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Iranian Sunni Cleric Says He Has Received Reports Of Sexual Assaults On Female Prisoners

By [RFE/RL's Radio Farda](#)

Iran's top Sunni cleric, a vocal critic of the government, says he has received reports of sexual assaults on female prisoners in Iranian prisons.

Molavi Abdolhamid [wrote on his Twitter account](#) on December 6 that the assaults on female prisoners were being committed with the intention of humiliating, suppressing, and obtaining forced confessions from them.

"If proven, the real corrupters on earth are the perpetrators of these crimes," Abdolhamid added, and asked the judiciary to punish these people severely.

"Corruption on Earth," is a common charge often leveled by Iran's judiciary in cases involving attempts to overthrow the government.

Molavi Abdolhamid is regarded nationwide as a spiritual leader for Iran's Sunni Muslim population, who are a minority among the mainly Shi'ite population of Iran. He is the director of the main Sunni seminary in Iran and has been under pressure for his comments against the Islamic republic.

CNN first published an investigative report last month about the "sexual assault and rape" of some of the detainees from recent protests while they were being held in Iran's prisons. Citing the testimony of a number of released detainees or hospital sources, CNN said it has confirmed that young women and teenage boys and girls have been raped in prisons.

In response to the report, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price condemned the Iranian authorities' use of sexual violence as a tool for protest suppression.

Price said on November 23 that the United States "is disgusted by the reports and eyewitness accounts of protesters, including minors, being sexually assaulted while in the custody of law enforcement."

Previously, in an open letter to Javaid Rehman, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Narges Mohammadi, a human rights activist imprisoned in the notorious Evin prison, called for a special investigation into the assault of detained women.

Written by Ardeshtir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda.

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