



Will I Ever Be Enough?

**A Marxist Analysis of Women Protesting Obligatory Veiling in the
Islamic Republic of Iran**

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MARXIST ANALYSIS OF PROTESTS AGAINST OBLIGATORY VEILING IN THE IRI

Abstract

The My Stealthy Freedom (MSF) movement on social media has garnered over 1 million likes on Facebook and continues to make headlines in major media outlets. The founder Masih Alinejad routinely speaks out against obligatory veiling in the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). This study analyses hijab and the MSF movement from a Marxist feminist perspective, evaluating the emancipatory potential for women. The study attempts to untangle Islam from the discourses around the oppression of women to find the material roots of oppression upon which the discourse has been built. The legislation of women's clothing and women's bodies has a long history, with just the hijab having been made compulsory and forbidden three times in Iran within the previous century.

Through the use of Multimodal Critical Discourse analysis, photographs and videos from the MSF movement are compared to hijab propaganda by the IRI to identify whether the concern of the MSF movement is limited to obligatory hijab, or if it places within the broader movement for women's emancipation. The results show that despite the visual emphasis on the hijab, the MSF movement has a broader aim emancipating women as expressed by the activists of the movement.

Keywords: feminism, Marxism, Iran, hijab, Islam, women's studies, Middle East, multimodal critical discourse analysis

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Wordlist

<i>Hijab</i>	Veil
<i>Namoos</i>	Woman's chastity tied to male honor
<i>Basij</i>	Voluntary military forces in Islamic Republic of Iran
<i>Chador</i>	Long women's garment without fastenings, formal color black
<i>Manteu</i>	Outer garment with sleeves, longer than thigh length
<i>Roosari</i>	Veil tied below the chin, or shawl wrapped around the head let loose over the shoulder
<i>Mardsalari</i>	Male supremacy
MSF	The My Stealthy Freedom movement
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran

A Marxist Analysis of Women Protesting Obligatory Veiling in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The hijab was not introduced immediately when the Islamic regime took the seat of power in Iran after the 1979 revolution. Women living in Iran during the time describe it as a gradual enforcement, beginning with making it mandatory for public servants at work, and spreading to the whole of society until it was brought into legislation. For the women who already preferred hijab, it was not an unwelcome move, but for the women who did not espouse hijab as part of their religion or due to secularism, the world suddenly became much smaller. Voices of dissent were quickly shut down, women who took their hijab off taken in for questioning and punishment through lashings, rumours include rape by guards. Spaces became

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segregated spatially, the veil itself a method of separating a portable female space, rendering women's bodies at once both homogenised into a spatial mass with other women, and permanently in the male specular field. Gender police was established, the rights of women eroded in the law. The regime's voluntary forces, Basij, sometimes boys as young as 15, wielded automatic rifles with which they threatened "bad hijabi" women. The occurrence in Tajrish Sq. fall of 1993 when a teenage girl in a phone booth was shot in the head for defying the Guidance Patrol in correcting her hijab, was not the first nor the last of its' kind (Khosravi, 2008, p. xi). The hijab in Iran is not enforced through consent, but through violent coercion. The control of women became "one of the most important pillars of the Islamic state" (Sedghi, 2007, p. 20).

It was not the first time women's clothing became the object of legislation. The same had happened twice before, once following the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 when women were forcibly veiled, and again during the Pahlavi dynasty 1925-1979 when the veil was prohibited (Sedghi, 2007, p. 2). It has been difficult for women in Iran to organize against the constraints on women and the control of female bodies. Feminist publications are deemed anti-Islamic and shut down ("Opinion | Shutting Down Zanan," 2008), feminist research discouraged and banned in universities (Afary, 2009, p. 315). The Iranian diaspora, most of whom moved out of Iran either following the revolution or during the Iran-Iraq war, have set up several media channels, publications and movements, sometimes with patriotic, nationalist undertones romanticizing the Pahlavi dynasty, Zoroastrian beliefs, and motifs of the Achaemenid empire.

The aim of this essay is the exploration of a civil rights movement which has almost become a household name by now; the My Stealthy Freedom (MSF) movement on Facebook (Alinejad, 2014) which started in May of 2014 by journalist Masih Alinejad. The work in this

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essay is a continuation of previous research I did during 2014 about MSF as an online movement for women's rights. To my knowledge, no other studies have been done on MSF.

The philosophical theories used in this essay include Fairclough's basis for critical discourse analysis as it is the employed method, Marxist feminism imbued with Althusser's development with Lacanian psychoanalysis, a brief review of Islamic feminism, in combination with questioning the building stones of religious beliefs, ideologies and identities prevalently presumed in the discussion. Challenges include oriental and androcentric bias of written works, and my own political convictions, as well as time limit and a wealth of source material available for analysis. The focus is on detangling implicit ideologies in actions and symbols taken for granted.

For the sake of reflexive transparency, it is necessary to disclose that I am inspired by my personal background as an Iranian woman raised with the generational stories of women's lives in Iran. While living in Iran, due to lack of feminist analysis, the oppression of women was difficult to verbalize and became most tangible in the overt expression of the hijab. The topic of the hijab is hot in both the West where many Muslim women have immigrated in recent decades as the result of war, in the Western discourse of warfare against Muslim countries, and within Iran where women were forced into the hijab in 1905, then were forced out of the hijab during the monarchy between 1925 to 1979 and now forced into the hijab with the revolution that brought Ruhollah Khomeini's special brand of theocracy (Sedghi, 2007, p. 2).

The literature review had to be severely restricted due to the richness of literature on the subject, and the vastness of the topic. Some of the literature such as *Modernity, Sexuality and Ideology in Iran* (Talattof, 2011), *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Torab, 2007), *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (Naghbi, 2007), *Women in Iran: Gender Politics in the Islamic Republic* (Shahidian, 2002), *Women and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Action and Reaction* (Vakil, 2011), *The Politics of Women's Rights*

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in Iran (Osanloo, 2009), *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (El Guindi, 1999), *Becoming Visible in Iran: Women in Contemporary Iranian Society* (Honarbin-Holliday, 2008), *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-century Iran* (Paidar, 1995), *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, Realities and Struggles for Liberation* (Afshar, 1993), *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Barlas, 2002), *Right-wing Women* (Dworkin, 1983), *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (MacKinnon, 1989) had to be used restrictively or completely omitted due to lack of time and space within this essay, but would be of interest for further studies on the subject.

Background

The 1979 revolution in Iran entailed a myriad of social and political changes. Iran went from being a monarchy to a theocracy with Ruhollah Khomeini as leader, and later Ali Khamenei who is the supreme leader to this day, titled Ayatollah. Amongst the changes to the fundamental structure of Iran, women were affected on a deep level as the legislation of their rights was became based on the Khomeini regime's brand of Shari'a, or interpreted Islamic law. It is of interest to explore the changes made to women's position in Iranian society, and therefore this literature review will focus on the discourses that has led to the current position of women in Iranian society. Some changes since the revolution have been more obvious, such as the enforcement of the veil, and some changes have been of a subtler nature and not as visible to the international community, for example the ousting of female judges and culture of bribing the Guidance Patrol.

The veil has been subject of much popular and academic debate. In pace with women's awareness and discontent rising, veiling is being brought into discussion and redefinition again with popular movements such as "My Stealthy Freedom" on the Internet. Devout women too are increasingly attempting furthering women's rights within the confines of the laws of the

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Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), through movements branded Islamic feminism, arguing that veiling should not be enforced lest it loses sanctity.

The woman behind MSF, Alinjead, resides in New York, USA, and currently works for Voice of America Persian Service, which could be described as America-centric and liberal-leaning in political views. Alinejad frequently does political activism by trying to meet Iranian politicians, and starts hashtags for specific activities on the MSF page on Facebook and Twitter, such as the #WhiteWednesdays hashtag in which the white veil tied on a pole quickly became a symbol of the movement. #WhiteWednesdays addresses “women who willingly wear the veil, but who remain opposed to the idea of imposing it on others. Many veiled women in Iran also find the compulsory imposition of the veil to be an insult. By taking footages of themselves wearing white, these women can also show their disagreement with compulsion”, writes Alinjead on the MSF Facebook page (Kasana, 2018). #WhiteWednesdays is the first concentrated effort for organizing women who willingly wear hijab.

The views of MSF are expressed as “many women and men in Iran feel that wearing a hijab in public should be a personal choice” (Alinejad, 2014). The MSF movement has taken a life of its’ own, and now has a symbol of a woman defiantly holding her hijab tied to the top of a pole, which followers and supporters spray onto building walls (see Figure 18 (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018c)). The protests manifested into a wave in January 2018 against mandatory hijab in the Islamic Republic of Iran (“Iran arrests 29 women for not wearing hijab in protests,” 2018), sparking controversy anew and gathering support among Iranians. The conflicting images of religion, politics and the popularity and animosity toward the Islamic regime in Iran both in Iranian living rooms and amongst Iranian scholars, surfacing through movements and projects on behalf of women is an issue that is of importance for the understanding of Iranian society, especially the women.

Research Question

The research question is whether the MSF movement is merely protesting veiling, or if the protests have deeper meaning. In order to answer the main question, a number of subdivisions need to first be answered. Why hijab? Who is the hijab for and whom does it serve? What is the intent and does it serve its' intended purpose? Is the purpose of obligatory hijab justifiable? After exploring these basic questions on the hijab itself, I will analyse the MSF movement. On the surface Iranian women are protesting the hijab, but as the veil in itself is just a piece of fabric and thus an empty signifier with no inherent meaning, it needs to be imbued with meaning by wearers and resisters alike. What are the women of MSF protesting against and what is the meaning of these protests? Is it a piece of fabric, or is there a deeper message behind the fierce protests that has already led to the imprisonment and abuse of several women? In other words, what meanings has the hijab been imbued with?

There has been much written about the political motivations behind the contested matter of the hijab, but it has not been adequately explained or academically rationalized so far, and so feminists, egalitarians, liberals and even Muslims often find themselves struggling on how to rationalize it. For the research question to be answered, first I take a look at what the hijab means and what purpose it serves, and thereafter analyse visual and written material from the MSF movement to see how the protests are rationalized and if my analysis is congruent with the work of MSF.

Methodology & Method

Methodology

For this paper, I have chosen the method critical discourse analysis (CDA) with some slight modifications. CDA is distinct from discourse analysis in that it takes distance from the post-structuralist approach of Laclau, Mouffe (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Torfing, 1999). While the post-structuralist approach asserts that reality is constructed through discourse all the way to the exception of natural disasters and the like, the materialist approach of Marx asserts the opposite; it is material reality that constructs our discourses. CDA falls in the middle of these two approaches, with the view that discourse both constitutes and is constituted. I am inclined to agree with the CDA approach, nuanced with the view that Althusser puts forward in the essay *Ideology and the State* (Althusser, 2001), as summarized by Andrew Collier:

[...] all ideology ‘interpellates’ (hails) the individual as a ‘subject’; that is to say, addresses the individual in such a way as to give him or her to understand that he or she is an autonomous agent, rather than a product of a definite society, limited by a definite class position. He uses the example of religious ideologies, but the root illusion of liberalism is very similar: the idea that freedom and ‘human rights’ are something we ‘naturally’ possess so that all that is necessary to secure them is to keep the state at bay, rather than something that can only be secured by real collective control of social forces. Or again, there is the attempt to atomise trade unionists by appealing to ‘individual responsibility’, or to blame the unemployed for the non-existence of their jobs; it is assumed that it is the choices of individuals that explain social processes, rather than vice versa (1980, p. 10).

In order to understand how such views are successfully upheld in society, Althusser puts forward the psychoanalytic notion that “ideology flatters our belief in ourselves as autonomous subjects” (Collier, 1980, p. 10). Žižek further builds on the underlying reasons

with Lacanian psychoanalysis, stressing the impossibility of stepping out of ideology, the Kantian view that our reality is coloured by our perception (Petar Ramadanovic, 2014; Vighi & Feldner, 2007; Žižek, 2012a). To Žižek, everything is ideology, as he famously asserted in the film *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology*: “I already am eating from the trash can all the time. The name of this trash can is ideology. The material force of ideology makes me not see what I am effectively eating” (Fiennes, 2013). Why do we resist stepping out of ideology to view objective truth? Through Lacanian psychoanalysis, Žižek theorizes that we find enjoyment in our illusions as we are socialized to do so, and stepping out of illusions is a painful process. CDA however states that there is an extra-ideological reality, an objective truth outside of language which we can assert. I will be combining the two approaches of CDA and Žižek mainly as Žižek uses Lacan and Marxist thought which are useful in the analysis of the phenomena of hijab in Iran. The reason for combining the two methods is because post-structuralism has the weakness of relativity, and CDA simplifies the motivations behind discourses of power relations. Thus, I will be developing a modified theory of critical discourse analysis to better understand the saturated field of studies of hijab in the context of Islamic Republic of Iran.

Method: Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA does not limit itself to the study of discourse mediated through language, but includes visual media. Multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) is a useful tool for discerning meaning mediated in photographs. It provides a vast toolbox that can then be contrasted to more traditional concepts used in propaganda analysis explained further down in this section. Aspects of visual material of the My Stealthy Freedom Facebook page that will be studied include:

- Professional or amateur photography?

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- Setting, light, time, place.
- Symbols
- Denotative or connotative? Is it a particular time, place, event, thing, or is it depicting an idea or concept? (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 49–51)
- Attributes of people and objects and what they signify (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 51–52)
- Distance and angle
- Saliency, foregrounding, overlapping. Which features are given importance? (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 54–56)
- Exclusion, what is missing? (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 56)
- Pose, activity
- Gaze, mood, emotions. A particularly useful tool for feminist analysis is the concept of *male gaze* by Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1975), for explanation see previous section.

By analysing photographs and stories by the protesters of the My Stealthy Freedom movement, a critical discourse analysis can reveal the motivations behind the movement. The text accompanying the photographs is also useful as it provides context. The accompanying text is copied rather than pasted from a screenshot together with the photograph due to lack of space. Additional tools for text analysis include:

- Personal or impersonal? Representing a function or status
- Individual or collective?
- Specification or generalization?
- Objectification, anonymization, or aggregation (representing statistics)?
- Us and them. Is it representing an in-group/out-group dichotomy?

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- Suppression. Are there missing agents or perpetrators?
- Nominalization. What information or assumption is taken for granted?
- Metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy (substitute), euphemism.

The language around the hijab discourse is interesting to contrast with propaganda methods. Of relevance for this analysis are the propaganda tools (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 8):

- Bandwagon appeal. Presented as socially desirable?
- Personal appeal. Presented as improving personal appeal?
- Name-calling. Is someone being vilified through slurs?
- Loaded words. Are emotionally loaded words being used?
- Card-stacking. Presenting positive information and leaving out negative information.
- Appeal to fear.
- Appeal to prejudice.
- Black and white fallacy. Suppressing information that reveals complexity of an issue.
- Flag-waving. Presenting as beneficial to an idea, group or country.
- Scapegoating. Blaming social ills on a group or individual.
- Stereotyping. Presenting a group as possessing certain attributes.
- Glittering generalities. Use of positively loaded words to discourage careful examination.

Method: Jefferson Notation

The videography from MSF has been transcribed using the Jefferson notation method as found in *Structures of Social Action* (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). The transcriptions have been translated from Farsi before analysis. Additional text in English accompanying the photographs and videographs have been included and considered in the analysis, as well as any accompanying text in Farsi that was not a direct translation of the English accompanying text, in case additional information could be pruned. A legend of the transcription symbols can be found in Appendix A.

Theoretical Framework

Terminology

Discourse is a term comprising “ideas, values, identities and sequences of activity” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 23) in society. In Lacanian terms, it comprises the Symbolic order, the meaning-making of our society (Žižek, 2007, p. 6).

Ideology Žižek describes ideology according to Hegel, divided in three “moments: *doctrine, belief, and ritual*” (Žižek, 2012a, p. 9) Cavanaugh refers to *ritual* as *myth* which will be mentioned in the literature review section (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 3). *Doctrine* is described as “ideology as a complex of ideas (theories, convictions, beliefs, argumentative procedures)”; *belief* is described as “ideology in its externality, that is, the materiality of ideology” such as state and social institutions; and *ritual* as “the ‘spontaneous’ ideology at work at the heart of social ‘reality’ itself” (Žižek, 2012a, pp. 9–10). The third kind, *ritual*, is inspired by Althusser’s (Althusser, 2001, p. 199) efforts in marrying Lacanian psychoanalysis with Marxian social theory, which is close to Foucault’s understanding of the workings of ideology; namely as a function of power where

ideology ‘interpellates’ (hails) the individual as a ‘subject’; that is to say, addresses the individual in such a way as to give him or her to understand that he or she is an autonomous agent, rather than a product of a definite society, limited by a definite class position. [Althusser] uses the example of religious ideologies, but the root illusion of liberalism is very similar: the idea that freedom and ‘human rights’ are something we ‘naturally’ possess so that all that is necessary to secure them is to keep the state at bay, rather than something that can only be secured by real collective control of social forces. Or again, there is the attempt to atomise trade unionists by appealing to ‘individual responsibility’, or to blame the unemployed for the non-existence of their jobs; it is assumed that it is the choices of individuals that explain social processes, rather than vice versa. The success of this ideological

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mechanism can be explained in Freudian/Lacanian terms by the narcissistic fascination of the individual by an ego-ideal. Ideology flatters our belief in ourselves as autonomous subjects, and distracts from brutal facts of class exploitation. (Collier, 1980, p. 10)

Foucault describes the process of interpellation as subjection (Foucault, 1982, p. 781), which is the method institutions use to legitimize themselves (thereby gaining power), as for example when a person submits to the domination of the church by confessing an identity of being Christian. Ideology works mainly through consent, as “those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology” (Althusser, 2001, p. 176).

Reproductive Labour is a term that encompasses reproductive, intellectual and manual labour needed for workers to reproduce themselves. It includes childbearing and childcare, production of art, cooking, cleaning, listening to others, caring for the elderly and sick, or helping your friend move. In the home it is unwaged but has exchange value outside of the home and can be paid. Men usually do reproductive labour outside the home, such as working at a restaurant. The unwaged reproductive labour inside the home befalls on women in patriarchal societies, notably as gestating and child-rearing. Marxist feminists such as Dalla Costa theorize that women’s oppression is for reasons of economic exploitation. (Mitchell, 2013; Vogel, 2013, pp. xix–xx) Reproductive labour is linked to the private sphere.

Productive Labour is value producing labour, or the work that we typically associate with “job”. Productive labour has been unavailable to women for much of history, both due to responsibility for reproductive labour, but also because women were restricted to the private sphere. Since men received wages for productive labour, they gained power over women. Since women’s unpaid domestic labour creates surplus-value for both the consumption of the family and for society at large, Marxist feminism argues that it is in fact productive labour.

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Women are the slaves of a wage slave, the male breadwinner who becomes the instrument of her exploitation. Women and children being largely excluded from productive labour gave rise to the *nuclear family*, that enabled men to spend time on productive labour, as “men needed women and children to reproduce them, and women and children needed men to bring in a wage to reproduce the family as a whole” (Mitchell, 2013). Productive labour is linked to the public sphere (Mitchell, 2013; Vogel, 2013, p. 160).

Male Gaze The male gaze is a term in visual arts derived from psychoanalysis by Laura Mulvey (Mulvey, 1975). The male gaze is defined as the power dynamics between a male subject as a viewer, and the female object of the gaze (Kosut, 2012, p. 195). The male heterosexual gaze is related to pleasure involved in looking at the female body in Freudian terms, as the male perspective is from the outside and not from the person inhabiting that body. The male gaze also serves the purpose of the Foucauldian concept of surveillance, as it constrains the female body to the submissive, the erotized, the objectified, the passive. The concept has been useful in analysis of advertising, where

the male viewer buys the product that will then help him “get the girl of his dreams,” who is featured in the advertisement (identification). The female viewer buys the product because she wants to be the female in the advertisement (she identifies with her objectification) (Kosut, 2012, p. 196)

Patriarchy Feminist terminology is often negatively portrayed and poorly understood. Patriarchy in particular, is often taken to mean whatever the speaker wants it to mean, usually pointing the aches of womanhood onto manhood, and the issues of manhood onto a male-made system dubbed as patriarchy. Patriarchy is most often thought of as the underlying system in societies telling men that it is forbidden to weep, and women to wear sexualizing clothes. While some truth lies in this notion, for the sake of clarity it is important to crystalize what exactly is

meant by patriarchy. Attempts at pinpointing patriarchy reveals the problematic aspects of feminist theory. Feminist theory attributes gender differences mainly to socialization (Bryson, 2003, p. 166), while a surface knowledge of evolutionary psychology shows a complex interplay of hardware/biology and software/culture. Sexual reproductive roles shape human society (Campbell, 2013, p. 1; Potts & Hayden, 2010, p. 1), with culture as the overlaying narrative for humans to make sense of it. Beneath culture, we are but mere apes shaped by our biology.

While our behaviors can be chosen by each individual, the template of predispositions needs to exist for that choice to be made possible. One cannot act out violence if the biological predisposition does not exist. Similarly, one cannot choose altruism if the biological imperative is missing. As this essay is taking the Marxist historical materialist approach, material reality is the assumed basis of human behavior, including environmental reality, economy and biological predispositions.

Misogyny/misandry are often thought of as elusive and loaded terms. With the advent of new terminology in gender studies such as “transmisogyny”, it becomes of paramount importance to clarify the precise meaning of these terms as relating to sexism. Kate Manne comes to the rescue in *Down Girl*, describing misogyny as

primarily a property of social environments in which women are liable to encounter hostility due to the enforcement and policing of patriarchal norms and expectations— often, though not exclusively, insofar as they violate patriarchal law and order. Misogyny hence functions to enforce and police women’s subordination and to uphold male dominance, against the backdrop of other intersecting systems of oppression and vulnerability, dominance and disadvantage, as well as disparate material resources, enabling and constraining social structures, institutions, bureaucratic mechanisms, and so on. (Manne, 2018, p.19)

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Misogyny is hence sexism enforced onto female bodies. This elegant explanation also explains how terminology such as “transmisogyny” is a misnomer, as misogyny is not meted out to male bodies; misandry is.

