**The Iranian protester who removed her head scarf and waved it in public like a flag has not been seen since**

January 25, 2018

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LA Times

http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-iran-headscarf-20180124-htmlstory.html

One day late last month, a woman wearing black trousers and gray sneakers climbed atop a telephone utility box in Tehran’s crowded Enghelab Square.

In an act of defiance as quiet as it was striking, she removed her white head scarf, tied it to a stick and waved the garment back and forth like a flag in protest against modesty laws that require Iranian women to cover their hair.

In cellphone videos captured by onlookers, her movements are slow, almost hypnotic, her dark hair flowing down to the middle of her back.

Weeks later, after Iran was shaken by the biggest anti-government protests in nearly a decade, the woman’s whereabouts are unknown. She has become the subject of a social media campaign labeled #Where\_Is\_She, and an anonymous symbol of opposition to what many Iranians view as the theocracy’s harsh laws against free expression.

Questions over the woman’s fate deepened this week after Nasrin Sotoudeh, one of Iran’s most prominent human rights lawyers, posted on Facebook that she had learned the woman was arrested the day of her protest, Dec. 27, released shortly afterward and then rearrested.

Sotoudeh said the woman was 31 and mother to a 20-month-old child, but she did not know whether she had been tried. No family members or friends have come forward to identify her publicly, perhaps to protect themselves as dissidents come under added scrutiny after the unrest.

Shopkeepers near where the woman stood — a street corner with a confectionary and several sidewalk peddlers — said in interviews that her protest went on for more than an hour, until she was arrested by two female police officers.

Peddlers who took video of her were arrested and later released, they said.

Her protest occurred on a Wednesday, a day when activists wear white in protest of the modesty laws that have been enforced with varying degrees of fervor since Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution. Women must cover their hair with the head scarf, or hijab, and wear long, loose-fitting coats known as manteaus — or risk being stopped by so-called moral police.

The next day, protests over economic grievances and corruption broke out and quickly spread to dozens of cities. In the ensuing crackdown, more than 20 people were killed and thousands arrested, with some believed to have died in custody under circumstances that authorities have not fully explained.

All that has made the hijab-less woman a cause celebre on social media, her gesture forever linked to the anti-government demonstrations even though she was not actually a part of them.

“As the protests spread, many Iranian activists online were inspired by the nonviolent protest of the lone girl,” Masih Alinejad, an activist and founder of the My Stealthy Freedom campaign against enforced hijab, told Al-Monitor, a news site covering the Middle East.

“Her gesture was seen as a symbol of resistance. Her protest caught the imagination of Iranian women and men, feminists and non-feminists.”

Internet memes have sprung up showing the woman facing a firing squad, standing in place of the emblem in the Iranian flag and countering a police baton with her hijab.

“I hail what she has done,” Golnar Ramesh, a 28-year-old engineer in Tehran, said in an interview.

Ramesh said she often goes without a scarf while in public or driving, in defiance of the moral police, but “I don’t have her courage to stand in public near Tehran University for more than an hour.”