**Iran Says Take Off the Veil—and Be Raped**

June 9, 2014

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The Daily Beast

http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/09/iran-says-take-off-the-veil-and-be-raped.html

Exiled Iranian journalist Masih Alinejad got under the skin of the Islamic Republic with “[My Stealthy Freedom](https://webmail.iac.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=IptwcOc160i2N0Ws7HeDJEDs_XwNV9EI-Id0xMGO8aO9qpu8FqyK2Pmj34sO595N0qRSOjDy-Mc.&URL=https%3a%2f%2furldefense.proofpoint.com%2fv1%2furl%3fu%3dhttps%3a%2f%2fwww.facebook.com%2fStealthyFreedom%26k%3duWCMTgG0stZxwOEwDWvrOA%253D%253D%250A%26r%3dbPtT%252FN53PaZKsoi9JPzesQTh2VJreH7QyPIL1Dmkaqk%253D%250A%26m%3dh7%252Fa%252FGXx9CgX8%252BCX9lPFa04v7RsuXh3sz78HSEbvuL0%253D%250A%26s%3dae3ed03fdb1a97851474cae860363a2e912eda6e0dbb82e3e09a86f9593e4a59),” a Facebook campaign encouraging women in Iran to post photographs of themselves not wearing the compulsory headscarves. The [page](https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom) has attracted some 482,000 “likes” and commanded considerable international attention.

Now, Iran has hit back with a thinly veiled lie, broadcasting on state television in late May that Alinejad had been assaulted and raped by three men in London in the presence of her son. Two days later, a hardliner commentator and TV personality called Alinejad a “whore who should not be elevated to the level of a heretic.”

It didn’t take long for Alinejad to answer back, posting a video clip of herself singing a famous Iranian song about freedom on a London tube station platform near where Iran’s state television had claimed she was assaulted. She intends to file a complaint with the Iranian judiciary against the Iranian television station who broadcast the false claims.

“My son and I are living a proud and peaceful life,” Alinejad wrote on Facebook. “Sometimes when I burst out singing he starts laughing. I wish from the bottom of my heart that I could break into song in a metro station in my own country and that nobody would assault my intellect.”

Alinejad spoke with IranWire about the slander and how she plans to fight it.

**IranWire: Why did you decide to respond to Iranian state television by publishing a video of you singing in a London Tube station?**

Alinejad: I thought a lot about how to answer this brazen lie but I could not come up with anything. I only knew that they [hardliner politicians in Iran] are frightened by people dancing happily, by singing, and by women without hijab. They try to say that anybody who dances, anybody who sings or rejoices or removes her headscarf will be raped. I didn’t make the video after Iranian TV broadcast its report—it was done before. But after the broadcast, I decided to upload it.

With this video I wanted to tell them that rape may happen anywhere in the world, but I can sing freely in this country and I am unharmed. In my own country, however, even my dreams have been raped. Thugs exist everywhere in the world but in our country it is the law that rapes us.

**How did you hear about the report?**

A new page called “the Islamic Republic” has been launched on Facebook and it was the first to report it. I immediately sent an email to Facebook and told them that the report was a lie. But Facebook replied that removing the page was against freedom of speech and its rules. The report said that three people had raped me in front of my son. Unfortunately, Facebook did not remove the report and it became the source for Islamic Republic television. The rumor is that Iranian state television is itself behind the Facebook page.

**What did you feel when Iranian TV broadcast the report?**

To be honest, I have practiced remaining indifferent to this kind of news a thousand times. But when I see these sorts of lies in Iranian media, my eyes swell up with tears and I start shaking. I cannot believe that they have spent millions of people’s money to offend our intelligence. I cannot lie and say that I am strong and I remain calm. I am strong but I feel the pain. I am just one example, but Iranian TV has over and over again accused Iranians living inside the country of things they haven’t done. They have no recourse whatsoever.

**Your family lives in Iran. What was their reaction?**

I prefer not to involve them. I believe that Iranian TV wishes to destabilize my family, who live in a small town. In any case, it is painful for any family to sit in front of the television and hear such a sad and disgusting story about their daughter.

**How did people respond on social media and on your own Facebook page?**

I never believed that I would be supported in this way, but my colleagues everywhere have supported me. They [the regime] try to sever connections between those living outside and those based inside Iran. They accuse old friends and colleagues of terrible things, even if they do something simple like return a greeting on Facebook. But this behavior was so brazen and immoral that even reporters who are under pressure or who are normally critical of me reacted. They said it was it was not right to remain silent in the face of such corrupt behavior.

My Facebook inbox is full of threats using vulgar words similar to those used by Iranian TV. People have asked repeatedly: “Are you sure nothing happened? Can you prove that it did not happen?”

**Is this a new tactic or it has happened before?**

I think it’s the first time a child has been involved in this kind of false story, the first time they have said a child has witnessed the rape of his mother. It is the first time that Iranian TV has publicized this type of report in such a brazen manner. Their goal is to frighten women who have objected to forced hijab. They want to tell them that [by posting photos to the “My Stealthy Freedom” page] they report for a journalist who is so corrupt she has been stripped naked in front of her son and raped.

**You wrote on your Facebook page that you plan to file a complaint with the Iranian judiciary.**

As a journalist who lives outside Iran, I am constantly targeted by Iranian TV and hardliners. I prefer to ask for help through my Facebook page. If a lawyer helps me, I’d like to see my case followed through the Iranian judicial system. I have my doubts if any conclusions could be reached on my case. Still, I don’t want to give in.

**You could actually be criticized for having faith in the Iranian judiciary.**

I know that it might get nowhere, but this is my only recourse. I do not want to give in.