

SOCIAL UNREST IN IRAN FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF MAHSA AMINI



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A wave of protests took place in Iran following the tragic death of Mahsa Amini. The young woman died following a violent arrest by the Iranian morality police. The country has since witnessed unprecedented public demonstrations in strong condemnation of the barbaric acts of the morality police and against the regime in general.

The Iranian morality police had been set up following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 to enforce the regime's new Islamic laws. The morality police are a powerful and feared institution in Iranian society due to their excessive and arbitrary use of force against civilians and their infamous re-education centre known to be a place of torture.

Mahsa Amini's death followed her arrest by the morality police for allegedly violating the Iranian dress code imposed on women. The 22-year-old was detained on the grounds that the mandatory hijab law was not correctly followed. Mahsa was visiting the capital city of Tehran from Iranian Kurdistan with her family. Her mother and brother, who were present at the time of the arrest, assured the police that she was wearing her hijab correctly. They claim they were not provided with a sufficient explanation as to why Mahsa was taken into custody.

Tensions arose regarding the circumstances of her death between the human rights defenders and the Iranian regime. The United Nations declared that Mahsa's head had been hit and knocked against a car. Following her death, photos of Mahsa leaked on social media where she can be seen bleeding from her ear. According to the New York Times, several physicians who had access to the photo argued that the bleedings were an indicator of a "concussion from injuries to the head", which supports the claims that she was beaten and tortured inside the re-education centre where she was taken.



The Iranian authorities have opposed such claims, stating that Mahsa died from a heart attack and that her death was “unfortunate”, denying any implications.

ACHRS condemns that the Universal Declaration for Human Rights was violated. The treatment of Mahsa itself violates article 3, which ensures the intrinsic right to life, liberty and security are maintained. Article 5 was also violated as any person is protected against “torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The ACHRS denounces the treatment of Mahsa in custody and the violation of her human rights by the morality police.

The death of Mahsa has catalysed mass protests. Men and women are taking to the streets of Iran - burning hijabs as a symbol of their anger towards the Mollah's Regime. Euronews has reported eight deaths following brutal repressive tactics of Iranian officials in response to protestors. Political analysts are forecasting the number of deaths to rise as the regime is more likely to accentuate repression rather than comply with social demands.

The current situation in Iran is analysed by some as a key moment in the fight for more social freedom and more respect for human rights. The mandatory hijab law is directly targeted by the recent waves of protest and is a fundamental aspect of the regime's ideology. However, reforming such an intrinsic aspect of the regime by altering the women's dress code would undermine the government itself. Given the domestic and international outrage caused by the brutal treatment of Mahsa and her death, such changes are necessary. There is significant international support from world leaders and human rights organisations for the social movement criticising Iranian social norms, lack of freedom and its morality police.

Today the United Nations held its 77th general assembly, where world leaders took the stage one after the other to develop their views on current world affairs. The Iranian leader, Ebrahim Raïssi reasserted Iran's Islamic values and argued that the western world does not have a monopoly on safeguarding Human Rights. Whereas American President Joe Biden expressed solidarity towards the Iranians fighting for their freedom.

ACHRS joins all leaders and spokespersons who expressed support for the Iranian risking their lives for their freedom. We denounce the dominance of the use of penal punishment by Iranian authorities, who also explicitly repress the freedom of expression within the nation.

ACHRS joins the global condemnation of the Iranian morality police's brutal and arbitrary repression. We also encourage an increase in transparency regarding the actions of Iranian authorities to better pave the path to respect and justice in the MENA region.