

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Woman, Life, Freedom

Matt V · Wednesday, March 22nd, 2023

Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old young woman, was beaten to death by the Iranian morality police for wearing her head scarf loosely. Mahsa Amini who grew up in the Saqqez Kurdistan province, in northwestern Iran was visiting Tehran with her family when she was stopped by the morality police because parts of her hair were showing. Mahsa was getting ready to start university that month and was taken into custody by the morality police for wearing her hijab improperly. She was beaten while in custody, and 2 hours after being detained, her family was notified that Mahsa was in a coma. She passed away a couple days later from, according to authorities, a heart attack (Wendy 1).

The Islamic regime of Iran came to power in 1979 after overthrowing King Reza 'Reza Shah'. The main reason for King Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to step down was his modern views, his support for the United States and foreign nations whose views did not align with those living in Iran. He would also not give any attention to religion and wasn't concerned about making it part of his and or his people's daily lives. The people of Iran are Shia Muslims and King Mohammad Reza, according to Ruhollah Khomeini and his supporters, had no respect or any interest in this religion. The protests of 1978-79 started with students at religious schools coming to the streets, then later Iranian youth, most of whom were immigrants, the majority coming from rural communities. Violence occurred in many of these protests because the king would not step down, many protestors and police were killed. Workers from all industries went on strike. Casualties amongst protestors and violence began to arise in the streets and the king finally stepped down. King Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was suffering from cancer while these protests were going on, fled to America to pursue his medical treatments (Randjbar-Daemi 30).

With the Islamic Regime coming to power came very strict Islamic laws. These laws impacted women more than anyone. Laws that control the way women dress and their behavior. In fact, the only countries that have mandatory hijab laws in the world are Iran and Afghanistan. Women must wear a headscarf while in public. Women cannot sing, work in certain fields, and politics is mainly male dominated. In a recent interview, Sattari, a young woman in Iran, explains, "For more than 40 years the Islamic regime has taken away human rights, suffocated women's rights, stole a countries wealth, destroyed its economy and culture and they still haven't had enough, they are murdering and imprisoning everyone that stands against them."

Women cut their hair to protest and mourn the death of Mahsa Amini. "This is not about Islam. We are all followers of Islam and respect the religion. This is about freedom and choice. This is about a religious orthodoxy that co-opted a popular uprising and took a nation hostage. This nation has

been holding us captive for over 40 years.” (Aslani). Women and men are marching on the streets of not only Iran, but all around the world to raise their voices and stop this violence and control of the government. On social media, as a sign of protest for human and women’s rights women are cutting their hair and creating awareness for this issue. The protestors hope to start a revolution for those who have sacrificed their lives for this cause.



A growing number of women are removing their mandatory head scarves & waving them on the streets of Tehran: a courageous symbol of civil protest against the hijab; forced on women in Iran for decades. Six women so far and it seems they’re just starting! #??????_??????_?????? (Twitter user Omid Memarian)

Six thousand miles away from the United States, the morality police have set up stations in every street and metro station in Iran, where they check women for their hijab and arrest those who are not following the strict rules. Amini is just one of many women who have lost their lives fighting for freedom, equality, and human rights. The UN nor any other organization has taken any action in helping those who have been imprisoned or are in custody for showing parts of their hair. In the upcoming world cup in Qatar, the national Iranian football team has decided to stand with the people of Iran and not sing the national anthem of Iran. The team stated that they will stand with those protesting the death of Mahsa Amini. This act of bravery can lead to being heavily punished

by the Islamic Republic leaders of Iran (Will 1).

The Iranian government has taken away internet access from all Iranians in order to silence the people speaking out against the injustices. They have filtered all social media applications, but despite all the government's efforts, Iranian's have found different ways to connect with the world and raise their voices. "We use filtershekan (filter breakers) to connect to the internet, they have filtered all app stores, every social media networks, all games, and everything that would allow us to reach to outside world." (Aslani). "Iran has taken 15,000 protestors to prisons and has announced to give them the death penalty, they are doing this to deafen and silence us. we need help, and no one is coming to our help." (Sattari). An Iranian hacker group was able to hack into the Iranian nuclear energy program and they have given the Islamic Republic only 24 hours to release all the prisoners arrested for political reasons and if Iran refuses to comply, they will publish all the confidential nuclear energy information publicly. This is just one of the many attempts from the Iranian hacker groups to protect many Iranian citizens. The hackers were able to hack into the national television stations and display the message "Women, Life, Freedom" with pictures of Mahsa Amini and other young women who passed away protesting against the Islamic Republic. Authorities use excessive force; they use metal bullets and tear gas to silence protestors. At least 8 protestors died in the first couple weeks of the protests. Most of them were young women raising their voices against the terrorizing republic who has no value for human rights (SyndiGate Media Inc 1).

Neda Sharghi, an American citizen who was traveling to Iran with her brother Emad Sharghi, when suddenly her brother was taken hostage by the government for political reasons. Her brother is now doing 10 years in political prison for "spying," according to Iranian authorities. She has made many efforts; she has spoken during UN meetings. Months ago, the president of the United States issued an executive order saying that hostage-taking was a national emergency, although so far there hasn't been any attempts by the American government to release American and European citizens imprisoned for political reasons (CQ Roll Call 1-2).

The people of Iran are healing and protesting against Islamic Republic of Iran by not purchasing products from companies that either support or have any relationship with the government. According to a recent interview, prices have decreased 50% or even more on products from companies with a relationship with Ruhollah Khomeini and his supporters. Many protestors stopped working for companies with any relationship to the government and resigned from their positions (Sattari).

The journalist Allan Hogarth of Amnesty International, a leading global human rights organization, explains that "The brave women who are currently taking a stand against these sexist laws, know the risks they are undertaking. Iranian women are uploading pictures of themselves removing their hijabs to protest severe restrictions that prohibit women from exposing their hair in public." The government declared July 12 to be "Hijab and Chastity Day," which means activities will be performed to promote the laws which mandate the hijab for females. Men are standing in solidarity with Iranian women as they remove their headscarves to protest the day. Iran severely restricts women's rights; all women are required to cover their heads in public and those who do not cover their heads or expose some of their hair while covering their heads risk fines or even imprisonment. Three young Iranian women, Monireh, Yasaman and Mojgan, are currently serving more than 30 years in prison simply for handing out flowers to female passengers on a metro train in Tehran whilst unveiled. "The women were filmed, sharing their hopes for a future where all women in Iran would have the freedom to choose what to wear" (Maya). Iranian women are

showing no fear, even risking their lives, 30+ year jail sentences and other punishment by authorities. They are tired of the more than 40 years of living under fear and having unequal and inhumane laws shoved down their throats. “Iranian women will shake the clerical regime by removing their hijab and taking to the streets across Iran to say #No2Hijab. This is called Women Revolution. In Iran, #WalkingUnveiled is a crime. Iranian men will also join us” (Masih Alinejad). ‘Woman, Life, Freedom’ Iranian women are healing from the brutality and harsh rules of the morality police through protesting and civil disobedience. They hope to cause a revolution in hopes to regain freedom for the generations of women whom it affects most and whom many were killed and brutally beaten by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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