



**An Assessment of the International Community's Role
in the Current Human Rights Violations in Iran**

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Abstract

Women in Iran are familiar with strict religious rules surrounding the way they should dress and behave. These rules are closely connected to feminine honour norms and are claimed to restrict women of their freedom, especially because they are enforced by the aggressive and invasive morality police. Surrounding these oppressions and the recent killing of Masha (Jina) Amini, citizens have started protesting for the freedom of women, often resulting in arrest and execution of protesters. Following the United Nations' Responsibility to Protect, these oppressions fall under the category of crimes against humanity. In this paper, I answer the research question: *Does the international community have the duty to intervene to attempt to end the women's rights violations and harsh reactions targeted at current protesters by the Iranian government, according to theories of responsibility and complicity?* by arguing that states in the international community and individuals living in these states are complicit in the current human rights violations in Iran, following outcome and remedial responsibility and political and metaphysical guilt. After this, I advise that states express their power through the Security Council to intervene in these crimes against humanity, and that individuals within these states act on their responsibility by implementing future-looking interventions while thinking critically and keeping in mind the context and intersectionality surrounding the current events.

Keywords: human rights, Iran, United Nations, Responsibility to Protect, complicity, international relations, women's rights, protests

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Since 1979, Iran has become familiar with a strict Islamic regime, which has restricted citizens, mainly women, in their freedom to express themselves and make their own choices. This has resulted in women having to cover most parts of their bodies and hair up and having to act 'modestly'. After the killing of Masha (Jina) Amini in 2022, who allegedly was not wearing a hijab properly, protests all over Iran started by people fighting for women's rights (Engelbrecht & Fassihi, 2022; Farda, 2022b; Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, 2021; Le Monde with AFP, 2022; Lu, 2022). Records show that by January 2023, more than 500 civilians were already killed because of being present at the protests. Other sources suggest that this number even rises above five thousand. Additionally, more than 20 thousand protesters have been arrested (Afp, 2023; Iran International, 2023; The Associated Press, 2023). This has drawn international attention to Iran, especially from human rights organisations and on social media (Adèr, 2022; Farda, 2022a; Kangarlou, 2022).

This paper discusses the oppression of women in Iran and protests starting in September 2022 and attempts to investigate to what extent the international community has a duty to perform humanitarian action in Iran through theories of complicity. First, the paper provides the context of the situation by explaining how people, particularly women in Iran, are restricted in their freedom by the morality police and how this can be connected to feminine honour norms. Secondly, to allow the reader to understand the context of the events, the historical background of Iranian political affairs between 1920 and now is elaborated, and the regime's reactions to the current protests are sketched out. After this, the theory behind the Responsibility to Protect is explained, including its four parameters, to fully comprehend how interventions could look like. Then, theories on complicity of David Miller, Karl Jaspers, Primo Levi and Sandra Lee Bartky will be used to answer the research question: *Does the*

international community have the duty to intervene to attempt to end the women's rights violations and harsh reactions targeted at current protesters by the Iranian government, according to theories of responsibility and complicity? Lastly, the implications of this complicity will be sketched out, including those for states and individuals.

1. Disclaimer and Positionality

I, the author of this paper, identify as a white, cis-gender woman from the Netherlands. Despite my efforts to educate myself as well as possible on Iran's politics and stay as objective as possible, the absence of my positionality influencing outcomes within this research cannot be ensured.

Furthermore, considering the nature in which the topic of women's marches in Iran rapidly changes, possibly influencing the outcome of this research, no changes within this situation after January 1st 2023, the start date of this research, will be taken into account.

This paper includes mentions of sexual and physical assault. If the reader experiences high levels of stress while reading about these topics, it is advised that they stop reading and, if necessary, seek professional help.

2. Morality Police and Feminine Honour Norms

In order to understand why the protests in Iran concerning women's rights have started, it is important to understand the restrictions put on women by the regime in Iran. People living in or visiting Iran have to obey strict rules concerning how they dress and behave to prevent them from receiving fines or having to serve time imprisoned, which mostly restricts women in their freedom. These rules include the dress code to wear loose clothing covering the arms and legs, wearing a headscarf in public places and on public roads, and committing no sinful acts, including flirtatious behaviour and eye contact (Iran

