

BE MY VOICE

by Nahid Persson | SE US IR UK NO 2021 | 58' 90' | Farsi, English



World Sales

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CREDITS

Director: Nahid Persson

Producers: Nahid Persson, Setareh Lundgren
Production Company: RealReel Doc AB
Cinematographers: Nahid Persson, Kambiz Foroohar, R.H, A.F
Writer: Nahid Persson
Editors: Nahid Persson, Rostam Persson
Music: Natali Noor
Sound: André Parklind
In collaboration with: SVT, NHK, SWR, DR, NRK, VRT, RTS, Knowlegde

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Journalist and activist Masih Alinejad is the voice of millions of Iranian women rebelling against the forced hijab on social media. Leading one the largest acts of civil disobedience in today's Iran, Masih uses her freedom in exile to amplify the protest in her home country. The regime tightens its grip to regain control, and Masih's courage is tested when violence and oppression threaten her own family members.

PRESS TEXT

Swedish-based Iranian director Nahid Persson has directed a number of impassioned documentaries exposing the corruption and cruelty of the leaders of Iran's Islamic Republic. Films from *Prostitution Behind The Veil* (2004) to *My Stolen Revolution* (2013) detailed the way in which the country's government has ridden roughshod over the rights of its own citizens.

These films screened at festivals, won prizes and were distributed widely. Nonetheless, Persson eventually realised that the world wasn't paying much attention. Western governments refused to confront the Iranian regime and the repression carried on.

That is why, in 2013, she decided to stop making political films about Iran. Instead, she veered off in a more personal direction with *Anders, Me And His 23 Other Women* (2018), a film about love and dating in the 21st Century. Its subject, tennis professional Anders, was a modern-day Casanova, going out at the same time with 24 women...and Persson was one of them.

"But two years ago, when I saw what was happening in my country, I couldn't continue to close my eyes," the director remembers. She realised that other Iranians in exile like journalist and activist Masih Alinejad, who has over 6 million followers were using social media to report on atrocities being committed by the State against its own citizens.

"The reason I decided to make the movie, *Be My Voice*, was when I watched on social media, how people desperately sent out their videos to Masih, for her to be their voice. I could not ignore it anymore. The fact that I could also be their voice in making this film, was the reason to make this film. The protests against increased petrol prices were in November 2019. In just three days, the regime killed 1,500 people. 7000 were arrested. Many of them are sentenced to execution. The regime

turned off the Internet throughout Iran so that the outside world would not see the genocide. But people in Iran always found a way to send videos to Masih.”

In early 2019, Persson began shooting the documentary, travelling to New York, where Masih is based, and following her subject everywhere. “She (Masih) is very similar to me. She is an activist. I’m an activist. But she has a hundred times more energy than I have...I was fascinated by her - she can be in 10 places at the same time.”

Although she lives in the US, Masih continues to receive death threats from the Iranian regime. Dissident Iranian journalists living abroad have long been harassed and some have been kidnapped and killed. One of them was Nahid friend Rohollah Zam, who was executed in dec 2020.

Before meeting Masih, Persson had begun to lose hope that her films could have any impact on how the outside world views Iran. However, when she saw how Masih has become the voice for the young Iranian activists risking their lives, her attitude quickly changed. She realised, as she puts it, that “everybody can do something.”

Making films like Be My Voice is also a way “giving hope” to those suffering and imprisoned in Iran. When they find out that they’re not forgotten, they are always encouraged.

“I am making this film for my family, for my people, for me,” the director declares.

Persson believes that the Islamic Republic will collapse only if the people of Iran are united and if other countries boycott the regime. “We have to understand that the regime is no different from ISIS. They are criminal. They’ve done everything against their people that ISIS done. The only difference is that the regime has been in power for 42 years and have done all of this under Islamic Law.”

DIRECTOR’S BIOGRAPHY – Nahid Persson

Born in Shiraz, Iran, Nahid Persson took political asylum in Sweden as a result of her political activism during and after the 1979 revolution in Iran. Since 2000 Nahid has pursued a successful career as a documentary filmmaker in Sweden.

Nahid’s social-political films have been harshly critical of the position of women under the Islamic Republic regime. On a trip to Iran, after the release of her award winning documentary, Prostitution Behind the Veil, Nahid was arrested and interrogated by the Secret Police. While under house arrest, she was secretly completing her documentary Four Wives - One Man.

Nahid is the recipient of numerous awards including the Golden Dragon at the Krakow Film Festival, Best International News Documentary at the TV-festival in Monte Carlo, as well as The Crystal Award (Kristallen) by SVT (Swedish State Television), a Guldbagge Award and International Emmy nomination for Prostitution Behind the Veil. She also received Ganneviksstipendiet in the Film category for her work in the field.

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

- Anders, me and his 23 other women 2018
- My stolen revolution 2013
- The Queen and I (2008 A meeting between the director Nahid Persson and Farah Pahavi, ex queen of Iran, two Iranians in exile)
- The blue heart (2008)
- The birdcage (2007) A journey to the streets of Iran.
- 4 wives one man (2007 A film about the polygamy family "Mohammadi "in Iran)
- Emma (2007 A story about a girls way back after years of heroin abuse.)
- The Ladies Room (2006 A place where the girls take a break, let loose, meet and open up. (Producer)
- The Motorman (2006 The every day life of a scrap- collecting man in Iran. (Producer)
- Prostitution behind the veil (2004) An intriguing story of two young prostitutes in modern-day Iran.
- Fuck the past (2004) Daniella's journey to a better life.
- Me and my cousin (2003). Two cousins meet, one brought up in Iran and the other one in Sweden. (Producer)
- The Last days of life (2002). A film about people with a very short time left to live.
- End of Exile (2000). A woman returns to Iran after seventeen years in forced exile
- My mother – A Persian princess (2000). A Swedish girl adopted from Iran travels to her native country and meets her biological mother.
- I am not only a homosexual. (2000) About homosexuality and the right to be treated with respect.
- What is wrong with me? Part 1 (1999). About young people and bullying
- If you don't do anything... Part 2 (1999) What can you do to prevent byllying?
- Five equal – Five different (1999) Five young immigrant women discuss boys, love and sex.
- My secret (1998). About sexuality and abortion among young immigrant women.
- Below the surface (1997). About drug abuse among young immigrants.
- To be adopted (1996). Adopted young peoples thoughts about their native country.
- Hidden signs (1995). A parents' story about its childs drug problems.
- A door to another world. (1994). Swedish adoptive parents and their children.
- 20 documentaries for Swedish Television (1995-2002)

INTERVIEWS AND PRESS

Nahid Persson interviewed by Business Doc Europe

<https://businessdoceurope.com/gothenburg-preview-be-my-voice-by-nahid-persson/>

Nahid Persson interviewed by Tempo Documentary Film Festival

<https://tempofestival.se/en/film/be-my-voice/>

Nahid Persson Profile on Nordic Women in Film

<http://www.nordicwomeninfilm.com/person/nahid-persson/?lang=en>