Marxist Feminism

Feminism is not a homogenous ideology, indeed even some core points are widely debated among feminist, including but not limited to issues of prostitution, gender and sexualization. The two largest groups of feminists in the West are radical feminists (radical as in origin), and liberal feminists. Marxist feminism shares core values with radical feminism, such as:

1. Stance against prostitution as it's seen as commodification of female bodies
2. Stance against belief that sex class can be changed through surgery or hormone therapy
3. Stance against sexualization of female bodies for male gratification (advertisements, pornography, etc.).

Liberal feminism embraces aforementioned values as “empowerment” and is essentially a “reformist” movement that does not seek overthrowing the system (Bryson, 2003, p. 40). These differences will be touched upon when relevant but not delved into at depth due to the vastness of the topics and limit of this paper.

The history of feminism is short but rich. Beginning in the 19th century liberal feminism took over and brought into law many protections for women in Western countries, including right to divorce in case of domestic violence and the right to vote and own property. It can be argued that while liberal feminism takes the side of women, it still operates within the framework of sexism.

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Marxism is a framework of economic and political analysis. It does not dictate mode of political authority as dictatorship, democracy or even anarchy, but later politically influential philosophers including Léon Trotsky, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong and Ali Shariati have incorporated Marxism into all modes of political leadership with Islamic Marxism on one end and genocidal authoritarianism on the other. In current academia, influential Marxist philosophers include Theodor Adorno, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Alexandra Kollontai, Rosa Luxemburg, Slavoj Žižek and famous campaigner of the Suffragette movement of the beginning of 20th century, Sylvia Pankhurst.

The sum of Marxist analysis is in historical materialism as described by Marx:

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness (Marx, 1859).

The implications of this simple theory are massive. Socially we have little choice, determined by our place in society with regards to our economic class, ethnicity, sex and sexual orientation. Our choices are illusions, constricted by our environment and consciousness, meaning we wouldn't even be able to conceive of a choice outside our own individual consciousness. Labour roles of segments of productive labour and reproductive labour is assigned each. Thus the economic incentives behind societal functions such as misogyny, misandry, homophobia, and racism become apparent. Women's autonomy and abortion rights for example, disturb the required reproduction (Bryson, 2003, p. 187; Vogel, 2013, p. 123). Homosexual couples being able to marry or even live in peace, disturb fertility rates required (Mitchell, 2013). Outsourcing of dangerous or cheap labour hinges on racism keeping certain ethnicities in their assigned places, within and outside national borders. State institutions serve to exert control over the class system, through injustice, lack of compassion, neighbourhood

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segregation, cultural segregation, legal constrictions, criminalization, laws limiting autonomy, laws requiring labour, as well as positive measures like financial incentives. Financial incentives have indeed been a powerful tool not just for control of reproduction, but also for mothers to give up their sons for war efforts, as was the case during the Iran-Iraq war. Iranian mothers of soldiers were given monetary compensation through benefit programs and subsidies to last a lifetime. The mothers were also given social status through glorification of “martyrdom”, as any soldier in the war effort is labelled martyr by Iranian authorities. They set up glass boxes of items representing marriage for the unwed soldiers killed in action called *hejleh* (Afary, 2009, p. 300). The status of mother of martyr as the ultimate sacrifice and worship of God is highly revered through state propaganda such as murals covering an entire side of a multi-story building strewn across the city landscape, special events and mentions in media.

The foundation of Marxist feminism is female labour. Beautifully argued by Vogel in *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (Vogel, 2013, p. 141), Marxist feminism takes into account the necessity of the labour that only female bodies can actualize: reproduction. Reproduction of workers is necessary for a capitalist means of production, and it is free labour expected of women – so expected that states take measure in controlling female bodies through policies on contraceptive help, femicide, abortion, monetary incentives, ejecting women from the workforce, restricting movement, restricting clothing, bodily mutilation, eugenics, violence, social narratives, and infanticide, particularly female infanticide. These measures are collectively under the umbrella of controlling “the work force”.

The view of the population as “work force” implies commodification. The labour of the worker is a commodity she sells to the employer. Slavery is another example of commodification of human bodies. Nowhere is the commodification of humans more apparent than in the commodification of the female body in prostitution, and especially so in trafficking.

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The expectation of reproduction enforced on female bodies is the most insidious type of commodification of women; women are objects of society protected for the sake of reproduction and sexual gratification. Women are not allowed subjecthood, as it disturbs the extraction of reproductive, domestic, and sexual labour off which the capitalist benefits.

Literature Review

Women and Politics in Iran

Recognition, Misrecognition and Redistribution

In *The Politics of Recognition* Taylor puts forth a theory that “identity is partly shaped by recognition or its’ absence” (Taylor, Gutmann, & Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Identity is also shaped by misrecognition, which is the society mirroring back a “confining or demeaning or contemptible” picture of a group, leading to a distortion of identity and suffering. Taylor argues that “non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 25). Women are the largest group by number to suffer misrecognition in patriarchal societies. The misrecognition has led to an internalized sense of inferiority, thereby replicating the projected image of womanhood.

Taylor describes the emergence of the concept of recognition as arising from the ashes of the fallen honor based culture. Honor is a quality served for the few, and therefore requires inequality to have meaning. In this sense, Iran as a collectivistic culture, with high levels of power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 58), does not value equality of individuals. Thereby individuals, or rather groups, are recognized by their position in society, which then becomes an internalized sense of self. Women, in the case of Iran, are not viewed to possess the same level of honor as men, but are rather symbols of a man’s honor. This view

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of women has been legislated by the clerical regime and is linguistically visible in Farsi by expressions such as *namoos*, translated as “honor”, “reputation”, “chastity of wives/daughters”. *Namoos* is an attribute of the male, and is not directly associated with women.

Taylor describes the concept of individualized identity taking shape during the eighteenth century, which in turn led to the honor being replaced by dignity, an inherent quality of all human beings (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 28). As the cultural heritage of different societies is not historically identical, there can be no expectation of all cultures to follow the same trajectory of development. In the sense that the prerequisites of growing recognition are valid only in individualized societies, the right conditions for the march of Western feminism in Iran might not be in the current situation. Iranian religious culture views the moral compass as an external quality made possible by the connection to God, as opposed to the “modern culture” of turning inward (Taylor et al., 1994, p. 29). As the Iranian society is not individualistic, recognition in the inherent dignity and need for recognition of the individual is not valued, but must be attained through the collective.

In connection with the theme of recognition, Nancy Fraser claimed in her famous essay *Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition and Participation* (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 8) that social justice movements have increasingly moved from the politics of redistribution of resources, to that of recognition of differences. The claim holds true for feminism, where “activist tendencies that look to redistribution as the remedy for male domination are increasingly dissociated from tendencies that look instead to recognition of gender difference”. However, studies have shown that it is not a pure ideological function determining the recognition of differences, but a material one. US women in higher economic classes report fewer instances of discrimination, regardless of their ethnicity and sexuality (Hurt, 2017). Economic disadvantage is an important, if not the root aspect of the struggle of Iranian women, without which recognition would essentially be meaningless. The

socioeconomic disadvantage of women is not just a question of attitudes, but a matter of legislation legitimized by tafsir/interpretations of the Quran.

Commodification of Bodies

In *Hijab as Commodity Form: Veiling, Unveiling, and Misveiling in Contemporary Iran* (Gould, 2014), Gould considers how the repeated veiling and unveiling of the shifting governments of the last century in Iran have reinforced capitalism by incorporating the female body into the political economy as a form of commodity. Because the veil is an empty signifier, it can be filled with whatever signification that satiates human desire. The veil itself is just a piece of fabric. The only practical function it serves is to be worn on the head, providing protection against wind and weather. When the object becomes a commodity, it “enters into relations with other commodities...The commodity’s pure materiality is usurped by its social function.” (Gould, 2014, p. 222). The significations given to the veil are so numerous, that “[t]he literature on the hijab is arguably thicker and denser than that for any other issue in the Islamic public sphere” (Gould, 2014, p. 222), varying from social status, economic status, sexuality, availability, identity, religious belief or lack thereof, conformity or non-conformity, protection against the male gaze, nationality, ethnic group, and so on. As such, it fulfills the Marxian definition of commodity; “(1) it is traded on the market; (2) it fabricates and satisfies a human desire; (3) it stimulates a desire for the perpetuation of the immaterial relations it engenders.” (Gould, 2014, p. 222). In discussions of hijab, it is not infrequent that the issue of oversexualized clothing in the West is brought up, yet the fallacy of the argument is “both articles of clothing render the woman’s body up for consumption” (Gould, 2014, p. 232).

In Islamicate societies, the veil has historically been a common divider of class. In Assyrian, Byzantine and Persian societies, only upper class women were allowed to be veiled, while in modern times the lower classes are more likely to cover with niqab or chador than the

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upper classes. Hiding coercive secularism behind the display of neutral liberalism, in some instances women are unveiled such as the case of France and the American University of Cairo forbidding face covering. In both instances, women's "bodies serve as marker of class difference" (Gould, 2014, p. 225). Before the '79 revolution, the ban on hijab restricted the autonomy of girls and women who refused to unveil or were not allowed to unveil, confining them to the home and pulling them out of jobs and schools. As these women were primarily of the lower classes, the restrictions widened the chasm between women of different social classes, Gould writes. The chasm between the social classes of women would later serve the instatement of the Islamic regime, as lower class women saw the opportunity for more freedom than they previously held. Secular and liberal Iranians have difficulty grasping why Khomeini had such support among women, as to them freedom was restricted post-revolution, but the view from the religious lower classes is the complete opposite, as not only did they become free to wear the veil, but also to engage in a society better suited to their worldview.

More importantly to the Islamic regime, the veil serves as marker of gender. Psychoanalytic feminist Luce Irigaray's hypothesis is used to explain the alienation and exclusion of women in society, asserting that it stems "not so much from their social reduction to some biologically determined function", but rather through enrolment of women into the discourse of the gender role of Woman, enforced through misogyny and reproduced "through their erasure or self-effacing complicity" (Gould, 2014, p. 230). The gender role of Woman is a "prescriptive homogenisation imposed on their bodies" that sustains the oppression of women and erases the space for "sexual difference within female sexuality" (Gould, 2014, p. 230). Women are denied individual sexuality to a different extent than men as "the state's interpellation of the body is less coercive for men than it is for women" (Gould, 2014, p. 230). On the surface, the marginalization of female sexuality is visible by the coercion of the veil onto female bodies. Here, Gould references Anne-Emmanuelle Berger who

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illustrates how, in both the Islamic and European public spheres, differences among women are erased and suppressed even as their generically feminine status is accentuated. On Berger's account, engendering through veiling homogenises the female body in such a way that it renders women visible to men in what is seen as the only appropriately 'Islamic' fashion. (Gould, 2014, p. 228).

The homogenisation of women is lauded as one of the virtues of hijab by Islamists, as it helps women "concentrate on their primary function of bearing children" (Gould, 2014, p. 232). The uniformity of women makes them a collective differentiated from men, and non-believers. Individualisation through unveiling or misveiling is seen as a threat, requiring correction by male authority, giving women a permanent place in the male field of vision which only affords freedom to the women homogenising themselves through the use of hijab.

The gender segregation is justified through the so called "suppressive" thesis, which has wide acceptance amongst the legislators, asserts that the suppression of male sexual desire promotes heterosexuality. The veil is argued for to purify the relations between the sexes, erasing sexual tension. The responsibility of controlling male desire thus falls on women. Gould points out that the suppressive thesis is a modern reading of the hijab, "more indebted to Victorian sexual norms than of Islamic law" (Gould, 2014, p. 229). The inherent paradox of the suppressive thesis is the overtly denied mechanism that the suppression of male desire "stimulates heterosexual desire in the act of rendering it forbidden" (Gould, 2014, p. 228).

Gould weaves feminism with Althusser's understanding of power structures and ideology to explain the workings of male authority in Iran. Althusser distinguished between repressive state apparatuses that function through violence and coercion (prisons, police, courts, military) and ideological state apparatuses, which function through consent (religious institutions, media, educational institutions) (Althusser, 2001, pp. 126, 137; Gould, 2014, p. 228). Seeing as religion is woven into Iranian law, it functions as both a repressive and an ideological state apparatus. The imposition of the veil "interpellates individuals as subjects of

the state”, making a matter of personal piety into the matter of state politics. From the outside, the veil seems imposed by violence, though the reality points to the main tool of interpellating being male authority. Paternal authority is perpetuated by coercion of men; when caught by morality police for misveiling, it is uncommon that the officer even acknowledges the presence of the woman (as it is sinful), but rather coerces her male companion by confiscation of valuable documents, cross examination of the relationship, threats of legal punishment, or simply reprimands him.

From this perspective, the only major difference between capitalist commodification and compulsory veiling is that in the first instance women are interpellated into the patriarchal regime through male desire while in the second instance they are interpellated through male authority (Gould, 2014, p. 228).

The act of misveiling as well does not escape this commodification in most instances as it is not politically motivated. Rather the woman misveils to commodify her own body in the capitalist system, ensuring male desire, showcasing how misveiling too is a product of patriarchy. Gould points out that “the commodification of the female body pertains as much to misveiling and unveiling as to veiling” (Gould, 2014, p. 231), which begs the question, does the MSF movement escape this commodification?

Sexual Politics in Iran

One of the most read and authoritative text on women in Iran is Afary’s *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Afary, 2009). She details Iran’s history of sexual politics from the turn of the century and how it affects women; how the practice of state controlled clothing began with Reza Shah in 1928, first with requiring men to wear Western suits and hats, later with the unveiling of women in 1936. “Unveiling disrupted male homosocial spaces, especially when gender reforms encouraged normative heterosexuality and pushed same-sex relations further to

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the margins of society” (Afary, 2009, p. 142), she writes, and continues to explain that these discourses predate Islam in Iran, as in Zoroastrianism too, “the body is a source of shame and ritual impurities” justifying traditions of gender segregation (Afary, 2009, p. 142). Drawing from such discourses, Khomeini wrote of the “evils of women’s entry into society and interaction between men and women” (qtd. Afary, 2009, p. 204), which he then put to practice post-revolution.

The resulting marginalization of women’s freedom in the Islamic regime is difficult to reconcile with the strong female support it garnered. The coerced unveiling during the Pahlavi era was a strong motivator. The middle class bazaar merchants and the rural poor were some of the most ardent supporters, as they had negative view of the modern entertainment urban women participated in, such as dancing, going to the beach, driving, going to cafés, or attending university. Most married young and were engaged before finishing high school. Divorce was looked down upon, marrying cousins common, and polygamy was acceptable. Therefore the new regime didn’t change much for these women, but rather legitimized their culture and forced others to embrace their culture as well. Islamist women rather became freer during the Islamic regime, especially during the Iran-Iraq war when they could join the war effort against the wishes of their families, join literary and health programs, work in the public sector as it was firmly gender segregated, and themselves choose a husband they had met in university or state sanctioned programs.

It was two women who played key roles in establishing the laws pertaining to women post-revolution, Marziyeh Dabbagh and Zahra Rahnavard. Their loyalty to the cause afforded them high positions in the new government. Dabbagh’s primary contributions were the repression of the left through recruitment of female spies, female hostile divorce laws, and granting custody to the wives of martyrs. In accordance with Shari’a, women’s household labor could be calculated into monetary value after divorce, would would gain custody if the man

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was deemed physically or mentally unfit, and they gained greater rights for the sum of dowry the husband had to pay. Dabbagh had her own version of Islamic womanhood, wanting women out of the homes to contribute to militant Islamism, offering soldiers and martyrs for the cause. Rahnavard had a more progressive stance. She was against mandatory veiling, unsuccessfully supported a law against sexual abuse and murder of women by male relatives, took stance against wife-beating, and called for women to be given custody of children after divorce. Rahnavard's view was that Iranian women were treated as the "second sex", a term coined by feminist writer Simon de Beavoir (Bryson, 2003, p. 128). However she held that "the West commodifies women, "true Islam" does not" (Afary, 2009, p. 315). Her feminist views got her ousted as president of al-Zahra Women's University in Tehran when Ahmadinejad came to power in 2006.

Between 1980 to 1983, universities were shut down for cultural overhaul, and school curricula was Islamized for the indoctrination of women. The Khomeini brand of Shari'a law was introduced, defining "a woman's legal rights as half of a man's" (Afary, 2009, p. 278), which can be further broken down by religion into Muslim women being half of Muslim men, Christian and Jewish women being a quarter of Muslim men, and so on. Legal marriage age of women was lowered to 9 years old, abortion was outlawed and contraception limited. Hijab became compulsory, women were forbidden from singing and dancing in public, public spaces became segregated including buses where women are relegated to the back, women judges were removed from courts, and charges of adultery can lead to execution and stoning of women.

The system of restriction on women's freedom was made possible through male authority. To reinforce male authority, men were given rights to control women. Male guardianship system was reinstated, requiring permission for marriage, education, employment, travel and other major decisions. The construct of male blood as regenerative reinforces the discourse of patrilineal descent, justifying the greater political power given to men. Husbands

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gained the right for unilateral right to divorce; he can divorce his wife without her permission, and also deny her divorcing him. Child custody heavily favors men, giving them automatic custody of children above the age of 7, as well as in case of the mother remarrying. Sentences for honor kills became lighter. Men also gained right of polygamy for up to four wives, as well as unlimited “temporary marriages”. Temporary marriage has been a hot button topic in Iran for decades, with clerics defending it aggressively, arguing that it reduces “men’s inclination to visit prostitutes and thus decrease[s] the spread of disease” (Afary, 2009, p. 150), although in practice it is a veil for legitimizing prostitution, as “nearly a quarter of those entering prostitution had contracted a temporary marriage” (Afary, 2009, p. 365).

The duties of men in marriage is legally defined as providing maintenance, and his right is unbridled sexual access, making it the duty of women to always be available (except during menstruation) for sexual exploitation. That gaining the right to exploit women was a great imperative in male support for Islamization is clear, as the same demands are made by Western “men’s right activists” (Marche, 2016).

A significant part of manufacturing the meaning of womanhood post-revolution was the militant Islamism of Dabbagh during the Iran-Iraq war. The hijab gained new meaning, “no longer only a sign of decency and propriety but also a symbol of jihad”, with propaganda murals showing women carrying rifles, wearing headbands with Islamic messages, offering “small boys destined for jihad” (Afary, 2009, p. 293). Gender segregation at the front line was circumvented with praise for the women. Economic incentives for female relatives of martyrs, including generous subsidies, access to basic food, healthcare, and education set the material motivation. The incentives raised the status of war widows and mothers of martyrs to community leader in the public perception, as it became “the highest honor to have given a shahid (martyr) to the war” (Afary, 2009, p. 303). These women were expected to observe rules of piety and act as role models for women and girls, and were honored above fathers in

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propaganda posters and murals. The changed perception of mothers of martyrs gave these women new found power in the household and altered their sense of identity.

“[H]ow did the government convince women to accept the principle of joining the Islamist jihad and offering up their children as martyrs?” Afary asks. Her hypothesis is based on Freudian psychoanalysis, claiming that the propaganda strengthened the common human trait of necrophilia (love of death). Indeed, Khomeini waxed poetic about death to a great degree, with stories of sacrifice for the regime, for country and kin, using emotional language such as “sisters”, “brothers”, “courage”, promises of God’s approval, and lauding the cause as aligned with that of martyred prophets and imams. The figure of Fatima, daughter of prophet Muhammad and mother of Hussein, was set as role model for women. Hussein, son of Ali who carries the Shi’a branch of Islam, is known as the greatest martyr and the role model of young men joining the war. Hospitals, mosques, parks, schools and particularly streets were named after martyrs. Memorial shrines in the shape of figurative wedding chambers celebrated the unmarried martyrs’ wedding in heaven. Afary uses the arguments of Farhad Khosrokhavar to explain how the figure of Khomeini could wield such ideological power:

The Islamic state in the person of Khomeini takes the place of the dethroned father, adopts an affectionate tone, separates the Good and the Evil (enemies are the Evil, defenders of the Islamic order are the Good), and confers a sense of engagement upon the youth of the martial organizations (the Pasdaran, the Basij, the Construction Jihad, the Martyr’s Foundation, etc). The youth use the state to cut ties with tradition. (Afary, 2009, p. 299)

In the post-war era, feminism began to gain traction with journals like *Zanan* (Women), bringing “women academics, artists, and other professional women to reclaim some of the rights and organizations they lost in the 1979 revolution and to demand new ones” (Afary, 2009, p. 316). In addition to showcasing feminist writings of Western and Iranian women, the journal reinterpreted Shi’a Islamic doctrine and the Quran in favor of women. Reinterpretation

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of religious texts had previously been used by the regime to recruit women for the war effort, but the same authorities refused to accept interpretations that restricted men's sexual access to women, favored women in family law, or challenged the perception of the women as inferior. Through reinterpretation of key texts, Islamic feminists have "called for the revision of family laws" (Afary, 2009, p. 293). Misogyny being a cornerstone of the Islamic regime, the efforts of Islamic feminists is met with stone cold resistance by authorities. The journal was shut down as the founder Shahla Sherkat was charged with promoting un-Islamic and "obsolete" views, but it resurfaced under the name of *Zanan-e Emrooz* as an online publication.

