

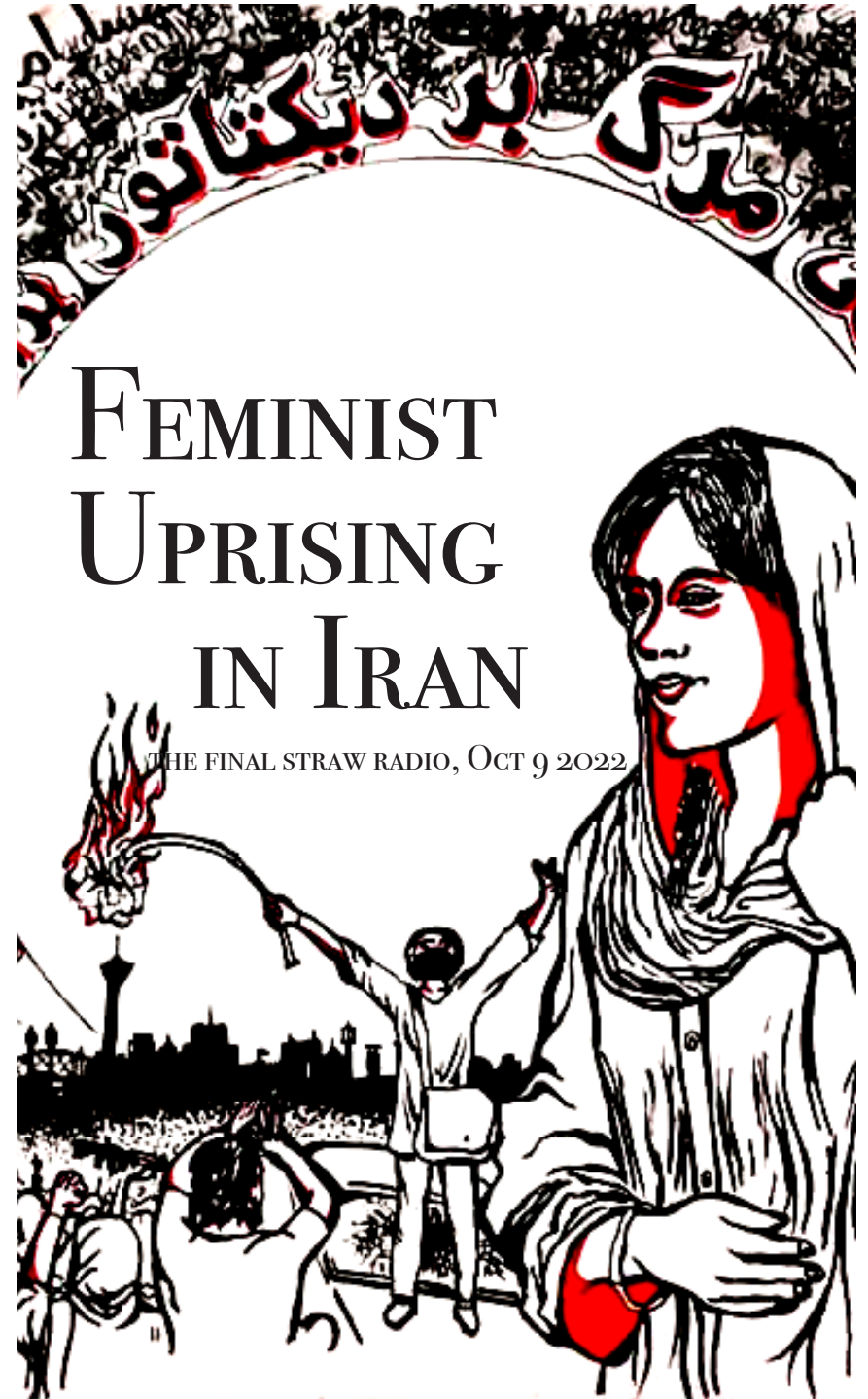
THE
**Final
Straw**
A WEEKLY ANARCHIST SHOW

The Final Straw is a weekly anarchist and anti-authoritarian radio show bringing you voices and ideas from struggle around the world.

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We're doing your fundraising at the moment for both our comrades in Afghanistan and the uprising in Iran. I did not mention this during this interview, but it has been mentioned on our social media that we have lost at least one comrade from our federation and many were arrested and injured. We are trying to support them as much as we can. We will be very grateful for people's support and solidarity. Thank you very much for having me and hope we talk when we win this revolution.

TFSR: I hope that it will happen soon.

Then, you'll hear a recent interview with Aryanam, a member of the Federation of Anarchism Era, an anarchist grouping based in Iran, Afghanistan and the diaspora to speak about the morality police murder of Zhina or Mahsa Amini and the ongoing revolt against the imposition of the hijab and general cruelty of the Islamic Republic regime. More by the Federation can be found at <https://asranarshism.com> and their fundraiser for comrades in Afghanistan & Iran at <https://asranarshism.com/donation/>

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TFSR: I'm very pleased to have Aryanam, a member of the Federation of Anarchism Era, back onto the show to share perspectives of the Federation about the unrest in Iran since the police murder of Zhina Amini. Would you please introduce yourself to the audience?

