«We did not make a revolution to go backwards»: The Iranian women's uprising of March 1979 and its systematic erasure from historical memory

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This article reconstructs the genealogy of the Iranian women's movement, establishing a critical historical linkage between the «Women's Uprising» of March 1979 and the «Woman, Life, Freedom» (Zhina) movement of 2022. While the mass protests of 1979 have been systematically erased from official state narratives, this study argues that the 2022 uprising is not an isolated phenomenon but the cumulative result of a forty-year struggle for bodily autonomy and political agency. The death of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini in September 2022 ignited unprecedented protests across Iran and the diaspora under the rallying cry: «Woman, Life, Freedom» (Zan, Zendegi, Azadi). While global media portrayed these protests as spontaneous, they represent the culmination of generations of feminist activism, resistance, and theoretical development within Iranian society. By employing a genealogical framework, the article analyzes the «intermediate episodes» of resistance that bridged these two eras, specifically the reformist press movement of the 1990s, the grassroots «One Million Signatures» campaign, and the «Girls of Revolution Street» movement in 2017. The findings demonstrate that the contemporary demand for regime change is deeply rooted in the unfinished business of 1979, having evolved from the initial defensive reaction against compulsory hijab into a proactive, autonomous political force that refuses to subordinate women's rights to other political ideologies.

Keywords - Iranian women's movement; 1979 revolution; compulsory hijab; Ayatollah Khomeini; feminist genealogy; Woman, Life, Freedom; Zhina Amini; political agency.

1. *Introduction*

On 8 March 1979, merely three weeks after the triumph of the Iranian Revolution, tens of thousands of women poured into the streets of Tehran in spontaneous protest against Ayatollah Khomeini's first declaration regarding

the imposition of hijab (Islamic modest dress) in government workplaces. This uprising, which continued for five days despite violent repression, represented the first major opposition movement to the nascent Islamic Republic and the largest women's demonstration in Iranian history [Esfandiari 2022, October]. Yet despite its magnitude, this movement has been systematically erased from the official narrative of the Islamic Republic and remains inadequately documented in scholarly literature [Saberi 2025].

This article posits that the «Women, Life, Freedom» protests of 2022 cannot be fully understood without reference to this suppressed history. Rather than viewing 1979 and 2022 as disconnected historical bookends, this research argues they are linked by a continuous «genealogy of resistance». The 2022 movement represents the maturation of the seeds sown in 1979, nurtured through decades of evolving strategies, from the reformist attempts to work within the system to the radical bodily defiance of recent years [Sadeghi 2018, p. 45].

To reconstruct this historical trajectory, this research employs a qualitative, historical-sociological approach. It draws on extensive archival research and original in-depth interviews with thirty-six women who participated in the 1979 protests. Furthermore, it utilizes the comprehensive oral history documentation provided by Mahnaz Matin and Naser Mohajer to analyze the specific mechanisms of the 1979 mobilization. The analysis is further contextualized through data from recent doctoral research, which examines the «middle years» of resistance, integrating the narratives of contemporary activists involved in the «One Million Signatures» campaign and the «Girls of Revolution Street» movement to map the continuity of the struggle.

The two-volume work *The Women's Uprising in Iran in March 1979: Another Birth*, authored by Mahnaz Matin and Naser Mohajer represents the first comprehensive academic examination of this critical episode. Their research, grounded in documents, newspapers, photographs, and collected oral histories, provides unprecedented insight into the uprising's background, participants, and implications, as well as the international feminist solidarity it generated [Matin & Mohajer 2013].

Understanding the 1979 movement is essential to comprehending the structural continuities and historical consciousness that animated the recent «Woman, Life, Freedom» (*Zan, Zendegi, Azadi*) movement following Zhina (Mahsa) Amini's death in September 2022 [Saberi 2025, 11 July]. The pattern established in March 1979, of women becoming the first organized opposition to the Islamic Republic's gender policies, [*New York Post* 1979, 8 March] has recurred throughout the regime's history. From Tehran to smaller cities across Iran's diverse provinces, women in both 1979 and 2022 spontaneously mobilized against mandatory hijab, revealing shared political consciousness transcending geographical, ethnic, and class divisions [Saberi 2023, p. 29]. This article demonstrates how Iranian women, who had actively

participated in overthrowing the Shah's regime, became the first victims of the revolution [Moghadam 2004, 16–17 November] they helped achieve, establishing tensions that would define post-revolutionary Iran and find renewed expression in the 2022 nationwide protests.