Western imperialist powers, most recently the United States, have opportunistically used the issue of the rights of Middle Eastern women for their strategic interests and abandoned it just as opportunistically when it no longer fit their purposes (Afary, 2009, p. 373)

"The lives of Iranian women changed substantially" by early 21st century (Afary, 2009, p. 360). The mean age of marriage had gone up to 24, literacy exceeded 95%, women make up the majority of university students, fertility rates dropped, infant mortality rate sank, and choice of partner increasingly became individual choice. The Internet has given women greater freedom of speech on intimate concerns, and enabled cross-sex communication. The importance placed on "virginity" before marriage for women has decreased, and marriage is viewed more as a celebration of love. As contraceptives became easily accessible, sex before marriage and gay subcultures became more commonplace. Afary points out the negatives accompanying this shift, including high rates of unprotected sex, prostitution and suicide. As women lack legal protection in case of sexual assault and harassment, the "Iranian sexual liberation" was on "masculine terms" (Afary, 2009, p. 361). Women lack the influence of feminist frameworks for forming a sense of personal autonomy, Afary quotes Moruzzi and Sadeghi:

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Rejecting the traditional Islamic conception of patriarchal authority (and its corollary obligation of the man to respect the honor of the woman), but without an indigenous modern conception of feminine power (i.e., feminism), these young women find themselves free to experience the insidious double standard of their own and their society's masculinist orientation. This is the recognizably modern version of gender inequality: the right of the woman to be held accountable for her own relative lack of power (qtd. Afary, 2009, p. 361)

Women became aware of their own unhappiness, yet unable to change their situation, the rate of female suicide has grown due to violent or emotionally abusive marriage. Rural women attempting suicide choose the brutal method of self-immolation, causing permanent health problems and disfiguration. In light of such issues, the hijab regulations were low on agenda of feminists, who primarily questioned the coercion of non-Muslim women. The turn came when sociologist Fatemeh Sadeghi, published an essay on her experience growing up in an orthodox family, called *Why We Say No to Forced Hijab*, declaring that the hijab “had nothing to do with morality and religion. It is all about power.” (Afary, 2009, p. 369). Sadeghi is the daughter of Ayadollah Sadeq Khalkhali, former Chief Justice of the Islamic Republic, notoriously known as the “hanging judge”, which makes the essay all the more powerful. The efforts of women have not been extinguished despite brutal treatment of activists, and now continues with the MSF movement.

Women, Conventions and Islam

A False Dichotomy of Islam versus Secularism

Professor of Catholic Studies, William T. Cavanaugh writes in his illuminating book *The Myth of Religious Violence* (Cavanaugh, 2009) on how religion has been portrayed as a “transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life, essentially distinct from ‘secular’ features such as politics and economics, which has a peculiarly dangerous inclination to

promote violence” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 3). Through the presentation of religion as violent, constant throughout history and people, and without the propensity for development, the secular nation-state can appear as its neutral antithesis. The creation of the ideology of secularism as a negative of the essential myth of religion being prone to violence is “one of the foundational legitimating myths of the liberal nation-state” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 4). Cavanaugh asserts that there is no such thing as religious or secular violence, as the categorization of such is dependent on the context of political power.

Catharine MacKinnon’s findings on how the law treats the word consent is relevant here. Consent implies imbalance of power, as it is the dominated who gives consent to the dominant (Nordiskt Forum, 2014). Consent is in effect acquiescence in the face of interpellation by state apparatuses. Using the confessionalization thesis, Cavanaugh explains how the populace of feudal Europe was interpellated into a religious identity (Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican and so on) through doctrinal statements, i.e. confessions, to promote unity and obedience. The same coercion can be seen in post-revolutionary Iran, where apostasy is punishable by death, and regular confessional rituals are required to display piety. Instilling a religious identity brings with it in-group unity, an “us”, distinguished from the out-group that is the “other”. The creation of in-groups confessing loyalty and identifying with a group and leader, flows power from the individual to the ideological institution that group represents. The political leader of Iran carrying the title Ayatollah, literally meaning sign of God, is evidence of the sacralization brought by the accumulation of power through interpellation.

Cavanaugh goes even further to argue that the concept of religion itself is a construct created through violence and coercion, as Europeans did not make the distinction between politics, economics, and religion in medieval times. The emergent nation-states needed to create the secular-religious dichotomy to relegate the power of the Church to private pursuits, while the loyalty of the public was transferred to the secular government and the secular pursuits of

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economic life. “The myth of religious violence helped and continues to help facilitate this process by making the secular nation-state appear as necessary to tame the inherently volatile effects of religion in public life”, Cavanaugh writes (Coakley, 2012, p. 31).

Cavanaugh argues that the West is a construct, a “contested project” created by the ideological state apparatuses of nation-states espousing Samuel Huntington’s famous dichotomous concept of “the West and the rest”. Within this concept liberal nation-states can legitimize themselves by constructing a dichotomy of the religious Other, who is particularly prone to religious fanaticism and violence, contrasted with the “rational, peace-making, secular subject” of Western society (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 4). In current political affairs, it is particularly Muslim societies that are cast in the role of villain, portrayed as irrational, absolutist, violent, sub-modern, and unable to distinguish between religion and politics. Naturally, secular nation-states then come to possess the inverse of all ideologies ascribed to the Other. Secular nation-states thus become rational, peace-making, modern, liberal, with firm division between state and religion. Coercive measures and violence against the Other become legitimized through the vilifying of the figure of the fanatical Muslim as enemy of contemporary liberalism. Secular violence is hardly violence at all, in fact it is necessary, peace-making and praiseworthy “especially when it is used to quell the inherent violence of religion”, while violence that is labeled religious is “particularly virulent and reprehensible”.

Hiding behind the veil of secularism and liberalism in the West, is the capitalist pursuits of exploiting the labor of marginalized peoples, collectively branded as the Other. Through the myth of religious violence, a villain is created “against which a liberal social order defined itself” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 14). Hinduism for example, is viewed as a mystical, irrational religion. Cavanaugh quotes Ronald Inden:

Implicit in this notion of Hinduism as exemplifying a mind that is imaginative and passionate rather than rational and willful was, of course, the idea that the Indian mind requires an externally imported

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world-ordering rationality. This was important for the imperial project of the British as it appeared, piecemeal, in the course of the nineteenth century (Coakley, 2012, p. 31)

In branding a whole way of life as a religion as has been done to both Indians and peoples of the Muslim diaspora, to be Indian or Muslim must be private, while to be British, American, or Swedish is to be public. The religious Other is thus marginalized to “give way in public to rational, secular forms of power” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 4). The myth of religious violence is in parallel with justifications of Western imperialism which marked the Other as inferior and in need of Western rationality “in the hopes of making them more like ‘us’” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 14).

The figure of the religious fanatic is constructed through biased readings of history. Cavanaugh uses the example of Iran becoming a great enemy of the United States. Bypassing historical events such as the support of the United States for the coup that installed the secular Pahlavi monarchy in 1953, religion is pointed out as the “deeper” cause of the animosity of Iran. The animosity of the United States against Iran thus becomes pathological, irrelevant of actions or events. Žižek describes the vilifying of the Jews by the Nazis in the same way, as the problems of German society were inherent to the society, and yet the Nazis externalized the causes of their social ills onto the Jews. In a way

one could say that even if most of the Nazi claims about the Jews had been true (that they exploited the Germans, that they seduced German girls, and so forth...) their anti-Semitism would still have been (and was) pathological, since it repressed the true reason why the Nazis needed anti-Semitism in order to sustain their ideological position (Žižek, 2004, p. 51).

That is not to say that Iran does not do the same, viewing Western societies as inherently decadent, greedy, sexualized, and immoral. Iran, as many other Muslim countries,

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pathologizes their perceived social ills such as drug addiction, promiscuity, divorce rates, and latch-key kids to “Westernization”, and apply the same logic to women seeking emancipation (Hassan, 1999, p. 251).

There are ideologies that the secular-religious dichotomy ignores in the public discourse and excludes from religion. Nationalism, patriotism, and even fascism is example of such ideologies. While fascist tendencies of the Western nation-state are rationalized away, nationalism is construed positively to ensure that the “lethal loyalty” of the public belongs to the nation-state. Patriotism is interesting in the case of state sanctioned violence. Pater is Latin for “father”, so patriotism means loyalty to the fatherland. “Patriotic public invocations of God are specifically excluded from the category of religion and therefore not subject to the kind of restrictions put on religion”, Cavanaugh writes (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 13). The secular nation-state can thus cherry pick which ideologies to include and exclude from religious fanaticism.

In *Sex and War: How Biology Explains Warfare and Terrorism and Offers a Path to a Safer World*, Potts and Hayden argue that human males possess the biological predisposition for team aggression (2010). Team aggression evolved before human and chimpanzee ancestry diverged, and predisposes men to form tight-knit teams for conducting aggressive raids on neighboring groups. Aggression in itself is just an emotion, and does not automatically lead to the action of violence. Therefore, both sports teams and violent gangs are examples of team aggression. Military squads are the perfect example of team aggression, where the team becomes one’s family, ensuring sacrifice, diligence, and loyalty. The state monopolizes male team aggression through interpellation of its subjects, both through the repressive state apparatus of the military, and ideological state apparatuses instilling the values of patriotism.

Cavanaugh asserts that violence and oppression is attributed to religion by scholars through obfuscation of, or refusal to clarify, what is defined as religion. The truth of the matter is, says Cavanaugh, that there is no consensus in the field of religious studies on what defines

religion; “[r]eligion is a constructed category, not a neutral descriptor of a reality that is simply out there in the world” (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 58). Hassan’s reinterpretation of the Quran below further shows how religion can be molded to justify the actions and beliefs of the powerful, veiling deeper causes and convictions. Before going through Hassan’s article *Feminism in Islam* (1999), I will go through Haleh Afshar’s case study of Iranian women’s relation to Islam (1998).

Islam and Feminism in Iran

In *Islam and Feminisms* (Afshar, 1998), Haleh Afshar take a deep dive into the situation of women in post-revolutionary Iran. This book proved indispensable for the subject, giving an overview of the sociopolitical standing of women in all areas, such as education, employment, marriage and more.

According to Afshar who quotes Mernissi, women have been successively denied the right to interpret Islamic laws by the construction of a “social architecture of veiling and exclusion” (Afshar, 1998, p. 3). At the dawn of Islam women such as Khadija and Aisha, two of the prophet’s wives, were vital to the religion as they were the first and most devout converts, providing both moral and economic support, and leading men into battle for the sake of Islam. Aisha is often used as a reliable source of Islamic interpretation to this day, yet with the passing of the prophet, the process of interpretation and law-making has become a privilege reserved for men only. The interpretation is not only a matter of law or conduct, but also that of the production of a religious narrative. It is this production of the Islamic narrative that is the goal of the Islamic Feminism movement, on the basis that the reclamation of the faith and the Muslim narrative brings with it the status and rights bestowed on women by Islam. The exclusion of women from the Muslim narrative has established a firm patriarchy, but not without protests and bloodshed, such as the murder of female religious leaders, most notably Qoratolaeyn at the turn of the century.

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Progressive Islamic Feminism scholars such as Zin al-Din and Saedzadeh claimed that Islam has its' basis in the freedom of thought, will, speech and action, and that "no Muslim has authority over another in such matters" (Afshar, 1998, p. 7). Women should be allowed to especially interpret religious matters pertaining to women, and eventual mistakes or sins are therefore the responsibility of women themselves. The issue of allowing women the freedom of interpretation is a Quranic concept, translated and propagated as a means of public control in post-revolutionary Iran called *amr-e be ma'rouf, va nahy az monkar*, roughly translating to "commanding good and preventing sin". The commanding of good and prevention of sin is a male duty as the upholders of the faith, and thus men are obliged to prevent women from practicing their own interpretations of the faith. The arguments of Islamic Feminism scholars as such is at stark odds with the doctrine of the Islamic regime used for keeping its' citizens in check.

Another problem facing women is the contestation of the concept of equality by Muslim men and women, who instead argue for the notion of complementarity. The equality mode of "the West" is viewed as a failure, repressing women to become like men, and leaving them no choice but to abandon motherhood for the sake of participation in the public domain. Complementarity on the hand, would offer women the high status of wife and mother without questioning her contribution to the public domain. Yet, the confusion of the current Islamic narrative concerning women suggests that women and men are not seen as complementary like yin and yang, but rather that the definition of a woman is what a man is not. The discourse consists of a view that women are naturally different from men, and therefore intended for different functions, and are not to compete with men in society, but rather to complement.

Through the argument of complementarity, the regime has succeeded in implementing an all-encompassing discourse of polarity, creating a gender binary that limits women to the small space that men cannot occupy. Women are confined to roles such as women's doctor,

teacher in girls' schools, wife, mother or other roles that prove no threat to the status of men. An influential view is that of Ayatollah Mottahari; Islam has granted women natural, and therefore eternal rights inherent from those of men, as "the law of creation has made man the seeker, the supplicant, the needy, and woman the desired and the needed". Time and again, it has been propagated that women's rights are not a subject for debate, but rather human nature made explicit through Islam and ordained through legislation based on a divine natural order.

The nature of women has been firmly established through the discourse of "human nature" as the root of humanity, procreators and mothers, but also with characteristics such as seeking beauty and variety, submission and flexibility, philanthropy, supremacy of emotions, love of the home, natural shyness and modesty. The described attributes are desirable in women by Mohamadi, but warned against by others, such as Mottahari, who describes "women's need for wealth and money" as "greater than that of men" (qtd. Afary, 2009, p. 23). The male-made conservative discourse rests on naturalistic assumptions used to advocate for the concept of gender complementarity, asserting gender asymmetry as benign through implicit binary metaphors of *'aql* and *nafs*. Men are associated with *'aql*, meaning rationality and reason, as well as control and morality. Women are associated with *nafs*, meaning disorder, passion, desire, and instinct. The binary is hierarchical, placing the male sex class above the female. The construct of femininity and masculinity in Islamic tradition does not have basis in the Quran, rather it mirrors "the familiar Cartesian legacy of mind/body in some Western discourses" writes Azam Torab (2007, p. 13). Women are cast in the role of mute nature that must be controlled and cultivated by the rational man.

Towards A Feminist Interpretation of The Quran

On the work of reinterpreting the Quran, Riffat Hassan's essay *Feminism in Islam* (1999) provides a sharp analysis. She opens with explanation on the different sources of textual

authority in Islam, each interpreted differently in the various denominations. There is (a) the Sunnah, the practices and traditions of prophet Muhammad; (b) the fiqh, jurisprudence; (c) the madahib, schools of law; (d) the hadith, sayings attributed to prophet Muhammad; and (e) the Quran, the holy text. The Quran and the hadith carry the most weight, with the Quran being the more important of the two. However, throughout history, the Quran has been read through the lens of the hadith, Hassan asserts (Hassan, 1999, p. 248).

The *hadith* being afforded such influence as to affect how the Quran itself is interpreted, is glaringly problematic. Historically Islamic scholars have been preoccupied with asserting the validity of individual *hadith* stories, and their observations have led to the conclusion that the majority are forged in support of political rulers of their time, or the religious leaders themselves. Despite the necessary skepticism, the whole of the *hadith* literature cannot be disregarded, as it forms the basis of the Quran's historicity, and carries the emotive aspect of tradition.

Hassan unapologetically points out that throughout Muslim history, Islamic texts have exclusively been interpreted "by Muslim men who have arrogated to themselves the task of defining the ontological, theological, sociological, and eschatological status of Muslim women" (Hassan, 1999, p. 250). Despite the claims of Islam giving women more rights than any other religion, male-centered and male-dominated Muslim societies have kept women in "physical, emotional, and mental confinement" and deprivation of actualizing their potential. Under the guise of Islamization, the Islamic regime in Iran used religion as an instrument of oppression, with women being the primary target. As the majority of people do not contest the frameworks of piety imposed upon them by religious clerics, they "regard themselves merely as instruments designed to minister to, and reinforce, a patriarchal system that they believe to be divinely instituted" (Hassan, 1999, p. 251). More and more women have however been jolted out of their comfort and joined Islamic feminist efforts when the realization hit that the Islamic regime had

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mathematically reduced the status of women to half of that of men, commanding women to “know their place” as the inferior sex class, and conditioning women to accept the myths perpetuating their oppression.

Hassan identifies out three fundamental theological assumptions leading to the belief that men are “above” women, or “have a “degree of advantage” over them, impeding the status of women as equals of men in the sight of God. The assumptions are

(a) that God’s primary creation is man, not woman, since woman is believed to have been created from a man’s rib and is, therefore, derivative and secondary ontologically; (b) that woman, not man, was the primary agent of what is customarily described as “man’s fall” or expulsion from the Garden of Eden, hence “all daughters of Eve” are to be regarded with hatred, suspicion, and contempt; and (c) that woman was created not only *from* man but also *for* man, which makes her existence merely instrumental and not of fundamental importance (Hassan, 1999, p. 254)

Hassan emphasizes in accordance with the Islamic feminist method, that theological questions must be answered from within theology. She writes that the three theological assumptions are answers to the following questions: “(a) How was woman created? (b) Was woman responsible for the fall of man? and (c) Why was woman created?” (Hassan, 1999, p. 254). There are more assumptions on women in Islamic discourse with little or no basis in the Quran, a notable example being the discourse on women and menstruation, prohibiting prayer, touching the Quran, and fasting during menstruation. The only prohibitions in the Quran is sexual intercourse during menstruation and ingestion of blood, but the cultural myths of menstruation as pollution persist. By extension, women are seen as spiritually inferior to men, as they cannot perform as many acts of worship (Torab, 2007, p. 187). Hassan’s analysis clarifies how the notions of inferiority of women have been built through patriarchal interpretations.

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The first question (a) pertaining to woman's creation is the determining factor, since if women and men were not created equally, "then they cannot become equal *essentially* at a subsequent time" (Hassan, 1999, p. 254). In Genesis which carries the creation myth of Judaism and Christianity, Adam is God's primary creation. Hassan points out that the account of creations differs in the Quran; all passages pertaining to creation of humanity use the egalitarian terms of *bashar* and *insan*, meaning *human*, not man. The term Adam is used in the ungendered Hebrew meaning of "of the soil", referring to the concept of humanity in capacity of God's viceregent on Earth. The Quran uses feminine and masculine terms and imagery evenhandedly, describing creation of humanity from a single source. There is no mention of Eve in the Quran. As Muslims rarely read the Bible, Hassan identifies the entry of Eve into Islamic tradition in the *hadith* literature. There are six *hadith* stories ascribed to a companion of prophet Muhammad known as Abu Huraira. The stories in essence advise that men take care of women, as women are created of the crooked part of Adam's rib. Hassan questions the authenticity of these stories, as they generalize the ontology, biology, and psychology of woman in conflict with the Quran. The popularity of these *hadith* amongst the general public speaks of how women are regarded in Muslim societies, as it is not woman who is created from a man's rib, but man who is created in woman's womb.

The second question of Adam's *zauj* (mate) leading to the fall of man. Hassan scrutinizes the verses, revealing that Satan is states to have led both astray, as the Quran addresses both with the caution against the forbidden tree, blames humanity for being deceived, and chastises Adam, as in humanity, for disobeying God (Hassan, 1999, p. 257). There is no differentiation made between the two in any passage pertaining to the fall of man. Cleric commentators have however interpreted the passages as Eve deceiving Adam to eat of the tree, even going as far as stating that Adam first refused and only succumbed after Eve had given him wine to drink. Adam is thus cast in the role of the rational man while Eve is actively

deceitful. The interpretation of the fall itself as a negative event is inaccurate, Hassan claims; there is no mention of “fall” in the Quran, as the word used is *zulm* meaning transgression of the boundaries of another, injustice, or transgression of the limits of one’s rights. It was the disobedience of humans that God disapproved of - as humans were meant to become God’s viceregent on earth, the command issued to humans to “go forth” means the earth is not a place of banishment. The episode of the fall can also be interpreted as in humans gaining self-consciousness through the first act of free choice (Hassan, 1999, p. 259).

The third question is the purpose of women’s creation. Hassan refers to Quranic verses detailing that the whole of creation is for just ends, and not for idle sport, and in the service of God. Men and women are called upon to fulfill their duties to God and humankind equally. The Quran unambiguously commands righteousness to both sexes, stating that women and men are protectors of one another. Yet, the division of labor places women as the possessions of men in Islamic societies like Iran. For the justification of this inequality, a passage is quoted as saying men are the “protectors” and “maintainers” of women, or are “sovereign”, or “masters” of women, while women are to be “obedient” to men, lest they be banished from the marital bed, and if not successful, beaten. This passage is usually interpreted as marital duties, while the passage itself does not refer to marriage. Hassan reinterprets the passage as ordering men to be the ones providing livelihood, exempting women from the role of breadwinner to fulfill the role of childbearers. Thus women are not to be restricted in working if they so wish, but should not be required to do so during pregnancy. She points out that the passage is a commandment to men, and not a descriptor of their inherent qualities.

The decree is made to the Islamic community as a whole “to meet a rather extraordinary possibility: a mass rebellion on the part of women against their role as childbearers” (Hassan, 1999, p. 265). To stop the dissolution of the Islamic community, a mass rebellion on the part of women without a just cause, the passage first advises counsel, then

isolation of the rebellious women from others, and prolong confinement if unsuccessful. Hassan stresses that the passage is addressed to the Islamic community, not to husbands to be the judge and executioners of women. Rather, it is to ensure justice in the community, since single mothers are in fact parenting for two people, without much support from the community. Children are the wealth and future of the community, and must be offered support (Hassan, 1999, p. 265).

So why are Iranian men so adamant in covering and homogenizing women? Pre-Islamic cultural practices imbue women's bodies with the concepts of "shame" and carrying the responsibility for men's "honor" through their chastity. The concept of honor linked to women's chastity is so important in Iranian culture that it has a separate word: *namoos*. Women's chastity is a male possession, a matter between men "in which women merely play the role of silent intermediaries", writes Fatima Mernissi (qtd. Hassan, 1999, p. 270). Male control of the women related by blood or marriage is what ensures his status amongst other men. External social controls such as hijab as an extension of the private sphere, lack of access to birth control and abortion, gossip, and laws prohibiting unmarried men and women sharing a room, serve the restriction of women's sexuality for the sake of preserving men's honor amongst one another.

Hassan highlights that misogynist interpretations of the Quran have been strengthened by *hadith* that not only set the relationship between the sexes as a hierarchy of male domination and female submission, but make man "virtually her god" (Hassan, 1999, p. 267). Women are required to acquire their husband's permission for acts of worship such as fasting. The belief of most Muslims, drawn from *hadith*, govern women's worship by the way of pleasing her husband. Postulating men as God and women's intermediators on Earth, denying women direct access to God, making men the arbiter of what happens to their wives on Earth and the hereafter, constitutes idolatry, insists Hassan (Hassan, 1999, p. 267), as Islam holds each person

accountable for her or his individual actions. The burden of individual responsibility for one's fate in Islam carries a unique emancipatory potential, writes Žižek (Collier, 1980, p. 10). Contrary to Western perceptions of Muslims as resigned to their God ordained fate, the power to choose one's fate could be the key for emancipation of Muslim women from patriarchy.

Summary of Literature Review

In the literature review, I have mentioned some of the processes shaping the role of women in Iranian society. The first is by Taylor et al. (1994) that describes the concept of misrecognition, where women are oppressed through society mirroring back a confining, demeaning, or contemptible picture of womanhood, which then becomes an internalized sense of inferiority. The misrecognition of women is necessary for the concept of honor to function, as honor is a quality served for the few, requiring inequality.

