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## Iranian Protests

BY KALI FOLLAND

**T**HE WORLD WATCHES as Iranian women in Iran are being abused, tortured, and even killed by the Iranian government for peaceful protests. No society is free if half of the population is deemed under control and denied self-expression. In 1979, the hijab became mandatory for Muslim women to wear after the Islamic revolution, leading to the overthrow of the shah and the installment of Ayatollah Khomeini as Iran's supreme leader.

The gatherings or protests are an echo that has erupted in Iran in response to the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who the Iranian police had detained. Whether it is in Istanbul, Los Angeles, or anywhere else

in the world, protests include striking words and images created by women for women's equality. Chants of "Women, life, freedom!" and women taking scissors to their hair fill the media. When Iranian women saw what happened with Mahsa, they saw themselves and knew it could potentially happen to them.

School girls in Iran have taken off their head scarves and waved them around in retaliation. During one of the protests in Iran, they were chanting "death to the dictator," and despite a state breakdown, protests continued. According to Amnesty International, at least fifty-two people have been killed during the protests, while many have been arrested and detained. The Iranian Society for the Rights of Children had said twenty-eight children have been killed at the hands of the government.

Protests remain rampant in the streets and have crossed over to high schools and universities. According to The Guardian, Professor of Iranian Studies at Soas University of London, Annabelle Sreberby said: "Women's issues have long been a catalyst for broader political action in Iran. This could be it. It could be the moment when people motivated by all the problems facing Iran today, like rising inflation, ecological crisis and lack of democratic participation, coalesce around these women's issues to challenge the regime."

Iranian women built a place for themselves online over a decade ago. Some of the most anti-regime movements were created by Iranian Journalist and exile Masih Alinejad, which encouraged women to post hijab-less selfies on social media. The removal of the hijab, in this case, has become a universal sign of rejecting the regime and unifying Iranians across the country. Among the videos and hashtags of women without their hijabs was Sepideh Rashno, a twenty-eight year old who was detained and forced to publicly apologize on national television after a video of her on a bus with her hair uncovered went viral.



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