2. *From revolutionary agents to primary targets*

Iranian women's participation in the 1979 revolution was extensive and significant. During the revolutionary movement against Mohammad Reza Shah, women stood shoulder to shoulder with men in this political struggle against the regime and fulfilled their agency despite the entrenched traditions and regressive beliefs that had limited them in various aspects of life. They participated in demonstrations, strikes, and various forms of political mobilization across class backgrounds, workers, students, professionals, and housewives [Ahmad & Banuazizi 1985, p. 3].

However, the transition from revolutionary participant to regime victim occurred with remarkable speed. Shahla Badi'i, a founding member of the National Union of Women who had been in exile during the Pahlavi era, described her immediate sense of foreboding upon Khomeini's return in February 1979. She recalled that «immediately after Khomeini's arrival, concerns about the restriction of women's rights had instilled fear and anxiety in the hearts of women» [Basiri 1999, pp. 130–156].

These concerns proved well-founded. Almost immediately after assuming power, the new regime moved to dismantle women's legal protections. The Family Protection Law[1], which had provided women with

[1] The Family Protection Law (enacted in 1967 and revised in 1975) marked a pivotal shift in the Iranian state's approach to gender, transitioning jurisdiction from Shari'eh-based rulings to state-administered Family Protection Courts. This legislation, which paralleled the country's rapid industrial expansion and labour market needs, aimed to facilitate women's entry into the public sphere. Key provisions included raising the minimum marriage age for women to 18, granting women equal rights to petition for divorce, previously a unilateral right of the husband—and mandating that divorces be adjudicated by courts rather than clerics. The 1975 amendments further restricted polygamy by requiring both court permission and the first wife's consent, and established the mother as the legal guardian of her children in the event of the father's death.

The law was significantly shaped by the advocacy of Senator Mehrangiz Manuchehrian (1906–2000), who drafted the initial bill and championed it against severe opposition from conservative clerics who viewed the legislation as heresy and a threat to their societal influence. Manuchehrian, who founded the Iranian Women Lawyers' Association in 1951, faced intense personal attacks for her activism, including threats that forced her temporary departure from Tehran and a high-profile confrontation with Prime Minister Sharif-Emami over the requirement for spousal permission for travel, which ultimately led to her resignation from the Senate. Following the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini abrogated the Family Protection Law on 26 February 1979 and revoked women's

minimal rights regarding marriage, divorce, and child custody through decades of advocacy by women's rights activists, particularly Senator Mehrangiz Manuchehrian (1906–2000) [Ahmadi & Ardalan 2003] was repealed immediately on grounds of «opposition to Islamic law». Simultaneously, efforts began to impose compulsory hijab on women across Iranian society [Mir-Hosseini & Hamzić 2010, pp. 80–110].

A statement issued by women's groups captured their disillusionment: Iranian women expected that after the victory of the 1979 revolution, all the humiliations and insults against women would suddenly come to an end. They believed that «all the laws of the monarchy that discriminated against women in society and placed the control of her life in the hands of others should be relegated to the dustbin of history with the collapse of the monarchical regime» [Najafi 1979, 1 April, p. 1]. This realization led women to understand that to achieve freedom and equal rights, one must fight.

As Mahnaz Matin explained in an interview, the women who led the initial protest movement were not opposed to the revolution itself. Many had actively participated in overthrowing the Shah, and quite possibly for this very reason, they had the courage to take to the streets and declare: «We oppose the anti-women policies of the new regime» [Sadeghi-Boroujerdi 2013, 11 June]. Shirin Ebadi, who would later become Iran's first Nobel Peace Prize laureate, identified the precise moment of her political rupture with the regime. Speaking at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo on 11 December 2003, she stated that at exactly 8 a.m. on 8 March 1979, when she heard on national radio that working women had to come to work with Islamic hijab, she realized that Khomeini was a hypocrite and a liar, and from that moment separated her path from theirs [Iran International 2023, 11 December].