The second process mentioned is the commodification of hijab detailed by Gould (2014). The enforcement of veiling and unveiling incorporates the female body into the political economy as a commodity. The female body becomes a signifier for capitalist activities by prescriptive homogenisation imposed on women's bodies.

The third process is that of religion being used as a basis for law, rendering it both a repressive and ideological state apparatus. Afary (2009) writes that since the time of Zoroastrianism, the body has been a source of shame and ritual impurity in Iran. Such discourses have been used for justifying sex segregation, of which hijab is another form of segregation.

Some aspects to take into account include religion itself not being a "transhistorical and transcultural feature of human life" (Cavanaugh, 2009, p. 3), nor is it distinct from what we term as secular. Cavanaugh's thesis clarifies how Islam is used as a tool in political justification

for patriarchal repression of women. Another aspect is laid forth by Afshar (1998) who clarifies how misrepresentation of women has occurred historically by women being excluded from participating as full members of society. This has been done through interpretation of religion being limited to men, and exclusion of female figures from historical narratives. To overturn this exclusion Riffat Hassan (1999) reinterprets the Quran, redefining and raising women out of the ontological and theological quagmire of male interpretation, by proving how the three fundamental assumptions enabling the belief of women's inferiority are theologically false.

Analysis

The material analysed is comprised of ten hijab propaganda pictures, and five hijab propaganda photographs as point of contrast and comparison to give context to the MSF movement, plus a random selection of ten recent photographs, and fifteen video submissions by MSF protestors taken from the MSF movement page on Facebook dated between June 2017 and June 2018. The signifiers of the hijab and how the propaganda around it affects women will be discussed in this section through a summary of the analyses of the photographs and videos. Analysis of each photograph and video can be viewed in Appendices B through E.

The ten hijab propaganda photographs include two girls. The girls wear light coloured hijab in peach and beige tones and appear to be in prayer. In the first photo (Figure 1) the girl is looking down, and in the second one (Figure 3) the girl is kneeling, both expressions of submission. The expressions of submission are both in the context of Islam (Islam means submission), and in the context of femininity. In Figure 1 the text positions hijab as an "instrument of strengthening the family, and lowering the damages to society". The discourses around family, religion, hijab, and body language are signifiers of the prescribed femininity by the IRI state, and the aim is for girls to be socialised into the same mould. Positioning hijab as

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a powerful instrument that remedies societal ills and ensures the moral health of society is an indirect way of laying the responsibility on girls and women. It is girls and women who have the power of strengthening the family and lowering the damages to society through the use of hijab. By laying the responsibility on women, men are freed from the responsibility when they are the perpetrators of sexual violence against women, as it was the girl or woman's responsibility to wear hijab. Figure 1 illustrates a young girl in hijab specifically, suggesting sexual attraction to young girls as the "damage" implied is of a sexual nature as in sexual violence, pedophilia, or infidelity.

To further the image of women as the arbiters of social good and ill, a specific kind of hijab is promoted as superior; the *chador*. The *chador* worn outdoors is typically black, sometimes with embossed floral, paisely or other patterns. Historically, *chador* has more often been in lighter colors and thinner cotton fabric than is used nowadays, but the thinner light colored *chador* is now only used indoors. The propaganda aimed at adult women uses *chador* typically. Figure 6 illustrates a poll done on the popularity of *chador* as a form of veiling. Of the 4390 participants 51% were men, showing that that it is not women's opinion on their own clothes that matters, but the opinion of society on women's clothes. The inclination to wear *chador* was lower among women, especially single women, compared to men. Despite the results, the graph describes *chador* as the model for female clothing and "favourite". Figure 12 illustrates the same point with banners reading: "I love my *chador*" and "*Chador* the superior hijab". The contrast of the children's *chador* in Figure 13 (with sleeves for increased ease of movement) with the adult version clarifies that there is a purpose to the *chador* lacking sleeves; as all other feminine items of clothing, it is meant for restricting the movement and space occupied by the female body.

In Figure 8 the hijab is described as a "shelter", emphasizing the private/public dichotomy, of which hijab enables the woman to stay in the private sphere while being out in

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public. The public sphere is synonymous with men, implied as dangerous for women. Women being out in the public sphere is positioned as a danger to society itself, as harms against women harms the men and families of the woman. The same logic can be turned on its' head to reveal the absurdity: men should be kept in the private sphere to keep them from harming women. This reverse notion is not as normalized for us and therefore sounds absurd, while keeping women in the private sphere is a normalised notion and does not sound particularly strange, even if one opposes it.

The theme of women as a site of vulnerability of society is furthered in Figure 9, where the silhouette of an unveiled woman with another woman (implying going out or socialising) is contrasted against the silhouette of a veiled woman with eyes downcast against the backdrop of a mosque. The unveiled woman is positioned as a wrapped, clean candy, and the veiled woman as an opened, dirty candy covered in flies. The woman herself is defiled if not veiled, and soiled by men. Girls and women are primed to see their existence in relation to men, and themselves as the Other. It is men who are Human and woman is Other. Women in society as thus male-oriented, and gain a male perspective, seeing men as the default human. Women are objects of attraction for men and must keep themselves pure and appetizing, while at the same time not “display the goods” as it leads to the disintegration of society. Against the sexual power of women, men are narrated as powerless. Any woman who has worn hijab is familiar with the fact that it does not indeed repell sexual harassment (Shahryar & Women’s Media Center, 2012). Figure 11 which features a banner with misveiled and unveiled women carries the same message with: “Lady, you have only become prey for impure eyes, is it worth it?” and “Lady, remember that your beauty comes to eye when you are chaste, so lady be a queen” [commas added for clarity]. The male gaze itself besmirches women, but it is the responsibility of women to ward it off. Andrea Dworkin describes it as: “In the sexual woman-superior model, power is

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articulated as being intrinsically female because power is redefined beyond reason, beyond coherence: as if power is in the corpse that draws the vultures.” (Dworkin, 1983, p. 209)

A common element in the propaganda for hijab is the use of emotive religious messages, particularly pertaining to Zahra, Ali’s daughter, who is hailed as the Twelver Shi’a feminine role model for women in IRI. In Figure 3 the prayer of the girl is imagined as “Guide me and my sisters to be grateful for hijab, this great safekeeping for God. And guide us so in the Day of Resurrection, through intercession of her holiness Zahra we will not be left with nothing in return”. Figure 5 includes the text: “To you from Fatima (S = peace be upon her) thus has been spoken, observing hijab is the most precious essence of women”. Hijab is itself positioned as an essence of women, as femininity is seen as innate to women, despite it here being observably a social construct. The type of femininity promoted by the IRI is incised into the image of Zahra. Hijab is again set as the “legacy of Fatima Zahra (S)” in Figure 7, and as “akin to jihad in the way to God” and “a wing for flying toward God” in Figure 10, meaning there are not just societal consequences to hijab or lack of hijab, but also theological ones. Figure 14 follows the same narrative with “*Chadori* lady, you are the sanctuary of Zeinab (S) unto yourself, and your *chador* is the defendant of the sanctuary”, here referring to Zeinab, Fatima and Ali’s daughter and a lesser, almost interchangeable role model of femininity. Figure 15 also has a sign with the same message worded as: “*Chador* has three points, the same three points that make the difference between veiling and decaying. I am the safe keeper of Fatima’s *chador*” [comma and period added for clarity]. The *chador* needs to be held in the front by hand to avoid slipping off, and it is not custom to tie it other than for performing manual labour.

The *chador* as well as Fatima as role model are tools for strengthening national cultural identity. As women are often set as the manifestation of national identity, the hijab propaganda includes imagery reminiscent of the Iran-Iraq war times, such as in Figure 2, where the women’s mouths are covered by a Hizbullah shawl and they wear headbands with “O Fatima Zahra”,

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symbolisms common during the war. The text on Figure 2 says “Hijab, is the flag of the fight against cultural invasion”. The video of Figure 37 featuring the Friday Prayers Leader of Saveh also includes the dichotomy of foreigners and nationals, pitting foreign influence saying “hijab should be free” as “pull[ing] woman through filth and society to filth”. The theme of women’s bodies as symbols nationalism recurs in Figure 12 with the sign: “Preserving the blood of martyrs is observation of hijab”, referring to the fallen soldiers who are frequently used as a tool for emotional effect in various nationalistic and misogynistic messages.

There are two girls in the propaganda photographs, in Figure 11 and Figure 13, both participating in marches in favour of the hijab. The girl in Figure 11 is wearing a decorated beige veil, and the girl in Figure 13 wears a children’s *chador* while holding up a sign that reads: “Revolutionary sisters, forbid your sisters from wrongdoing with nice speech and a smile”. The sign refers to a slogan that has come to permeate the post-revolutionary Iranian culture – “*Amr-e be ma’rouf, va nahy az monkar*”, which loosely translates to commanding good and forbidding evil. Many of the MSF videos make reference to the “*Amr...*” concept as intrusion of privacy, such as in Figure 16, Figure 26, Figure 29, Figure 31, Figure 32, Figure 33, Figure 34, Figure 37, and Figure 38.

The concept of “*Amr-e be ma’rouf, va nahy az monkar*” has connotations and historic recurrence in other austere regimes where citizens were encouraged to spy, discipline and report other citizens to keep in line with guidelines issued by state apparatuses, while the IRI brand seemingly emphasizes less on violence and more on consent with the use of discipline, propaganda, and interpretations of Islamic texts as justification. The Basij and the Guidance Patrol (called morality police in everyday speech) are the violent state apparatuses enforcing the “*Amr-e be ma’rouf, va nahy az monkar*” doctrine. Even when it always does not turn violent, the threat is ever present which can be seen in Figure 26 and Figure 29, if one does not comply. There are also instance of violence as in Figure 33 and Figure 34. Some of the people carrying

out the “*Amr-e be ma’rouf, va nahy az monkar*” doctrine are private persons, possibly lower ranks of volunteers, Basij, such as in Figure 32 where a woman attempts to argue with the protestant that her unveiling is wrong, and in Figure 38. In Figure 38 the husband praises the man disciplining his wife (as a method to make him stop), for doing his religious duty. The concept of “*Amr-e be ma’rouf, va nahy az monkar*” has become an acceptable way of doing good for improving one’s ecclesiastical and social standing.

The behavior of men is interesting in the issue of obligatory hijab. According to the poll in Figure 6 (Jafarzade, 2016) more men than women are keen on obligatory hijab and more restrictive forms of hijab. It is most often the man who is approached when a woman in company is disciplined on hijab as in the videos of Figure 26 and Figure 38. In Figure 35 the women are pressed by the policeman to call a male relative. The men in general try appealing for the women in low risk ways as in Figure 26, Figure 31, Figure 33, Figure 34, and Figure 38, but do not engage physically when the situation delves into violence as seen in Figure 33 and Figure 34. The behavior can be contrasted with the fact that the very reason for, and enforcement of the hijab is men themselves. Women amongst themselves do not need to wear the hijab, it is only necessary in relation to men. The issue of the hijab is thus a male problem, an extension of honor culture and male sexual violence. The only propaganda aimed at men is Figure 4, which was a rarity (I found only two in total), promoting the concept of jealousy and possessiveness, called *namoos* in everyday language over women. Figure 4 reflects what Riffat Hassan writes about Islamic culture in *Feminism in Islam* (1999).

Digital media has become an important player for enabling MSF and other social justice movements. There is a stance of fear against it from the IRI state as well as another stance of using digital social media as a tool to appeal to the masses. Of the latter Figure 14 is an example with the text: “Hijab means: 1 valuable Like from God, not the worthless Like of some people!” using symbols from Instagram which is in popular use in Iran. An example of

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social media being regarded negatively is Figure 37 where previous social media campaigns for social justice such as green and purple bracelets are together with the recent MSF hashtag #WhiteWednesdays where women wear white shawls to signal protest, compared to prostitution to discredit the women. The aim of the speaker in Figure 37 is to blame women for social ills, while both the social media campaigns and the still ongoing issue of prostitution in Iran are due to the underlying economic necessities disempowering women and political exclusion of women by men.

On the MSF protestor side, the hashtag #MyCameraIsMyWeapon is used for filming private persons and figures of authority disciplining women on their hijab. The hashtag is used in Figure 29 where a schoolgirl is taken by female Guidance Patrol guards, in Figure 32 where a woman harasses the protestant verbally, in Figure 34 where Guidance Patrol guards physically beat a woman, in Figure 35 where three women are prevented from riding bicycles by a male policeman, in Figure 38 where a man indirectly disciplines a woman through her husband, but also in Figure 30 and Figure 36 where it is used preemptively. In Figure 40 the hashtag is again used preemptively where a woman speaks about the arrest of Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoude and their feminist movement.

MSF has through the use of digital media reached a large mass with 1 million followers on Facebook (August 2018) and sent a ripple throughout Western media and within Iran. During the time of writing (August 2018), protestants have been arrested and some, such as Shaparak Shajarizadeh have received prison sentences for speaking out. The IRI has taken harsh measures by arresting famous female Instagram users who have broken morality laws such as against dancing.

There is no doubt of the power behind the MSF movement, but is it really only about hijab? Physical freedom is important, but it is only one aspect of misogyny. Perhaps the larger issue that is being fought is for the recognition of women, and against the exclusion of women

from the public sphere. Figure 23 with the schoolgirl protesting against mandatory veiling in schools, Figure 27 with the women showing their strength in their daily lives, Figure 28 with the group of women singing the Iranian “Anthem of Equality”, and Figure 40 with the woman from the Red Women of Enqelab Street bringing attention to Nasrin Sotoudeh pay witness to the grander fight at hand that extends beyond the hijab, to the recognition of women. Iran is still an honor based culture, requiring inequality of groups to function, of which women bear the brunt of misrecognition to enable the men to enjoy honor.

Discussion

An important point about the MSF movement, is that even through misveiling, the veil does not lose its status as commodity. It is not just a piece of fabric that the women hold at the end of a stick, it is the symbolic casting off of the signifiers imbued in the veil. From a Marxist perspective, the material conditions of women in the form of economic dependence on men, low-paid jobs, lack of viable job opportunities leading to being stuck in the quagmire of pornography and prostitution, bad housing or no housing opportunities for single women, lesbian women in relationships, or women house sharing, lack of legal rights for custody of children, and lack of legal rights for women to exit abusive marriages is an extension of capitalist need for cheap labor and cheap solutions at a human cost.

An androcentric, patriarchally approved “feminism” has grown in the West during the past decades (MacKinnon, 1990, p. 3) which sees primarily female functions such as gestating and lactating as devoid of value, weakness and “other”, while valuing all choices done by women as feminist despite the harm done to women and the primary beneficiaries of the choice being men. This devaluation of female reproductive functions is the first step in devaluation of women as a sex class and devaluation of female reproductive labor as it has not been commodified without ethical hurdles. What this comes to mean in practical terms is that women

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become saddled with both productive and reproductive labor, and if they do not meet the same quota of productive labor as men who are less burdened by reproductive labor of society, they cannot attain the same amount of resources.

From a sociological perspective, the feminine subordinate role is an inverse of the masculine dominant gender role. As the inner emotional lives of humans is androgynous and not reflected by the masculine and feminine social roles we perform, the partner choice of males becomes the inverse of qualities attributed to the masculine dominant gender role. The male fantasy of femininity ascribes women with what is considered ethical in society, while men are ascribed with qualities considered unethical; compare women being considered caring and men considered aggressive. Men project what they perceive in themselves to be their feminine sides, qualities in themselves that they cannot perform within the scope of masculinity. What men perceive as beauty in women is their own projection of their softest, kindest, most emphatic sides. It is not strange that men reject or even want to extinguish women who do not fulfill their fantasy of femininity, as this perceived inadequacy in women is a direct insult of the inner emotional life that the man has exteriorized as a projection onto the woman. Men view the masculine performance of other men, but are only privy to their own androgynous inner emotional life, leading to insecurity about their own performance of masculinity. The woman who possesses what is deemed masculine qualities is thereby “polluted”, like a vessel filled with two different liquids. The veil can thus serve the purpose of preserving this male fantasy of femininity, as when it is lifted, women too are revealed as complete human beings, possessing of an androgynous inner emotional life as opposed to being limited to the projection of a male fantasy of femininity. In Lacanian terms, femininity would thus be a male *objet petit a* (Krips, 2008; Žižek, 2012b).

To return to the research questions, I begin by analysing whether or not the MSF movement escapes the commodification of the female body. As pointed out by Gould:

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The difference made by veiling in capitalist modernity, as contrasted with earlier circulations of commodities, is that it has been interpellated, along with women's bodies, into the capitalist world-system. This commodification of the female body pertains as much to misveiling and unveiling as to veiling (2014, p. 231).

Islam itself has become a commodity, where one can be more Islamic through the consumption of Islamic goods, including fashion, pilgrimages, services of clerics, and decorative goods for the home. Similarly, resistance to the veil can also be commodified if driven "by a woman's desire to co-opt her body into a capitalist system that, in rendering her as a commodity, thereby ensures her desirability to male spectators" (Gould, 2014, p. 232). Here it is important to point out the difficulty of resistance with the consciousness required to step away from desiring to make oneself desirable for the male gaze, as women are socialised to find their value exclusively within their desirability for men.

Iranian women are in a double bind, where they cannot resist hijab without reaching further in women's liberation than states without obligatory veiling. True resistance of hijab must be resistance of the male gaze itself, and having one's value within the self as a subject rather than an object for male consumption, as "[f]ar from being liberated, the fashionably dressed, misveiled woman is as much a product of patriarchy as are her more modestly veiled sisters" (Gould, 2014, p. 232). Analysing the photographs and videos from the MSF movement, there are but a few who have conformed to the Iranian cultural norms for women with rhinoplasty and make-up, yet more in contrast to the photographs of Basiji women. However, it is not women themselves commodifying the female body to begin with, it is capitalist patriarchy which does. Therefore it is not a question of women resisting commodification as oppression is not a quality of the oppressed, but a quality of the oppressor. It is not women who must stop being oppressed, but men who must stop doing the oppressing, and therein lies the difficulty. Resisting patriarchal domination of women is not an easy task wherever in the world,

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as can be seen in the difficulties for obtaining justice in the aftermath of rape, or even men raping women in the first place. Misogyny is a universal experience, the difference is if one has the tools to recognize it or not.

Can the MSF movement achieve female liberation then? To answer the question, I will backtrack to the research question of whether the MSF movement is merely protesting veiling, or if the protests have a deeper meaning. The sub-questions include: why hijab? Who is the hijab for and whom does it serve? What is the intent and does it serve its' intended purpose? Is the purpose of obligatory hijab justifiable? What are the women of MSF protesting against and what is the meaning of these protests? Is it a piece of fabric, or is there a deeper message behind the fierce protests that has already led to the imprisonment and abuse of several women? In other words, what meanings has the hijab been imbued with?

The MSF movement focusing on hijab could have several reasons. One could be that it is not compulsory in other nation-states and is therefore an easy issue to garner sympathy for from other nations. Another reason could be that the hijab is a physical manifestation of misogyny and therefore tangible. There are many women inside Iran who oppose obligatory veiling for many reasons, including the autonomy to objectify oneself on one's own terms, and that of escaping commodification altogether.

One of the virtues of hijab as described by clerics is that it protects women against men. Here we come to the question of who the hijab is for and whom it serves. According to the IRI ideological apparatus, it is thus women who are served by the hijab, as they can allegedly escape sexual harassment, sexualization, objectification, infantilization and other belittling treatment. However neither sexual harassment nor other forms of misogyny are curbed by the dress of women, rather they are curbed by the aggressors not performing misogyny. Another reason stated for the hijab is for women to focus on their "their primary function of bearing children" (Gould, 2014, p. 232), which reduces women to the function of bearing children, as

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women are not viewed as capable of being full humans – the very notion that women need to prove themselves capable of their value as humans is misogynistic. The purpose of the hijab being obligatory is thus not justifiable.

As the hijab has been imbued with many meanings from those promoting it, such as the aforementioned quote of concentrating on bearing children, or being objects for the male gaze, it has also become imbued with meanings by the MSF movement. The #WhiteWednesdays campaign specifies a white shawl as a symbol for choice. The attention MSF protestors also put on Nasrin Sotoudeh and Shaparak Shajarizadeh, the violence of the state against women, “women are not slaves!” as said by the woman in Figure 38, the issues of privacy and respectful treatment of fellow citizens, the lack of value placed on the education of girls being as they can be deprived for misveiling or unveiling, acid attacks against women, the difficulties working class women encounter in their jobs, the view of women as inherently harmful to society, the lack of freedom of movement of the body, the theological issue of forcing Islamic belief onto women and female bodies, and the placing of men between women and their God can be viewed in the analyses of the photographs and videos, which are but a fraction of the material available on the MSF Facebook page.

Does the MSF movement then have an emancipatory potential for women? The emancipatory potential might not so much be in how the women themselves dress, but in the fact that they are raising their voices to speak directly out against patriarchal capitalism. Judging by how it has angered the IRI authorities to take action against protestors, it has indeed proven effective.

Conclusion

As has been brought up by scholars (Hassan, 1999, p. 249), the importance put on practicing the Hadith is problematic and has led to much division and variance in the Ummah.

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It is mainly in the Hadith we find problematic passages pertaining to women and gender roles in general. The Hadith have been relied upon as they define the way to practice the religion in terms of cultural habits. It is these cultural habits that are difficult to shed as they bring jouissance, despite the validity of the Hadith being contested and the Quran explicitly forbidding them.

Another reason for holding the practices of the Hadith even above those prescribed by the Quran can be found in the nature of ideology itself, namely ideology in itself and for itself as a means of immobilizing social structure and change of labor roles. An important attribute of the hijab is the stark contrast it creates between men and women. The weight placed on women's chastity to the point where men require women lacking in sexual experience for marriage, is closely tied to the gender roles of men and women in Iranian society being the antithesis of one another. The difference in gender roles is described as "complementary" and lauded by clerics as beneficial to society by creation of labor division as its' natural consequence. The labor division caused by "complementary gender roles" is said by clerics to be divinely ordained. As productive labor has been assigned to males and is controlled by the capitalist/clerical class, reproductive labor needs to be controlled by the means of controlling women's bodies. It could be argued that none is more free than the other, as the ideology they both ascribe to instruct seeking the approval of the Big Other, in the IRI symbolized both as the ideological state apparatus and a transcendent God. This view can legitimize the differences of labor roles as complementary rather than hierarchical, yet there is the issue of hierarchy of the sexes being legislated in IRI, which serves to undermine claims of complementarity.

