

THE FEMGUIN

a feminist newsletter



WESTERN FEMINISM

*Does Western feminism apply
on an international scale?*

SEXISM IN MUSIC

*The problems women have faced in
a male dominated industry*



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

Women's Aid

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The Women's Revolution in Iran

By Keemia

This article is dedicated to Mahsa Amini and to all the young people in Iran who have sacrificed their lives for freedom.

The world has now slowly become aware of the mass protests taking place on the streets of Iran since September when Mahsa Amini, a young girl was arrested and killed at the hands of the Iranian government for not wearing her headscarf properly. This has marked a huge uprising amongst Iranians who are no longer willing to accept the government's draconian laws and their brutal enforcement. This movement which is now being called a revolution has been spearheaded by women and Iranians who have taken to the streets in their thousands to face the armed forces while risking their lives. The anger being expressed today is one that has been pent up for many years in a country where the body of the woman is used as a symbol to be controlled, turning it into a political battleground.

The history of the hijab in Iran is multi-layered and a historical context helps frame the current

events. Iran has been a predominantly Muslim country for over one thousand four hundred years, however, the role of religion in people's daily lives has shifted through time. In 1936, the King - Reza Shah - set out to modernise Iran by forcing Iranians to adopt European dress. He issued a decree called the Kashf-e Hijab (literally translated as the 'unveiling') which banned Islamic veils in all public spaces, although many women would have traditionally chosen to keep their hair covered. To successfully implement this law into Iranian society, the police were ordered to forcefully remove the veil from any woman who wore it outdoors and beat them, literally stripping them of their freedom of choice.

In 1979 the Islamic Revolution, overthrew the Pahlavi Dynasty and enforced Muslim values on the entire population of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini (the new ruler of Iran) made wearing

hijabs obligatory for all Iranian women over the age of nine, regardless of their beliefs. At this point in time, the great majority of Iranian women saw this law as an absolute violation of their individuality but have had no choice but to cover themselves for over 40 years under the new Islamic law.



Iranian women protesting on the last day they could leave their homes without covering their hair in 1979

In 2009, millions of Iranian people came out on the streets to support a more moderate and reformist government. The regime arrested thousands and used violence against the protesters, killing a girl called Neda Agha-Soltan. Neda became a symbol of the resistance movement; women have continued to be at the forefront of social movements in Iran ever since.

In 2018, Vida Movahedi became a symbol of defiance when she stood on a busy street in Tehran and tied her white headscarf to a stick.

Many women followed her defiant action, but they were punished and imprisoned.



The women of Iran went on to find another way to show their objection to the enforced hijab without risking their safety. They decided to wear a white headscarf every Wednesday, in what has become known as 'White Wednesdays'. This has become an extremely powerful movement and one that the government is powerless against as they cannot arrest someone purely for the colour of their scarf. This 'White Wednesdays' movement has become an act of female solidarity which empowers and unites women who oppose the hijab, as they see each other every week in their

The woman who started the idea of this movement was an Iranian journalist called Masih Alinejad who had to flee Iran and now resides in America where she continues to act as a platform for the voice of Iranian women where she continues to act as a masses. The woman who started the idea of this movement was an Iranian journalist called Masih Alinejad who had to flee Iran and now resides in America where she continues to act as a platform for the voice of Iranian women.

Last year, a new hard-line president was brought into power who has introduced an annual Hijab and Chastity Day while also renewing the notorious morality police patrols on Iran's streets, who confront women who, according to the authorities are not covered properly. On the 16th of September, they arrested a 22-year-old girl called Mahsa Amini for apparently not covering her hair properly. They told her family that she was being taken in for a "re-education" which, in effect, resulted in so many

blows to her head that she went into a coma and died. The news of Mahsa's death has created an uproar in Iran, with thousands of people coming to the streets in support of women's rights. Although these protests have been led by women, Iranian men have been standing by them and risking their lives in support.

The young women in Iran have successfully captured the attention of the world with their bravery and hope for freedom. The slogan of this movement, which is becoming known as the first woman-led revolution, is 'Woman, Life, Freedom' ('Zan, Zendegi, Azadi'). This is the vision of this people's revolution, led by protests inspired by women's rights and working to secure the most basic of our rights, the right to life. This is the course the people of Iran have chosen, and it is up to the Iranian diaspora to amplify their voices, to demand their safety and to reflect the dignity in which they labour to prepare the ground for a new Iran.