3. *The emergence of independent women's organizations*

The fall of Mohammad Reza Shah's regime precipitated a transformation in women's organizing. The Women's Organization, which had operated under state support during the Pahlavi era, ceased its activities. In its place emerged new independent women's groups with diverse political perspectives [Najmabadi 1991]. A 28-year-old teacher who became an early member of a newly established women's group recalled that questions about women's future began «a month before Khomeini's return to Iran». She explained that

right to serve as judges on 3 March 1979. It can be argued that this immediate prohibition stemmed from Khomeini's pre-revolutionary confrontations with formidable legal scholars like Manuchehrian; he likely recognized that women possessing judicial authority could effectively deconstruct and challenge the patriarchal interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) that were foundational to his political vision.

among women, «there was no tradition of organization at all, so women acted on their own, establishing women's groups among friends and colleagues to reflect on the situation» [Matin & Mohajer 2013, pp. 8–27].

Recognizing International Women's Day as an organizing opportunity, some women published a notice in a Tehran newspaper approximately three weeks before 8 March, signed by about 40 women, explaining the day's significance. A subsequent meeting held on 24 February to prepare for 8 March demonstrations attracted between 200 and 250 women. By 8 March 1979, several women's groups had declared their existence, including the Women's Awakening Society, the Revolutionary Association of Women Fighters, and the Association of Women Fighters [Echo of Iran 1979].

Only a few groups from the Pahlavi era remained active, notably the Iranian Women's Rights Union led by Mehrangiz Manuchehrian. The Iranian Women's Rights Union took one of the earliest official stances, conveying its position in a letter to the new government on 1 March 1979 [Kayhan 1979, 1 March, p. 3]. Notably, this letter made only general references to enhancing women's status and avoided directly objecting to the regime's anti-women policies. Manuchehrian believed that Khomeini's personal practice of monogamy demonstrated his respect for women's rights. Mehrangiz Kar, a younger lawyer and women's rights activist, approached Manuchehrian with concerns about the impending loss of women's rights. Manuchehrian, who had a picture of Khomeini in her office, asked: «Why should we harbour doubts about him and prepare to oppose him?» [Kar 2018, ch. 4]. This faith in Khomeini's intentions, shared by many at the time, would soon be shattered.

Shahin Navai, co-founder of the National Women's Alliance, noted that 8 March had been prohibited from celebration during the Pahlavi era, which had instead designated Women's Day on the anniversary of Reza Shah's unveiling decree [Hoodfar 1999]. As Navai explained, when the 1979 revolution occurred, everyone was preparing to celebrate 8 March [Navai 1994].

4. *The hijab decree and spontaneous uprising*

The immediate catalyst for the uprising came in Ayatollah Khomeini's speech on Wednesday, 6 March 1979, at the Feizieh Seminary in Qom. Speaking before clerics, religious students, and scholars, Khomeini declared that in Islamic ministries, «there should be no disobedience», and «women should not come to the Islamic ministries and workplaces unveiled» [Paidar 1995, pp. 339–342]. Women could participate in workplaces, but they must observe the hijab, «preserving the boundaries set by the Shari'eh» [Sadr-Hashemi 1985].

The *Ettela'at* newspaper published an article on 7 March titled «Imam's Decree Regarding Islamic hijab», quoting Khomeini: «Islamic women are not dolls. Islamic women should appear with hijab, not demean themselves» [Sadr-Hashemi, 1985]. This marked the first instance of Khomeini disparaging a specific societal group.

On 8 March, female employees who went to work were prevented from entering their workplaces and instructed to return home and wear headscarves. Rather than complying, these women poured into the streets. Those who did return home brought their families, notably their mothers, and joined the demonstrations [Jamileh Nedai, personal communication, Paris, 29 May 2022].

