



SELF-SUFFICIENCY. Elham Karami sews a protective face mask at a workshop of Bavar charity in Tehran, Iran. As the coronavirus pandemic ravages Iran, a women's group hopes to empower its members by helping them make and sell face masks. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

Iranian women's group empowers amid pandemic by making masks

By **Vahid Salemi**
The Associated Press

TEHHRAN, Iran — As the coronavirus pandemic ravages Iran, a women's group hopes to empower its members by helping them make and sell face masks.

The organization called “Bavar,” or “Belief” in Farsi, formed in 2016, allowing women looking for work to make handicrafts with donated sewing machines. It gave widows and others a way to earn cash in a country whose anemic economy only worsened since, two years later, President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Sara Chartabian, the founder of Bavar, said the group tries to teach women to be self-sufficient as unemployment and inflation remain high.

“We teach them fishing instead of giving them a fish,” Chartabian said.

The pandemic, however, has seen the demand for handicrafts drop. Iran has more than 1.4 million reported cases of the virus, with more than 1.2 million recoveries and nearly 58,000 deaths — with officials acknowledging the true toll could be far higher. Meanwhile, the women in need still had to earn money to support their families.

So the women at Bavar decided to begin making cloth face masks. Today, some 50 women sit with their sewing machines, creating two-ply cloth masks. A third layer can be added with material sold in local pharmacies.

Elham Karami, a 41-year-old woman who works five days a week to support her two sons, said she makes around 10,000 rials (3 U.S. cents) for each face mask she sews. Clients for Bavar include companies and others.

“I am grateful for this (organization) because they turned me into a skilled tailor for free,” Karami said. “They allowed me to use a sewing machine to learn how to sew. They also provided materials for me to work on.”

Depending on the order size, Bavar then sells the masks for as much as 250,00 rials (96 U.S. cents) apiece.

In Iran, where the capital of Tehran has been hard-hit by the virus, authorities have mandated mask-wearing. While fines for not wearing a mask remain low and poorly enforced, the public increasingly has been seen wearing them.

Chartabian said Bavar's sales help support buying materials, sewing machines, and other matters. The organization also provides women with psychological counselling and other support. She declined to offer specific sales figures for the masks so far, but said every bit helped support women in need.

“Maybe the money is not so much, but we provide them services such as psychological counselling and also equipment,” she said.

“One Good Thing” is a series that highlights individuals whose actions provide glimmers of joy in hard times — stories of people who find a way to make a difference, no matter how small.

Woman's salve for devastation of Lebanese blast: 100 dolls

By **Mariam Fam**
The Associated Press

In the wake of a massive explosion that devastated Beirut, 93-year-old Yolande Labaki sought a way to help bring healing to the Lebanese capital.

The internationally recognized painter's solution was to make dolls — 100 of them, distributed to children traumatized or otherwise affected by the destruction.

Her inspiration was another Lebanese tragedy, etched in her memory: the look on the face of one of her grandchildren, then about three, when his home was damaged during the country's 1975-1990 civil war.

“He saw all his toys on the ground amid the rubble and asked me: ‘Who broke my toys?’ His eyes were filled with tears,” she said.

So when a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate stored at the Beirut port ignited and blew up on August 4 — killing more than 200 people, injuring thousands, and leaving a swath of the city in ruins — Labaki thought of the children, and how “they, too, must be asking who broke their toys.”

Labaki gave herself a challenge, and a deadline.

“I said: ‘God, if you give me the power, I will make 100 of these by Christmas,’” she recalled.

And thus began a monthslong labor of love.

Getting the doll's face just right — she wanted to make sure it wouldn't scare the children — was difficult. The great-grandmother painstakingly embroidered features using a sewing machine, stuffed fabric with cotton, and tailored tiny dresses. And then non-governmental organizations helped distribute the dolls.

Two went to the daughters of Beirut resident Georges Chlawuit. The blast blew out windows at the family home, he said.

“At least she thought of these poor kids after what has happened in the explosion,” he said. “May god keep her and give her good health. If it weren't for how the Lebanese people came together, we wouldn't have been able to stand back on our feet again.”

His daughters, he said, have been sleeping with their new dolls.

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https://seattlefoundation.smapply.org/prog/2021_tateuchi_scholarship

Attention, Multnomah County renters!

Your eviction moratorium protections are changing

Starting February 1, 2021, Multnomah County renters will be covered by the Oregon statewide eviction moratorium, which protects tenants from eviction for nonpayment or without cause until June 30, 2021. The repayment grace period also ends on June 30. This means that renters will have until July 1, 2021, to pay back the money they owe.

You must take action to stay protected

To be protected from eviction for nonpayment or eviction without cause, sign and return the “Declaration of Financial Hardship for Eviction Protection” form to your landlord stating that you are unable to afford your rent.

Get the form

You can download the form at **multco.us/covid-eviction**. You can also pick up a paper copy of the form at any Multnomah County Library location.

Return the form soon

You can return the form to your landlord in person or by mail. You can also take a photo of the form and send it to your landlord by email or text message.

Renters are encouraged to submit the form to landlords as soon as possible. Although landlords are required to give their renters information about the moratorium protections with a copy of the declaration form, you are encouraged to submit the form even before receiving the notice.

Learn more at **multco.us/covid-eviction**



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News page advertising deadlines for our next three issues are:

March 1, 2021 edition:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, February 24 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, February 25 at 1:00pm

April 5, 2021 edition:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, March 31 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, April 1 at 1:00pm

May 3, 2021 edition:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, April 28 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, April 29 at 1:00pm