Remedying the situation of women has proven a difficult task the world over. Redistribution of material capital would enable the ideological recognition of women, just as further recognition enables material redistribution. The women of MSF raising their voices against misogyny has proved a powerful tool in changing the discourse of society around the

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misrecognition of women, but whether it can emancipate women's bodies and/or the veil from the status of commodity remains to be seen.

For future studies, it would be of interest to compare the MSF movement to grassroots movements for women's emancipation in other nations, measure the changes the MSF movement has caused within Iran, in the Iranian diaspora, and through social media, and most importantly how we can form a women's movement that can achieve the emancipation of women from capitalist patriarchy. An important aspect to discuss from a Marxist perspective is the concept of individual rights, human dignity, and the concept of intersectionality vis-à-vis oppression not being a quality of the individual.

At times when we go about our day to day lives, we tend to forget how repressed women and girls of the world still are as a sex class, for as Rosa Luxemburg is credited with the saying: "Those who do not move, do not notice their chains". The women of My Stealthy Freedom are a reminder to all women that our fight is not yet over.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Jefferson Notation Legend

Below is legend of the symbols used in Jefferson Notation (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

Symbol	Name	Use
[text]	Brackets	Start and end of overlapping speech
=	Equal Sign	Break and subsequent continuation of utterance
(#)	Timed Pause	Number of seconds paused in speech
(.)	Micropause	Brief pause, less than 0.2 seconds

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.	Period	Falling pitch
?	Question Mark	Rising pitch
,	Comma	Temporary rise or fall in intonation
	Hyphen	Abrupt halt or interruption in utterance
>text<	Greater than / Less than symbols	Enclosed speech delivered more rapidly than rest of speech
<text>	Less than / Greater than symbols	Enclosed speech delivered more slowly than rest of speech
ALL CAPS	Capitalized	Shouted or increased speech volume
underline	Underlined	Emphasizing or stressing the speech
:::	Colon(s)	Prolonged utterance
(text)	Parenthesis	Unclear speech
((text))	Double Parenthesis	Non-verbal activity

Appendix B: Propaganda Pictures

Figure 1. Hijab propaganda banner with young girl. From *Hijab Design Banner*. Retrieved from <https://www.parsgraphic.ir/Posts/post/21508>. Copyright 2016 by Vahid Abbasi.



Figure 1 is a montage using the photograph of a young girl in light coloured veil covering all her hair and neck, going down over her chest. The bright, almost white colour can be interpreted as symbolising innocence, purity, and chastity. The floral pattern on the veil and the background suggests childish youth and vitality. Her gaze is lowered, suggesting humility, submission, modesty, and pioussness.

The text is surrounded by brackets in the same art form used in many prints of the Quran, giving it weight. It translates as “Hijab - instrument of strengthening the family, and lowering the damages of society”. The text has many implications, including placing the onus on women and girls for “damage to society” caused by men. Men are omitted from the narrative, but assumed as the viewer for whom the hijab is worn, and thus the perpetrator of “damage”. The picture being a young girl suggests a sexual attraction to young girls, as the “damage” implied is of a sexual nature, whether sexual violence, pedophilia, or infidelity.



Figure 2. Hijab propaganda poster with three Basiji women. From *Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab*. Retrieved from <http://hijab-poster.blogfa.com/post/368>. Copyright 2011 by Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab.

Figure 2 is a montage of a photograph of three women against a blue background. All three women are clad in black chador, with Hizbullah shawls covering their noses, mouths, foreheads and front. On their foreheads, they have headbands in “seyyed” green – the colour of the lantern Imam Mahdi holds leading the Muslims on the Day of Resurrection, a popular colour for displaying piety and jihad. The text on the headbands reads “O Fatima Zahra”, referring to the prophet’s daughter who acts as the female role model in Twelver Shi’a Islam. Headbands with the names of Hussein for men, and Fatima for women were common during the Iran-Iraq war. The two women in the back are looking into the camera, while the woman at the forefront is softly gazing upwards. The text above them on the poster reads “Hijab – is a fight” and under “Hijab, is the flag of the fight against cultural invasion”. The bottom most text is in English,

“Hijab is a struggle”, which as a mistranslation does not carry the intended meaning, but rather makes hijab sound burdensome (“Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab,” 2011).



Figure 3. Hijab propaganda poster with praying girl. From *The Foundation for News and Analysis of The Culture of Abnegation and Martyrs*. Retrieved from <http://fashnews.ir/fa/>. Copyright 2017.

Figure 3 is made by the association for Quranic discussion with logo in the upper right corner. It depicts a girl in full prayer chador, typically of a light cotton fabric. The girl is praying, looking slightly upwards, and her hands are alight with a mysterious sheen. The text on the left reads: “O Providence... Guide me and my sisters to be grateful for hijab, this great safekeeping for God. And guide us so in the Day of Resurrection, through intercession of her holiness Zahra we will not be left with nothing in return, and bear witness to the satisfied smile of Bi Bi. Amen, O Creator.” Bi Bi is an endearing name for Ruhollah Khomeini. As Riffat Hassan pointed out, idolatry is common among Muslims, and while the wording is careful not to put anyone on the same level as God, it places both Zahra and Khomeini between the believer and God. It is the help of God that is asked for, but the approval of Zahra and Khomeini that is sought. It is assumed that Zahra will speak on behalf of pious women to God, intercession.

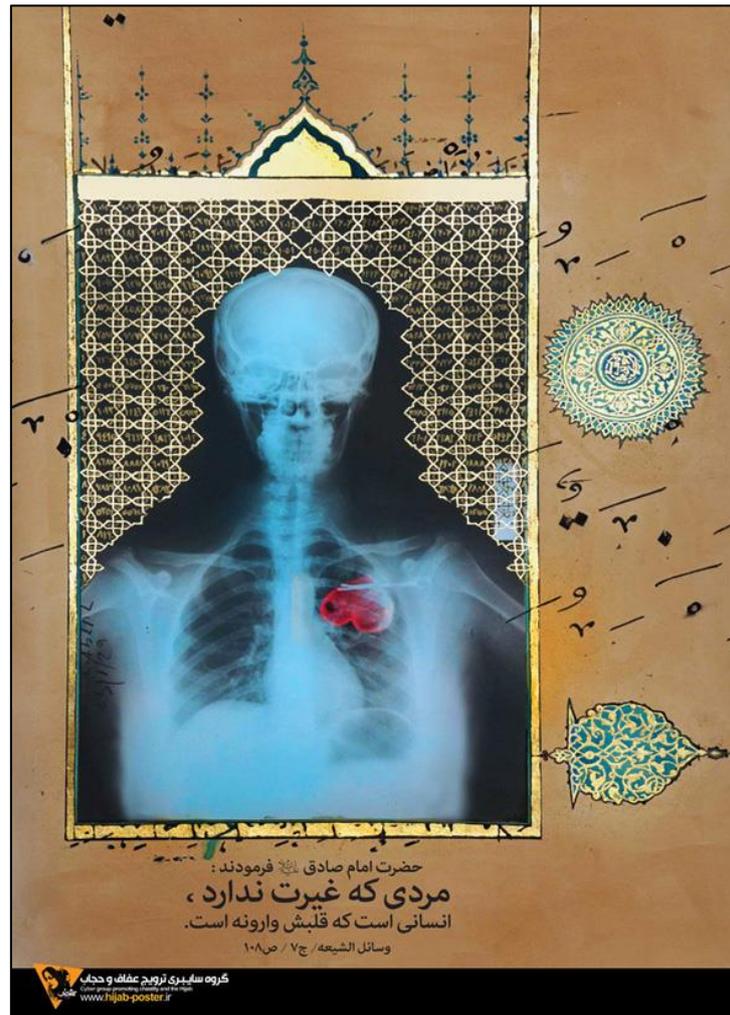


Figure 4. Hijab propaganda poster with x-ray photo of human. From *Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab*. Retrieved from <http://hijab-poster.blogfa.com/post/483>. Copyright 2014 by Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab.

Figure 4 is quite rare in that it addresses men and not women. It was one of two pictures addressing men found when searching for hijab propaganda. The page layout is reminiscent of popular Quran prints. It depicts a human X-ray photograph with an upside-down heart symbol in the chest. The text underneath reads: “His holiness Imam Sadegh said: The man who lacks jealousy, is a human whose heart is upside-down. *Wasa’il al-Shi’a* vol.6 p.108”. The quote is from a series of Hadith books compiled in the latter 17th century. The word for jealousy here can also be interpreted as zeal or backbone. It refers specifically to *namoos*, i.e. the women the man is guardian of, and carries the meaning of feeling strongly about protecting the chastity

and purity of the namoos. Thus, the honour culture is validated through Hadith ascribed to highly regarded Imams.



Figure 5. Hijab propaganda billboard poster. From *ParsGraphic*. Retrieved from <https://www.parsgraphic.ir/Posts/post/7490>. Copyright n.d. by Morteza Manikhinejad.

Figure 5 depicts a billboard, typically set up on the side of highways. There is a drawing of the profile of a woman in veil and chador, red and pink roses, and a colourful flying bird against a blue background. The flying bird is a type called bird-of-paradise and symbolizes freedom and the afterlife. Flowers symbolise purity, beauty, and nature. The text in red reads “Hijab, O woman!”, which can be read as a reminder to women from men, as the word “woman” here denotes the difference and sounds somewhat derogatory and chastising. The text at the bottom reads “To you from Fatima (S = peace be upon her) thus has been spoken, observing hijab is the most precious essence of women”. The text rhymes in Farsi. As with the previous pictures, it invokes the authority of Fatima Zahra as intermediary of God and women, and role model of Muslim women. The word “observing” can also be read as “safekeeping”, and the word “essence” can also be read as “gem”, “jewel”, “pearl”. It is in line Žižek writes about women in Islam that “only a woman, the very embodiment of the indiscernibility of truth and falsehood, can guarantee Truth. For this reason, she has to remain veiled” (2012, p.3). The

essence, or jewel, spoken of here is the liminality between truth and falsehood as embodied by Khadija, the wife of prophet Muhammad, who was instrumental in determining whether the voice that the prophet had heard was that of an angel and not Satan. The reason she needs to remain veiled is that, of course, there is no feminine Truth, as women are fellow humans and not the arbiters of truth and falsehood. Therefore, the illusion must remain for the sake of men, as “belief is *never* direct: in order for me to believe, somebody else has to believe in me, and what I believe in is this other's belief (in me)” (Žižek, 2012b).

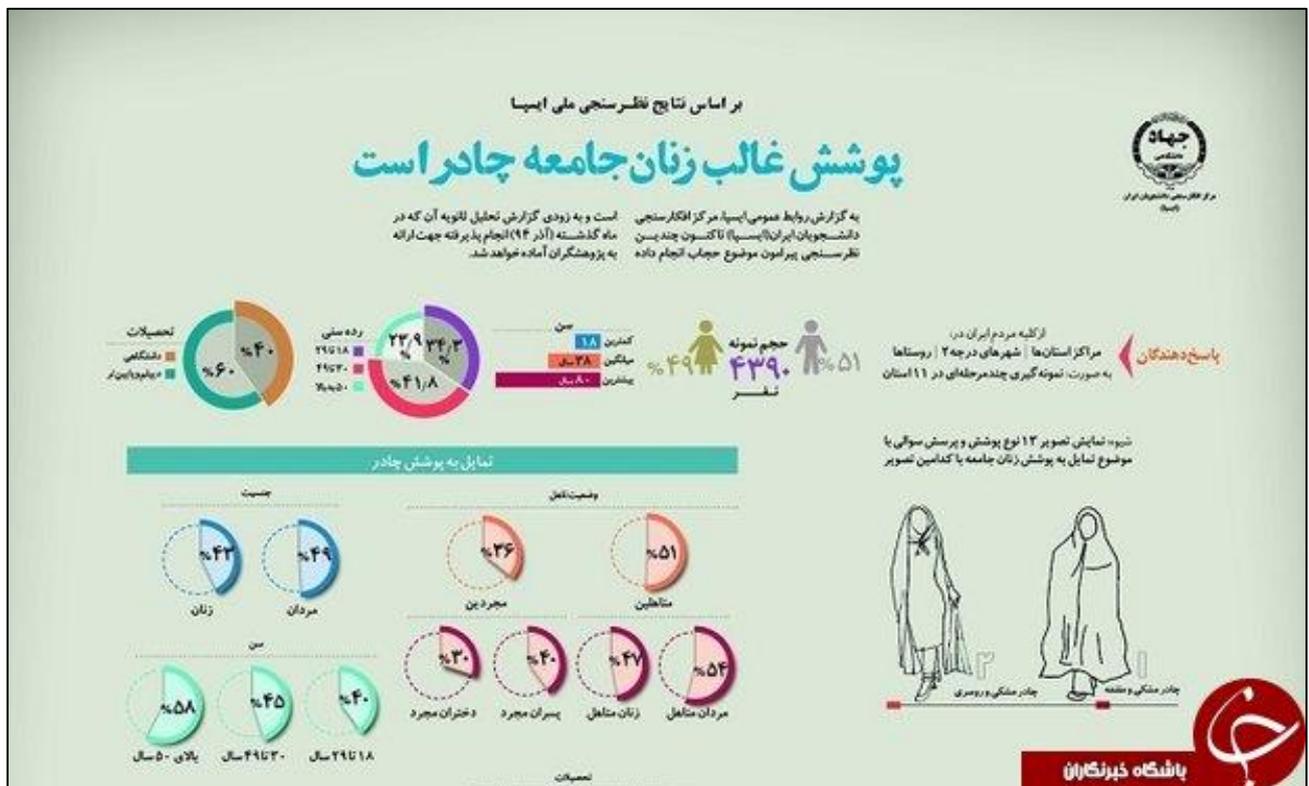


Figure 6. Chador propaganda statistics graphics poster. From MehrNews. Retrieved from <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/>. Copyright 2016 by ISPA.

Figure 6 depicts various graphs with the aim of promoting the *chador* specifically as the basic element of women’s clothing. The graphs depict the results of asking 4390 participants, 51% of whom were men, about their inclination toward the *chador*. 49% of the men, and 43% of the women showed inclination for women to wear the *chador*. 58% were above 50 years old, with the 18-29 age bracket showing the least interest at 40%. Only 30% of

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single women were leaning toward the *chador*, versus 54% of married men. While the aim is to promote the *chador* as the norm for hijab, what the graphs show is that the younger generation, and particularly women, do not take warmly to the idea. The article where the graph is presented is titled *Hijab, the free choice of Iranian women/Chador the favourite veil*. The poll is conducted by Mehr News Agency (YJC, 2016).



Figure 7. Chador online propaganda. *The Foundation for News and Analysis of The Culture of Abnegation and Martyrs*. Retrieved from <http://fashnews.ir/fa/>. Copyright 2017.

Figure 7 depicts a woman walking in *chador* with her eyes downcast. On the left is a text reading: “Lady...Each time you are leaving the home, hold the corner of your *chador* and say softly under your breath: This is the legacy of Fatima Zahra (S)”. The word legacy carries the meaning of safekeeping. The theme of Zahra as the role model of Muslim women is frequently recurring in religious propaganda aimed at women specifically. The corresponding role model for men is the prophet himself. Interesting to note is that it is not his wife and first

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Muslim woman Khadijah who is set as the role model, but his daughter and Imam Ali's wife. Ali is the first of the imams in Twelver Shi'a Islam.

In Sunni Islam, the corresponding role model for women is Ai'sha, one of Muhammad's wives after the death of Khadijah, and called "Mother of the Believers". Ai'sha narrated 2210 hadiths and spread the message of Islam for 44 years after the death of the prophet. She was married to Muhammad from the age of 6, and as such was raised by him in a sense, into the perfect Muslim woman. The Shi'a have a generally negative view of Ai'sha, as she led an army against Ali in battle, defying his caliphate.

The opening "Lady..." suggests the advice coming from a man, as it is more likely that the word "sister" would be used otherwise.

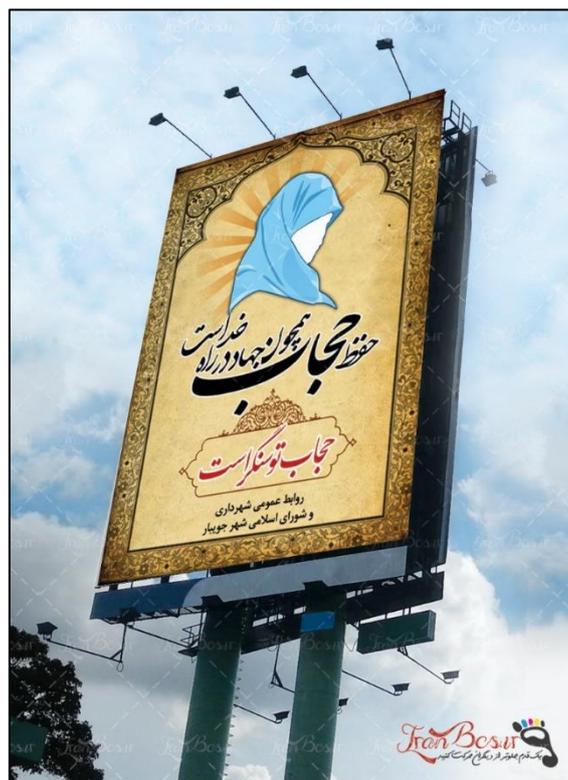


Figure 8. Hijab propaganda billboard poster. From *ParsGraphic*. Retrieved from <https://www.parsgraphic.ir/Posts/post/1788>. Copyright n.d. by Vahid Abbasi.

Figure 8 depicts a drawing of the profile of a woman in light blue veil against a khaki background. She has rays around her head reminiscing of a halo. The layout of the poster is a

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recurring theme in poetry books, the Quran, and carpet weaving. The black text in the middle reads: “Keeping hijab is akin to jihad in the way to God.” Jihad carries the meaning of holy war. It provides an easy method for women to make up for their “deficiencies” caused by the natural processes of the female body, in reaching God (as women are not allowed to pray or fast during menstruation in Islamic culture).

The ornately framed words in red read: “Your hijab is your shelter.” The likeness to shelter emphasizes the private/public dichotomy, of which the hijab becomes a sort of portable version of the private taken out amongst the public. The public, being synonymous with men, is implied as unsafe and dangerous, a war-zone that women need shelter from.

The bottom text is the source of the propaganda: Public Relations of the county and Islamic board of the city of Juybar (Mazandaran province).

An interesting point to note, is that the sex of the person in the drawing is unspecified. The text as well does not mention the sex. It is also not possible to discern the text from the grammar since Farsi is an unsexed language. It is implicitly understood to target women, and the understanding of the target audience extends beyond both Iranian culture and Islamic culture.



Figure 9. Hijab propaganda comparing veiled and unveiled women. From *Cyber Publishing Group for Modesty and Hijab*. Retrieved from <http://yase-nabi.mihanblog.com/extrapage/hejab>. Copyright n.d.

Figure 9 is divided into two sections, with the left depicting the silhouette of two women without hijab in dark magenta, and the right a forest green (associated with the twelve imams) profile silhouette of a woman with hijab. In front of each silhouette is a candy in wrapper, with the hijabi one untouched, and the uncovered one opened, dirty, and covered with flies. All the text is in Arabic, suggesting that the target audience is not casual Muslims, but pious women. The only text in Farsi is at the bottom, stating the source as the Cyber Group for Promotion of Modesty and Hijab.

The concept of the metaphor in the picture is not an uncommon one. It emphasises that women are not subjects but serve the purpose of existing for the sake of men, the Other. Like candy that has no life of its' own, women too are an object for the enjoyment of men, and thus must keep themselves in an appetizing condition. Women and girls are primed to see their own existence in relation to the Other, which equals men, and to see their object a as being attractive to men. Being attractive to men here is equalled with worshipping God.



Figure 10. Hijab propaganda billboard poster. From ParsGraphic. Retrieved from <https://www.parsgraphic.ir/Posts/post/7402>. Copyright n.d. by Vahid Abbasi.

Figure 10 depicts a tabloid shot from a low right-of-centre angle. It appears to be of the type typically used on the side of highways. The tabloid depicts a figure, implied to be a woman, in a prayer *chador*, which is of a thinner cotton fabric usually in white with floral design used indoors. Behind her is a *mehrab*, the prayer niche in the mosque indicating the direction of Qiblah/Kaaba, and where the imam leading the prayer stands. A cloudy sky in turquoise green adorns the top, while the bottom fades into traditional swirl patterns in white. The woman's body is accentuated with two floral swirls on each side, and her face is illuminated with a holy light.

The yellow text at the top repeats the same message as fig. 8; “Keeping hijab is akin to jihad in the way to God”, so it will not be interpreted again, but it seems to be a phrase that the propaganda attempts to popularize. The text at the bottom of the tabloid in the blue frame has an unexpectedly whimsical font, akin to Comic Sans, and reads: “Hijab is a wing for flying

toward God". The combination of the emotional, and metaphorical tone of the message with the font suggests it is meant to appeal to a younger audience of teenage girls.

Appendix C: Propaganda Photographs



Figure 11. Women marching in favour of hijab. From Avaliha. Retrieved from <https://avaliha.ir/>. Copyright 2016 by Avaliha.

Figure 11 shows a march in favour of hijab. While many speculate that the theocratic regime itself organizes such protests, it need not necessarily be that way. The simple reason that a protest in agreement with imposed laws is allowed while one protesting legislation that the government deems to be a basic tenet of society is severely punished, makes it possible for such large crowds to gather in favour of the hijab. The march includes children, here a girl being carried by her mother, so it is deemed safe. The girl is wearing hijab, but short sleeves and colourful clothes, counter to the adult women wearing all black. The women in the foreground

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hold a professionally made sign by Razavi Mosque. In one corner are 12 images of women without or with poor hijab/misveiled. The poor quality of the images could be a method of censorship.