Figure 1. The woman holding a large placard with the message «Defend Freedom with and without hijab» is Jamileh Nedai.[2] She participated in the first demonstrations on 8 March 1979, by women against the compulsory hijab law imposed by Khomeini. (Source: personal collection of Jamileh Nedai)

8 March 1979 witnessed two concurrent yet distinct events in Tehran. The first comprised planned celebrations of International Women's Day organized by newly established women's groups at the University of Tehran.

[2] Nedai was a prominent theatre actress during the second Pahlavi era, an art graduate, and the wife of director Bijan Mofid. She worked for the radio station until the announcement of the mandatory hijab law, at which point she stopped attending work in protest and participated in all demonstrations opposing the decree.

The second event, the spontaneous uprising against compulsory hijab, emerged independently when working women, nurses, and schoolgirls who had been turned away from their workplaces converged on the streets [Moghissi 1996]. The *Kayhan* newspaper reported that fifteen thousand women who held a lecture session at the Faculty of Engineering decided to march, chanting slogans such as «We are against despotism» and «We don't want compulsory veiling», moving toward the Prime Minister's office [Foundation of Historiography 1979, 8 March, p. 3].

Figure 2. Photo from the personal album of Jamileh Nedai. The placard states: «We demand a government founded on the principles of equality and equity between all individuals Men and Women, regardless of gender».

It is crucial to recognize that many women protesting compulsory hijab were not acquainted with 8 March as International Women's Day, and it is equally inaccurate to portray the initiators of the 8 March celebrations as the architects of the anti-hijab movement [Saberi 2025, p. 111]. However, the demonstrations of working women altered the predetermined plans of leftist women's groups, and many women present at the university events left the lecture halls to join the street protesters [Fatehrad 2015].

Kate Millett (1934–2017), an American feminist who witnessed the demonstrations firsthand, wrote in her book *Going to Iran* that five thousand women marched from the gates of the University of Tehran towards the city

centre and government offices, «facing guns, having initiated the revolution» [Millett 1982, p. 120]. In an interview, Millett expressed astonishment that in America, organizing a demonstration on such a scale would typically necessitate years of planning, yet in Tehran, approximately a thousand people had independently gathered seemingly overnight [Politique et Psychanalyse 1979, 8 March]. Beyond Tehran, women in other cities organized solidarity demonstrations. In Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, and Shiraz, women staged sit-ins and street demonstrations echoing the democratic slogans emerging from the capital, demonstrating that women's opposition to mandatory veiling transcended regional, class, and educational differences [Foundation of Historiography 1979, 8 March].

5. *Democratic slogans and political consciousness*

The women's protests were characterized by the democratic nature of their slogans, which emerged spontaneously without prior preparation. The protesters chanted «We did not make a revolution to go backwards», «Freedom is neither Eastern nor Western; it is universal», «In the dawn of freedom, the place of women's rights is vacant», «The freedom of women is the freedom of society», «An Iranian woman fighter will not be a slave», and «Women are hardworking; the hardworking are free» [Mulard 2010].

These slogans reveal sophisticated political consciousness that transcended immediate grievances. The assertion that freedom is universal directly challenged the Islamic Republic's anti-imperialist framing, which positioned women's rights as Western impositions incompatible with Iranian or Islamic identity. The slogan connecting women's freedom to societal freedom articulated prophetic understanding: the suppression of women's autonomy would inaugurate broader authoritarian repression. As Matin and Mohajer note, this was a time when reactionaries, with the cooperation of liberal, nationalist, religious-nationalist, and leftist currents, were imposing their political supremacy on the revolutionary movement, a time when the majority of society was pinning its hopes on Islamic forces and drawing lines against dissenters, and a time when hostility towards anything suggestive of free thinking and modernism were considered virtues [Matin & Mohajer 2013].

