

Woman, Life, Freedom

The protests began in the wake of the killing of 22 year old Kurdish-Iranian woman, **Mahsa Amini**, at the hands of the regime's so-called "morality police" or "guidance patrol" on account of her alleged failure to adhere to the rules regarding mandatory hijab. At first, the protests centred on the issue of mandatory hijab, as well as the regime's empowering of brutal militias to enforce the policy, but soon escalated into calls for an outright end to the entire authoritarian system of theocratic rule.



Despite the initial apparent dumbfoundedness on the part of the authorities at the protests' spread; the enthusiasm and zeal with which they were greeted in many quarters, with the country's women taking a leading role; as well as their continuation, as days turned to weeks then to months, the regime soon moved to its default recourse and launched a brutal clampdown on the protesters and dissident currents.

This has resulted in the killing of around 600 people (including more than 70 minors), the execution of at least four more, and the arrest and detention of around 20,000 people – many of whom were subjected to maltreatment and torture during their incarceration.

The prominence of women at the forefront of these protests has led to their targeting and singling-out by the regime's enforcers for especially horrific treatment. Countless women have been blinded, injured, and maimed by the regime's enforcers, while their calls for freedom have been perversely seen as a green light by these same thugs to sexually abuse, rape, and torture them upon their arrest. The forced disappearance of protesters has become commonplace. The battered and mutilated bodies of many women have been found days after their disappearance, and the families of those killed are then themselves intimidated and attacked during subsequent attempts to hold a funeral or mourning ceremony.

The general growing antipathy among Iranian people towards the ruling regime and the broad inclusiveness of the core “Woman, Life, Freedom” slogan allowed for the drawing-in of a large swathe of Iranian society to the protest movement. Furthermore, and importantly, this movement was not a stand alone phenomenon... It represented a direct continuation of previous recent popular uprisings in the country in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

A central thread running throughout these uprisings has been the catastrophic and ever-worsening economic crisis in Iran, which is primarily the end-result of the regime’s implementation of neoliberal economic policies from the early-1990s onwards. In the aftermath of the disastrous Iran-Iraq War – a conflict it can be legitimately stated that both countries are still reeling from today – the Iranian government moved sharply away from its until-then largely state-controlled economy and set about essentially implementing economic shock therapy and IMF/World Bank-prescribed overhauls. (In Iraq, Saddam Hussein’s solution to largely the same problem was to try and recoup Iraq’s losses by invading Kuwait...)

According to official government statistics, more than 40% of the country’s population lives below the poverty line – but believed to be much worse in reality. This crisis is compounded by endemic corruption and cronyism, all overseen and held in place by a fiercely repressive dictatorship which can be legitimately characterised as reactionary and misogynistic.

After six months of upheaval, the resolve and will of the long-suffering Iranian people is manifest...And it is no exaggeration to state the country is poised on the cusp of radical change.

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Committee for Defence of the Iranian Peoples Rights campaigns for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy in Iran. CODIR was established in 1981 by a group of British labour and trade union activists in collaboration with Iranian democrats living in exile in the UK.

