used nail varnish. The Guard locked her in a dark room and put her hands in two sacks full of cockroaches.

Parvin's story is a testament to the personal sacrifices each woman has made in joining the rebel army. They say, trying to control their sadness, "We are fighting for our daughters' freedom."

Source: *Marie Claire*, May, 1999

(abridged and adapted)

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## WORDS

**banned** - forbidden

**threat** - intention to punish or hurt

**celibacy** - a life without sexual relations

**slaughtered** - killed, massacred

**cockroaches** -large, dark-brown insects

## EXPRESSIONS

**head for** - take the direction of, go to

❖ **Check your vocabulary. Find words that mean the opposite of the following.**

- 1 – allowed: \_\_\_\_\_ 2 – female: \_\_\_\_\_  
3 – absolve: \_\_\_\_\_ 4 – ugly: \_\_\_\_\_  
5 – back: \_\_\_\_\_ 6 – easy: \_\_\_\_\_  
7 – marriage: \_\_\_\_\_ 8 – conformist: \_\_\_\_\_  
9 – hated: \_\_\_\_\_ 10 – supporting: \_\_\_\_\_  
11 – happiness: \_\_\_\_\_ 12 – day: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ **Read the text again and complete the table accordingly.**

	are not allowed	10 000 decided
<b>IRANIAN WOMEN</b>		

❖ **Answer the following questions about the text:**

1. Do Iranian women have the same rights as other women? Explain.

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2. Did Parvin Firhusan accept Iranian law? Justify.

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3. Was this an easy decision? Why?

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4. In your opinion, is celibacy inevitable for these rebellious women? Explain.

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5. What made Parvin join this rebel army?

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6. Is Parvin the only woman to make sacrifices? Explain.

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