Tens of thousands of women rose up, motivated by humanistic ideas and relying on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, swimming against the mainstream with courage and without opportunism, undeterred by the risk of damaging the «unity» of «popular» forces. Women's statements emphasized: «We must all make it clear to our brothers that attacking women's rights is the beginning of an attack on freedom in society» [Najafi 1979, 1 April, p. 14]. This warning proved prescient, as the successful suppression of the women's movement emboldened the Islamic Republic to

proceed with systematic elimination of press freedom, political pluralism, and labour organizing.

6. *Organized violence and repression*

Despite the peaceful nature of the women's demonstrations, they were met with organized violence from the first day. The newspaper headline read «Women's Protests Turn Violent» [Ayandegan 1979, 8 March]. ITN's Jon Snow reported on gunshots during demonstrations, documenting acts of aggression and verbal abuse by Hezbollah forces, as well as aerial shooting by Committee forces [ITN Archive 1979, 11 March].

The coordination and readiness of many Basij men demonstrated that disruption of the women's march was thoroughly planned. Many formed lines in front of the university to prevent thousands of women from joining the protests, physically obstructing their passage with beatings. These assailants rushed at women with slogans such as «We follow the Quran, we don't want immodest women», «Western doll, go away», and «Neither Eastern nor Western, Islamic Republic». They broke and tore women's umbrellas and threw snowballs at them [Jamileh Nedai, personal communication, Paris, 25 May 2022]. It was in this context that the slogan «Either the veil or a hit on the head» (*Ya rusari ya tusari*) was introduced for the first time.[3] Prior to this, extremist Shia groups had not dared to confront women; however, seemingly through Khomeini, they received permission, and the desecration of women's dignity was mandated as Shari'eh law.

On 9 March 1979, the French newspaper *Libération* published an article with the headline «Iran: le foulard ou la raclée» (Iran: the scarf or the beating), stating that groups of men were lurking in the streets of Tehran, targeting women whose hair were free and whose neck and legs were visible [Libération 1979, 9 March].

[3] These slogans have been referenced in nearly every academic work related to the struggle of Iranian women following the 1979 revolution and have been documented by various newspapers. For example, see Behnoud [2020, 13 February].


Libération
SIDERURGIE
Denain: le fourneau a explosé
Iran: «le foulard ou la râclée»
La «journée des femmes du 8 mars»
ROCKOPOLIS
Afrique du Sud: la grève raciste des mineurs blancs

Figure 3. Archives de Libération, Paris, «Iran: le foulard ou la raclée», Libération, 9 March 1979, cover page.

The Women's Rights Defence Committee issued a statement questioning whether women have the right to decide for themselves how they want to dress, noting that many women have been injured by knives, chains, stones, and acid for the «crime» of being unveiled, and declaring that the issue of women's freedom has become the focal point of freedom for all the oppressed [Women's Rights Defence Committee 1979, 10 March]. Farideh Zebarjad recounts in her memoir *Trembling* her mother's warnings on 8 March, predicting that the Mullahs would not stop at just putting headscarves on women but would cover their bodies with abayas and force them to stay at home, ruining women's lives [Zebarjad 2008]. These predictions proved accurate over subsequent decades.

7. *The abandonment by political forces*

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the March 1979 uprising was the failure of secular and leftist political forces to support the protesting women.

Although secular women with diverse political and ideological orientations were the driving force behind the uprising, they failed to find adequate support within the broad spectrum of male secular forces in society. The vast majority of revolutionary political groups of that era, from the left wing and liberals to religious and secular groups, abandoned the women who protested against compulsory hijab, either through direct opposition or by remaining silent, which facilitated the subsequent intensification of protestor suppression and the further erosion of women's rights [Tabari 1982].

Anti-imperialism and nationalist movements often held simplistic views regarding women's liberation. A key question was whether women should participate only as nationalists or also confront gender oppression alongside foreign dominance. The Algerian liberation movement was an early example of this challenge. Frantz Fanon believed that as women engaged in revolution, men would recognize their equality. However, the outcomes of the Algerian Revolution, as well as the Constitutional and 1979 Iranian Revolutions, showed that this belief did not hold true [Shahidian 1994, pp. 223–247]. Women realized that their agency was only acknowledged as long as it served male-dominated power structures. One bitter experience for women was the realization that political entities virtually disregarded women's rights and did not prioritize them. Another painful truth was that despite the magnitude of their protests, women, devoid of meaningful influence within power structures, were incapable of instigating change.

