

## **BEHIND BARS: EXPLORING GENDERED VIOLENCE IN SEDNAYA PRISON THROUGH THE FEMINIST LENS**

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### **Abstract**

This study applies feminist theory to the international relations context to investigate the widespread gender-based oppression that women experienced in Syria's Sednaya Prison. Examination of survivor testimonies and documented violations reveals how sexual violence and psychological abuse are used as an intentional control strategy in authoritarian regimes. The article criticizes the dominant theories of international relations for their failure to explain gendered aspects of oppression and the insufficient consideration of human security concerns that impact women. The article examines two main questions:

Q1. How does the application of feminist theory enhance the understanding of gendered oppression experienced by women in Sednaya Prison?

Q2. What are the broader implications of gendered violence in Sednaya Prison for understanding power dynamics and human security in authoritarian regimes?

This paper emphasizes the necessity of adopting inclusive frameworks in international relations by revising concepts of power and security through the feminist lens. It requires measures that emphasize the safety and empowerment of individuals, especially women, while revealing the patriarchal frameworks that perpetuate systemic violence and injustice. This study also provides substantial insights into the relationship of gender, power, and violence in oppressive conditions.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Sednaya Prison, Gender based Violence, Human Security, Gendered Oppression, Authoritarian Regimes

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## **PARMAKLIKLARIN ARKASINDA: SEDNAYA HAPİSHANESİNDE CİNSİYETE DAYALI ŞİDDETI FEMİNİST BİR BAKIŞ AÇISIYLA İNCELEMEK**

### **Özet**

Bu çalışma, kadınların Suriye'deki Sednaya Hapishanesi'nde deneyimlediği cinsiyete dayalı baskıyı araştırmak için feminist teoriyi uluslararası ilişkiler bağlamına uygular. Hayatta kalanların ifadelerini ve belgelenen ihlalleri inceleyerek, cinsel şiddetin ve psikolojik tacizin otoriter rejimlerde kasıtlı bir kontrol stratejisi olarak nasıl kullanıldığını ortaya koyar. Makale, baskının cinsiyete dayalı yönlerini açıklamadaki başarısızlıkları ve kadınları etkileyen insan güvenliği endişelerinin yeterince dikkate alınmaması nedeniyle uluslararası ilişkilerin baskın teorilerini eleştirir. Makale iki ana soruyu inceler:

S1. Feminist teorinin uygulanması, Sednaya Hapishanesi'ndeki kadınların deneyimlediği cinsiyete dayalı baskının anlaşılmasını nasıl geliştirir?

S2. Sednaya Hapishanesi'ndeki cinsiyete dayalı şiddetin otoriter rejimlerdeki güç dinamiklerini ve insan güvenliğini anlamak için daha geniş etkileri nelerdir?

Bu makale, feminist bakış açısıyla güç ve güvenlik kavramlarını gözden geçirerek uluslararası ilişkilerde kapsayıcı çerçeveler benimsemenin gerekliliğini vurgular. Özellikle kadınların güvenliğini ve güçlendirilmesini vurgulayan önlemler gerektirdiğinden, sistemsel şiddeti ve adaletsizliği sürdüren ataeril çerçeveleri ortaya çıkarır. Bu çalışma, baskıcı koşullarda cinsiyet, güç ve şiddet arasındaki ilişkiye dair önemli içgörüler sağlar.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Feminizm, Sednaya Hapishanesi, Cinsiyete Dayalı Şiddet, İnsan Güvenliği, Cinsiyete Dayalı Baskı, Otoriter Rejimler

## **Introduction**

Sednaya prison in Syria exemplifies the political repression, as it is recognized as one of the most horrific facilities regarding human rights violations. The prison has faced widespread condemnation for the persistent torture and brutal treatment of detainees, particularly since the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011 (Amnesty International 2017). While Sednaya prison is recognized for arresting men for their political dissents, female inmates are believed to have endured a different painful ways of repression that includes sexual, physical, and psychological assaults. This has highlighted the necessity for analyzing these crimes within the framework of the feminist theory in international relations.

The feminist theory of international relations highlights the connection and the relation between gender and power within political and social frameworks. It shifts its focus to the examination of how political and economic systems specifically impact women, especially in authoritarian regimes that are characterized by oppression (Tickner, 1992). This article aims to examine Sednaya prison via the feminist lens by illustrating the important key concepts of the feminist theory, discussing the women's current circumstances, and comparing their conditions in prison to the values advocated by the feminist thinkers. This paper will also discuss the relation between the violent, oppressive measures that were applied in Sednaya and the feminist theory by showing concrete examples and testimonies that demonstrate the suffering of female inmates (Amnesty International, 2016).