Human Rights Documentation Center, 2021). To enforce these rules, Iran has used the so-called 'morality police', monitoring women's behaviour and way of dressing based on their own parameters (Engelbrecht & Fassihi, 2022; Farda, 2022b; Le Monde with AFP, 2022; Lu, 2022). In interviews with Iranian women, it is often noted that the morality police started harassing them early in life, trespassing on private gatherings and personal boundaries, taking them away from their families, and hurting, threatening and killing them. Enforcement of these strict rules concerning women's behaviour and dress codes can oppress citizens, especially when applied without consideration for religious diversity (Adèr, 2022; Engelbrecht & Fassihi, 2022; Iqbal & Safi, 2022; Rhodes et al., 2020). These rules can also be connected to feminine honour norms. Feminine honour norms are normative rules in society, written or unwritten, expecting women to be 'pure' before marriage and dress and behave modestly. The link between these honour norms and the rules in Iran can be made by considering the way in which women are restricted in their behaviour to not make themselves attractive to other people by showing their hair and skin and by their behaviour. Another way in which feminine honour norms can be recognised in Iran is by how the law protects men committing honour killings, which occur 375 to 450 times per year in Iran but fails to protect women in cases of domestic violence, arranged marriage and sexual assault (Iran's War on Women, 2022; Sinaee, 2022).

3. Research Question and Relevance

Human rights organisation Amnesty International stresses the responsibility of the UN Security Council to inform the Iranian authorities that their crimes against humanity will not go unpunished and to launch an independent investigation towards these crimes (Amnesty International, 2022). In addition, pressure on governments in the Global North has intensified, intending to get them to show more action against the regime (Bavandpour, 2022;

Geranmayeh, 2022; NU.nl, 2023a, 2023b). However, other sources claim that pro-human rights organisations from Western agendas can be characterised as 'white saviour' groups. This is because of their lack of consideration of other cultures' fundamental norms, especially if this culture's norms originate from a religion that is not dominant in the Western country (Dube, 2021; Zarni, 2021). The term “white saviourism complex” can be defined as a paternalistic need to perform heroic acts towards suffering individuals, often in trade for self-interest or self-fulfilment of countries from the Global North (Hughey, 2014; Malkki, 2015). This argument can be connected to countries in the Global South still suffering from the devastating effects of Western countries pushing their political agenda, especially in cases of colonialism. Moreover, from the historical background, Western influences in Iran's political situation can be identified, as well as the turbulence and protests they caused at the time (Afary, 2023; Iran's War on Women, n.d.; The Iranian Revolution of February 1979, n.d.; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). This creates a debate on to what extent other states are complicit in the current critical situation in Iran and to what extent these countries should intervene in human rights violations without undermining other cultures' norms and religions. Therefore, this paper will attempt to answer the following research question:

Does the international community have the duty to intervene to attempt to end the women's rights violations and harsh reactions targeted at current protesters by the Iranian government, according to theories of responsibility and complicity?

Here, I use the definition of humanitarian interventions explained by Holzgrefe (2003), which includes the use of force by states or a group of states in the targeted country. To this, I add interventions without the use of threat or force, as per the UN's doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P). The former regards military action, where states can either use the Security Council's power by pleading Iran's case to the Council or apply their own

measures without working together with the Security Council. However, enforcing military action without the approval of the Security Council would be considered illegal but could be considered necessary if the Security Council fails to consider the situation in Iran problematic enough (ICISS, 1998). The latter includes, for example, travel restrictions or the threat of using economic, diplomatic or other sanctions. In the particular case of Iran, where international connections are mostly through oil trade, these sanctions are expected to be mostly connected to oil trade and diplomatic pressure.

The actors included in the aforementioned international community are all states, independent of their physical or relational distance from Iran, through the power of the Security Council. Included in the definition are also all individuals within these states.

Important to note here is that human rights interventions aim to prevent or end widespread and grave violations of the fundamental human rights of individuals, which means that claiming that interventions should be enforced assumes that violations of fundamental human rights are happening (Holzgreffe, 2003).

4. Historical Background

In order to be able to grasp the political situation in Iran and investigate the role of other states in this, the country's rich history and international influences should be taken into account. Considering the scope of this paper, this will be limited to the period starting in the early 1920s, when Reza Khan Mirpanj, the father of Mohammad-Reza Shah, got access to the throne after the military coup d'état, and until the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The historical background will focus on different topics, including socialist and communist influences, economic tensions, the war between modern and nationalistic groups and the Green Revolutions and reactions to this.

