

Iran Profiles the Female Police Seeking To Quell the Women's Protests

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

In September 2022, the death while in police custody of 22 year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for alleged improper dress, sparked an unprecedented wave of protests and unrest across Iran, as Iranians rallied under the slogan “Women, life, freedom.”¹ In addition to brutal crackdowns that have killed hundreds and landed tens of thousands in prison, the Iranian government has engaged its state-run media to present an alternative narrative to its populace to argue that women support the Islamic Republic. The excerpted feature by a correspondent from *Fars News*, which is affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, profiles a female police officer, but its awkward praise for her intellectual and athletic excellence and her choice to become a police officer unintentionally highlights the regime’s condescension that chafes at Iranian women.

The Iranian regime is aware that it has an ideological problem: many young Iranians are not committed to Revolutionary Leader Ayatollah Khomeini’s Shi’ite revolutionary values.² *Fars News’* decision to spotlight the women’s elite police unit coincides with a broader effort to counter this ideological erosion and renew revolutionary values among Iran’s youth. It also seeks to amplify the idea that the police

cracking down on the protestors are the true patriots by juxtaposing the anonymous subject with allegations that outside powers sponsored or manipulated those protesting on behalf of Amini and Iranian women. The emphasis in the *Fars News* profile on the special police unit members’ proficiency in both English and French is curious. It might seek to imply to the Iranian audience that the protests are not indigenous, but rather foreign agents spark and control the riots. At the same time, the mention of language proficiency

Some people were paid to attack.

may also reflect an understanding inside regime circles that they must engage foreign journalists and diplomats in their own languages. While women have long played a role in specialized units of the paramilitary Basij, their traditional focus on enforcing dress and sexual segregation in public spaces has rubbed many Iranians the wrong way. Notably the article acknowledges the popular anger directed to the security forces, but it is not clear if information operations like this or even a new squad will improve Iranian women’s perceptions of their government and its security forces.



Members of the Women’s Police Special Unit pose in front of their motorcycles, February 2023.

Source: https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1401/10/24/14011024000759_Test_PhotoN.jpg Attribution: Farsnews.ir

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Source: Maryam Arab Ansari, “Ba Polis-e Zan-e Nukhbeh ‘Yagan Vizheh’: az Tobaher dar Rishteh-haye Razmi Taslet beh Inglis va Faransavi (With the Women’s Police Elite ‘Special Unit’: From Mastering Martial Arts to Speaking English and French),” *Fars News Agency* (news agency closely affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), 12 February 2023. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14011122000164>

She is a police officer, a woman, a member of the Special Operations Group, and has full proficiency in English and French. In 2021, she graduated with a straight A average, and ranked 300th in English [nationwide], entered the Amin Police University [in Tehran], where she had both general and specialized training. She also passed combat training including [basic] self-defense, judo, weapons training, rappelling, ninja crafts, shooting, arrest and detention. Every day, she periodically reviews her exercises, specialized and combat training because physical fitness is an integral part of sports and specialized training for special force officers, although her specialty is judo.

She is single. I ask during the riots and with your presence in the streets, didn't your mother worry that God forbid something would happen to you?

With calmness, she says, "There were no troubling issues, and we have learned not to worry our families...."

I ask about the days of turmoil, the unrest and how some people were paid to attack people in the streets and squares of the city and...The only answer she gives use is that insults and slander have no effect on our resolve, and our sole purpose and focus is to ensure the order and security of the people, and we are not going to react whether we hear insults or disrespect.

Notes:

[1] For background on the death of Mahsa Amini and the ensuing protests, see: Maggie McGrath, “Mahsa Amini: The Spark That Ignited A Women-Led Revolution,” *Forbes*, 6 December 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maggiemcgrath/2022/12/06/mahsa-amini-the-spark-that-ignited-a-women-led-revolution/?sh=6a9f7aeb5c3d>

[2] For a previous discussion on revolutionary fervor among a younger generation, see: Michael Rubin, “Iran’s Supreme Leader Speaks on Martyrdom,” *OE Watch*, December 2021, <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-past-issues/399678/download>; Michael Rubin, “Khamenei Warns Veterans of Declining Revolutionary Fervor,” *OE Watch*, February 2020. <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/oe-watch-articles-2-singular-format/354648>