Sexism in Music

By Imogen

Since the beginning of time, women have been overlooked. There has been a book that they couldn't publish, a career they couldn't have, or a talent ignored by a society that dismissed them for their gender. The music industry was and still is no different.

Women being ignored or silenced in this field dates all the way back to the 1400s. To have any success, all the famous female composers dedicated their life to being seen as perfect humans. Whether that was relentless childbearing, illustrated by Clara Schumann who had 8 children in just 12 years, or a lifetime of chastity, like always proper Marianna Martines, purity was key. While doing my research, I was shocked at how inferior these women were viewed to be in comparison with their male counterparts.

Mozart: the child prodigy who performed all around Europe in

the 18th century, shocking people, everywhere. The level of skill and inherent talent was astonishing. But what if I told you that I'm not talking about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart? What if I told you I was actually talking about Maria Anne, his (perhaps even more) talented sister? As she is not nearly as famous as her brother, you might assume she was not as talented. You would be wrong. At the age of 12, she was recognised as one of the most skilled pianists in all of Europe.



In a letter, her father, Leopold Mozart, wrote “my little girl plays the most difficult works we have with such incredible precision and so excellently.” And Leopold Mozart was not the only one who thought this.

In 1762, the two young Mozart played for a group of aristocrats in Munich, one of whom recorded his thoughts in his diary. They read “the little child from Salzburg and his sister played the harpsichord. The poor little fellow plays marvelously. However, his sister’s playing is masterly, and he applauded her.” He went on to elaborate on the gift that Maria Anne possessed.



Much of Mozart’s success is also due to her. It is thought that around 20% of his works were written, at least partly, by her. If she had published it, it would have gone ignored by society, because she was a woman. This is also why we have lost many of her works that were published under her real name, as her pieces were overlooked then and never played for a paying audience. Her potential was never fully reached; her father

stopped taking her on tour when she was reached marrying age, meaning she never got the exposure she needed for her career to take off.

Nowadays, sexism in music still exists but it manifests itself in very different ways. Being big in the music industry no longer means being able to play the piano well, or being a professional violinist: it means singing. In the 21st century, we love a good pop song, and to make it, you have to be able to write good lyrics as well as a catchy tune and beat. For men, that’s where it normally ends. For women, they must look good. At the moment, there is no ‘ugly’ famous female popstar. They are all, based on society’s stereotypes, beautiful.



Then, there are the award shows. Men can turn up in suits, or a shirt and trousers, or, sometimes, just tracksuits and no one bats an eyelid.

Women, however, are expected to turn up in glamorous outfits, dressed to the nines and looking flawless. If not, people humiliate them, images and videos circulate about them on social media, and they are no longer viewed as an artist. Instead, they are just seen as celebrities, there for people to watch. Taylor Swift had an interview where she outlined the different vocabulary used for men and women in the music industry. She talked about the way that women aren't allowed to write songs about their exes because they're overreacting, but men can because they are just reacting.



Though we are now a more developed society in terms of how we view women, sexism remains at the forefront of most industries and music is no exception. Though it has got better in many ways, women now face different challenges in the music industry. In the future, through women speaking out about the prejudice they have faced, hopefully the divide will begin to close and, eventually, sexism will no longer be a prevalent issue within this industry. Conversations and campaigns like MeToo are slowly forcing the music industry to respond to criticism about the treatment of women.



We must acknowledge and learn about the deep history regarding women and music in order to ensure a future where equal opportunities are provided to all.

Women and Conscription

By Nikki

On the 24th of February 2022, President Zelensky of Ukraine signed a general mobilisation in all regions of Ukraine for all men between the ages of 18 and 60. There was a travel ban imposed on these men and when their wives and children fled the country they were forced to stay behind. There was no choice.

In the United Kingdom, we are fortunate not to have war and conscription on our home front but there are several countries in which war still prevails. This year, the war in Ukraine has uncovered many hidden debates in the modern world. Debates on how dependent we should be on other countries for oil; the extent of external intervention in war; whether mandatory conscription should extend to women.