The text in red reads: “Lady, you have only become prey for impure eyes, is it worth it?” [commas and question mark added for clarity]. The text in green reads: “Lady, remember that your beauty comes to eye when you are chaste, so lady be a queen” [commas added for clarity]. The quotes may sound respectful, but they are a clear reminder to women of the male gaze. The meaning of the existence of women, their purity, their value, is judged by their position in the hierarchy of the male gaze.



Figure 12. Women holding up banners in hijab march. From ISNA. Retrieved from <http://tnews.ir/>. Copyright 2017 by Atieh Joveireh

Figure 12 is from a pro-hijab march in Abouzar area of Tehran, as evident by the partially visible text at the bottom of the neon yellow banner in the middle. There appears to be above a hundred attending the march. Women walk in the front with men in the back. It is likely

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that there are more men attending than women. The women wear black *chadors*, but many wear colorful veils underneath of a type called *naghmaeh*, a pre-sewn veil that one just pulls over the head, quite like a balaclava, that is common in school uniforms and the public sector. The women hold many professionally made banners and signs. At the very front a young woman holds a print of the “revolutionary leader” Ruhollah Khomeini. At the very back the imagery is repeated but this time with a framed photo of current political leader Ali Khamenei. An older woman with black sunglasses at the front holds a framed photograph of a young man, customarily martyrs of the Iran-Iraq war.

The top-most neon yellow banner reads: “I love my *chador*”, where the word *chador* is placed within a symbolic heart shape and repeated twice. It could be an attempt at modernizing the message using symbols popular amongst youngsters. A partially visible sign behind it reads: “*Chador* the superior hijab”, so here again we see the attempt to promote the *chador* specifically as the norm for hijab. The *chador* is not typically used in the Muslim Arab countries, nor in east Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, but is particular to the Iranian culture, therefore it also is promoted as a sign of nationalism. The sign at the front with text in blue, red, and green reads: “Preserving the blood of martyrs is observation of hijab” – the theme of nationalism reoccurs here, with tying observation of hijab to honoring the deaths of soldiers. The bodies of women are used as a symbol of nationalism, and by promoting uniformity of dress with the *chador*, the women represent a single unit for the eye of the foreign observer, as opposed to the individuation men enjoy.



Figure 13. Girl holding up banner in hijab march. From ISNA. Retrieved from <http://tnews.ir/>. Copyright 2017 by Atieh Joveireh

Figure 13 shows two women and a girl wearing *chador*, walking in the middle of a street. It is unclear where the photograph is taken, but it looks like a city street in Iran. The source of the photograph confirms the city to be Isfahan, march in defence of the culture of hijab and modesty. There are men congregating on the side of the street, and two women speaking beside a car. It is likely in the aftermath of a march. The girl is wearing a multi-colour scarf and bright pink trousers. Her *chador* is especially made for girls, as it has sleeves and doesn't slip off if not held in place. It looks more like the Arabic *abaya*. She is holding a magenta protest sign, which makes the purple text difficult to read. The sign does not look professionally made. The sign reads: "Revolutionary sisters, forbid your sisters from wrongdoing with nice speech and a smile". The revolutionary sisters referred to are the women supporting the IRI, most likely the Basij. As the sign is action between women, and refers to sisters, it is likely written by the women themselves. The forbidding mentioned is an idiom repeated often for propaganda purposes, "*Amr-e be ma'rouf, va nahy az monkar*", meaning

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commanding the right and forbidding the wrong. The idiom has become the doctrine of the *Basij-e- Mostazafan*/The Mobilization of the Oppressed. Commonly referred to as the Basij, it is a paramilitary force for societal control and main cause of the IRI being an illiberal state. The Basic is the prolongation of the revolution itself, and the unit enforcing piety and coercion of the state's specific brand of Islamic morals. It is an irony that the Mobilization of the Oppressed is itself the main force of societal oppression, a militia for suppressing revolts, propagating for the state, and micromanagement of women including clothing and cosmetics, spending time with the opposite sex, dancing, and so on. The difference between the Basij and state apparatuses in "liberal" nations is the difference of coercion vs. consent. The Basij does not hesitate to use violence such as lashing as punishment for dissent, sexual assault of homosexual men and prostituted women, and not seldom murder. As such the message in the sign above is a thinly veiled threat.



Figure 14. Woman holding up two signs in hijab march. From ISNA. Retrieved from <http://tnews.ir/>. Copyright 2017 by Atieh Joveireh

Figure 14 shows a woman holding two signs. She is in the street, and there is a mass of people behind her to the right. She wears a veil and *chador*. The sign to the right reads:

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“*Chadori* lady, you are the sanctuary of Zeinab (S) unto yourself, and your *chador* is the defendant of the sanctuary”. Notable here is that the word for sanctuary is “harem” in English, which would mean the innermost part of a home. The second sign reads: “Hijab means: 1 valuable Like from God, not the worthless Like of some people!” The 1 is shaped as the “Love” symbol from Facebook and Instagram social networking platforms. As Facebook is blocked in IRI, it is most likely referring to Instagram which is very popular. Here again, the message targets young people both through a religious message, and by tying it to popular culture – one that the IRI not necessarily likes but allows.



Figure 15. Women holding up signs in hijab march. From *MehrNews*. Retrieved from <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/>. Copyright 2017 by Maryam Hamed.

Figure 15 depicts another Hijab and Modesty march, which could be arranged and attended by Basij recruits and other factions under the military, and state employees. Like the other marches, the women are at the front. There were no photographs with the men in the foreground. The women wear both headscarves and *chador*. None of them wear visible cosmetics. There are three signs in the foreground of the photograph, all look to be

professionally made and in the same style. The sign to the right reads: “*Chador* is difficult, but it is the command of God” [comma added for clarity]. The second sign reads: “*Chador* has three points, the same three points that make the difference between veiling and decaying. I am the safe keeper of Fatima’s *chador*” [comma and period added for clarity]. The third sign is partially covered by the second sign, but what is visible reads: “...gaze, but God’s gaze” [comma added for clarity].

The first sign is unique in that it admits to veiling being difficult. From personal experience, the veil is itchy and hot in the Iranian climate. The difficulty could also be the innate sense of injustice that men do not face the same requirement. The statement is countered by the assertion that it is the command of God; one might ask according to whom, as interpretations the Quranic verses on the subject are much contested. As the march is arranged as propaganda by the state, here the state is asserting sole authority of interpretation, as dissenting interpretations are either illegal (unveiled), or judged as inferior to the *chador* which is specified – which is culturally and historically inconsistent with Islamic literature.

The second sign references the three corners of the *chador* which is a cone-shaped. It also references Fatima, as is often done in messages to women. The interesting point is the dichotomy created between being veiled and decaying, a tactic used both from promoting religiosity and secularism. Much of the propaganda has used this tactic, by incorporating unrelated qualities to being unveiled, including moral decay, the male gaze, safety, and rape. By putting the onus on women, men are left off the hook for controlling their sexuality.

Appendix D: MSF Photographs



Figure 16. Two women sitting beside an Islamic cleric on the metro. From *My Stealthy Freedom*. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Accompanying text in English: “A very striking scene on Tehran's metro. I witnessed this very striking scene on Tehran’s metro today. Two visibly “badly-veiled” girls (the hijab of one of them was also down at some point), sitting next to a cleric. Much to my surprise, the cleric was completely unfazed and calm by the presence of these two girls sitting beside him. We typically expect clerics to give warnings to “badly-veiled” girls (which is typically the case), but let’s not forget that not all clerics are bothered by women’s freedom of choice.” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018a)

Translation of accompanying text in Farsi: “This is respect...

Hello

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Today I was in the Tehran Metro when two young girls sat beside each other and one of them took off her *roosari* and her clothes would be considered “*bad hijabi*” from the point of view of the morality police (*Gasht-e Ershad*) and commanders of doing good and abstaining from evil, a holy man entered and sat on the chair beside them. I expected him to say something and meddle in the business of these young girls or in their own words command them to do good. But I saw him sitting calmly without saying anything and the girls and the cleric each got busy with their own matters without creating a nuisance for each other. Every religious is not necessarily fanatic and intrusive. Some of them are enlightened that they must keep their beliefs to themselves and not intrude in the conduct and clothing and beliefs of others. These religious people have even understood that if the ruling system acts oppressively people will not change the way they live.

These groups of religious people have understood that commanding good or meddling in the choices of others is a kind of harassment of others. Seeing the scene today I thought of other Islamic countries like Emirates or Malaysia where in the streets and even by the beach unveiled and irreligious women walk beside religious and veiled women without anyone meddling in the other’s business. We ought to learn that the beliefs of each person is their own and don’t cause inconvenience to others. [Unreadable words] to causes in the middle of a struggle, insults and dishonoring will not bring us together with the opponent.

I hope someday soon we too in our country will witness such a culture where women and men and religious and irreligious and veiled and unveiled all live beside one another with tolerance and in a peacebringing way and learn that no one in society and the ruling apparatus have the right to intrude and opine on the clothing of others #White_Wednesdays” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018a).

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The MSF photographs provide a stark contrast to the propaganda ones in that they are taken in an uncontrolled environment, in the everyday life of people rather than arranged or formal events. Figure 16 is labeled as a part of the White Wednesday hashtag campaign, but bears no obvious connection.

The photograph portrays two young women on the metro sitting beside an Islamic cleric. The woman to the left is misveiled, while the woman in the middle has let her veil fall off her head. They are both looking at the smartphone screen of the woman in the middle and laughing. The misveiled woman to the left covers her mouth, and she is wearing blue nailpolish. The woman in the middle wears tight blue jeans with large rips on the knees and thighs. The cleric sitting beside them is in clear discomfort, his head turned away from the women, but his body is relaxed and faces forward.

By the mode of transport, gold necklace, smartphones and clothing, it can be deducted the women are upper middle class, and not from the bazaar merchant segment. The cleric as well is wearing a watch and tailored robes. I interpret the photograph as the women purposefully defying the hijab obligation through misveiling directed at a figure of theocratic authority. At the same time it is not too obvious, as the veil has just slipped and it can be claimed as an innocent mistake. The cleric is doing his best to nevermind the women, but has clearly noticed their misdemeanor as he is averting his gaze.

The accompanying text in Farsi describes that the woman took her *roosari* off before the cleric entered. The emphasis is put on religious people, even clerics, not all being intrusive. Intrusiveness and holier-than-thou attitude is not an inherent component of religiosity, but a component of the current system. The text emphasises that respect for the differences of each other can foster a peaceful society, as opposed to pressure to conform which creates conflict and tension.



Figure 17. Activist Shaparak Shajarizadeh waving a white shawl. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Accompanying text in English: “20 years prison for #WhiteWednesdays activist against compulsory hijab in Iran. #ShaparakShajarizadeh sentenced 2 years prison + 18 years Suspended imprisonment. I spoke with Shaparak she said millions of women are against compulsory hijab. Iran is a bigger prison for all of us.” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018b)

Translation of accompanying text in Farsi: “Shaparak Shajarizadeh one of the women of #WhiteWednesdays and #GirlsOfRevolutionStreet was sentences to 20 years in prison. 18 years suspended sentence and 2 years imprisonment. I spoke to Shaparak who says: For all of us millions of Iranian women against obligatory hijab for 40 years Iran is a larger prison, protesting imprisonment will not cease.

Tehran’s prosecutor also announced they will legally deal with the horns of Instagram meaning for this regime eighteen nineteen year old girls dancing will be threatened with legal

consequences and they think they can stand against dancing and protesting the obligatory hijab with imprisonment.” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018b).

Figure 17 portrays a woman standing in the middle on the street, wearing a coat, holding a white scarf tied to a stick. She is unveiled, wearing light or no make-up, with a slight smile. Judging from the background with Alborz mountain range, and sloped street, it looks like uptown Tehran. The photograph is high quality, with a frame filter making the edges darker, which gives it more depth. The women taking photographs of themselves and uploading online is a risky move, as they can be recognized easily by authorities and face punishment. It is also a method of immortalizing the protest and broadcasting to a wider audience both inside and outside Iran, as the photographs are uploaded both to Facebook where a mostly international audience views it and becomes aware of the condition of Iranian women, and Instagram which the Iranian audience and uploaders have access to. It also connects the Iranian diaspora abroad to what goes on inside Iran and garners support.

The Iranian authorities are aware of the potency of online movements, as Shaparak Shajarizadeh is facing prison, and measures have been taken against popular Instagram users (horns of Instagram is a slang term for “Instagram celebrities”) defying the Iranian morality laws. The measures have the double effect of strengthening male control of women, and silencing of women.



Figure 18. Stencil art in white on black marble wall. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Figure 18 shows a black marble wall of a courtyard, with an MSF insignia stencilled in white. The stencil art depicts a woman, with hair flowing behind her back, holding a veil tied to a stick. The neighbourhood looks typically middle class, considering the high price of black marble, yet the poor condition of the street itself. The graffiti points to fearlessness, as it is a lasting mark in view of ordinary citizens and authority figures passing by and a mode of communication.

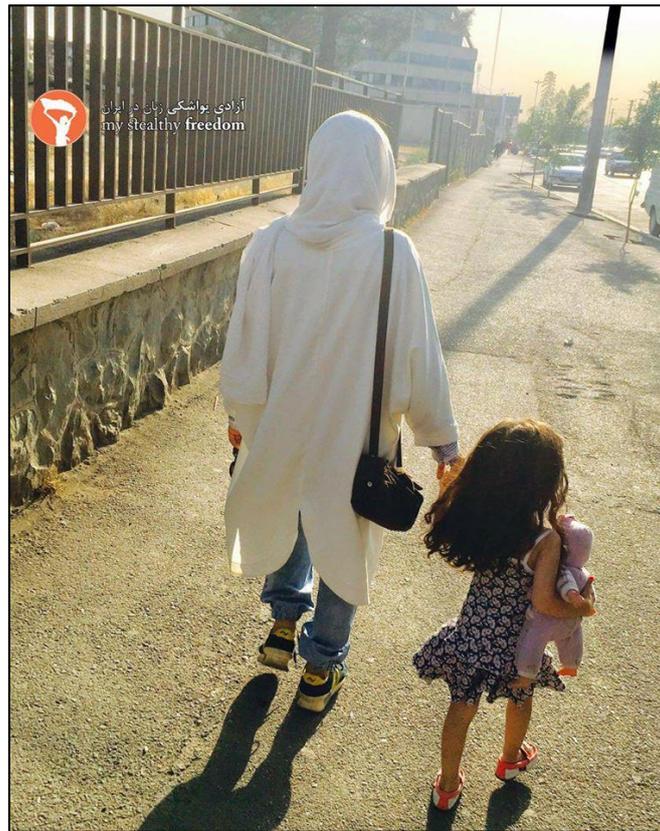


Figure 19. Mother holding her daughter's hand. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Figure 19 is less explicit than the previous ones. It depicts a woman wearing jeans, black and gold sneakers, white *manteu* and a loose white shawl, contrasted with a black handbag. A little girl holds the woman's hand. The girl is unveiled, with long hair, wearing a short dress with spaghetti straps, holding a doll. The photograph is taken from behind, hiding their faces. The background is a city sidewalk with few cars in the street, the light showing it to be dusk or dawn. The woman does not want to reveal her identity for safety reasons as she has a daughter but is showing her support by wearing a white veil for the White Wednesdays campaign. The protest is subtle but can be powerful with large numbers. The white veil and *manteu* are powerful as it is the opposite of the black *chador* propagated by the state. It individualises the woman as opposed to homogenizing her into a sea of black fabric. The loose veil and jeans reveal that she is not veiled by choice, as she is not observing hijab, but obeying the minimum required by the law.



Figure 20. Three women standing on the beach. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Figure 20 depicts three women from behind, standing on the sand shores of the sea. The woman to the right is wearing a three-quarter sleeve tunic in dark blue, tight jean pants with rolled up pant legs, with curly brown hair to her buttocks. The woman in the middle is wearing a light white and floral maxi dress with short puff sleeves. She has curly black hair to the middle of her back. The woman on the left is wearing a short-sleeved blue top, tight white jeans, and has brown curly hair to her buttocks with pink ombre. As the protest act is done by the sea, it carries less of a risk. The women also avoid showing their faces for safety reasons. There are commonly sections of the beach closed off for women, but this appears to be a mixed sex area as there is no drapery in view. The clothing and placement suggests that the women are vying for freedom to not be sexualized, but to wear weather appropriate clothing in colour (as black tends to become hotter than light colours) and cut and not have to cover their hair and necks, which is both hot and harmful for the hair. There is a banner at the

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bottom of the photograph reading: “#White_Wednesdays – Each Wednesday no to obligatory hijab.” In the middle of the banner is a logo of a white silhouette of a woman holding a veil above her head against an orange background. The tone is more informative, rather than the emotive tone of the hijab propaganda.

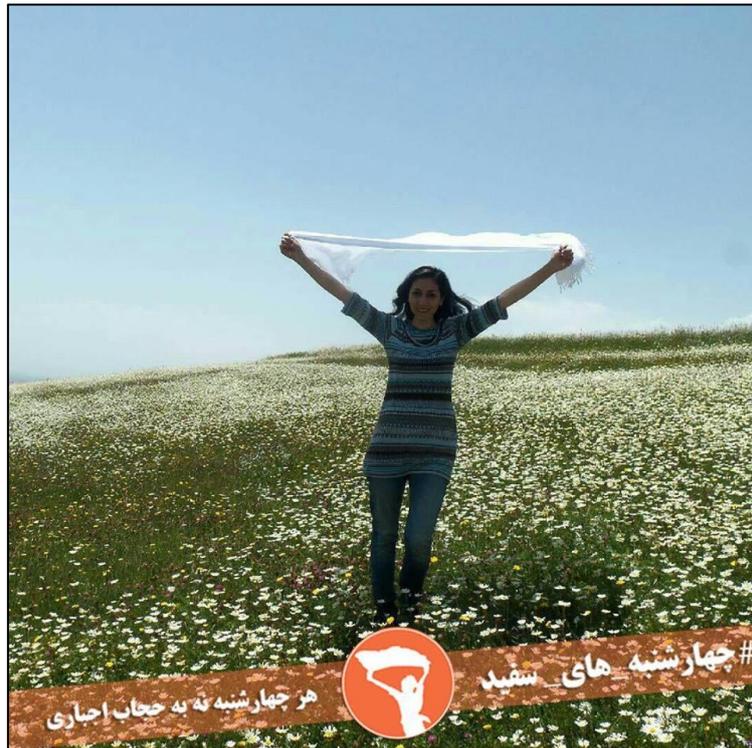


Figure 21. Woman holding up white shawl in flower field. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

Figure 21 depicts a woman standing in a flower field during the day. She wears a tunic with three-quarters sleeve and jean pants and holds a white shawl above her head with both arms. She is smiling and in mid-step. There is a trend coming forth of photographs being taken in natural areas, which could have two purposes. The first purpose can be safety, as there are less people and less coercive state forces outside towns and cities. The second reason for using natural areas can be to emphasize the message of being in a natural state, freedom, and positive portrayal of the female body as connected to nature. The hijab propaganda did not use natural themes; it commonly used man-made such as religious art or concepts. The facial

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expressions of the propaganda art are more commonly averted gaze in humility, or devotion, while the marches showed stern and determined faces. The women of MSF here have the advantage of not needing convincing for their actions, so there are no rallying cries, religious themes or promises of God's grace.



Figure 22. Woman holding up printed shawl on stick. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

The accompanying text reads: “This is the Saadabad Palace in Tehran. I say no to compulsory hijab. It is not about a piece of cloth. Our problem is that we’re being deprived of our dignity and agency by being forced to dress in a certain way. One has to fight for freedom. #GirlsOfRevolutionStreet #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018g).

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Figure 22 portrays a young woman standing on a ledge holding a twig with a scarf tied around. The scarf is white with a colourful pattern of owls. She wears black shoes, blue culotte jean pants, and a draped *manteu* in military green linen-like fabric. Her hair is loosely tied back, and she is smiling at the camera. She wears a ring on her ring finger, a bracelet on her left arm and wine-red nail polish. The scenery behind her includes an old building and lush greenery. Her clothes point to individuation even when wearing hijab, as opposed to the black *chador* which homogenizes women into one body.

The text clarifies that the choice of place is decided by the individual. Saadabad Palace is in the uptown Tehran. In her protest, she points out that it is not about the fabric, which is just a symbol, but that by being forced to dress in a certain way, women are deprived of “dignity and agency”. The Farsi version from which the text is translated, mentions that the “problem is not a piece of fabric. The problem is the domineering of women and insulting the human dignity of women”. The phrase for human dignity carries a theological meaning, alluding the benevolence (*karim/keramat*) of God in breathing life into humans, and is thus meant as an unshakeable essence inherent in all humans.



Figure 23. Schoolgirl holding uniform veil. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

The accompanying text reads: “Today is a Wednesday. Today, I wanted to defend the rights of my country's girls. We girls are obliged to wear the veil at school too. I have taken off my veil in this picture. I hope one day people will have the right to live as they see it fit. Can you believe that even in a class full of girls we are not allowed to remove our veil for even one second?” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018h)

Figure 23 depicts a schoolgirl standing in front of a wall. Judging by the ground and shape of the wall, it looks like the inner courtyard of a public building. The girl is wearing a uniform *manteu* and pants and holds a black veil in one hand. She has her hair tied back and is smiling at the camera. On the wall behind her is a stencilled graffiti saying: “hijab means” (the rest of the text is outside the photograph).

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From personal experience attending three different schools in Tehran; the level of strictness varies between schools and depends on the staff. Although unusual, there are also teachers who insist on the students taking their veil off in class, as there is only the one male janitor in girls' schools. Despite the lack of men, schools are counted as the public sphere, and so women and girls must be veiled as to signify the private sphere being carried with them, or that they are a part of the private sphere and their presence is in effect forbidden in the public sphere. Thus it becomes clear how the hijab is a symptom of attempting to get around the prohibition of women existing in the public sphere.