## **Feminist Theory in International Relations**

Feminist theory of international relations is an important conceptual framework that arose in the late twentieth century, offering a perspective on international affairs through the lens of women and gender equality. Unlike conventional theories of IR that examine the relations among states and political institutions. Feminist theory emphasizes the impact of social and political structures on women, along with the consequences of violence, armed conflicts, and economic inequalities on their lives. Furthermore Weber (1994) points out that gender intersects with sovereignty in global politics, making the analysis of power inadequate if these factors are not taken into account. The primary objective of the feminist theory in international relations is seen to confront gender inequalities in the social and political areas that are frequently neglected in the conventional theoretical analysis. Sylvester (1994) contends that women perspectives on war and peace offers an essential insight into international policies that overlook women's experiences during conflicts.

The feminist theory claims that international politics is naturally gender-based, characterized by unequal dynamics between men and women, in addition to the persistent male hegemony in political, military, and economic domains. Feminist thinkers seek to offer an original view that acknowledges the significance of the internal matters, such as domestic violence, reproductive rights, and women's rights that are frequently neglected in the conventional political context of international relations (Shepherd, 2008) (Tickner, 1992). Wibben (2011) argues that feminist security studies provide a framework for understanding how male dominance persists through violence and power within the political and military institutions.

## **Post Colonial Feminism**

Post colonial feminism is a theoretical approach originates from the critiques of scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1999), and Trinh Thi Minh-ha, who challenged the supremacy of the Western classical feminist discourse. these scholars believe that Western feminism frequently portrays women in the Global South as passive victims requiring “rescue”, thereby maintaining colonial hierarchies of knowledge and power while neglecting the historical, cultural, and political distinctions among various societies (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1999).

This school also argues that a woman’s agency, struggles, and resistance are grounded in specific contexts shaped by colonialism and its persistent legacy. That includes political, economic, and cultural institutions that perpetuate authoritarian relations (Mohanty, 1988). In this framework, Sednaya prison dose not only serve as a sight of criminal activity, but as an example of the state’s repressive authority, where modern authoritarian systems merge with a historical legacy of control and domination associated with prior authoritarian regimes.

From a human security<sup>2</sup> aspect, postcolonial feminism criticizes the tendency of international discourses and humanitarian institutions for generalizing “women’s issues” neglecting the economic and political frameworks that contribute to the vulnerability of women. This includes global capitalism, militarism and neo-colonial interventions that promote instability (Spivak, 1999). Postcolonial feminism also emphasizes the importance of promoting marginalized voices, prioritizing indigenous knowledge, and critically analyzing the global power dynamics that contribute to

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<sup>2</sup> Human security is notion that prioritizes the protection and dignity of individuals by ensuring their fundamental needs. Including health, food, education, and environmental sustainability, while safe guarding them from various forms of vioalnce and deprevation. It implies an approach that surpasses conventional state security. Prioritizing individual safety.

violence and oppression in societal institutions, including prisons (Mohanty, 1988; Spivak, 1999). Furthermore, it provides frameworks for analyzing the normalization of violence and oppression within contemporary modern states, illustrating how such violence serves to uphold political and social power. It also highlights that these dynamics are not simply incidental outcomes of control but are connected to historical strategies and plans that are rooted in colonialism and the authoritarian legacies it has produced. (McClintock, 1995).

Postcolonial feminist analysis provides a critical framework for understanding Sednaya prison as an institution where poor environment and violent actions along with authoritarian policies intersect with the historical legacies of colonialism, showing us a comprehensive interpretation of oppression and control within the Syrian state.

### **Intersectional Feminism**

Intersectional feminism as defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), suggest that the experiences of women cannot be fully understood through a singular perspective such as gender alone. Instead, these experiences are intricately linked with an extensive range of social and political identities, including race, class, religion, and ability. This framework enables the analysis of the complex link between violence, oppression, and discrimination within institutions like Sednaya Prison, where the personal experiences of both women and men are shaped by a combination of social and political structures.