4.1. Socialist and Communist Influences

Reza Khan Mirpanj can be characterised as a leader with major Western influences, which can firstly be recognised in the encouragement of British diplomacy in the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty, and secondly in his motivation to modernise Iran's army, education, judiciary, women's rights, industry and health care. Reza Khan Mirpanj left the throne for his son Mohammad-Reza Shah in 1941, who also showed major interest in the Western agenda, particularly in that of the British Crown (Bayandor, 2018; Sheikh & Fadaizadeh, 2013).

Additionally, from 1941, Iran became subject to communist influences, starting with the Anglo-Russian invasion in 1941, when the British attempted to secure the oil supply from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian for the Second World War. This year also, the Tudeh Party was formed, a communist party whose translation is 'Party For the Masses' and who influenced Iranian politics by going against the secularisation measures of the Shah. As a reaction, the radical religious group Fada'ian-e Eslam was born, a group led by Navvab-Safavi as an attempt to de-modernise and 'Islamise' the country (Bayandor, 2018; Behdad, 1997).

4.2. Economic Tensions

In 1945 the political situation in Iran intensified with the Azerbaijan Crisis, which was sparked by Soviet forces refusing to withdraw their troops from Iran in an attempt to secure their economic zone in Iran and spread their influence. Following a warning from the US Secretary of State James Byrnes to Stalin to withdraw, and an oil concession was signed by Iranian prime minister Ahmad Qavam, Stalin finally accepted to withdraw the Soviet troops from Iran. Qavam then formed a coalition of left forces under Soviet influence (Bayandor, 2018; Hasanli, 2006).

In 1947 a war between two Iranian factions was sparked, with one faction fighting for national interest connected to ties with the West and the other fighting for national rights and attempting to break the British oil concession. After the assassination of prime minister General Haj. Ali Razmara, Mohammad Mossadeq became Iran's prime minister. He enacted the Nationalisation Law, which caused a chain of reactions from the British to block Iranian international trade. The most impactful one was removing Iranian oil from the international market by obtaining their oil elsewhere in the region. As a reaction, Iran's prime minister went to the United Nations (UN) Security Council and International Court of Justice to plead for the country's rights, originating from his fear of Iran landing in communist hands and the Soviet Union getting too powerful. This led to a proposal between Washington and Britain, in which the idea of removing the oil logjam was to put Iranian oil on the international market again. In fear of the costs to Iran for accepting this particular proposal, Mossadeq turned down this proposal, resulting in Western motivation to unseat him (Bayandor, 2018; Foreign Relations of the United States & Everett Gleason, 1953).

4.3. Modern versus Nationalist Values

As a result of the attempted overthrow of Mossadeq, tensions between the Shah and the nationalist fraction grew, with rallies by the Tudeh and pro-Mossadeq parties occurring more often, leaving the monarchy in danger and the Shah under pressure for structural reform. When the Shah proposed the White Revolution as an attempt to extend the land reform by adding gender, literacy and income, his popularity shrunk even more. The public vote and Ulama voted negatively on this proposal, leading to a referendum boycott. Simultaneously with Shah's decline in popularity, Ruhollah Khomeini and his ideas to restrict women's rights and let Iran be an Islamic nation got more admired. Despite attempts of the Shah to silence these critical voices by putting supporters of Khomeini on trial and allowing

live ammunition in protests, the outcome of the war between pro-modernisation and pro-religion surrounding the White Revolution was that of Khomeini securing a place on the throne in 1979. Starting with Khomeini leading the monarchy and with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the head of the state since 1989, Iran has continued to become an Islamic republic, with religious norms leading the decision-making and law forming in the government until now (Bayandor, 2018; Behdad, 1997; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023; *The Iranian Revolution of February 1979*, n.d.).

4.4. The Green Revolution

In 2009 protests surrounding the presidential election between nationalist Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, liberal Mir-Hossein Mousavi Khameneh and reformist Mehdi Karroubi began. After right-wing and holocaust-denying Ahmadinejad won the elections, which many suspected was an effect of fraud, the country's economy was subject to 25% inflation, the closing of non-governmental organisations and the halt of a part of government subsidies. This was when citizens went to the streets, demanding their voices to be heard and the country's economy to be restored (Alterman, 2022; Maiwandi, 2013). One of these protesters was Neda Agha-Soltan, who was shot by the authorities when she got into a car at one of the protests (Elson et al., 2012; Naghibi, 2016). Another citizen filmed this footage, causing it to quickly get much attention on social media (Alterman, 2022). This is why the Green Revolution is also frequently called the 'Twitter Revolution' (Elson et al., 2012; Maiwandi, 2013).