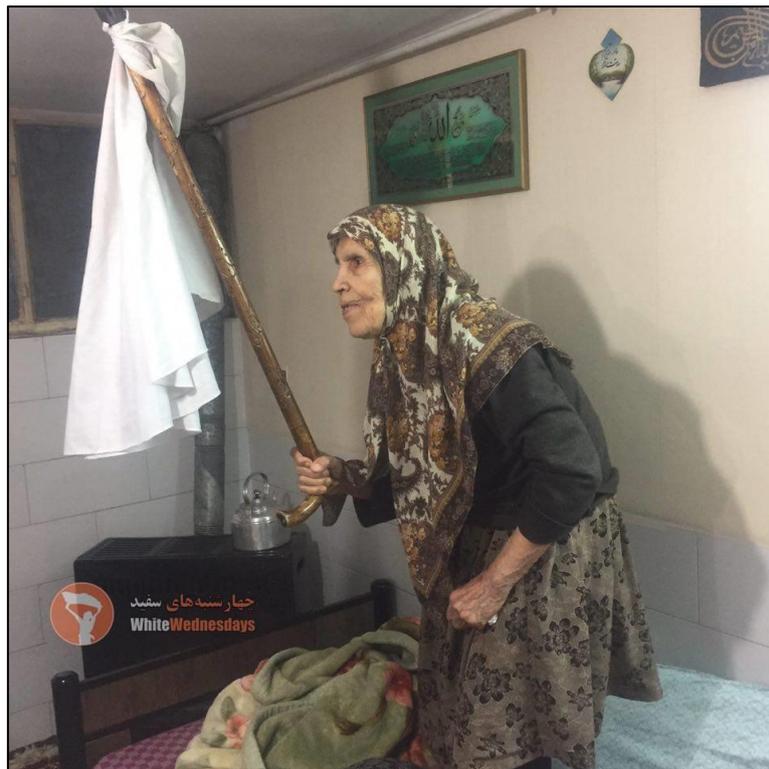


Figure 24. Woman holding up white shawl on walking cane. From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

The accompanying text reads: “My 80-year-old grandma supports women's freedom of choice. She says ‘Why are you bothering girls for not wearing veil. Everyone's religion is to themselves’ [sic].” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018i)

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Figure 24 depicts a woman inside the home, standing on top of the bed, holding a white fabric tied to her walking cane. She is wearing a floral veil and a floral skirt, observing hijab. She is an elderly; her back is bent and her skin wrinkled. Behind her on the wall are three frames and postcards. The text on the two larger ones on each side is visible as Quranic verses and/or prayer. The woman is an observing Muslim herself, but wants to show support and thus tied a white veil to her cane. She is not afraid of revealing her identity as she is not hiding her face. Despite the portrayal of dissent being a phenomenon of youth rebellion, elderly women are joining in the protests.

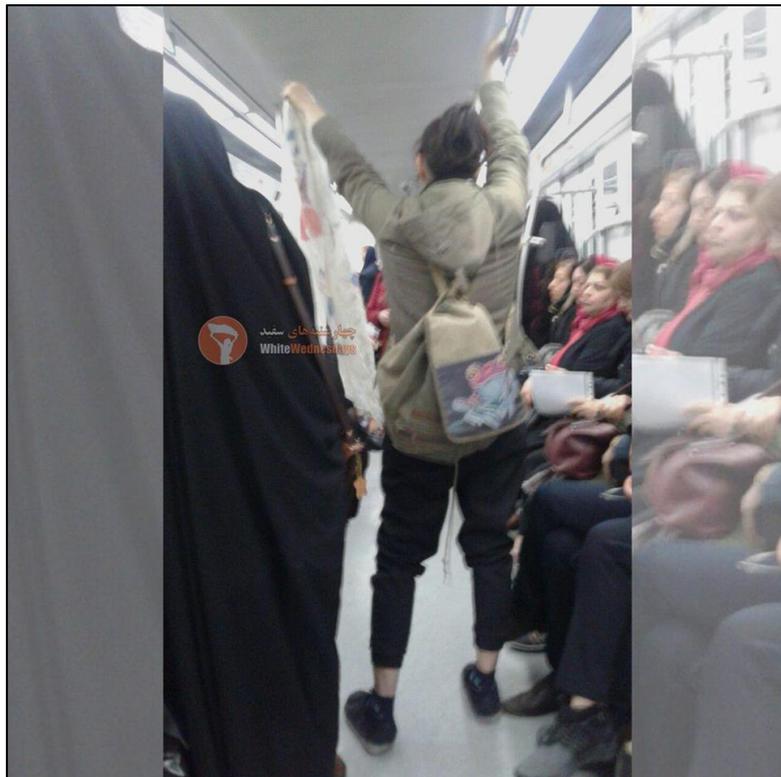


Figure 25. Woman standing unveiled on the metro From *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/photos/>. Copyright 2018.

The accompanying text reads: “According to eyewitness accounts, most days this girl travels unveiled in Tehran's metro and exercises her civil disobedience.” (“My Stealthy Freedom,” 2018j)s

Figure 25 depicts a woman from behind in casual clothes. She is wearing black sarouel pants and an army khaki green jacket and backpack. She is standing and holding onto poles above her head. The scene appears to be the female only car of a metro train. In one hand she is holding a piece of fabric which appears to be her veil. She has her hair tied up in a pony tail and is unveiled. The scene is safe and yet unsafe; it is a woman only car and thus there is no actual need for hijab, even if it is in public. The photograph underlines that hijab is not for women, but for men. The young woman exercising civil disobedience daily is a sign of the power of women connecting through the Internet, as the support nationally and internationally, seeing other women protesting, and seeing how it is recorded and reaches news sources abroad as well as angering national clerics, has lent courage to more women joining the protests.

Appendix E: MSF Videos



Figure 26. “Pro-regime vigilantes” arguing with heterosexual couple. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2258248120855936/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/QO156WBQWcI>

Text: ““I’ll beat you up & destroy you.” This is the language used by pro-regime Basiji militia as they harassed a couple for the wife’s hijab. Watch this video.” (“Profane language of the pro-regime vigilantes against a couple,” 2018)

Translation of text in Farsi: “Any written or unwritten law that has allowed these commanding of good-doers hijab righteousness! [sic] bother the peace with obscenity, audacity, insults, and condescension and humiliate us like this, must be abolished. Commanding of good

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with any attitude means prying. We will not be silenced.” (“Profane language of the pro-regime vigilantes against a couple,” 2018)

Transcription:

Man (M): ((off camera)) I have work, she has university, we [have to go=]

Woman (W): ((off camera)) [I have a test]

M: [(--have to buy a test)]

Male basiji 1 (MB1): (.) alright you have a test [(they want your^--)]

Male basiji 2 (MB2): ((off camera)) [identification card]

MB1: Warning has [to be given (to you)]

W: [Behind on the motorbike] in my hand I’m holding phone, [this one]

MB2: [Were you given] warning or not? These things are not [excuses (for you to--)]

M: [Can you] keep your distance from my [wife]

MB2: [shut up man, your wife is immodest] all over town [I’ll rip you apart eh]

M: [talk properly^] [-prope- what for]

MB2: [let me see] am I not warning you, and now you suddenly have pride moron^

W: speak properly mister (40.0)

MB1: ((gets into passanger seat of car))

MB2: ((gets into driver’s seat of car))

M: what should I say I’m powerless with them-

W: -god willing they’ll go one day

Analysis:

Figure 26 is a video of a heterosexual couple being stopped by two male “vigilantes”. It is unclear who the men are or what position they occupy, but their attitude suggests power. It is also unclear whether the couple are actually married, since it is illegal for men and women to have sexual relations outside of marriage. Not being married could be a reason for the repeated pleading and delay in showing identification, as well as the nervousness displayed in his voice.

The power dynamics in the video are skewed, with the male partner pleading for the couple to be on their way, and the two men intimidating the couple with body language and verbal threats of violence. The video ends with the two men going back to their car after having seen the man’s identification card. There was seemingly no purpose to their actions. The script followed a familiar outline, with the men addressing the male partner and completely ignoring the woman, despite the issue being her unveiling. They intimidated the safety of the couple, with direct verbal threats to the male partner, and indirect threats. All parties are also aware of the unspoken threat of sexual violence towards the woman, which is the main component of the power struggle and what the two men are aware will make the male partner start behaving in a more controlling manner towards the female partner.



Figure 27. Destinies of ordinary Iranian women Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2120691154611634/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/SLHKF5MpOg4>

Text: This is the new face of Iran's activists. Through their cameras, they are narrating the hardships they face as women. These strong women started changing their own lives against all the odds and, in the process, they became stronger. Instead of waiting for the authorities to help them, these women have taken the matters into their own hands. A wheelchair bound woman, a female bus driver, a female hawker selling food, an acid attack victim, a woman boxer, and a cancer survivor... So far, we have brought forth the stories of more than 50 strong women who have shown an impressive resourcefulness to succeed in life. #March8_Iran. #March8_Iran #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“These are Iran’s strong women who refused to become victims,” 2018)

Transcription:

Woman 1 (W1): I cannot foretell the future but I can wish for a bright future

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W2: as a woman (.) what saddens me most with working as a driver is that the attitude of some people is very cold they don't accept that as a woman I too can do the difficult job of driving that a man can do ((text on screen: Each Woman A Story))

W3: the women here who (.) work very hard, do everything alongside their husbands and meet every problem head on ((text on screen: Each Woman A Fighter))

W4: we are not victims of acid attacks we are victims of anti-woman legislation (.) victims of legislation that do not prevent these incidents

W5: from childhood girls have been told that in society, many families many other places have told us you're unable, dude we are able, as women we have enough power to do many jobs

W6: with all of the problems I have and my illness ((inhalation)) I feel that compared to many men I am powerful ((text on screen: Visionaries for Equality #MyStory))

Analysis:

The video begins with a woman sitting in an armchair, and cuts to her crossing the road on her wheelchair. She is unveiled and sports a white shawl around her shoulders. As she approaches the camera, she waves energetically and smiles broadly. She does not describe anything particular to her situation as a disabled woman, but her presence in the video suggests a will to include women who have additional difficulties to overcome in comparison to the able bodied woman who is set as the norm, as a reminder that not every woman has the same pre-conditions for fighting against oppression.

The second woman shown is wearing a black professional veil common in uniforms, called *naghmaeh*, which requires no tying or fastening. Next is a scene showing her at work as a bus driver. She describes the difficulty of her job in that some people do not accept that she can do a job that is deemed too difficult for women. Other than the false belief that women are

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not able to drive buses, a female driver also has to stand sexual harassment from men, misogyny of unfair treatment and lack of respect.

The third woman is wearing a type of veil going behind her neck. She mentions “women here”, which judging from the green lucious background, is the countryside. The scene cuts to her cooking outdoors, and again to another woman in a more pious and less fashionable fastening style of veil who is cooking on a wood fueled fire stove. Her narrative clarifies that working women on the lower side of the working class do not have the luxury to afford femininity neither in demeanor, behavior, nor looks.

The fourth woman is wearing a bright green veil as shown in Figure 27. Her eyes have been blinded and eyebrows disfigured from an acid attack. She speaks against how the government handles the issue of acid attacks, in that there are no measures from preventing men permanently disabling and disfiguring women. It is overtly decried and condemned, but covertly accepted, blamed on women, even condoned as an act of jealous romanticism. The root of the problem is not identified in misogyny, but as with all other cases of male pattern violence against women, it is isolated from the structure of male violence, intimidation and terrorization of women.

The fifth woman is veiled, and appears to be in a park or natural reserve. Her face is contorted in frustration and upset. The scene cuts to a match of kickboxing with her and an unveiled opponent in the ring, and then to her practicing with a punching bag. When she mentions that society and family have told her that she is unable to do many things, from her occupation it can be concluded that she is referring to sports traditionally deemed masculine, as there is emphasis on competitiveness and aggression which are seen as unbecoming qualities for women. The theme of feminine qualities being an inverse of masculine ones repeats, with feminine qualities being seen as the weaker ones, the more ethical, and any qualities which require deference, charity, and compassion. While what is categorized as feminine qualities are

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lauded as the epitome of ethics in society, they are not awarded, but rather punished. It is the masculine qualities of assertiveness, aggression, competitiveness and entitlement which are awarded and encouraged.

The sixth woman is unveiled and suffers from alopecia, which could point to heart disease. The woman points out that despite her illness, she feels stronger than many men, emphasizing the word. She raises one eyebrow at the end, and her expression is sardonic. One way of interpreting the repression of women, is the weakness of men.



Figure 28. Women singing in metro station. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2121414107872672/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/XhG0YE6IqH4>

Text: The courage of Iranian women in the face discriminatory laws and their civil disobedience make them exceptional human beings. Just like these three women who removed their compulsory veil in a crowded metro wagon in Tehran on women's day and started singing the "anthem of equality", which has been sung by Iranian women's rights activists for years. ("Performance of 'The Equality Anthem' in Tehran Metro with The Voices of Iranian Freedom Fighting Women and Without Hijab," 2018)



Figure 29. Girl being shoved inside van. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2245029762177772/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/LBxw6JpoXBQ>

Text: See how morality police make young students cry when they violently force them to wear it. We have been facing such harassment this every day for the past years. We are fed up with compulsory hijab laws. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“Morality police brings tears to young student for hijab,” 2018)

Transcription:

Unidentified girl 1 (UG1): ((off camera)) [(wait she will come on her own)]

Female student (FS): [(-----) e::::h why are you doing this?] ((is shoved into the van))

UG1: [what kind of treatment is this?]

Female Basiji 1 (FB1): (.) alright you brat^

Female Basiji 2 (FB2): collect these things, collect them

FS: (2.0) I’m closing it myself [eh]

FB2: [alright] close it

Unidentified girl 2 (UG2): ((off camera)) °she’s like a lunatic°

FB2: alright, go sit over there. Hurry

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FS2: you said if [I answer the inquiry-]

UG2: ((off camera)) [(---it was mistaken?)]

FB2: [if you're not] listening to me in two
minutes-

FS1: -I HAVE A TEST TOMORROW ((crying)) [tomorrow I have-]

FB1: ((leaning in from the van window)) [uhuh (----)]

((several women speaking over one another))

UG2: ((from behind the camera)) come sit here >come sit here [let's see what to do<]

FS: ((crying)) ((distressed)) [I have a test tomorrow-]

UG2: -I have a test right now, come sit here

Unidentified girls off camera: [I have a test too] (.) [why do they stress us so much]

UG2: why have they brought and put you here?

FS: ((crying)) ((hiccups)) tomorrow I have a test >my test is tomorrow<

FB2: ((pointing towards the camera)) [(sure-----)] sure, go sit there

FS: ((crying)) [tomorrow I have a test]

UG1: [I have a test too]

UG2: look, don't cry >you think they're [worth< it that you cry <for them?>]

UG1: come sit [a bit beside me] I have a test right now [they want to (make you cry)]

FS: ((comes to sit with the unidentified girls)) ((crying)) no because they're taking us
[away]

FB1: [girl] why are you [making it such] a big deal? Let me see your [phone]

FS: [[(hiccups)]] [[(hiccups)]]

UG1: [what] do
you want to see-

Analysis:

The smartphone is taken at the end of the film, so the scene is cut off. The hashtag #MyCameraIsMyWeapon suggests that the universal availability of smartphone cameras is being used for the campaign.

The video begins with a schoolgirl being shoved into the van. It appears some of the girls are used to the treatment as heard in the calm tone of their voice and attempts to comfort other girls who are unused to the harsh treatment and the repercussions of missing school and their parents finding out. For some the punishment becomes compounded as their grades are lowered and they might face consequences from their family. The girl is not informed of what her “crime” is on camera, so it is difficult to know, but the treatment of suddenly being taken off the street is an example of an action by a repressive state apparatus whose presence, even when not repressing women, makes itself known as a reminder to women from girlhood of how they must act, dress, and live their lives. It is a state instrument of misogyny, forcing women into state defined feminine subordination.

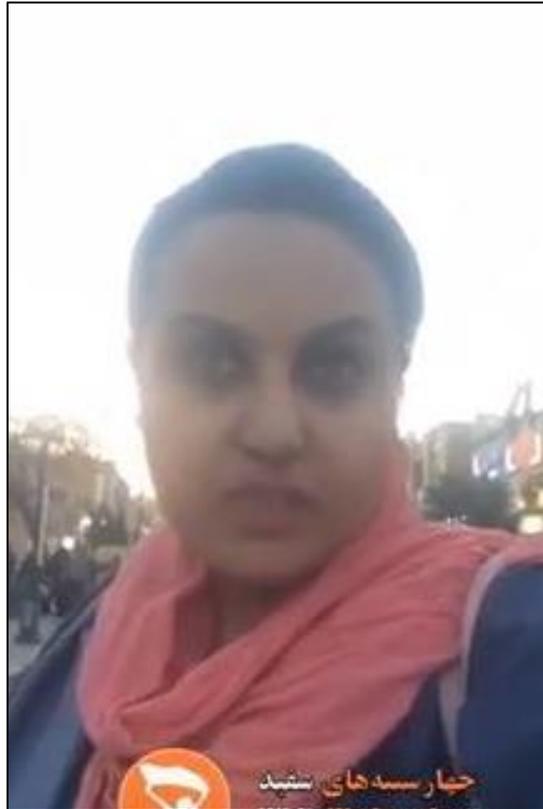


Figure 30. Woman with pink shawl around her neck. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2245342395479842/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/Q3Jw6Grdefs>

Text: This video has been filmed in Yazd in one of the most religious neighbourhoods of the city. Even here, it's my duty to say no to compulsory hijab. One cannot taste freedom as long as fear is there. The authorities won't be able to censor women forever. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("Even in a conservative neighbourhood, I say no to compulsory hijab," 2018)

Transcription:

Woman: Masih dear my name is Haniyeh, this is Yazd, and in accordance with the civil disobedience that was foreseen, I decided that today without censoring myself I will remove my hijab in the most religious area of Yazd, meaning the main mosque (.) this is

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occurring where I can see the morality police in exercise a little ahead (.) I hope there will come one day when I can very easily and very (-) walk in this place (.) with wishes for that day (.) ((starts speaking English)) no to obligatory hijab, no to sexism, no to obligatory (-) this dictatorship

Analysis:

Figure 30 is an example of a video that recurs many times on MSF Facebook and Instagram accounts; women speaking a message into the camera. Another type that recurs often is videos taken from behind of a woman walking unveiled. What is striking in this types of video is how seldom outsiders intervene or even throw glances at the women. The videos in which someone intervenes, it is done on the basis of *amr-e be ma'rof* (doing good), which is a doctrine that fulfills several purposes: for the individual, approval is gained from their social group and ideological state apparatus, and for the state it is a way of implementing ideology at no cost.

The woman in Figure 30 wears a salmon pink shawl around her neck, with her hair tied back. She speaks of a “civil disobedience that was foreseen”, which might be referring to some information she has seen in the media. She exercises civil disobedience in proximity of the morality police, but escapes detection.



Figure 31. Soldier with white shawl around his neck. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/1824511707562915/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/WDEbVGpz94o>

Text: I'm a soldier

Defending my country isn't my only duty. Defending my mother's and my sister's rights is also my duty.

I'm joining and serving #whitewednesdays to protest compulsory hijab. #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“I’m a soldier joining women to protest against forced hijab,” 2018)

There is no speech in the video. Instead the male soldier holds up a series of placates.

Translation of placate 1: Not wearing hijab is not lack of modesty

Compulsory hijab NO

Guidance Patrol NO

Translation of placate 2: Join and serve white Wednesdays

Analysis:

The official name of what is in everyday speech called “morality police” is Guidance Patrol. The young soldier in Figure 31 is most likely conscripted. It is unclear why he uses placates since his face is shown, but it could be a way of avoiding repercussions from the military. He wears a white shawl around his shoulders as a sign of solidarity with the movement. He objects to the Guidance Patrol, who serve little other purpose than enforcing morality laws; not with the intent of helping people, but as a way of ensuring state power through interpellation by making their presence known in the private matters of people such as their social relationships, details of their clothing styles, against dancing, singing and so on. The soldier’s message includes “not wearing hijab is not lack of modesty”, pointing out that the hijab is a commodity signifying modesty, but not necessarily the truth.

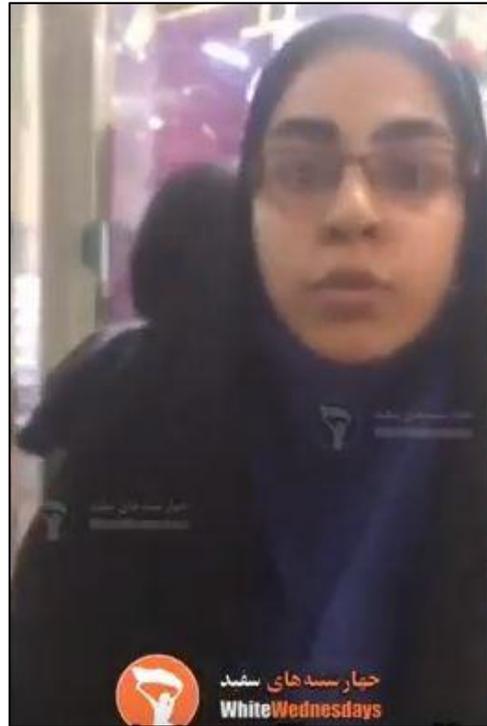


Figure 32. Woman with glasses. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2275857272428354/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/os5sl6lhQ6I>

Text: See how I confronted a regime agent. Her fear is visible. After all, we've filmed and exposed a lot of them. For the past 40 years, agents of the regime and the morality police have been interfering with the way we dress. This is the first time I've filmed them and tell them "my freedom of choice is none of your business". As soon as she saw my camera, her language changed while she herself also started filming me. I told her that I was not scared of confronting her, but she clearly was scared of my camera. Why? Because the #MyCameraIsMyWeapon campaign has exposed their street harassment and as more and more of these people are exposed to public, they're treading carefully. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("How I confront a regime agent," 2018)

Transcription:

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Woman 1 (W1): ((behind the camera)) [let me film you then, ^don't^ you think what you're doing is good my dear?] dear lady, isn't it that you think what you're doing is good, is interfering in other people's business the right thing::?