Within the framework Sednaya Prison. This form of oppression extends beyond the boundaries of the legal institution, intertwining with wider social and political dynamics, including sectarian discrimination, the centralisation of political authority, and economic inequalities. This approach also highlights the importance of understanding that the dimensions do not function independently; instead, they interrelate to create various examples of oppression that

surpass simplistic, one-dimensional interpretations (Crenshaw,1989).

Intersectional feminism offers frameworks for understanding the varied experiences of the detainees as shaped by their diverse identities. For instance, individuals from ethnic or sectarian minorities may encounter a more severe kind of violence from those who come from dominant groups, emphasizing the necessity of examining the intersections of gender, race, class and power in the context of analyzing violations within the prison systems (Collins, 2000).

Furthermore, it also clarifies the institutional and relational dynamics that perpetuate oppression within Sednaya Prison, including the exertion of power to ensure compliance, creating an atmosphere of fear and discrimination, showing the complex relationship between individual identities and power structures (Crenshaw, 1989).

### **Fundamental Principles of The Feminist Theory**

Just like any other theory, feminism stands on several principles as follows.

#### **Gender equity**

It is a key principle of the feminist theory that argues that international politics involves supporting societal institutions and reinforces the marginalization of women in society. Accordingly, feminists' objective is to eliminate these disparities by advocating for gender justice. Weber (1994) argues that women's involvement in decision-making directly influences the reformation of global political institutions to become equal and inclusive. This requires women's involvement in decision-making in international relations policies (Tickner, 1992). Sylvester (1994) suggests that advancing gender equality in global politics relies on the critical examination

of the impact of laws and institutions on women. Where Wibben (2011) adds that feminist theory redefines the concept of power to include the capacity to protect and promote individual rights within international structure.

#### Power criticism

In the feminist paradigm, wars and military are regarded as one of the main concerns, as well as any policies that prefer the use of power and violence as a solution; this also includes the economic exploitations that impact the role of women in society to a great extent. Viotti argues that feminist theory covers not only the skepticism of war and its actions but also examines their impact on individuals and particularly women, who are frequently regarded as the marginal victims (Viotti & Kuappi, 2012).

#### Power and gender in international relations

Gender is seen as one of the main concepts in the feminist analysis of international relations, in that it is used to illustrate the predominance of men in the global political sphere. The marginalization of women illustrates the male supremacy in politics, which denies women equal opportunities to engage in decision-making and influence foreign policies (Enloe, 2014). Gender functions not only as a social dimension but also as a mechanism for sustaining power dynamics and domination within the international system, where women's perspectives have traditionally been excluded from decision-making roles, and male supremacy remains a structural element of global security and political systems (Shepherd, 2008; Sylvester, 1994; Wibben, 2011).

## **Feminist Critics of Conventional Theories of IR**

Feminist views pose a challenge to the conventional thinking, including realism and idealism. Realism in international relations emphasizes military power and the balance of power between states, as they believe in the anarchy of the international structure. These theories focus on the military, political, and economic aspects, neglecting the role of women in these dynamics (Viotti & Kuappi, 2012).

### **Feminists' Criticism of Realism**

The realist theory is a state-centered, that highlights power and sovereignty concepts. Nevertheless, it has been challenged for the fact that it does not consider the roles of individuals, particularly women, in the process of constructing peace and dealing with the consequences of conflict. According to Tickner (1992), realism frequently adopts a military point of view about security, while disregarding the concept of "human security," which includes the protection of individuals from sexual abuse and exploitation, arguing that these are issues that particularly affect women the most. Gender demonstrates the use of male dominance politics to sustain power structures, leading to marginalizing women from decision making roles (Shepherd,2008).

In addition, feminism draws attention to the ways in which realist discourse is utilized to maintain patriarchal systems that prevent women from holding positions that involve decision-making. Wibben (2011) demonstrates that male dominance is an inherent component of global political and security systems, rather than a mere incidental outcome.

### **Feminists' Criticism of Idealism**

While idealism aims to promote international cooperation and peace, feminists criticize it for neglecting to address the structural causes of gender inequality within international organizations. Idealism frequently ignores the fact that women in developing nations confront multiple obstacles as a result of both gender systems and international policies imposed by the wealthy countries (Enloe, 1989). Even international institutions including the United Nations that are seen as one of the instruments of idealism frequently tend to neglect promoting gender equality in their practices and policies (Sylvester, 1994). As for that Shepherd (2008) highlights the necessity of acknowledging women's roles in humanitarian missions and diplomatic negotiations, moving beyond the conventional emphasis on male leaders.