Our earliest record of the use of conscription is during the 27th century BCE in Egypt. It became far more mainstream during the 20th century and was drawn into law in the UK in 1947. 85 of 195 countries in the world still use some form of conscription today

however, it varies. In Israel everyone must serve for two years and eight months when they turn 18 – though there are different sectors of the military they can choose from. In Brazil, like most countries, the mandatory conscription only extends to men. There has certainly been argument for female conscription: linking it with feminism and empowerment. An argument that the reason women were never conscripted is that we were thought to be too weak, emotional, and fragile to face the hardships of war. We know that this is untrue. In 2022 women can do anything, so why not fight? It could also be argued that by female conscription being introduced we reduce the 'macho' stereotype in war. Historically, male glorification of war has been evident: going to war was righteous and brave even when it meant loss of lives to thousands of people for the aims of those who rule, who lead.

While the glorification of war

has certainly been prevalent historically, in the 21st century, by and large, violence is condemned. Unwarranted invasions face huge moral backlash (as we have seen in Ukraine). It is far too easy to discount the enormous hardships of men in war. Especially when fighting for justice, we must recognise their bravery and courage. However, this is very different to shaming those who do not fight.

Today, many argue that there are many more reasons that women have not been conscripted. While the argument of 'who will look after the children?' seems broadly sexist, it is a hugely important question. In war, protecting the younger generation is vital. They are always blameless and always have the most to lose. They have their whole lives ahead of them which need to be protected. As that is the case, it follows that we need at least one parent or guardian for children. Currently it is women, but some propose that the conscription should be changed to one person per family. It does warrant me saying that in no way should looking after children be seen as a weak or bad

thing. Crossing borders with a screaming 5-year old would be hugely difficult. As always, we can look at history to explain our today. In school we study the 'land army' and the ammunition factories that were entirely run by women in WW1. In fact, one of the main reasons women got the vote is because the government could no longer deny the fact that women contributed to society and war: that economically it is necessary for someone to be keeping normal life up and running.

As with any complicated problem, we are left with a weigh up in the end. It is our overall outlook on war and women that needs to change on many fronts. We need to strike a balance between praising the brave and making it look like fighting is the only method of contribution. We need to lose the idea that women do not already contribute to war, and that conscription is the only way to contribute. Unless we change this narrative, changes in conscription laws will not matter. They will not matter unless we realise the choice to fight is far bigger than a patriotic choice.

Western Feminism

By Sophie

Feminism is not a rare term. In fact, despite it only really existing for around 50 years, I'd say it's now a part of household vocabulary. Most people, at some point, have heard or used the term feminism, and many women today would consider themselves a feminist. Now, I am no exception, believe me. I grew up with a mother who wrote her thesis on feminism and a father who occasionally mansplains feminist ideology to me. I eat, sleep and breathe feminism, and I assumed everyone else did as well, but not everyone does. The feminism that people outside the West live with is incredibly different to what I grew up talking about.

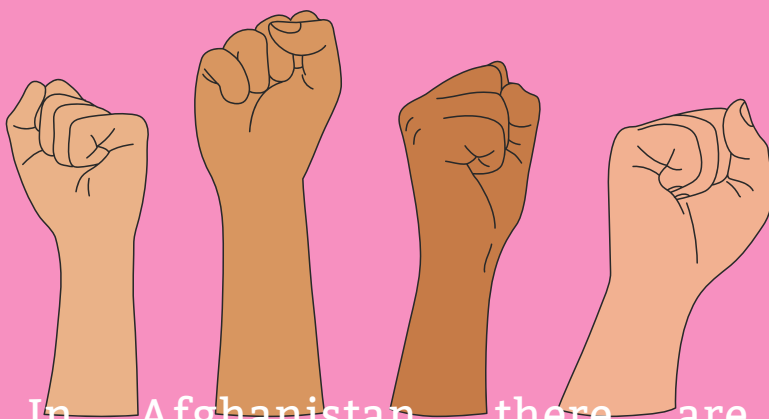
The definition of feminism is the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes. And, whilst in pretty much all countries there are movements for equality, what is being



fought for varies so much internationally that they can barely even be grouped together. The feminist movement's focus in the West has been for equal treatment, equal pay and fighting against the Pink Tax (all important issues), while in other parts of the world people are protesting to prevent child marriages, fighting to keep girls in school after they start their periods and marching against the oppressive control of women's bodies. Women's issues across the globe are not the same.

