

## The Anti-Hijab Protests in Iran

### Why in news?

The death of a young Iranian-Kurdish woman while in the custody of the morality police has triggered nationwide protests in the Islamic Republic, bringing the clerical regime under public pressure.

### What is the issue?

- Mahsa Amini had been detained by morality police for allegedly wearing the hijab (headscarf) in an improper way.
- The authorities attributed her death three days later to a heart attack while being trained on hijab rules.
- But her parents and activists say she was beaten to death.
- The incident triggered widespread anger in a country where state suppression of women's rights and resistance has always been a big political issue.
- Several cities, including Tehran and Mashhad saw demonstrators chanting slogans against the clerical establishment and women publicly burning hijabs.

### How about the regime in Iran?

- The Shia clergy have built a system of clerical dictatorship with limited democratic practices.
- The state-sponsored conservatism and social repression produces constant tensions between the rulers and the ruled.
- President Ebrahim Raisi's regime has made it clear that it would use force to quell the protests, with the Revolutionary Guard Corps terming the protesters "traitors".

### What are Iran's hijab laws?

- It was made compulsory for women to wear the hijab in Iran, following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.
- Morality police are tasked with ensuring women conform to the authorities' interpretation of proper clothing.
- In 2014, Iranian women began sharing photos and videos of themselves publicly flouting the hijab laws as part of an online protest campaign called "**My Stealthy Freedom**".
- It has since inspired other movements, including "**White Wednesdays**" and "**Girls of Revolution Street**".

### What about hijab laws in other Islamic nations?

- **Afghanistan**- Since the Taliban's takeover, women in Afghanistan are required to

wear a burqa and remain under veil in public.

- **Saudi Arabia**- Women in Saudi Arabia are supposed to wear abayas - a loose-fitting dress that is worn alongside a hijab or a burqa.
- **Indonesia & Pakistan**- Despite being Muslim majority countries, there is no law that mandates wearing hijab.

### How is the issue seen with respect to Karnataka hijab protests?

- **Differences**- In India, women who want to wear their hijabs are fighting against a system that is forcing them to take the hijabs off.
- In Iran, women are battling against a regime that is forcing them to wear the hijab.
- The protest in Karnataka is against the legalisation of anti-Muslim prejudice and the patriarchal attitudes.
- The protest in Iran is against a patriarchal setup and against how religion is used as a pretext to enforce injustices.
- It is ironic to compare both since Iran is an Islamic republic and India a secular one with different sociopolitical realities.
- **Similarity**- The similarity between the agitations is that they are both fighting against the control over the autonomy.
- Both Iran's anti-hijab & India's pro-hijab protest are said to be in regards with the **freedom of choice**.

### References

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2. <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/iran-anti-hijab-protests-karnataka-hijab-protests-about-choice-womens-rights#read-more>
3. <https://www.timesnownews.com/india/explained-anti-hijab-protests-in-iran-and-hijab-laws-in-islamic-nations-article-94380876>
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62967381>

### Quick facts

### Morality Police

- The morality police known formally as "Gasht-e Ershad" (Guidance Patrols) in Iran enforce a dress code in the country that requires women wear to wear hijabs in public.
- The morality police also bans tight trousers, ripped jeans, brightly coloured outfits and clothes exposing knees.
- Officers have the power to Stop women and assess whether
  - They are showing too much hair
  - Their trousers and overcoats are too short or close-fitting
  - They are wearing too much make-up
- Punishments for violating the rules include a fine, prison or flogging (beaten severely)

with a whip or a stick).