Fundamental ideas like power and sovereignty are re-examined through the lens of feminism. According to feminist criticism, power is not limited to military or economic power, but rather, it involves the capacity of individuals and communities to accomplish their objectives in a non-oppressive condition (Tickner, 2001).

From a feminist point of view, sovereignty is not merely about the power of the state, but rather, it is about social justice and equality within the state boundaries themselves. According to Sjoberg (2013), feminism draws attention to the unseen roles that women play in international relations. These positions include those of peacemakers, victims of violence, and participants in social movements that aim to reform authoritarian regimes. And to challenge the conventional views that limitedly focused on the male leaders and powerful entities, feminism also highlights the importance of acknowledging the contributions women make to humanitarian missions and diplomatic negotiations.

## **Sednaya Prison and Human Rights Violations Against Women**

The prison of Sednaya is a widely known facility in Syria. The facility is recognized as a hub of systemic torture, severe human rights abuses, and oppression. The prison was administered by the former Syrian authorities, located near the capital, Damascus. “Human slaughterhouse” was the name that was given to this prison by numerous accounts, marking it with systemic abuses and brutal executions.

A report of Amnesty International (2017) highlighted that the arbitrary detentions of activists, political opponents, and those who were suspected to be affiliated with the opposition movements since 2011, with the beginning of the Syrian revolution against the regime. They were subjected to brutal conditions, described by the overpacked cells, inadequate healthcare, and starvation.

While most detainees in Sednaya are male, women have also experienced significant violations, both within the prison walls, during the arrests and interrogations and even after their release. Testimonies from survivors indicate that sexual abuse has been used as a mechanism of humiliation and psychological devastation. And a significant number of women were subjected to rape during interrogation; these practices were documented by the Syrian Network for Human Rights (2021) as a kind of collective punishment. Also, women who were able to survive the prison cells were subjected to a large amount of social humiliation in their communities because of their arrest, particularly if they were accused of committing unacceptable acts as part of the investigation (Enloe, 1989). A (2019) Syrian Center for Justice and Accountability research claims that women survivors of Sednaya prison describe terrible events, including isolation, deprivation of communication with their families, and degrading treatment that aimed to violate and break their will. These testimonials expose the hidden aspects of repressive policies inside the prison, highlighting the part that

women play not as victims but as witnesses to unforgettable crimes (Sjoberg, 2013).

### **Sexual Violence**

Evidence of routine sexual abuse as a tool of control:

Several human rights reports, including the 2017 report by Amnesty International, have proven that rape is used routinely in Sednaya prison as a way to humiliate and control people.

Witness testimony:

“I was taken to the guards’ room at night. They repeatedly assaulted me. Months later, I discovered that I was pregnant, and I had no choice but to bear this burden in silence for fear of punishment.”

### **Motherhood and Childbirth in Prison**

Harsh conditions during pregnancy and childbirth:

Women disclosed the horrific circumstances they encountered during pregnancy and childbirth. According to one detainee’s testimony:

“When I gave birth to my child, I was in a dark, dirty cell. I didn’t know how to deal with the situation, and I wasn’t allowed to see a doctor or receive any kind of medical care.” (SNHR, 2021).

### **Psychological Manipulation and Threats to Children**

Use of children to intimidate mothers:

Additional testimonies suggested that guards used children as a means of psychological manipulation against their mothers.

Witness testimony:

“The guards told me that they would take my child away from me if I didn’t comply with their orders. I lived in constant fear.”

In Sednaya, children who were born as a consequence of sexual assault were subjected to exceptionally severe conditions. Their

upbringing was characterized by a hostile environment in which they were regarded as just another source of pressure on their mothers. Also, children who are born into these circumstances frequently encounter challenges regarding their identity. After their release from prison, many children are left without any documentation that confirms their identity, making them vulnerable to social marginalization (Enloe, 1989). These stories highlight only a part of the horrific atrocities that women face, using gender as a tool for oppression and humiliation. In order to clarify the circumstances at Sednaya prison, one must go beyond the conventional ideas of international relations and toward a more comprehensive approach. This calls for using feminist methods that highlight individuals as well as the human and gender sides of repressive regimes, that expose the hidden aspects that idealism and realism failed to reveal.