Aryanam: Hello, my name is Aryanam. I'm a member of the Federation of Anarchism Era. Thank you very much for having me again.

TFSR: It's my pleasure. Thanks for coming back on.

People, and women in particular, living under the Islamic Republic of Iran have grabbed headlines due to widespread revolts following the September 16 morality police murder of Zhina or Mahsa Amini for allegedly allowing a wisp of hair to escape her hijab. But I've also heard that it was about her jeans being too tight in the view of the pigs. Can you describe what we know of what happened and the protests that have erupted and, if you could, explain why there are two names? I've heard Zhina Amini as well as Mahsa Amini. It gets a little confusing, I think.

A: Mahsa Amini is her legal name which is recorded on her birth certificate. But among her family and friends, she was better known as Zhina which actually means "life" in the Kurdish language. Because of the discrimination that Kurdish people face, they don't put their Kurdish names on legal document if they have can help it. They use Persian name. Mahsa is Persian, but she was known as Zhina among her family and friends. From now on I would call her Zhina.

So, Zhina came to Tehran with her family from her hometown Saqqez to visit some relatives and family. At the Shahid Haghani Expressway in Tehran, she was with her brother, and they were approached by the guidance patrol, or morality police, and she got arrested because of her improper hijab. There is a picture of her before she gets arrested and her hijab was no problem, but we are talking about the police and they can do whatever with impunity, so she got arrested. Her brother protested her arrest saying that they are not from Tehran, they are new here and they should not arrest her. But the morality police said that it would only be a one-hour briefing class, and she will be released after that. But, as we know, after a few hours her family found her in the hospital in a coma. We know what happened in the police van and the police station because of all the eyewitnesses, all the other women who were arrested and saw what

Hungry, in the November 2019 uprising, people were coming out because of the hard, economic problems they faced. And in the beginning, it was just to ease those sufferings for themselves, but this time, there was no request for the government to do something because the government is not going to cancel the Islamic code of conduct, it is not gonna get rid of hijab. Sometime in the beginning of the uprising, people were chanting "Voluntary hijab," but that went away quickly, that didn't stay. It would direct the movement, the uprising toward the reformist place, and the regime could control the movement. But people realize that and they stopped that completely. All the slogans are against the regime. And it is for Woman, life, freedom.

If we cannot overthrow this regime this time, it's only because we are not armed. And one of the slogans that people are chanting all across Iran was "Woe the day we get armed!" So people realize that we need to get armed to overthrow the regime. And the problem is that the regime is armed to the teeth. And we need some sort of organization to attack, to get guns and arm ourselves. Nobody else can do about ourselves. Right now, the regime is trying to give free reigns to the militia, to the Basij, the government sanctioned militia to suppress the university student movements. If you could take over a university there might be guns that we can get and start moving there. The military bases are harder to get but the police stations have been taken over and burned down in multiple cities all across the country. So, the only problem we have is that we don't have arms. Once we get over that, this regime will fall. And after that, our problem will be stopping other forces to take over this revolution and steal it from us, like the Islamic Republic stole the 1979 revolution from us.

TFSR: Yeah, or like the Bolsheviks stole the Russian Revolution in 1917.

A: Yes, exactly.

TFSR: Well, Aryanam, thank you so much for having this conversation. I really appreciate the insights. How can people follow the work of the Federation of Anarchism Era and support the project and the folks that are in Iran and elsewhere?

A: People can follow us on Twitter, Instagram, and Telegram. Also on our website asranarchism.com. I believe you both provide links to them.

and now they want to help the Iranian people? I don't think so. It is very hypocritical and disgusting, to be honest.

TFSR: I assume that you can't see the future. But do you have a sense that this uprising in Iran against the regime will cause enough cracks to be able to sustain itself that something more permanent can come, like an actual overthrow of the regime or this has seemed like another stepping stone in that direction?

A: Yes. The uprising is still going. The regime is doing everything it can to suppress it. People are still protesting, the regime came with tanks and water cannons. Oh, I wanted to add one more thing that I just remembered when I mentioned water canons, regarding the previous question. The water cannons that the Islamic Republic used were possibly bought from Austria or Germany. These same water cannons, the anti-riot water cannons were sold to Chile during the protests and uprising, and now they are being used in Iran. Some of the pellet guns and ammunition are produced locally, but others are purchased from either China or some European countries. They're still selling to Iran. Just wanted to mention it.

So the regime is doing everything it can to suppress the uprising. They are brutal in Zahedan, in Baluchistan, and there was a very brutal suppression in Kurdistan, in Saqqez and Sanandaj. But people are still taking the streets. Right now, a very visible section of protesters are the university students and high school students, even the middle school students, the 14-15-year-olds who are going on a strike or protesting. People either arranged by themselves where to meet and organize either through their neighborhood or by meeting each other in the protests and exchanging details. It became a habit to come out every single day at a certain time and see what was happening. If there is a significant number of people coming out, we're going to have a good protest that day.

