Maranlou, Sahar. Access to Justice in Iran: Women, Perceptions, and Reality. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 263p. \$99.

Reviewed by Benjamin J. Keele*

¶92 Sahar Maranlou, a postdoctoral researcher at Oxford University, specializes in Iranian studies and Islamic law and gender. Her book, *Access to Justice in Iran: Women, Perceptions, and Reality*, appears to be based on her 2012 doctoral thesis at the University of Warwick.²² In my experience, books based on theses and dissertations tend to follow a fairly regimented structure: they have a very thorough literature review, discuss a discrete research project, and include more academic jargon than I would like. *Access to Justice in Iran* confirms all these expectations; it is a valuable piece of research in a neglected field, but it would be most useful to specialists in Iranian law.

¶93 Maranlou spends about half of the text providing conceptual background on different theories of justice. She particularly distinguishes between procedural justice, which is concerned with fair processes regardless of the ultimate outcome, and substantive justice, which is concerned with just results in each individual case. While Western legal systems mostly worry about procedural justice, Maranlou suggests Islamic legal traditions place greater emphasis on substantive justice. How-

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^{22.} About, Sahar Maranlou, http://www.saharmaranlou.com/index.php/about/ [https://perma.cc/CH8L-QBLZ].

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ever, when Maranlou examines the Iranian legal system and the extent to which it provides justice to women, she finds it lacking in how it provides procedural or substantive justice.

¶94 Despite imperatives for a strong justice system in Islamic legal thought, the Iranian legal system Maranlou describes needs substantial reform to achieve those principles. Corruption is a major concern, and persistent cultural norms discourage women from pursuing legal remedies, especially in family disputes. The Iranian judiciary and legal profession is working to establish more robust legal aid programs, but they are not yet enough or sufficiently well known to women to provide adequate access to the courts.

¶95 Maranlou surveyed and interviewed 120 Iranian women in Tehran to learn how they perceived the legal system and what recourse they had to it. She concludes that Iranian women generally understand their legal rights, but do not know how to vindicate those rights in court if need be. She also detects a cultural distrust of the courts and a common view that the courts are one of the last places a woman should go for help in a dispute.

¶96 Maranlou concludes that the Iranian legal community should empower women with more information on how women can protect their rights through the legal system, and that cultural taboos against women invoking legal protections should be challenged.

¶97 This book will be worthwhile for libraries supporting strong research programs in women's rights and Middle Eastern legal issues. It is probably too specialized for basic collections on Islamic law.