4.5. Reactions of the Regime

In the aftermath of 2009's Green Revolution and the more current protests, the regime in Iran has begun implementing laws to make it easier for authorities to monitor online activity and more difficult for Iranians to access international platforms. After the protests of

2009 and their noticeable social media attention, this has been done by implementing a Computer Crimes Law and banning encryption. In 2019, internet access was restricted even further by the government implementing the User Protection Bill and blocking the usage of Virtual Private Networks (Alterman, 2022; Isfahani, 2022). Concerning the current protests, the government has imposed near-total internet shutdowns in which only national services were available. Sources state that the government has threatened to shut down mobile data services and track protesters through their mobile phones. Additionally, sources claim that the government has created fake social media accounts and posts under the Mahsa Amini hashtag to spread misinformation and create negative narratives about the protests (Adèr, 2022; Alterman, 2022; Isfahani, 2022).

To conclude, the historical analysis of Iranian politics between 1920 and January 2023, the country is familiar with impactful international influences, mainly that of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. These influences have made the country's ruling alternate from a socialist character during the Pahlavi Dynasty to a more nationalistic, religious and conservative character from the nationalistic front of Mohammad Mossadeq and Ruhollah Khomeini. The main force behind these outside sources can be identified as interest in Iranian oil, particularly in the Second World War. Since 1979, Iran has continued to increase the importance of Islam in the state's decision-making, which has resulted in protests surrounding women's rights and restrictions regarding citizens' freedom to communicate and express themselves.

5. The Responsibility To Protect

As elaborated on in the introduction, the behaviour and freedom of women in Iran are restricted by the strict religious laws, which include how they should dress, what they can say and how they should act modestly. These laws are closely connected to feminine honour

norms, expecting women to be pure, and often resulting in the killings of women who do not behave in compliance with these norms. Surrounding these strict laws and the killing of a young Iranian woman on the basis of these rules, there have been protests in Iran to which the government has reacted by arresting, torturing and killing protesters and restricting their freedom via technological means. This has resolved in a global debate if other states should intervene following the R2P.

The United Nations (UN) Office on Genocide Prevention offers guidelines on countries' R2P in case of human rights violations. They note: 'The international community has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means [...] to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.' (United Nations, n.d.-b). This responsibility is to be exercised by the Security Council of the UN. From this quote, it becomes clear that four parameters are offered for the international community in which cases interventions are suitable. These actions to uphold human rights in countries rest upon three pillars of equal importance: 'the responsibility of each State to protect its populations; the responsibility of the international community to assist States in protecting their populations; and the responsibility of the international community to protect when a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations' (United Nations & Šimonović, 2016). This raises the question of which of the parameters could apply to the current case in Iran and if this could mean that the international community should apply the third pillar and intervene in Iran. Therefore, the next four paragraphs will discuss if and how the different parameters could apply. I will briefly outline the four crimes but focus on crimes against humanity as this crime applies most to the current case of Iran. After this, I will expand on the role of the Security Council in the R2P.

5.1. Genocide

The word "genocide" was first introduced by Raphaël Lemkin in 1944, and its translation from Latin leads to the definition "the killing of a race or tribe". First, this term was mostly connected to the Holocaust during the Second World War. However, the definition was later expanded to all types of killings of certain groups of people (United Nations, n.d.-c). Currently, the definition by the UN is: '[...] any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.' (United Nations, 1948).

In the case of the current protests in Iran and the restrictions and punishment towards women's behaviour, the government of Iran does not seem to intend to kill all of the Iranian women or prevent them from reproducing, nor does it appear to focus on a specific national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Therefore, the crime of genocide explained by the United Nations (n.d.-c) does not seem to apply here.

5.2. War Crimes

War crimes are behaviours done by warring parties in case of armed conflict. The lists of war crimes can be found in international humanitarian law, as well as in international law treaties and international customary law. They include crimes concerning taking hostages and attacks directed towards civilian populations (United Nations, n.d.-d).

The definitions of war crimes all include the prerequisite that the party should be at war. The Iranian government cannot be identified as a warring party. Therefore, war crimes do not apply to the current case of Iran elaborated on above.