A key difference between "Western feminism" and other movements is that a lot of the time, we are marching for

better treatment, whereas others are marching for humane treatment. Women are treated much better in England than in Chad or Sierra Leone or Pakistan. The treatment that women are fighting to improve here is a dream to some of these women. We ask to make sanitary products free; they dream about having access to basic sanitation.



In Afghanistan, there are women who risk execution to hide their daughters from their husbands – many who were married before they even hit puberty. Countries in central Africa are still trying to pass laws to prevent FMG.

I want to pose a question: does the feminist movement in the West hold any weight in

comparison to what these women face? Can we really help fight to prevent these abuses in ways other than raising awareness and giving financial support if we will never understand the experiences of the women in these countries?

As I make these points, I wonder if feminism can even be seen as an equivalent ideology outside the West. A lot of these protests and movements that I've talked about are fighting for survival -for the right to live – rather than fighting for equal treatment as we are seeing in the West.

Let's look at what a lot of feminists in the West do to exercise their equal treatment: they might not shave, not wear makeup, wear pink to the office to point out that you can look pretty whilst having high powered jobs.

These are all important and somewhat effective at achieving the aims we are trying to fulfil, but they don't

equate to what women in the countries mentioned above face. So, I can't help but think that, maybe, feminism is purely a Western concept, and only really unique to developed countries.

This is not to say that all countries in Europe and North America are equal when it comes to gender and all countries in Asia, Africa and South America are living in the 1800s. Women across the world face all kinds of challenges. In Poland, abortion (unless the woman's life is in danger) is illegal and in the USA Roe v Wade was overturned, meaning abortion is no longer a constitutional right. The Philippines is in the top ten most equal countries according to the Gender Equality Index. I do, however, think it's important to acknowledge the differences and diversities of feminism internationally, and what it means in different societies. The progression of society is not a uniform movement, and, perhaps, we need to realise that different countries move at a

different pace when looking at equality.



Charity of the month

Women's Aid

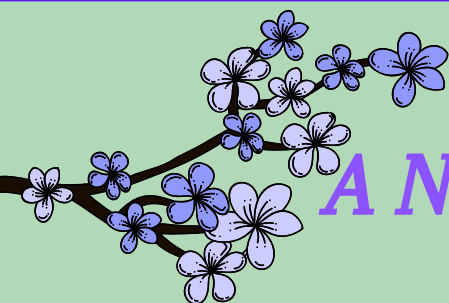
'Women's Aid' is a federation working to provide services in England for people struggling with domestic abuse. Their goal is to end domestic abuse via education, awareness and support. One way they spread awareness about issues women face is their list of “10 ways to help end violence against women and girls”. They also protest, fundraise and campaign to ensure people understand the issues women and girls deal with.

With the current cost of living crisis many people are struggling to leave abusive relationships due to the fear of financial instability, 'Women's Aid' is working to support people in this difficult time. They provide women with a forum where they can communicate with other survivors, they read any emails they receive within 5 working days and they have an instant messaging service for people who need help.

In order to help 'Women's Aid' achieve their goals you can make a donation, support your local service and learn more about the issues the charity is fighting.

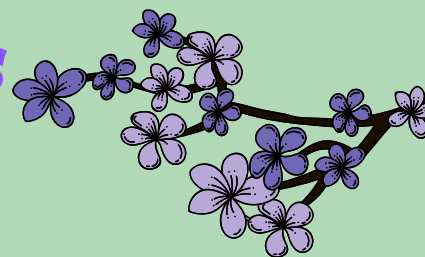
women's aid
until women & children are safe

<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/get-involved/give/>



A Note From the Editors

By The Editors



Hi there! It is us, the editors (believe it or not). We hope you enjoyed the fifth edition of The Femguin! It took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to get this to you, so if you've read this far, you're really cool :)

A huge thank you to everyone that contributed to this issue! Our student body is so talented, and we love being able to share and showcase all different forms and styles of creativity.

If you have a killer idea for an article that you just need to share, or are interested in illustrating and helping to make our next issue look even better, or if you just have some feedback and suggestions, feel free to let us know in the form below! We strive to make The Femguin the best it can possible be, and really value student input and feedback.

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