Zhaleh Ahmadi explains in her article «Hijab and Islamic Totalitarianism and Opposition» that the hijab united thugs with Mullahs close to the centre of power. For both groups, women served as the screen onto which they projected their desires, anxieties, and obsessions about honour; as such, women had to be removed from public view and confined to the private sphere [Ahmadi 2003].

8. *International feminist solidarity*

Whilst domestic political forces abandoned the Iranian women's uprising, it evoked substantial enthusiasm amongst European and American feminists. The movement that emerged in support of Iranian women can be considered the first manifestation of international feminist solidarity on such a scale. The Iranian women's uprising resonated beyond Iran's borders amongst women's activists and feminists worldwide, receiving modest but symbolically significant support [Millett 1982, p. 120].

Kate Millett, an influential figure in women's rights activism and author of *Sexual Politics*, travelled to Iran during this period. Her experiences were documented in *Going to Iran* [Millet 1982]. Millett was invited by the Committee on Artistic and Intellectual Freedom in Iran (CAIFI), based in

New York. The International Committee for Women's Rights, chaired by Simone de Beauvoir, was formed on this occasion and sent a delegation to Iran with the aim of supporting the Iranian women's uprising. Global solidarity with Iranian women activists led to hundreds of gatherings, conferences, marches, and protests in major cities around the world, including Rome, Milan, Madrid, Barcelona, Montreal, Vancouver, New York, and Washington. Dozens of articles, statements, and pamphlets about the legitimacy of the Iranian women's uprising were printed and distributed worldwide, with headlines such as «We Are All Iranian!» and «Women's struggle for freedom knows no bounds!» [Chan-Malik 2011, pp. 122–125; Burns 1979, 27 March].

France demonstrated the strongest solidarity. Through the efforts of Iranian groups who accompanied the French team, a remarkable film, *The Iranian Women's Movement, Year Zero*, was produced documenting the women's march of 1979 [Boissonnas et al. 1979]. Simone de Beauvoir gave a speech at a press conference in Paris, underscoring the importance of feminists worldwide collecting information regarding the challenges Iranian women were facing. She urged them to forge connections and bolster the women's cause, pointing out that it was crucial for feminists to comprehend the specific demands of Iranian women. De Beauvoir believed Western feminists should not impose their viewpoints upon others; rather, her approach was to extend support to Iranian women from their own perspective. She proposed that the initial step should be to understand the situation fully and establish direct communication with Iranian women, emphasizing that the task was fundamentally one of information gathering, «a mission to acquire knowledge so as to put themselves in touch with Iranian women, to understand their demands, and to comprehend the methods they intend to employ in their struggle» [de Beauvoir 2015, pp. 265–269].

However, whilst women's rights activists around the world recognized and supported the legitimacy of this movement, most left, centre, and right-wing parties, politicians, and organizations, as well as many intellectual and political tendencies, both in Iran and globally, proved unable to comprehend the authenticity and potential of this movement and turned a blind eye to it.

9. *The evolution of resistance: From despair to public defiance (1990s–2019)*

While the 1979 uprising was suppressed, the movement for women's rights did not perish; rather, it underwent a complex metamorphosis, evolving from acts of desperate refusal to organized legalism, and finally, to performative public defiance. This trajectory can be understood through three distinct phases that paved the way for the 2022 uprising.

Phase 1: The Politics of Despair (1990s) The post-war era of the 1990s was characterized by the consolidation of state control over the female body, creating an atmosphere of suffocation. In this period, resistance was often individual and existential. This desperation crystallized in the tragic figure of Dr. Homa Darabi, a brilliant academic dismissed from her university position for «improper veiling». In February 1994, Darabi committed self-immolation in a public square in Tehran. Her death was not merely a personal tragedy but a profound political statement, a «somatic protest» demonstrating that the state's bio-political control over women had become a matter of life and death [Darabi & Thomson 1999].