As I was saying earlier, in every single protest, every single operation we are advancing the dialogue. First, we were finished with reformism, we started going toward overthrowing the government, then it became more radical. This time it became much more radical. Never before have we had this much anger towards the police. This time people did not have any requests from the government, one of their slogans is "No more protests. This is the beginning of a revolution." People are not asking the government to do something for them, they want it gone. From the very beginning, it was like that. In the Uprising of the Thirsty, Uprising of the

happened. When she got into the [police] van, there was an altercation between the detained women and police saying that they shouldn't be arrested. Zhina was one of the people who were protesting, and the police wanted to shut the detainees up so they started beating the women inside the van. One of the eye witnesses mentioned that the police hit Zhina's head against the van wall really hard.

After that, they arrived at the police station and Zhina was not well. She didn't have color in her face, she was unsteady. This is a place where she fell down based on CCTV footage. The police chose that specific station, to not beat her again. Once again at the police station, she kept saying to the police that she didn't feel well, and then she fell down unconscious. Then she came to [consciousness] but the police were like "No, you're faking it. We know all these tricks that you guys are playing." The other women noticed that it was serious, so they started protesting and demanded help for Zhina. But the police started beating them up again to make them stop. They beat Zhina one more time. This time Zhina went unconscious for the last time, she did not recover after that. The police knew that situation and they started humping her chest and raising her leg and massaging it thinking that she just went unconscious.

In an hour or so, they got an ambulance and took her to the Kasra Hospital. But before they did that they made sure to get all the evidence that the detainee women might have from their cell phones, they might have taken pictures. The police made sure they confiscate all of it. They threatened all the detainee woman's witnessing what happened to force them to silence. Once they moved her to the Kasra Hospital, we have another eyewitness who actually told her story to a friend who retold that story on Twitter. So Zhina came to the hospital. When she arrived at the hospital, she was unconscious, she was beaten. They moved her to the special care unit and she was kept in a coma for two days and then declared dead. The police threatened the doctors, the nurses, and hospital employees to stay silent and lie to the parents about the cause of death. The clinic that admitted Zhina released a post on Instagram saying that she had heavy brain trauma. They threatened the hospital to stay silent and lie to the parents. They wanted to spin the story as a heart attack, heart failure, and brain stroke. But hacktivists managed to get access to medical data of Zhina and from that, we know that she died because of heavy brain injury and brain edema from internal bleeding. She was in a coma for a few days.

The day she got admitted into the hospital, her brother was smart

enough to contact news agencies to cover the story. And the story was already on Twitter and Persian social media on September 14, and it kept circulating. But since she was in a coma, there was hope that she would recover, people didn't have the whole story of why she got admitted to the hospital. She was declared dead two days later on September 16, in a few hours, there was a protest at the hospital. The police managed to scatter the protests with tear gas and pepper sprays and by arresting and beating the protesters. The actual protest started in Saqqez. But the police started playing all the tricks they could to make whatever was going to happen as small as possible. They had Zhina's body, and instead of taking it to Sanandaj directly, from where they could drive it to Saqqez, her hometown, they brought it to Tabriz, which is in a different province, it's in Azerbaijani province, while Sanandaj and Saqqez are in the Kurdistan province. Then they started driving with her body and stopped in the middle of the road to throw off the protesters. They gave the wrong cemetery location to avoid the protesters and they wanted to bury her body at five o'clock in the morning so they cannot gather and the funeral is small or non-existent. But her family resisted all the pressure that they were receiving from the government and they wanted to have a proper funeral.

So the crowd managed to gather and that's when the first chants started with "Marg bar dictator," which means "Death to dictators" and the other one was "Jin Jiyan Azadi," which is Kurdish for "Woman, life, freedom." This slogan has been with the Kurdish people for a long time. It started with Öcalan, with the feminist ideals that Öcalan was proposing to the PKK, that the women struggle within that party, they managed to win with Öcalan's support, and they managed to turn the PKK into a more feminist organization. And after that "Jin Jiyan Azadi" became a prominent slogan within Rojava. This is a slogan that has been in the social media and satellite TV for the Kurdish people, so it was in the back of their minds. So "Jin Jiyan Azadi" was, especially in this situation where a woman was killed because of just hijab, was chanted as a counter, including "Marg bar dictator" (Death to dictators). Women started to remove their headscarves with the support and encouragement of men right at the funeral. And from there, protesters spread to other Kurdish cities including Sanandaj. On September 18-19, the uprising spread to Tehran, Rasht, Esfahan, Karaj, Mashhad, Ilam... On September 20th, it went even further, to Sari, Tabriz, Qom, Kerman, Hamedan, and Kish.

There are so many significant cities here, they are all major cities. Something significant here is Qom and Mashhad are the ideological

serfs. But the serfs, because of their religious upbringing, resisted the fact they could have autonomy and produce and consume as they will, and they saw that as haram and even prayed that land that was given to them as haram.

