

## Establishment of Shelters: A Novel Paradigm for Combating Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Iran

Dear Editor,

Given the global prevalence of 35% and the negative health consequences of intimate partner violence, the development of effective prevention strategies is a global public health priority.<sup>[1]</sup> According to the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, shelters are part of a holistic response to survivors. Article 125(a) requires states to establish well-funded shelters for girls and women facing violence.<sup>[2]</sup> Shelters were established in Western Europe, North America, and Australia in the 1970s and 1980s as part of an expanding international effort that mostly provided a place to sleep, eat, and shower.<sup>[3]</sup> This strategy was launched in Iran in 2014, and there are already 26 shelters in the country.<sup>[4]</sup> In Iran, safehouses provide services that are both short-term (such as food, clothing, and accommodation) and long-term (such as counseling for support and empowerment) and are open 24 hours a day. Women in a crisis scenario can stay for 90 days. Some women are able to reside in long-term housing for 2 years, according to assessments.<sup>[5]</sup>

Women who are survivors need holistic, interdisciplinary, and specialist care that focuses on safety and needs. Because of a lack of funding, the existence of taboos, and competent staff, safehouses are usually unable to empower and create new opportunities for women in Iran. To achieve the empowerment of women, which seems to be the ultimate goal of shelters, we need to take action.

The government, with the assistance of the involved non-governmental organizations, must secure sufficient and sustainable funds to deliver long-term services, recruit specialized employees, and enhance professional staff education. Due to public policy and social norms, there is no direct advertising for safehouses in Iran. As a result, it is critical to provide women with informative protocols on the introduction of these centers and their services by using visual and audio media. This action has the potential to break the stigma associated with shelters and encourage women to use the services offered by these facilities. In addition, at the macro level, the adoption of regulations with robust enforcement guarantees and accessible licenses for the construction of non-governmental safehouses should be on the agenda setting.

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### Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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