Phase 2: Legal Reform and Civil Society (2000s) The 2000s witnessed a strategic shift toward pragmatism and civil society organization. Women activists attempted to work within the system to dismantle discriminatory laws through discourse and petition [Mir-Hosseini 2006]. The most significant manifestation of this was the «One Million Signatures Campaign», where activists like Rezvan Moghaddam utilized face-to-face engagement to educate women about their legal rights regarding marriage and inheritance [Saberi 2025, p. 29; Tohidi 2017]. Simultaneously, the era saw the rise of prominent human rights lawyers, such as Nasrin Sotoudeh, who faced imprisonment for defending dissidents. This period proved that Iranian women were not passive victims but politically sophisticated agents capable of organizing complex, grassroots networks despite the authoritarian context.

Phase 3: The Visual Turn and the Reclamation of Public Space (2010s) The 2010s marked a «visual turn» facilitated by the digital era. Campaigns such as «My Stealthy Freedom» and «White Wednesdays», initiated by Masih Alinejad, allowed women to document their defiance, effectively breaking the state's monopoly on truth and shattering the wall of fear [Alinejad 2018]. This digital activism materialized into physical reality in December 2017 with Vida Movahed, the «Girl of Revolution Street». By silently waving her white headscarf on a utility box, Movahed transformed the female body from a site of repression into a flag of resistance.

However, the cost of this struggle remained high. The self-immolation of Sahar Khodayari (known as the «Blue Girl») in 2019, facing prison for attempting to enter a football stadium, served as a stark reminder of the continuity of oppression. Her death highlighted that the restrictions on women extended beyond clothing to a total «gender apartheid» that excluded women from public joy and social life. These cumulative traumas and acts of defiance created the combustible material that would eventually ignite the 2022 uprising.

10. *Conclusion*

The Iranian women's uprising of March 1979 represents the foundational chapter of the current struggle, a critical yet systematically erased episode that holds the key to understanding the present. To comprehend the «Woman, Life, Freedom» movement of 2022, one must look back to this historical genesis. The resistance did not begin in 2022; it began on 8 March 1979, less than a month after the revolution, when tens of thousands of women poured into the streets of Tehran to challenge the immediate imposition of the hijab. They chanted a slogan that remains analytically piercing today: «We did not make a revolution to go backwards».

These women understood a fundamental truth that their male counterparts ignored: a society cannot be free if it enslaves half its population. However, their prescience was met with a historic betrayal. The political left, nationalists, and liberals, prioritizing «unity» against imperialism over human rights, effectively told women to «go home», arguing that the battle against the West took precedence over gender equality. This was the pivotal historical mistake. By sacrificing women's rights for a monolithic anti-imperialist front, these political forces allowed the theocratic regime to consolidate its power, pushing the women's movement into the margins and paving the way for decades of systemic repression.

This political abandonment allowed the state to enforce what constitutes a «Dual Patriarchy», a concept elaborated in my doctoral research. Following the suppression of the 1979 uprising, Iranian women found themselves entrapped by two converging forces of oppression: a Private Patriarchy, enforced by fathers and husbands within the domestic sphere, and a Public Patriarchy, codified and enforced by the state and its laws. The mandatory hijab became the symbolic and practical intersection of these two forces, granting the state intimate control over women's bodies while reinforcing traditional male authority in the family.

Consequently, the 2022 uprising represents the shattering of this dual structure. The «Woman, Life, Freedom» movement is the maturation of the seeds sown in 1979, nurtured through the reformist debates of the 1990s and the civil society activism of the 2000s. It marks the moment where Iranian women refused to accept the «historical mistake» of 1979 any longer. By rejecting the subordination of their rights to other political ideologies, the women of 2022 are finally reclaiming the agency denied to their mothers and grandmothers, proving that the struggle against the «Dual Patriarchy» is the central axis of Iran's fight for democracy. The legacy of 1979 persists not as a memory of defeat, but as a testament to an unfinished revolution that is finally being completed.

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