Woman in *chador*: (WIC): [(if it's there----) (10.0) ((pulls out smartphone and begins filming))]

W1: you film too, ^you^ film too, be comfortable [I HAVE NO problems with it]

WIC: [lady this is a public place not private]

W1: in a public place, what I'm wearing is [my own business]

WIC: [look here, if] some asks you, you will tell them that it's none of their business?-

W1: [-that's none of your business]

WIC: [this is a] public place and my private matter is none of [your business]

W1: this is a public place and my private matter is [none of your business]

WIC: [me asking you this] and you answering me like this is completely mind-boggling

W1: no I am the one who is mind-boggled by your nerve and audacity::, that you allow yourself to such degree to come forward and take someone's time, >stand in their way< and allow yourself to speak about the clothes they're wearing, giving your [opinion]

WIC: [now I'm] truly in shock by your personality, that you have this attitude in this culture, [really]

W1: [I] haven't spoken badly to you at all-

Analysis:

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The video begins with the woman filming asking for permission with a condescending word choice, using “dear” and saying she is interfering in others’ business. The other woman also begins filming as a way to further antagonize. The aim or reasoning of the veiled woman is not clarified, but it is clear that it is due to the misveiling or unveiling practice of W1 that she has begun the argument. The WIC mocks that clothing choice is a private matter, and later says “I’m truly in shock by your personality, that you have this attitude in this culture”, both expressions pointing to the common practice of misogyny where society punishes and disciplines women stepping out of the mold for prescribed femininity.

The WIC appears not to understand the argument of W1, and does not have any argument for why W1 would be wrong other than pointing to prescribed femininity. It could be deduced that the WIC believes the prescribed femininity to be divinely ordained and thus not a question of choice or social construct that one could disagree with nor step out of. In the accompanying text, W1 says “as more and more of these people are exposed to public, they're treading carefully”, claiming that the WIC is “scared”. The body language of the WIC does not suggest fear of being filmed, but rather that she has no argument justifying her actions, both with regards to veiling nor with disciplining the other woman. It is a common issue with social constructs that have been normalised, that we do not question them, which is the mechanism by which they survive and replicate.



Figure 33. People congregating on the side-walk. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2235039016510180/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/iNIU8YypDS0>

Text: This innocent school girl was slapped in broad daylight by the pro-regime paramilitary. Watch how ordinary people protect her - This member of the Bassij, a pro-regime paramilitary organisation, slapped a school girl in the street under the pretext that she was not wearing a hijab. She screamed so loudly that passers-by gathered around her to protect her from the brutality of this Bassij member. The #MyCameraIsMyWeapon initiative reveals such brutalities that Iranian women live on a daily basis. Let's not stand by and watch. Just like these people who are protesting this Bassij member, let's not let innocent girls be brutally beaten by the regime. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("Ordinary people protecting an unveiled school girl from the brutality of Bassij," 2018)

Transcription:

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Man: ((behind the camera)) Dear Masih, these Basijis are picking on these girls for their hijab (.) he raised his hand against them. And this is the anger of the people against the Basijis^, they are protesting against these (.) filthy Basijis

Analysis:

Figure 33 is filmed by a man. There are at least two unveiled schoolgirls that can be seen, and a man wearing a white shirt who is stopped by an elderly man. The man in white forces his way through and there is a girl heard screaming profanities as the man strikes her. Later the scene cuts to a group of men on motorcycles and another group of men arguing. The scene cuts again to a closer shot of the veiled schoolgirl, the man in white, and a male cleric standing among a crowd. The girl shouts and the man shouts back, but their words are unclear in the audio recording. The crowd cheers as the man in white and cleric walk away.

The people arguing and protesting against the man in white shows a lack of support for the state of matters. The man in white going as far as striking the school girl is thus an attempt at gaining authority and reinstating his power position as the interpellation for consent has failed. He therefore resorts to violence for forcing consent and repressing dissent.



Figure 34. Women engaged in physical fight. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2171316402882442/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/CPf2kLFAH18>

Text: This woman is savagely beaten up by morality police as punishment for her insufficient hijab. And they tell us hijab is a "small issue." #MyCameraIsMyWeapon we expose them and we resist compulsory hijab. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("Heart braking video of an Iranian woman being beaten up by morality police," 2018)

Translation:

Man (M): it's [yours, it's] your father's legacy

Female Basiji 1 (FB1): [get up lady]

Male Basiji (MB): (--) we have [a duty to (make sure you) observe the law]

Woman 1 (W1): [for now it's your father's legacy that (--)]

Woman 2 (W2): ((behind the camera)) come on, it's enough (.) please don't argue

W1: come let's go, come on

M: I want to find out whose father's legacy it is

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FB1: stand in that corner, stand in that corner, STAND IN [THAT CORNER]

M: [go away lady]

FB1: [alright] stand in that corner, STAND IN THAT CORNER, E::::H STAND IN THAT CORNER (.) [SIT DOWN]

W2: ((off camera)) [why are you pushing me]

W1: [stop it]

Female Basiji 2 (FB2): sit over there

W2: ((off camera)) please [don't touch me]

FB1: [SIT DOWN]

W1: WRETCHED, YOU ANIMAL

FB1: THE WRETCHED ONE IS YOU

W2: ((off camera)) lady, please it's enough

FB1: WHO ARE YOU CALLING WRETCHED

W1: YOU

W2: ((off camera)) stop, stop, please

FB1: GET DOWN, GET DOWN

W2: please let her GO, what is wrong with you

W1: LET ME GO::::

W2: let me go

W1: [LET ME GO, YOU HAVE TAKEN IT TOO FAR]

W2: [lady STOP IT, THAT'S ENOUGH] (-----)

((several women's voices screaming))

FB2: I will let her go

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W1: WHY ARE YOU HITTING HER (.) YOU HAVE ANNIHILATED US FOR THIRTY YEARS (----) LET ME GO, LET ME GO ((screams)) LET ME GO ((screams 10.0s))
[LET ME GO YOU ASSHOLE]

W2: LET HER GO

((commotion and shouting 4.0s))

W1: ((crying))

((commotion and shouting 3.0s))

W2: her arm hurts (---) she is ill ((crying))

W1: ((screaming)) LET ME GO (-----)

((woman's voice off camera screams)) LET HER GO (.) LET HER GO ((crying))

((hiccup)) LET HER GO ((cries loudly))

((commotion and shouting 8.0s))

W1: SHUT UP

FB1: YOU SHUT UP

W1: PIECE OF SHIT

((commotion and shouting 6.0s))

((woman's voice off camera shouts)) YOU PIECES OF SHIT, YOU FILTH ((cries out in pain)) (2.0)

FB2: get up

W1: shut up, I'll ruin you, YOU WRETCHED SHIT

Analysis:

Figure 34 shows an argument between a woman from the moral police or Basij (unclear as to which), with two civilian women that breaks out into physical fight. Like Figure 33, the interpellation for enforcing consent does not work, so the agents resort to violence to

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repress dissent. A heated argument descends into a physical brawl, and none of the men get involved to stop it.

The video begins in the middle of the argument. The use of the phrase “father’s legacy” is an expression with similar meaning to “you don’t own the place” in English. The disrespectful treatment of W1 triggers an outpouring of suppressed rage, which she later expresses as “YOU HAVE ANNIHILATED US FOR THIRTY YEARS”.

The interesting issue in the video is the women who act out misogyny on other women, and why they do it. Patriarchal systems reward women who discipline other women into socially prescribed femininity. The benefits to patriarchal systems is two-fold: putting women in place, and dividing women.



Figure 35. Women with bicycles standing with policeman. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2233439846670097/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/jDrxOaLFT6Y>

Text: Today, in Yazd, female cyclists were stopped by the police for riding bicycles. In the Islamic Republic, even women's cycling draws the ire of the authorities. Based on a fatwa

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(edict) issued by Iran's supreme leader, women riding bicycles is "haram", in case they excite men! #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“Female cyclists arrested in Yazd,” 2018)

Transcription:

Male police officer (MPO): ((off camera)) what is their working hours

Female cyclist 1: ((off camera)) (---) working hours

MPO: their working hours (--)

FC1: their working hours hasn't begun yet

MPO: the working hours of the police (--, --) in the service of the people

FC1: (-----) we are exercising, we are not doing anything illegal

MPO: (----) reported [then I have to-]

FC1: [if it has been reported] (--) I have explained [(----)] I'm exercising, I have a contest coming up, and [now I'm-]

MPO: [even now you] shouldn't be (--) if you say that you came here in a pick-up truck, call them now

FC1: we will walk the bikes, we all live right over there

Female cyclist 2 (FC2): yeah we [(--)]

MPO: sure but the [way you're saying it you're trying to give me orders]

FC2: [you too are forcing us]

FC1: no, I'm telling you we live right over there [we want to go home]

MPO: [because I'm saying] you came with a pick-up truck so call the pick-up truck-

Analysis:

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Figure 35 shows two women with bicycles and a middle aged policeman. There is a conversation in the background between FC2 and a woman in *chador* (WIC) standing on the side, but it is difficult to discern the words. The body language implies that the WIC is with or siding with the police officer. The tone of the WIC is harsher than the policeman. The tone of the policeman is not threatening, but firm and rather parental. His body language is relaxed and there is no anger, but there is some annoyance with the women not heeding his words (faster pace of speech). It appears that the laws are ambiguous as to whether or not women are allowed to ride bicycles, as FC1 says she has a competition coming up that she is exercising for. FC1 avoiding to call the pick-up truck that took them to the spot might be a sign of humiliation, that she does not want the driver (by the honorifics used, it is likely an older relative, perhaps father) to find out that she has been apprehended by the police. She attempts to diffuse the situation by saying that their homes are close-by and that they will head home, which the policeman does not trust as he repeatedly tells them that they need to call for the pick-up truck.



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Figure 36. Woman with septum piercing. Screenshot from My Stealthy Freedom, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2233723359975079/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/znqC1CKaAUA>

Text: Our #WhiteWednesdays means conquering your fear. I've been #WalkingUnveiled like this several times now so that others can also conquer their fear. #MyCameraIsMyWeapon #WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("I've conquered my fears and I walk unveiled often," 2018)

Transcription:

Woman: -Wednesday, from Quds Square in the direction of Tajrish Square, no to compulsory hijab. Although they came to my home and warned, and, and, and, many things happened, I will not silence myself and will put down my life too (.) I love you, hoping for freedom

Analysis:

Figure 36 shows a young woman with dyed black, blue and blonde hair, a septum piercing and make-up inspired by Western fashion icon Kylie Jenner. She is wearing white earbuds and speaks to, presumably, her smartphone camera while walking in the street. The distance between Quds Sq. in north east Tehran and Tajrish Sq. in the north is more than 40 kilometers, so it is not clear what is meant by mentioning the location. The woman mentions "they came to my home", by which she probably refers to the morality police. She mentions that many things have happened, and so must have an extensive history of activism both off and online, as the video postings create a wider audience and drive discourse. In the text she mentions that she wants to inspire other women to "conquer their fear", so her method of action is that women should walk unveiled. There are many videos like hers on the page, many without

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showing the face. The increasing number of videos, and the increasing pace of the video postings are a sign that indeed more women are inspired to conquer their fear, and not wait for permission from men, or for men to change laws for women.



Figure 37. Hijab propaganda banner with young girl. Reprinted from ParsGraphic.ir, Retrieved August 8, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/1810851102262309/>. Copyright 2016 by Vahid Abbasi. Reprinted with permission.

Video can be viewed at: https://youtu.be/ZwB3PPgF_oQ

Text: Amidst the rising popularity of our #WhiteWednesdays campaign, a Friday Prayers Leader in Iran compares #WhiteWednesdays campaign to prostitution. In his most recent sermon, he stated, "White Wednesdays campaign is asking you to march in the streets on Wednesdays; they're saying hijab must be optional! This white shawl, and white symbols like bracelets are like the flags prostitutes used to attach to their houses' walls. Their men (husbands and brothers) have no honour!" ("Cleric compares #WhiteWednesdays to Prostitution," 2018)

Translation of Farsi text: Speech of Friday Prayers Leader of Saveh and his rude insulting of women: the white shawl of women, like the green bracelets and purple bracelets is the flag and signifier of “working women” and the men whose women are unveiled lack honour.

#WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom

Transcription:

Male cleric: these days when some people are actualizing White Wednesdays nationally and internationally, what does it mean (.) in fact, it is Black Wednesday, they want to pull woman through filth and society to filth (.) you keep putting on these white shawls, these white shawls, like the green bracelets and like the purple bracelets all smell of trouble and, >are all like those flags< of women doing evil and prostitutes in the pre-Islamic era when the ones doing evil put on their roofs, that yes we are this way (.) anyone doing this needs to be known as immodest (.) and never you mind the honour of their men (1.0) what kind of honour is this (.) before they had actualized white wedding which was black wedding as they had no commitment, and now for opposing the black *chador* and veils of ladies they say <you throw a white shawl around your neck> and on Wednesdays get out on the street (.) the foreigners too say it, some of the traitors inside the nation propagate and say but hijab should be free

Analysis:

Figure 37 is an audio recording curated with photographs of the cleric speaking, men sitting in mosque as is custom for the Friday prayer, and some video footage of women protesting. The speech is interesting as it demonstrates the reaction of the establishment inside Iran and their attempts to curb the demonstration and demonize the protesters. The women are described as harmful to society and to women themselves. Further he draws parallels between

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previous protest movements and likens them all to prostitutes, asserting that the lack of hijab itself is immodesty and therefore a sign of prostitution. It is a reoccurring theme that prostitution is described as the identity of a woman, instead of an industry. Casting prostitution as an identity enables the blame of society's degeneracy and men's sexual perversions onto the women in the industry. The demonizing of the protesting women also propels hostile masculinity and misogyny towards women, as the men feel righteous to violate women who have been cast as carrying the identity of "prostitute" and are to blame for dragging "society to filth". The additional advantage of casting prostitution as an identity is also to twist the women's purpose with the protests into wanting to act out their sexuality. The same theme of "active female sexuality" reoccurs here, this time posing a danger to society through prostitution which is enabled through lack of hijab. The active sexuality of women thus becomes prostitution, which women would carry out freely if they were not controlled by men. The men "in charge" of these women are here described as lacking honour, as they do not control "their women" and do not mind the lack of hijab, although lack of hijab according to the cleric means the women are prostituted.

The casting of prostitution as an identity of women is a vital part of the lore enabling misogyny to flourish in society and empowering patriarchy, as the men (as pimps and brothel owners as well as "johns"/buyers are almost always men) in charge of the industry are cleared of any charges. . The situation in Iran is both alike and different from that of Western countries. As a positive, pornography is outlawed in Iran, but the negative point is that it is not done so with the interests of women in mind, but rather with the view of women as the enemy who defile men through pornography, rather than men being the abusers and commodifiers of women through the production and use of pornography. The example of pornography can apply to many areas where women face misogyny, including prostitution.

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Important to note here is that the cleric carefully places prostitution in the pre-Islamic era. The pre-Islamic era is called *zaman-e jaheliyyat*, which literally translates to “era of ignorance”, as Islam is heralded with bringing not just wisdom, but also granting women their “God-given rights”. The ongoing and increasing prostitution of current times in Iran is overshadowed and the responsibility of any ongoing prostitution is placed on women, as opposed to the men making money off the trade of women’s bodies, and the men purchasing access to violating women’s bodies.



Figure 38. Men arguing. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2208265935854155/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/UXUfjSEC4fw>

Text: This man vigorously tries to save his wife from the harassment of bearded Bassij [sic] members (a militia tasked with enforcing Islamic laws in the street). For years now, the harassment that Iranians have endured have wreaked havoc in their lives. In this video, you can see a group of Bassij members harassing a family in the name of « upholding Islamic virtues » because the woman’s hijab had fallen off. Instead of bowing down to these men, the woman bravely responds: « You should learn that women are not slaves. What I wear is none of your

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business ». In the meantime, her husband also defends her. Yet, the Bassij member still shamelessly allows himself to meddle in this family's private life. In situations like this, let's refrain from resorting to profanity and let's defend our rights. Let's not give them the chance to harass us « in the name of upholding Islamic virtues ». #MyCameraIsMyWeapon

#WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“Watch this husband's bravery as she saves his wife from the harassment of religious vigilantes,” 2018)

Transcription:

Wife (W): I was now, my veil dropped from my head, I was now reaching to get my son's ball from the tree (.) this man suddenly showed up (.) he even can't pronounce your name [well-]

Man 1 (M1): [come] film from this side

W: NO it's not like society [belongs to you, we have no rights in this society, what, what is it, my veil [fell off my head]

M1: [come film from this side] so my voice is recorded [nicely]

W: [it's being] recorded, don't you worry, [don't you worry]

M1: [now I'm telling you this]

Husband (H): [°you shouldn't say anything at all°]

M1: no why, I feel bad for you, now someday soon your wife, you're also a Muslim-

W: mister are you going to be placed in my grave, who said you will be placed in my grave-

M1: [-I don't intend to harass you]

H: [(---) °let it go°]

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M1: [I was thinking that you,
it's Ramadan month we read from the Quran-]

H: [I don't even, I'm saying
don't say anything, I'm saying-]

Man 2 (M2): *haji*, mister you (-- [(-----)])

W: mister you have warned us of bad deeds, [take your leave]

M1: [(---)] I'm saying kudos, I'm saying you
said it, you're a good person who said it, do you get me^ I'm saying kudos, praised be your
nobility that you said so

W: no he needs to learn that woman, woman is not slave

Analysis:

Figure 38 shows two men, one with his face away from the camera, who is presumably the husband. The man whose face is visible is antagonizing the couple, not by warning the woman about her hijab directly, but by speaking to her husband about it. The full beard is a fashion among the religious, as the non-religious tend to shave to adhere more closely to Western standards. The video begins with the woman behind the camera explaining the background of the situation; she was picking her son's ball down from the tree when her veil fell off and the man in the video approached. Halfway through another man approaches but is not let into the conversation.

The tone of the woman's voice suggests she is upset. Her husband speaks in a low voice, trying to calm the antagonist. He also strokes the man's ego by approving of the act and saying that he has done his religious duty and so is now good to leave. The woman is upset at the end and emphasizes that "woman is not slave", suggesting that she feels humiliated by the situation.



Figure 39. Woman with braids. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2187320051282077/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/D5X4S3ouZH0>

Text: In the Islamic Republic, nearly 40 years of spending money on propaganda in favour of compulsory hijab has been a fiasco. These young girls were sitting near Tehran’s City Theatre and with all their confidence, they were laughing at the morality police and compulsory hijab. This boils down to the fact that nearly 40 years of campaigning and propaganda in favor of compulsory hijab has been a fiasco. They will not be able to send us to paradise by force. #WalkingUnveiled #WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom (“40 years of propaganda in favour of compulsory hijab has been a fiasco,” 2018)

Transcription:

Woman 1: Hello, today White Wednesday, although I’m not wearing white, my friends aren’t wearing white either (.) here (.) Vali-ye Asr Crossroad, Daneshjo Park, there are cars,

>like those are cars< <a number of guards are standing too> (.) and this is the building of (.)
city <hall>, and us three here, in front of these squad of guards, are sitting without hijab (.)

Woman 2: without <hijab> ((giggle)) look, without any kind of hijab ((giggle))

Analysis:

Figure 39 shows an unveiled young woman with lipstick and eyeshadow in dark earthy tones. She has her hair in two braids and a blue shawl ready around her shoulders. The woman is smiling while speaking. She shows the surrounding area with water fountains and cars, suggesting a location in the city. The place she specifies is close to the University of Tehran. The camera passes over her two friends sitting on a ledge, both women also unveiled, smiling and waving. After W1 speaking to the camera, it shows W2 taking her shawl off and tossing it away. While these women are branded as rebellious punks, it takes a lot of bravery to spite the morality police who have free hands for treatment not specified in the law, including sexual assault and physical assault as well as imprisonment and fines. Their smiles are victorious, inciting fury at their actions as they do not want to show themselves fearful. The accompanying text writes about the women in third person and is therefore probably written by Alinejad herself. It terms the hijab propaganda as a “fiasco”, that hasn’t succeeded in converting women to want to wear the hijab by their own will, even with promises of the afterlife. Expectance of homogenous religious beliefs in a country with such variety of ethnicities, languages and religions is a big ask.



Figure 40. Woman with yellow robe. Screenshot from *My Stealthy Freedom*, retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/videos/2246686245345457/>. Copyright 2018.

Video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/b6oAYyR2yAI>

Text: You've imprisoned #NasrinSotoudeh. Yet, today, I will be her voice on the metro, in the street, and everywhere. #WhiteWednesdays asked its supporters to support #NasrinSotoudeh, Iran's renowned human rights lawyer, who has recently been imprisoned for representing the girls who removed their headscarves in public (#GirlsOfRevolutionStreet). This girl has the following message: "You've imprisoned #NasrinSotoudeh. Yet, today, I will be her voice on the metro, in the street, and everywhere."

#MyCameraIsMyWeapon #GirlsOfRevolutionStreet #FreeHijabProtesters
#WhiteWednesdays #MyStealthyFreedom ("You've imprisoned #NasrinSotoudeh. Yet, today, I will be her voice on the metro, in the street, and everywhere," 2018)

Transcription:

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Woman: To all ladies and gentlemen, u:h, we are from the Red Women of Enqelab Street, and we expect help from all the ladies and gentlemen and would like for you to support us, and for the freedom of Ms. u:h Nasrin Sotoudeh u:h, we'd like for you to pray for her uh, >Nasrin Sotoudeh< is one of the activists for women u:h thank you

Analysis:

Figure 40 shows a woman standing in a crowded public space that, judging by background noise and the close proximity of other people, is likely inside a metro car. Her tense posture, hesitating speech with the use of hedging, and her hands suggest she is inexperienced and nervous. Her head is blurred, but it is visible that she is not veiled. Her clothing is casual, with a bright yellow kimono-like open *manteu* and a black dress with a floral print on the chest, suggesting modest adornment. She mentions that she is a member of a group called “the Red Women of Enqelab Street”, of which I could not find any information online. The use of “red” could indicate Marxist leanings. The use of “we are” suggests there are other group members present. The speech is in support of human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was sentenced to solitary confinement and disbarred in 2010 on charges of spreading propaganda and conspiring to harm state security (“Iran human rights lawyer detained,” 2010). While the speech in the video is not very informative, the accompanying text provides more of a context on why Nasrin Sotoudeh is important for the MSF movement with the use of the #GirlsOfRevolutionStreet hashtag. The high profile case of Sotoudeh makes the law of obligatory veiling and women’s lack of freedom tangible. Sotoudeh spoke up as a woman and challenged patriarchal structures, and for this she was punished.