So religion is not just a branch of capitalism, it is another tree in the poisonous garden that is authoritarianism. In the world we live in, we have to get rid of all of them, or we cannot be free. We cannot live in this world that is created on death. But it is not just regarding the West and a dog whistle, and is not something new. It is not something that only the West does. The Iranian right-wing fascists use Islam as a way to be racist toward Arabs. They blame Arabs after 1400 years for the problems they are having now. So this is not new. But the only way that you can differentiate them is by who's blaming the people, who's blaming the individual who's blaming the system. The anarchist way is to blame the system, blame all the authoritarian systems in the world, which is all the religions, including Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism. Graeber, in *Debt: The First 5000 Years*, mentions Hinduism and consequently, Buddhism using karma, which is basically a threat for the people to pay their debt, or they're going to become a slave in their future lives. That's how they enforce the proto-capitalist way of life. We know that the principle "You always have to pay your debt" is something essential in capitalism. It has been something that was enforced by religion, it was always first introduced by religion, and capitalism used that from religion. Even before Christianity, even before the birth of capitalism, this has been taking place.

So yeah, the Western media uses the current uprising as a dog whistle that they want liberal democracy. It's liberal democracy, what they did in Afghanistan. We saw what they did with the hypocrisy of inviting the Taliban to Oslo to have a conversation with them. The West stayed silent in the pleas of the women of Afghanistan being suppressed and killed every single day by the Taliban. It was funny when we heard the chanting Jin, Jiyan, Azadi in the EU Parliament. When they listed PKK, whose leader is Öcalan, who basically invented the Jin, Jiyan, Azadi, basically, which was popularized by PKK and was considered a terrorist slogan of the PKK. Now they are saying it out loud, like all the previous experiences did not happen. What happened to the liberal democracy, when Turkey part of NATO attacked Rojava, the place where Jin, Jiyan, Azadi was chanted every day. It was popularized with Rojava. That's where the rest of the world heard Jin, Jiyan, Azadi. The liberal democracy failed Rojava,

reactions. One reaction was, as you said, the West trying to explain this as something that people are rising against backward ways of the region, which use Islam as a code word, which doesn't mean the culture and, like you said, Orientalism. The other one is that Islam is not the problem, it is just the Islamic Republic, it is just this regime or that regime, there is no compulsion in Islam, which is, I'm sorry, a really ridiculous statement. The vast majority of the Islamic religion, and also the rest of religions are about enforcing the sacred taboos about society and what the consequences would be if we obey or do not obey. I'm from a federation that does not accept the religious tendency of anarchism because we see religion as another mode of power that forces people into obedience. That's another tool in the masters' hands to make people obey.

While capitalism is doing that by interfering by sabotaging the production and consumption relations of human beings, religion does lead to sabotaging human everyday relations by using sacredness as property. This was mentioned by Graeber in *The Dawn of Everything*, that the sacred is the oldest form of property that we observe in human society so far. They have sacred knowledge that only the clergy class can know, which is intellectual property. There are sacred grounds or tools or a base that are all part of the property which is monopolized by the clergy class. These are things that people get enslaved by and forced to obey things against their interests. The problem is the institution of the religion, not the way the religion acts.

As Graeber mentioned— I am using Graeber because it was really instrumental in my thinking about this. He said that capitalism is not natural. It is a social construct that we reproduce every single day. The same is true about religion. Religion is a social construct that is something that we reproduce every day. We decide what religion is and how we conduct ourselves. We decide every day that we obey instead of revolting against these institutions, we are reproducing these oppressive systems. We are not the right-wing fascists who blame the people for failures of capitalism. We are not fascists that are blaming the poor and disfranchised for the problems. They are the victims of this system. We look at the problem systematically: capitalism as a system problem, not the individuals entrapped and enslaved in it. The same is true about religion. The institution of religion is the problem, not the people being entrapped and enslaved by it. We have comrades in Afghanistan giving examples that when the Communist Party took over Afghanistan, they took the land from the Khan, the landlord in the feudal system, and gave it to the people living in it, the

strongholds of the regime. Mashhad is where the eighth Imam of the Shia sect is buried, Imam Reza. Qom is where all the major mullahs train, that's where they come from, but they were one of the first cities that joined the uprising. And Tabriz was another amazing one. In the first few days, a lot of people from Tabriz didn't want to join because people were chanting "Jin Jiyan Azadi," that's the slogan of PKK, the terrorists (they were following the line of Turkey). So there was a surprise that Tabriz rose as fast as they did. And it was a very pleasant surprise.

By now, all 31 provinces, and more than 100 cities have risen up. And 100 is just an underestimate, I just don't have the number at the moment. Oshnavieh was a city that got liberated, but unfortunately, it got retaken the following day. The regime used drones thanks to the technology that the US gave them. They had tested those on Baluchistan during previous uprisings, they used it on Oshnavieh and on the stronghold of the Kurdish democratic parties. So Oshnavieh fell into the hands of the regime again, but the uprising is still ongoing. The universities have started a massive strike. By now, at least 110 universities went on strike. The Sharif University of Technology, which is well-known worldwide, went on strike and was brutally suppressed. The police surrounded the University and started shooting at the students and arresting them. They closed down the university for the next few days so the protests cannot happen and so they can erase any evidence of human rights violations. But after the strike, the arrests of students continued. Also, high school students and even younger students are joining the protest. We are seeing 15-17-year-olds are joining the strike. There was one video that high school students throwing their Principal out of the high school.