### **Feminist Analysis and Discussion**

Within the walls of Sednaya prison, women are subjected to a variety of gender-based forms of abuse and exploitation, which is seen as a manifestation of the actions of authoritarian regimes and systematic gender-based oppressions<sup>3</sup>. One of the main aims of the feminist analysis is to get an understanding of the ways in which patriarchal regimes not only exclude women but also use their bodies and identities as instruments of control and degradation. The experiences of women in the prison of Sednaya, highlight a different form of oppression in contrast to male detainees. Women were denied medical care during their childbirth and pregnancy, and well as being subjected to sexual violence and psychological abuse. Referring to the testimonies discussed above, sexual assaults and rape were not a result of random incidents, but rather deliberate strategies used intentionally to dehumanize and oppress women (Amnesty International, 2017). Feminists discuss that these kinds of actions are

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<sup>3</sup> Gender-based oppression describes the systematic discrimination or injustice that individuals encounter do due to their gender identity, resulting in unequal rights and opportunities and maintaining unbalanced social roles within society.

examples of gender-based violence that informs the patriarchal control in both society and prison.

Feminists analyze power and criticize how patriarchal governments use gender to preserve male dominance in the system. Sednaya prison is a striking example of these dynamics, where it exemplifies a place where female inmates are subjected to a different kind of brutal torture as a symbol of opposition. The use of sexual assaults as a way of humiliation and women's disempowerment to tighten the authoritarian regime's grip on women and their families getting increasingly common. Through the feminist lens of the international relations theory, it is rather possible to spot how these activities contribute to maintaining the gender inequality and to strictly establish male-dominated structures (Tickner, 1992).

The consequences of these gendered violations extended beyond the boundaries of the prison walls. Women who were released from prison were subjected to social prejudice, which marginalized them even further within their communities. Human security and the protection on individuals from different forms of violence is given a higher priority in the feminist approach, where it highlights the limitation of the traditional security concept that disregards the humanitarian side of the issue (Enloe, 2014). A more comprehensive framework that takes the lived realities of excluded groups into account shall be developed as a response to the problems that women faced in Sednaya prison. And a light must be shed on the conventional ideas of international security.

Discussing the circumstances at the prison of Sednaya, makes it brightly obvious that the conventional theories of international relations, such as realism and liberalism, are not able to offer an accurate and complete explanation of this complicated phenomenon. For feminists, this is the result of their state-centric and sovereignty-oriented concentrations, which totally ignore the human and gender aspects of the problem. In that form, feminists interpret the concepts

of power and sovereignty differently from the traditional views. In this perspective, power includes not only the strength of the military but also the capacity to enforce silence and humiliation, as exemplified in the prison of Sednaya. Sovereignty is often used as a justification for suppressing resistance, as these violations are considered part of the state's mechanisms of control for realists; therefore, it is essential to adopt new approaches that prioritize social justice and individual safety (Tickner, 2001).

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative methodology, examining the testimonies of Sednaya prison survivors alongside reports from international and regional human rights organizations, including Amnesty International (2016;2017), the Syrian network for Human Rights (SNHR, 2021), and the Syrian Center for justice and Accountability (SCJA, 2019).

#### **Firstly – Selection of Testimonies and Reports**

A selection of testimonials provided in published and documented human rights reports was made for the following reasons:

**Reliability:** testimonies were chosen from reports published by organizations employing strict verification processes including multiple sources such as repeated testimonies, medical records, interviews with detainees' families.

Amnesty international's 2017 reports documented over 30 testimonies from women who survived detention in Sednaya, while the Syrian Network for Human Rights reported at least 20 additional testimonies addressing sexual violence. Additionally, the

Syrian Center for Justice and Accountability concentrated on around 15 detailed testimonies concerning women and children within Syrian prisons.

**Diversity:** the study aimed to incorporate stories that represent varied circumstances, including women who experienced violations during

questioning, those during pregnancy and childbirth, and those post-release facing societal shame. This diversity exemplifies the various aspects of violence.

Contextual representation: the objective was to acquire a normative sample (purposive sampling) rather than a statistical or numerical sample. This is to reflect the common patterns of violations, consistent with feminist research methodologies that emphasizes on the victims' experience as a mean to understand power dynamics (Enloe, 1989).

#### Secondly - Analytical Method

Thematic analysis was utilized as the main method for understanding testimonies and documents. These analysis were performed in multiple phases:

Preliminary Coding: Recurring keywords and phrases found in survivors' testimonies included "humiliation", "sexual violence", "isolation", "lack of health care", and "stigma".

