

Woman, Life, Freedom and Democracy

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Abstract

Iranian women have been struggling for freedom and equality for almost 150 years. The recent killing of a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman Zhina (Mahsa) Amini by the so-called “morality police” for allegedly not wearing the compulsory Islamic hijab “properly” has ignited ongoing waves of protests in Iran and around the world. The country’s fearless women and girls have been chanting Women, Life, Freedom and leading the fight for change. This feminist uprising has inspired those from marginalized backgrounds, including ethnic minorities (such as Kurdish, Turkish and Baloch), gender and sexual and religious minorities to join the protests and call for a fair society. This paper explores these issues, drawing upon forty-seven semi-structured interviews with Iranian feminists and women activists who considered this uprising as the best way to reach democracy. This study identifies women’s views on different factors that enable democracy in Iran. It concludes that cultural transformation and cultural change play an important role in the process of democratisation.

Keywords: feminist uprising, Iranian feminists, Iranian women activists, democracy