TFSR: That video was amazing.

A: Yes. They kept saying "beesharaf", which means "scoundrel," "without honor." The universities are getting brutally suppressed, at one university at least there was one dead student, many injured and many arrested, over 100 were arrested in one university. But the uprising is still going on. This is the third week of the protest. It's been 21 days since the start of the uprising, and this is the longest uprising in the last few years in Iran.

TFSR: Yeah, that's amazing. Part of me just thinks of how embedded the secret police and security state are in parts of Iranian society, how many levels of policing there are, and how frequently people are get-

ting stopped. I mean, I live in the United States, there's a lot of policing here too. But it's so brave that people of all these different generations, especially the youth, would be rising up and refusing to take the shit anymore. When you said that Oshnavieh had been liberated briefly but retaken by the regime, was it just the government was kicked out for a day or two by the population or by a specific group?

A: Oshnavieh is a city in the Kurdistan province near the border, but they managed to take control of all the government buildings, and they threw out all the police and all the regime forces. But that night, there was a military unit from Tabriz that headed towards, and the government used drones to strike all the government buildings, all the possible gathering places for the people. A few people died just because of that. The city was suppressed again.

TFSR: That's incredible and it's amazing how widespread, as you say, this has been. Getting back to Zhina's case, what the morality police or the guidance patrol is, what do they do and what is your impression of how people generally think of them?

A: Guidance patrol is an organization that was established in 2005. But it succeeded an older organization, the Islamic Religious Police, and they have one goal – enforcing the Islamic code of conduct. This is not limited to the women's Islamic dress code, it is controlling the relationship of the people in all ways possible. The boyfriends and girlfriends cannot be seen together in public. You can only be seen with the opposite gender if they are part of your family, if they are mahram, an Islamic word meaning a member of your family, marrying whom is haram – taboo or forbidden. So you can be together with a member of your family. But, again, this is a patriarchal society in which you need to have either a brother, even a younger brother or younger cousin, or a father, so you don't get harassed by the regime or other people when you're going about doing your business as a woman. That's one of the reasons that Kiarash, Zhina's brother was with her, because this is how it is expected to be. Unfortunately, as part of the patriarchal society, you cannot be alone. In the boyfriend-girlfriend relationship, if they are seen together, the police harass either both of them or the woman. So people have to play different tricks to circumvent the guidance patrol.

But guidance patrol does a lot of things like harassing transgender

Maybe it was in Raj, where there is a video in which people were chanting "Bread, work, freedom" alongside with "Woman, life, freedom," But there was a bombing that we believe to be caused by Taliban in the Kaaj education center that had the main women's section and it is in the Hazara ethnicity neighborhood. A suicide bombing happened in the women's section of the Education Center, and many women were killed in this bombing. That caused a new wave of solidarity. Some of their slogans include "Bread, work, freedom," and "Death to Taliban, whether it's Kabul or Tehran." The other one is "Stop Hazara genocide". Since this is part of the campaign against the Hazara people, and also against women and women's autonomy, and the right to education. The women in Afghanistan, across Herat, Bamyan, Kabul, and many other cities started protesting and chanting "Stop Hazara genocide," "Education is our right," and "Death to enemies of knowledge." Everything that goes on in Afghanistan and Iran is basically the same. Taliban is just a younger sibling of the Islamic Republic.

Also in Iran, the government used ambulances to covertly move the detained protesters. Taliban did the same thing in Afghanistan. So Taliban is just copying Iran in all its ways to suppress the people. We also saw amazing protests in Iraq and Lebanon. In Iraq, there were protests in solidarity with the uprising, and also against the intervention of Iran in Iraq's politics, which we are very grateful for and we hope to see more. This is how we see solidarity. Each of us is acting with our own goals and tactics but at the same time, we are strengthening the movement in our surrounding area. We are acting in solidarity. The people of Lebanon also had a demonstration in solidarity with the uprising for Zhina Amini. We are very grateful and hope to see more.

TFSR: Media in the USA and the West are presenting this revolt as feminist, and the West frequently uses symbols of the hijab, for instance, as a dog whistle for Islamophobia and Orientalism. The part that isn't said out loud is the idea that there should be regime change and the imposition of a neoliberal "democracy" installed in Iran. But I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what you've seen of Western media presentations of what's going on, where they get it right, and where they get it wrong...

A: First of all, I want to touch on the word Islamophobia. I don't think that we have a good anarchist critique of religion at all. So far, I saw two

trail. She didn't want to go straight to her aunt's house and cause trouble there. So she went to the empty construction area. On that same night, her Telegram account and her Instagram account were deleted and her cell phone was turned off. 10 days later, her family did not get any news from her. They went to the police, they went everywhere – to the hospitals, to the morgue, everywhere to find out anything about her. After 10 days, they got a call from the police saying they should come and identify her body. She, again, had a bad head injury caused by police batons. The police claimed that she fell from the high ground and died. But this is police, so they fabricated that they possibly threw her body down. Who knows what they did in 10 days before calling her parents? She's not the only 16-year-old that was killed in this uprising. We don't have a count, but many 16-year-olds like her were killed by the police in the last few weeks.

