



Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran, Re-Birth or Human Rights Violations against Transgender People?

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Dear Editor-in-Chief

Iran is the only Islamic country where the sex reassignment surgery (SRS) is recognized. Many European citizens travel to this Middle East country for gender confirmation and reassignment surgery. The Guardian wrote "Today, the Islamic Republic of Iran occupies the unlikely role of global leader for sex change"(2). Hence, Iran can be called the hell of homosexuals and the paradise of Trans seeking SRS.

Classical Islamic discourse divides gender as one of two categories, male or female, but has accepted the possibility that in the case of hermaphrodites it is difficult and sometimes impossible to determine the body. However, Ayatollah Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of the Iranian Revolution, once in 1964 in his book "Tahrir al-Wasila" and once after the Islamic Revolution in 1982, issued a fatwa on the act of reassignment and confirmation gender only for people whose faces are inconsistent with their gender and considered it legitimate and this issue became one of the emerging issues of Shia Islamic jurisprudence (2). According to the jurists, since it is not possible to change the soul, but at the same time medical advances have made it possible to change the body, the act of gender

reassignment is permissible. Furthermore, according to Iranian civil law, each person receives a share of inheritance based on gender. For example, a Trans woman receives as much inheritance as a woman. In article 939 of the civil code of Iran, if in a transgender person sexual signs prevail over other gender signs, the person is subject to the rules of gender in which the symptoms are predominant. According to the Family Protection Law adopted in 2012, a person can refer to the family court to apply for gender matching (2). On the other hand, in an article the authors did not distinguish between SRS and conversion therapy (1). What is common in Iran is SRS, not conversion therapy or reparative therapies. SRS has a guideline and is designed and approved by the World Professional Association for Transgender People (WPATH). It is a professional organization that has published the health care standards for transsexual, transgender and gender nonconforming people in the latest version (version 7). Psychologically, SRS is in line with the adaptation of physical body to sexual identity and reduces the gap caused by the incompatibility of these two dimensions, allows gender expression and contributes to the mental health of these people (3).



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In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), distress is caused by gender mismatch, which is an inappropriate and harmful diagnostic method. In the International Classification of Diseases Code (ICD)–11, the Health Organization has suggested that relevant diagnoses be transferred to a new sexual health-related chapter (3).

Although the growth rate of gender reassignment in Iran does not necessarily indicate positive progress towards LGBTQ rights, it seems that SRS, despite aspects of threatening and responding to social demands, has been able to promote transgender health. Becoming a new version of yourself that is loved by the person and is considered a rebirth, liberation from the physical prison that does not belong to him, access to basic rights, the possibility of changing the name, obtaining a birth certificate and a driving license certificate based on the new gender, choosing clothes and finally eliminating the charge of homosexuality and the risk of execution (punishment for sodomy) is only part of the benefits of accompanying religious rule for transgender people. In Iran, the Imam Committee provides interest-free loans to some people eligible for gender reassignment surgery, which is in line with the recommendations of the WHO (2).

In the meantime, we are witnessing discrimination and ridicule from Iranian authorities aware of the act of SRS, conflicts in the minds of Trans people

after gender reassignment surgery, and honor violence following gender reassignment surgery.

In Iran, the lack of training programs for health care professionals and mental health professionals in the field of transgender health is strongly felt. The treatment process in Iran does not comply with international medical and psychiatric standards and requires bedrock in the field of medical and psychological education (1). Our suggestion is to change the culture of the society towards Transgenders, to improve the quality of surgeries, to create a culture of dealing with these people, and finally to pass laws that will make life easier for them than before.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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