5.3. Ethnic Cleansing

The term ‘Ethnic Cleansing’ is considerably harder to define than the former two parameters, considering that it has not been recognised as an official independent crime under international law. However, in an interim report, a UN’s Commission of Experts have defined ethnic cleansing as using force or intimidation to remove persons from an ethnically or religiously homogeneous group from a certain geographic area. It is also noted that there may be an overlap between ethnic cleansing and genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (United Nations, n.d.-e). Following the fact that the Iranian government does not seem to use intimidation or force to remove certain ethnically or religiously homogeneous groups from certain areas, ethnic cleansing does not appear to apply here.

5.4. Crimes Against Humanity

The UN uses the 1998 Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court to define crimes against humanity (CAH). This statute includes a long list of acts which count as these crimes as long as they contain the three following elements: a physical element, a contextual element, and a mental element. Therefore, CAH could be defined as: ‘widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack’ (Sc & Kalyk, 2018; United Nations, n.d.-f). Furthermore, the statute notes that it is not necessary that these crimes happen in times of war, as in the case of war crimes, and the acts do not have to target a specific group or have a specific intent, as in the case of genocide (United Nations, n.d.-f).

To be able to conclude that the Iranian government is guilty of CAH in current affairs, it should be investigated that all three parameters of CAH are happening.

The first parameter of CAH is a physical element, for example, murder, enslavement, and torture. As has been noted by experiences from Iranian citizens in interviews, as well as captured in numbers from national and international sources, the morality police have physically hurt women not obeying the strict rules concerning their behaviour and clothing. In more extreme examples, women have been tortured and killed by the morality police as a direct result of these rules (Adèr, 2022; Engelbrecht & Fassihi, 2022; Iqbal & Safi, 2022; Rhodes et al., 2020). Concerning the more recent protests, protesters have been arrested, tortured and killed because of their presence in the protests (Afp, 2023; Iran International, 2023; The Associated Press, 2023). Therefore, the first element of a physical element applies to the current events in Iran and the oppression of Iranian women and protesters.

The second parameter of CAH is a contextual element, meaning that they should be part of a systematic attack towards any civilian population. The current oppressions in Iran can be regarded as being systematic due to the strict norms causing the oppression of Iranian women to be a part of the legal system of Iran (Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, 2021). Furthermore, the repression of social media usage and the persecuting of civilians present at the protests through technological means, like the prohibition of VPNs, implementation of the User Protection Bill and internet shutdowns, are also included in the law, so part of the system of the country (Alterman, 2022; Isfahani, 2022). Due to the oppression of Iranian women and protesters being part of Iran's legal system, the oppressions can be considered systematic, which means that the second parameter applies.

The third parameter of CAH is a mental element, meaning that the government should have knowledge of the attack(s). To return to the legal aspect of the oppressions in the former

paragraph, the Iranian government has been implementing strict, oppressive laws and has used the morality police to enforce these laws. The oppressions have been happening for over fifty years and have had much media coverage. Therefore, knowledge of the Iranian government on the current oppressions and human rights violations can be established, and the third parameter applies.

Because the Iranian government has been launching physical attacks on protesters and women who do not obey the country's laws through the morality police and other law enforcement over the past fifty years and seems to be aware of this, the current events in Iran can be considered to be in line with all of the UN's criteria of crimes against humanity. This raises the question of why there has been no action from the Security Council yet, and how countries could use the Security Council to take action.

5.5. The Security Council

So what is the role of the Security Council in the R2P? As the UN notes, the R2P is to be exercised by the Security Council of the UN. In the report 'The Responsibility to Protect' the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001) states that the Security Council is the most appropriate party to be dealing with military intervention issues and cases which concern overriding state sovereignty, intending to save populations at risk. This means that formal authorisation of the Security Council should be sought before any military interventions take place, which can be done by pleading the case to the Council. The Council can also raise a matter on their own initiative and can only decide upon military measures if non-military actions prove "inadequate". When the Security Council gets familiar with a threat to international peace or human rights, they first attempt to solve these issues peacefully. The UN has also created international tribunals to prosecute those accused of human rights violations (ICISS, 2001; United Nations, n.d.-a).

The ICISS report also sketches out what parties should do in case the Security Council rejects a proposal for human rights interventions or are unable to fulfil their role, but human rights are significantly at stake. The first option would be to seek support from the General Assembly meeting in an Emergency Special Session. In case a majority of voters in this meeting would vote in favour of military action, there might be a possibility for the Security Council to reconsider their decision. The second option would be to seek action at a regional or sub-regional organisation within their defined borders, which proves to be possible and effective in neighbouring countries where the crimes occur. The last option would be to act without the approval of the Security Council, which was the case in the Kosovo intervention of NATO and the United States in 1999 when they implemented military action without the Security Council's approval (Global Europe Program, 2001; Nato, n.d.). However, as the ICISS states, it should be critically assessed if the lives of the human being saved weigh more than the harm of undermining the credibility and damaging the international order of the Security Council (ICISS, 1998).

