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## **Interview with Mahsa Kayyal, Global Campus Visiting Researcher**



The Press Office of the Global Campus of Human Rights had the opportunity to ask the Global Campus of Human Rights visiting researcher Mahsa Kayyal about her experience in Venice and the situation of

women in her country of origin Iran.

**Please share with us about your background and your role as a visiting researcher and in the EMA Master Programme at the headquarters of the Global Campus of Human Rights.**

I am a PhD student in International Law at Tehran University and a Visiting Researcher at the Global Campus of Human Rights Headquarters in Venice. My research is about “the evaluation of non-discrimination and equality in Human Rights European Court jurisdiction”. Also, I hold an LLM in human rights and have over fifteen years of experience as a Lawyer in the field of human rights, with particular expertise in women's and children's rights.

During my time in Venice, I tried to play a role in raising students' awareness of the discrimination against children and women in Iran, especially after anti-state protests broke out across Iran in supporting women's rights.

In this regard, I have published a post on the blog about Protecting International Human Rights Mechanisms for Children's Rights in Iran. And I gave a speech during the human rights film week for students of EMA about the status of children's rights in Iran.

In the future, there will be research on discrimination against women in the Middle East.

**How could Venice become more efficient, attractive and prepared to host events and programmes for academic activities in the near future?**

I think Venice, as a popular tourist, refugee, and migrant destination, has everything needed to attract students to a higher education program and multinational events. Although, to become more a driving force in both our local and international communities, it just simply needs to apply of its human rights field capabilities.

Venice is not only is a tourist destination full of charm and beauty, but also it has also welcomed refugees and migrants into its borders, that giving the city a culturally and religiously diverse face which can consider as a human rights educational field in equity and human rights. I personally believe, a winter human rights school about equality and non-discrimination with a focus on awareness raising for women's equity would be one of the best opportunities for students who want to thoroughly investigate the evaluation of these concepts, especially in Venice.

In addition, celebrating events about women's human rights, especially on IWD day could change Venice into the most orange color city at a global level which raise awareness of women's work, the challenges they face, and gender equality.

So, using the potential of Venice city will represent a major influence on the Global Campus of Human Rights to create a forum for discussion of Venice's and human rights education's potential in futures.

**Regarding your involvement in the Global Campus online conversation related to the international women's day, could you describe the situation of women in your country Iran and how the international community could support the movements to protect their rights?**

Women in Iran are among the Middle East's most educated but are subjected to a broad range of discriminatory laws and practices. In Iran, Women have unequal and highly limited rights to divorce, inheritance rights, and traveling outside of Iran. The age of criminal responsibility for women begins very soon from 9 years old and some crimes bring flogging and death sentences for women. In addition, a women's court testimony is worth half that of a man's. Women in Iran also suffer workplace, political, and

public sphere discrimination.

Every day, women in Iran see their rights challenged and face systemic human rights abuses and discrimination. The peaceful advocacy of women's rights is criminalized and many women have been imprisoned for their activism. Recently, the murder of 22-year-old Masha Amini in government custody due to an inappropriate hijab led to a new wave of widespread protests for women since September 2022, in whole cities of Iran. Anti-government demonstrations support the rights of Iranian women and eliminate discrimination towards them with the motto of "Women, the life, freedom". This is a wonderful movement that started in the Middle East in support of women.

Unfortunately, protesters faced aggressive violence from the Islamic Republic of Iran's government. Many youths were killed by shooting or beating in the streets, universities, and schools or in custody. Many of them were injured or got blind. Women in custody were raped and sexually abused, and other protesters were deprived of education and lost their jobs.

Worst of all, some protesters are sentenced to death without a fair trial and are currently at risk of imminent execution. But the international community should not watch these tragedies. Although, according to supporting of the international community, The UN Human Rights Council's decision to investigate the Islamic Republic's lethal violence against protesters in the country and the vote of the UN Economic and Social Council to remove the Islamic Republic of Iran from the UN Commission on the Status of Women are signals broad support by the international community for Iran's embattled movement for social and political change.

Yet executions are being carried out in Iran and there is more the world can and must do to support the struggle for freedom in Iran. So, the international community can support movements to protect their rights. Coordinated and sustained action by the international community has been effective in reducing government abuse in many cases around the world. If statesmen around the world speak up and citizens share information about the violent suppression of protesters in Iran, the IRI government will realize that the world is watching and condemning its actions. A strong and coordinated international alliance in the international community can be the best solution that could support the victims of the Islamic Republic's violent repression of peaceful dissent and its systemic discrimination against women, even against the most powerful forces.

### **Could you give a message to the students, professors, alumni, staff and partners of the Global Campus of Human Rights?**

Indeed, our world would be a scary place for women without equity. It gives women the courage to save our world in perfect harmony with their amazing kindness. So each one of us, in whatever position we are, as students, teachers, alumni, etc., must do our best to embrace equity for women. Also, we should keep in our mind that treating everyone equally is not the best path to achieving equity. By treating everyone fairly and considering their circumstances, it will be accomplished.

It is not important whether our action is a small-scale movement or a large one, we are all able to challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias, and seek out inclusion in every situation. So, within our respective spheres of influence, each of us can actively support and embrace equity.

Let's all embrace gender equity and make it a daily priority to make the world a better place for everyone to live.

For more information contact our [Press Office](#)

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Stay tuned for the ninth issue of the Magazine coming soon in March in English and Italian!

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