In her case, the police were so scared about causing another spark in the uprising that they stole her body from the funeral house and they buried it in a village surrounding Khorramabad where her family lived. In the dead of night without the consent and knowledge of the parents. The news started getting out. The mother started talking about their circumstances of Nika's death. And today, the police forced a false confession from her, she had to repeat what the police wanted her to tell. In a forced confession from her uncle, we can hear the interrogator. Like a quiet voice was saying, "Talk, talk now. Talk now, dammit." So the uncle had to say whatever they were feeding him. And he was audible in the video. They didn't know they had accidentally released it like that. So they threatened and intimidated the family. I think her uncle might be in prison right now, and I can't confirm that, but that's the story. That's how they do it to Nika's family. They couldn't do it to Mahsa, but they did it to Nika and to many other 16-year-olds whose names we might not know. They just intimidated and threatened the family into silence.

TFSR: Have you witnessed much solidarity from other places in the region in terms of the uprising against the regime's brutality and the imposition of the hijab?

A: Yes, absolutely. There was solidarity across the region, amazing solidarity from the women of Afghanistan. They showed their solidarity with the people of Iran for the cause of Zhina and for the cause of freedom for women and the cause of women. And one of their slogans was "Bread, work, freedom," which is one of the slogans that was also chanted in Iran.

or queer people because of lack of gender conformity, they can do everything with impunity. They even monitor men's attire. Back in Rafsanjani's presidency, which was from 1989 to 1997, even men could not wear short-sleeve clothing in public. Now, if men are wearing clothing coded as western or whatever guidance patrol sees as improper clothing for men, they get into the same problem as women. Not as bad as women because men can resist more, since it's a patriarchal society, they are more lenient to men. They would be sent to do 40 hours of the briefing class, and there is not as much beating. But for women, there is much beating to make them stop.

Also, they monitor what people buy, and there are cases when people had to return newly bought goods, such as clothing, bags, shoes, whatever that morality police finds improper for the Islamic code of conduct. As I said, they can do anything with impunity, as long as they can frame it as an issue of the Islamic trust code or Islamic code of conduct in public. As you might expect, the majority of people in Iran hate the guidance patrol. Putting it more concretely, there was an independent survey done by Gaman in 2020. 58% of the people in that survey do not believe in the hijab at all. Of those that believe in hijab, 76% are against compulsory hijab. Only 15% of the people in the survey were for legal obligation and compulsory hijab. There is no family, no individual in Iran that has not experienced the harassment of the guidance police, didn't have a family member or a relative being harassed or arrested by them. Unless they are part of this regime, they are a religious and patriarchal family that enforces hijab strictly, before even the guidance patrol gets the chance to enforce it for them. So that 15% that are for compulsory hijab, they already enforce it on their family members and are part of the conservative, religious and patriarchal family unit. People pretty much hate this unit called morality police or guidance patrol. And they join in burning down, flipping over the cars, or hitting the police whenever they get the chance.

TFSR: Is Zhina's killing totally out of the ordinary? Did they just go too far and the family was able to follow up so it didn't get covered up? Is it a semi-normal thing or was this just an act of brutality that was totally out of the ordinary for how the morality police are?

A: Women experience police brutality similar to Mahsa's case every single day in Iran. They get pressured, some get raped, some get killed by the police, and the regime managed to silence the family by getting forced

confession from them to say something positive about the regime and why their child was wrong. It happens every single day. Before this event happened, there was a video of a woman in Raj being thrown out of the morality patrol's van, there were multiple videos of morality police beating a woman and forcing her into a van or beating them down. This is normal. This happens every day. The only reason that they failed in Mahsa's case was that the family resisted the intimidation and refused the pressure. They allowed the large gathering, and Kurdish people were behind them in the funeral and it sparked. Morality police have always been brutal.

But in the last few months, it had been more brutal because of what I believe to be a reaction to the women's popular grassroots activism. In Iran, some businesses enforce the hijab as well. So what the women of Iran did was blacklist the businesses that do that. They didn't have any leader, they just gathered the listings saying, "We don't go to this business. This business just keeps harassing us for a hijab, or being with our boyfriend or girlfriend." Transgender people of Iran joined as well saying that "these businesses harass them for their gender nonconformity." The businesses were like, "Oh, you're shutting our businesses by blacklisting us, don't do that, we are good people." But right then the cases of morality police brutality started increasing or it became more visible (to be more honest).

People are becoming more aware of what's happening. The cases of people taking a video of the morality police van, recording the brutality of police inflicting on a woman are being videotaped everywhere. So there was a tipping point. Mahsa's death, unfortunately, was a tipping point. As they say, her name, the slogan that we use is "Mahsa, you're not dead, your name became a symbol." So although being Kurdish in Tehran had a significant effect on how the police treated Zhina but it's happening all across the country, unfortunately.