Combining: the codes were categorized into primary themes that indicate patterns of violence: sexual violence, psychological violence, denial of medical care, and threats to children.

Theoretical Connection: these themes were compared with fundamental concepts in the feminist theory of international relations ( such as "Human security" and "the body as a tool of power") to illustrate how the testimonies highlight the weaknesses of the conventional theories.

Critical Interpretation: an intersectional feminist perspective demonstrates that oppression is not only gender-based but also connects with political identity and social status.

**Table 1: Linking testimonies to thematic dimensions and feminist concepts**

<b>Verified Testimonies</b>	<b>Thematic Dimensions</b>	<b>Related Feminist Concepts</b>
“I was raped during interrogation... The aim was to humiliate me and force me to confess” (Amnesty, 2017)	Sexual violence as a tool of humiliation and control	Body as Site of Power – A critique of the traditional concept of security (Tickner, 1992)
“I birthed my child in a dark cell with no medical care” (SNHR, 2021)	Denial of health care – a violation of reproductive rights	Human Security – Health and Reproductive Rights in Feminism (Enloe, 2014)
“They threatened to take my child away from me if I did not obey their orders” (SCJA, 2019)	Exploiting children psychological pressure	Patriarchal and authoritarian structures – motherhood as a tool of oppression (Sjoberg, 2013)
“Following my release, I was marginalized by society and deemed a disgrace to my family.”	Social Stigma – Post-Prison Violence	Intersectionality – the intersection of gender, culture, and politics (Crenshaw, 1991)

#### Lastly – Ethical Considerations

The testimonials were seen as actual witnesses of the crimes, rather than as a “statistical data”. This methodology aligns with the feminist perspective that opposes the re-marginalization of survivors or the quantification of their suffering. Instead, prioritizing their experiences in the analytical framework (Sjoberg, 2013).

The research aims to integrate strict methodology with ethical responsibility, highlighting that the analysis’s objective is not merely to detect violations but also to expose how patriarchy and authoritarianism use the female body as a mean of conflict and control.

## **Conclusion**

This article effectively employs the feminist theory to analyze the gendered oppressions that were experienced by women in Sednaya Prison, highlighting how systemic violence is deeply embedded in the patriarchal structures. Through the survivors' testimonies, it demonstrates that acts of sexual violence and psychological abuse are not random and unintentional incidents but rather deliberate tools of domination. Feminist theory, as applied in this article, reveals the unique forms of violence faced by women, which are often overlooked and neglected in the conventional international relations frameworks (Tickner, 2001). This directly addresses the first research question by showing how feminist analysis sheds light on the mechanisms of oppression and their gendered dimensions.

Furthermore, the article criticizes the traditional international relations theories like realism and idealism for neglecting the human security issues, particularly the ones affecting women. This was by defining the concept of power as the ability of the regimes to enforce control through systemic violence and by suppressing the marginalized groups. Feminism also expanded the understanding of security beyond state-oriented understanding and introduced the importance of highlighting the individual safety and empowerment, especially for women, in creating more inclusive and effective security frameworks (Sjoberg, 2013). This article provides an answer to the second research question by demonstrating how gendered violence<sup>4</sup> in the prison of Sednaya shapes our understanding of human security and power dynamics in authoritarian regimes.

Lastly, this article is not only skeptical about the ineffectiveness of the conventional theories but also advocates for a feminist approach

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<sup>4</sup> Gendered based violence refers to any act or a threat of violence directed at an individual due to their sex or gender identity, including physical, psychological, sexual, or social harm. It might be interpreted as an instrument employed to sustain unequal power dynamics and gender inequality.

that prioritizes gender equality and emphasizes human security. With that, it calls for a re-evaluation of international relations theories to address the complicated realities that are faced by the marginalized groups in oppressive authoritarian regimes. It also demonstrates that the use of gender-based violence in authoritarian contexts not only affects individual victims but also reflects structural challenges in traditional concepts of security, calling for reconsideration of policies and approaches aimed to protect vulnerable groups (Shepherd, 2008; Weber, 2010).

For further research directions, the findings indicate the importance of continuing studies that integrate the feminist theory more with practical cases, to explore policy mechanisms and preventive interventions, evaluate methods of accountability and justice, and enhance understanding the relation between gender-based violence and power structures.

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