

Woman, Life, Freedom: Iran's Mass Protest Movement, One Year On

A Conversation with Masih Alinejad

by [Masih Alinejad \(/experts/masih-alinejad\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Masih Alinejad \(/experts/masih-alinejad\)](#)

Masih Alinejad is an Iranian American journalist and political activist known for her tireless promotion of women's rights, freedom, and democracy in her native country.



Brief Analysis

A leading activist discusses the protests and the international response on the anniversary of the movement's outbreak.

On September 7, The Washington Institute held a virtual Policy Forum with Masih Alinejad, an Iranian American journalist and activist known for her tireless promotion of women's rights, freedom, and democracy in her native country. For her courageous work, she has been targeted twice for kidnapping or assassination by the Iranian regime. In 2022, the Institute conferred upon her its prestigious *Scholar-Statesman Award* (<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/conversation-masih-alinejad>). The following is a selection of quotes from her one-on-one discussion with Institute executive director Robert Satloff, edited for clarity.

As we get close to the anniversary [of Mahsa Amini's death], we see how the Iranian regime is getting more frustrated because they know that people are getting ready to get back to the streets. They know that the number of women who actually practice their civil disobedience every day has increased. They know that the family members of those victims who got killed [are] not going to give up the fight. They became the

voice of their beloved ones [and] the engine of the revolution called “Woman, Life, Freedom”...

I believe that people across Iran will take part. They will not only mourn for Mahsa, they will celebrate the revolution, which [her] brutal death sparked. Don't forget that the Islamic Republic killed more than 700 innocent protesters to prove to the rest of the world that they did not kill Mahsa Amini...The anger is still there. Maybe you don't see people in the streets, but revolutions have different phases...Many revolutions take years...The Iranian people are not going to give up. This is just the beginning of the end, and we will see very soon that the Islamic Republic will be gone...

People in Iran...made a clear decision that they don't want this regime. And they are learning from their previous uprising how they can...get together [with fewer] victims but more victories.

International Response to the Protest Movement

[What] helped the Islamic Republic survive was not only the crackdown and the brutal oppression. It was clearly the lack of concrete and strong actions from democratic countries...All we saw was just empty condemnations...The Islamic Republic has seen no punishment, no consequences, no isolation. So what [reason does it have] to stop killings, massacres, executions?...

The time has come for democratic countries to be as brave as Iranian women [and] the Iranian people...The Islamic Republic only understands one language: the language of pressure...

The Europeans, Americans, and Canadians must be united in telling their citizens “don't go to Iran”...The Islamic Republic is not a land of tourism, it is a land of terrorism...

We, the women of Iran, alongside the women of Afghanistan...ask all of you...to help us send a message to policymakers in European countries, in the United States, in Canada...to expand the definition of apartheid to include gender in all international laws.

Attempted Assassination

My life is upside down, and four people are in prison right now...hired by the Islamic Republic to try to kill me on U.S. soil...I'm thankful to law enforcement, [but then] I'm asking myself a question: after the FBI stopped the kidnapping plot, [why did the regime become] more encouraged to send killers?...

This is not about me. This is about the Iranian regime trying to challenge the U.S. government on U.S. soil...If we don't take strong action against this...the third attempt is going to be successful...I'm not scared for my life, [but] that would encourage the Islamic Republic to target more opponents, more Americans, on American soil.

Future of the Iranian Opposition

The Islamic Republic took everything away from us: the right to protest, the right to have a normal life, the right to even hug our families. They took everything away from us...but not hope. We have hope that the future is bright. The future belongs to the young generation that deserves to have a secular democracy, to have a government that separates religion from politics...

Inside Iran or outside Iran, none of us should feel safe. That is why we have to see this as a common battle, and that's why I always stress the word “unity”...

When dictators are welcome to go to the United Nations General Assembly to give an address about freedom [and] peace, the time has come for the dissidents to have their own general assembly...We the dissidents and the opposition...must be united and help each other...We have to call the whole world to join us...Inside Iran, inside Afghanistan, inside countries where they are facing guns and bullets every day, we cannot tell [protesters] what to do. But what we can do for them is echo their voice and continue their path by mobilizing the world to stand behind democracy fighters.

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