TFSR: As you say, the awareness is happening all across the country. You mentioned before, when I asked about the two names, that the regime is generally unfriendly to Kurdish people as a minority. Is that because of a Persian supremacist perspective? Is it because they view any break from what they consider to be the norm, to be a sectarian grouping? Is it because of separatist groups in the Kurdistan region? What do you understand to be the motivating factor for the state to repress Kurds or Baluchi or other minorities?

the time.

There are always some patriarchal men... some who have started a new slogan to basically go against Woman Life, Freedom. Their horrible slogan is "Men, Nation, Prosperity." An example that comes to mind in the US is "Black Lives Matter" when it was countered by "All Lives Matter," but unfortunately, some people are chanting it right now, but it is counter-revolutionary, and it counters the ideals set out by this uprising.

TFSR: According to the Iran Human Rights NGO based in Norway, there have been at least 150 killings so far that they've been able to record during demonstrations and hundreds detained. Among those killed was a 16-year-old woman, Nika Shakarami, who disappeared on September 27 and was found dead from what appeared to be bludgeoned wounds and their allegations of her body being snatched by the state for a private burial. I don't know if you can talk about Nika's situation, I was seeing some videos up on the Federation of Anarchism Era's social media earlier. And you've covered how widespread the demonstrations are, the drone strikes in certain instances, and another government repression, but if you could talk a little bit about if the repression has been successful in your view of dampening people's resistance, or if people have continued to endure despite it.

A: The number of deaths grossly exceeds 100. 100 deaths were just in the city of Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province. And that's just counted deaths. As I said earlier, a large section of Baluchi people do not have birth certificates and their identity is not known. So their deaths will not be counted in the official record. Nobody knows, as if they do not exist and that their deaths don't count. This is the same in the other major cities. If in Zahedan we had 100 deaths, we can see that throughout three weeks, there are at least 100 dead in Tehran and other major cities. One hundred deaths are grossly underestimated.

Another point, as I was saying earlier, the majority of the protesters are from Generation Z. They are 16-22 years old and coming out on the street fighting the regime. Nika Shararami was a 16-year-old girl who was one of the protesters. She went out to protest with a water bottle and a bag with her birth certificate for identification. She mentioned that she was followed by the police a few minutes before her disappearance. The CCTV showed that she did not go to her relatives' house, because she knew that she was getting followed, she was trying to get them off the

people getting arrested after the protests. So many Arab activists were arrested after the Uprising of the Thirsty because their videos were released in public and people could see their faces. We are really glad that it's going forward.

TFSR: You've mentioned before in past conversations how in Afghanistan, when the Taliban was able to regain control, some men would come out in solidarity with women but also be repressed, maybe not. They would face different repression. Everybody hates the morality cops in Iran but they suffer different consequences often. Have you witnessed or has the Federation expressed witnessing a lot of people crossing the imposed gender lines in these protests, in terms of coming out and supporting and standing with people that are forced to wear the hijab or people who are policed in their body differently? Is it mostly just femme-presenting people that are out there? Or has this shifted conversation of solidarity in the streets or within families to common hatred of the imposition of patriarchal gender?

A: Oh, it definitely moved the conversation toward rejecting the patriarchal ruling of hijab. There were a lot of older women that came out in support of the uprising. They burned their own scars, and some of them were like, "We go old, our time is over, you guys fight on. You're doing your job." They are supporting. There was a video of a senior woman in the metro sitting and not wearing a hijab. Another older man was trying to enforce hijabs, saying "Why are you not wearing hijab, are you not ashamed of yourself?" And the woman answered his question really well with a very sharp word, when the man got up, she got up and started beating him for trying to enforce hijab on someone he has no business forcing hijab on her, and people were really supportive. People's awareness about hijab and patriarchal and religious norms is increasing not just among young people, but all across the family strata.

Whenever women remove their scarves, before they would get harassed by men, now they are getting encouraged and supported by men. This is something that didn't happen before. Before, there were women's protests about compulsory hijab. Women would individually go to the streets and removed their headscarves, but they were not getting support from the people around them, and the morality police took them. But this case is different. People are supporting the actions of women, they are at the forefront of the uprising and are getting support from the men most of

A: The regime is using Persian supremacy for sure, but their motivation is to keep their hegemony. And their cultural hegemony is rooted in the Persian language and Persian culture. The Kurdish people, the Baluchi people, the Arab people, and the people of Sistan, the Afghani people, are breaking the hegemony. They are outside the hegemony that the regime wants to project. So, it's not just the people of Kurdistan. The people of Kurdistan are prominent because they can resist, they have organizations, but the regime keeps the people in the periphery poor. For example, people in Baluchistan are getting massacred right now. The number of deaths right now in Baluchistan is at least 91 people. Those are the ones who have birth certificates, a lot of Baluchi people do not have birth certificates. So it is easier to cause genocide when the people do not legally exist. That's how they do it, it is a colonial and genocidal tactic. And they do that all over the periphery in Iran, which is Kurdish, Baluchi, Gilak, people of northern Iran, which in northern Raj, Sistan... It is a way to have control.

