

"Against oppression and injustice let's take off their turbans!" - Young Iranian rebels fighting for Freedom

By Filippo Brogioni

It has already been five months since the self-styled Islamic Republic of Iran was rocked by a wave of nationwide protests following the death of Masha Amini, a young Iranian woman killed by the "Guidance Patrol," Iran's feared morality guards for wearing her hijab "improperly" while visiting Tehran. Despite the authorities' violent crackdown, the protesters do not seem to be giving up and are adopting new and creative forms of protest to keep their demands for Freedom alive. Over the past few days videos have appeared on various media channels around the world of young Iranian men on the streets of Iran intent on dropping the turban typical of Shiite clerics and then running away to the consternation of mockery and laughter of passersby.

In this context, the "decapping" of an ordinary cleric takes on a commanding force. What to most may appear to be such a light-hearted and playful prank, holds within itself a strong symbolic meaning.

In fact, the turban represents the figure of the Shiite clergy, which, since its emergence in Iran nearly four centuries ago, has always had a complex relationship with political power. Turbans worn are generally of two different colors. Where a white turban indicates that the person wearing it has no descent connection to the Prophet and has a non-Arab origin. On the other hand, a black turban identifies the wearer as a descendant of the Prophet through one of the twelve imams of Twelver Shiism.

Protests involving the ridiculing of the uniforms of men in power are creative and powerful ways to express dissent and challenge established power. These kinds of demonstrations are a form of protest aimed at striking at the psychological security of men in power, showing their vulnerability and disrespect for them. In this context, the complex and contradictory nature of the freedom struggle is represented by the duality between playful prank and the risk of being killed. On the one hand, turban "decapping" represents a form of subversion that undermines the stability of Iran's despotic government authorities. On the other, this form of protest represents a real struggle for survival, as protesters put their lives on the line to defend what they believe in. In the footage, young rebels can be seen smiling even though they know they are risking their lives. Laughter and joking are thus transformed into a peaceful and elegant symbol of resistance, a sound that echoes in the streets and blends with the strength and the determination of Iranian youth on their path to Freedom.