

Letter of Solidarity with Protesters in Iran

The Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) and its International Relations Committee (CRI) hereby express their concern with the Iranian government's acts of violence in relation to the latest wave of peaceful demonstrations and protests in Iran. These protests intensified on September 16th, when a young Iranian woman of Kurdish origin, Mahsa Amini (22), died in the custody of the Iranian authorities. Amini was arrested on September 13th by the “Morality Police” in Tehran for allegedly wearing the Islamic veil (*hijab*) inappropriately. According to eyewitness accounts, while in custody she was beaten, fell into a coma, and later died in a hospital.

In Iran, wearing a veil in public is mandatory by law, and is regulated by covering rules - concealing the neck and all hair - which are materialized in the *chador*, the traditional form of *hijab* in Iran. The *chador* is promoted by official discourse as “the best *hijab*” and is voluntarily adopted by many women. Other women, however, adopt different forms of veiling regarding size, width, tie, and color, which in turn show more or less hair, thereby often challenging the official model. The Iranian government's response to “improper *hijab*” takes various forms of persuasion and punishment, including detention and imprisonment.

Revolt over Amini's death has expanded the wave of protests across large segments of the Iranian population, especially among school and university students. Protests center around the rejection of Iran's compulsory headscarf policy, and the penalties associated with breaking the law. However, discontent and dissatisfaction with the government go far beyond the “veil issue”. Protesters fight against authoritarianism, the restriction of freedom, discrimination, injustice, and the decline in quality of life resulting from the current economic crisis. According to international media, more than 200 people have been killed by the Iranian authorities, including around 32 minors. Figures also show that more than 12,500 people were arrested in 114 cities.

These protests spread to several countries in Europe and North America, especially in cities with a strong Iranian diasporic presence, such as Paris, Los Angeles and Toronto, where Iranian women took the lead in the demonstrations. Among such rallies, there was also a demonstration in São Paulo, organized by Iranian immigrants and refugees residing in Brazil.

It is important to note that Iranian women and women of Iranian origins, belonging to different religious and ethnic backgrounds - including Muslims - participate in the protests. Therefore, these protests are not anti-Islam, but rather a response to the Islamic Republic of Iran's authoritarianism and the imposition of its particular view of Islam as state policy. Finally, these protests must be understood in the contemporary context of resistance against authoritarian and oppressive governments in the Middle East, which includes the 1979 Iranian Revolution itself, the “Arab Revolutions” of the last 10 years, and decades of Palestinian struggle against colonial oppression and the Apartheid imposed on them by Israel. With this in mind, we call on the Iranian government to abandon repressive tactics in favor of political solutions that consider the popular demands expressed in the protests.

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