TFSR: In your view, is there an underlying philosophical movement that people are being motivated through their resistance to the morality police at this point? Is there an idea spreading? Or is it just the existent dignity of human beings to not live under omnipresent attack and surveillance that's motivating a lot of the uprising?

A: People in every uprising have a dialogue with each other. In the uprising in 2017, they ended the conversation about reformism. They started the conversation about overthrowing the regime. Before that, in 1997 when Hatami became the president of the Islamic Republic, he brought reforms into the government, which gave a lot of hope to the people who believed that things can get better through reforms. Before then, it was Rafsanjani's presidency. So Hatami relaxed some rules about hijab, about Islamic code of conduct, and just gave some breathing room to the people. That helped the regime for 20 years, they could play that reformism game for 20 years, until 2017 when people were done with reformism, their slogans were like "Reformers, this is the end!" In 2019, that continued but it became more radical, and the conversation about overthrowing the government through armed means started happening. And thru the Uprising of the Thirsty, the uprising of Baluchistan, through Uprising of the Hungry, the bread riots that happened this year, every time we are advancing and moving the position to "fuck the police."

First, we've been like "Screw the reformers, we cannot survive

through reform. We need to get rid of this government.” People believed in voting, for example, in 2009, it was the Green Movement in Iran, and the main slogan of the people was “Where is my vote?”, people were still believing in the vote. In 2017, that went away, they were not talking about votes that much. They were some small groups, but in 2019, more radical conversations started saying “Marg bar setamgar, che Shah bashe che Rahbar”, which means “Death to the oppressor, be it the Shah or the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic”. So these slogans became more prominent. In 2021, which was the Uprising of the Thirsty, that conversation went forward, and became more radical, until this year 2022, in which the conversation from the beginning was “Death to the dictator”, “Death to the oppressor, be it Shah or leader”, it was against the police. This is a way that people kept going forward and using their previous experience from the last uprising to inform the current action.

TFSR: Thank you. So there have been a lot of videos that have come out of girls and women mobbing authoritarian men, dancing in the streets, and people burning their hijabs. Can you talk about how the word has spread during the uprisings and if any digital tech or social media, in particular, have aided, and maybe a little bit about internet shutdowns too?

A: Yes, the internet had a major effect on the advance of the uprising. As I said, the news of Zhina’s death was spread the moment that she was admitted into the hospital, hashtags were used, and people were learning about it. So, the majority of the population on social media was already aware of Zhina’s situation, they were just not going to act because she was in a coma. One thing worth mentioning is that the majority of the people protesting right now in the uprising were born in 1380 [Islamic calendar]. We call them the 80s, which is generation Z. They were born around 2000. And the oldest of them are about 21 years old, the same age as Zhina. A good section of them is from 17 to 20 years old that are on the street fighting the regime.

So they are very savvy with the internet and social media. And one thing that we are noticing recently in this protest is that the people of Iran are doing an amazing job, they are taking security culture very seriously. This is the first time that we are noticing that majority, if not all the videos that are coming out, are taken from the back of the head or taken with a low angle so that people cannot be identified by their faces. And

this is another thing that people learned through the continued protests throughout the last few years – to protect themselves and their friends and fellow people fighting against the regime, they need to take the security culture seriously, and they are doing that correctly. It is really hard to see people without a mask protesting. They are covering their face as much as they can. If they’re not, before posting a video, people are blurring faces. People were using the internet to inform each other of what was happening, where to gather, what to do, what to get and keep motivating each other like that.

Right now, with the shutdown of the Internet, in some cities, people are using a small paper notice on every house, saying “Let’s gather up here.” In some other places, people have gathered in the neighborhood, they already organized themselves in the neighborhood, they know each other, they do talk, they organize themselves, and they set up a meeting time at a certain place. They do it through that or they get each other’s phone numbers because the cell phones are still working. But once in a while, the internet comes in and people can use it to get news and information. WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, and Session are filtered, people need to use a proxy to use the Session app, which is another good app for anonymous communication. Signal got shut down, and people were using Signal. But people found other ways, some people are just going out every day at 5pm on the streets, and they find other people protesting and start taking action. They form their own solidarity groups and keep their speaking habit every day. So, this is not like during previous protests and uprisings when the government shut down the internet and could basically shut down the protests.

TFSR: Oh, that’s interesting. I was thinking, “Oh, in the past, when we spoke and you talked about how a lot of people don’t bother organizing online because of the surveillance and the internet getting shut down.” But then I started thinking about the videos being everywhere. That makes perfect sense. But I’m so glad to hear that people have been taking the security of themselves and the people around them seriously. And I’ve noticed that about the videos that a lot of them are from behind or at a low angle. Super smart.

A: Yes. They keep mentioning to the protesters that they need to film from the back and wear a mask. We are glad it happens everywhere, not only in the bigger cities, they learn from their previous experiences. They saw