6. Theories on Responsibility and Complicity

In an attempt to answer the research question: *Does the international community have the duty to intervene to attempt to end the women's rights violations and harsh reactions targeted at current protesters by the Iranian government, according to theories of responsibility and complicity?* the next paragraphs will argue that the international community is responsible for and complicit in the current events in Iran. This will be supported by arguments focusing on the historical background of the international relations of Iran and on the capacity of states in the international community to intervene. After this, it will be considered what the consequences of these states' complicity and responsibility are to individuals of these complicit states and what the overall implications of this complicity are.

The arguments will mostly be supported by theory in political philosopher David Miller's book *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (2007), which is widely used by scholars who write about questions surrounding global responsibility, and by theories of other authors, including Primo Levi and Sandra Lee Bartky.

6.1. The Complicity of States through History

I argue that through the historical context, states within the international community are partly responsible for the current political situation and human-right violations in Iran by their role in Iranian politics and are, therefore, complicit. First, I argue that through the influences of states in the historical background of Iran's politics, states are causally partly responsible and complicit in Iran's current human rights violations. After this, I explain the counterargument of the difference in time leading to the problem of establishing a causal relationship. I rebut this argument by explaining that no causal relationship is needed for complicity because only constitution is necessary.

6.1.1. Outcome Responsibility

Through the historical background, it becomes clear that states within the international community, and particularly Great Britain, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, have had major influences on Iranian politics. This can be identified by investigating the British influence on the election of prime ministers, the communist waves in Iran after the Soviet's interests in Iranian oil and the American influences on westernising Iran during the reign of the Shah, all expanded on in the historical background. Additionally, it can be stated that these waves of influences have had a polarising effect on Iran's politics by intensifying the tensions between communism, nationalism and socialism, which has finally resulted in a strict Islamic regime.

To support this argument, I use the theory of outcome responsibility explained by David Miller in his book *National Responsibility and Global Justice* (2007). In this book, Miller distinguishes two kinds of responsibility: outcome responsibility, and remedial responsibility, which I will elaborate on in the next section. Outcome responsibility involves the ways in which agents can be responsible for events following a partial causal relationship. He provides an example of a messy classroom as a result of children being alone and turning over the tables in the classroom. The causal relationship in this situation is between the children turning the tables upside down and the mess, which means that these children hold an outcome responsibility for the mess made. In contrast with causal responsibility, outcome responsibility requires genuine agency, which means that outcome responsibility requires a foreseeable connection between action and result. In the example of the classroom, this would mean that the children could have known that turning over the tables would make the classroom messy (Miller, 2007).

As explained by Miller (2007), nations can be responsible for the impact of their actions on outsiders. In the case of Iran, this theory leads to considering the current human rights violations a result of political imbalance partially caused by states within the international community. These states have intervened in the political affairs of Iran, resulting in political turbulence. Furthermore, this result of political turbulence, leading to a strict Islamic regime, was foreseeable. This means that the states in the international community hold an outcome responsibility for the current human rights interventions, following the prerequisites of Millers' outcome responsibility. Therefore, I argue that states within the international community, and particularly Britain, the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, are complicit in destabilising Iran's political situation, leading to the current human rights violations, following their outcome responsibility.

6.1.2. The Aspect of Time

As a counterargument, it can be argued that a causal relationship cannot be established because an accounting of the causes of the current situation in Iran is not possible. Following the theories of Catherine Lu (2017), this problem is mainly due to the time element of the influences of other states in Iran, meaning that there is a gap in time between these influences and the current human rights violations. These influences destabilising the country have only lasted until 1979 when the Islamic regime started governing. Following the theory of Lu, after 1979, Iran became its own state and therefore holds its own responsibility. Because of the time difference between past interactions and present injustices, and Iran's own power to improve the situation between 1979 and now, the influences of the international community are not a logical cause of the current human rights violations.

As a counterargument against this point, I argue that through their contributions, the complicity of states in the current events in Iran can be established without the need for a clear causal relationship. To support this, I use the theory on complicity of Primo Levi and attempt to expand it to fit the current situation in Iran. Levi is an influential thinker in the field of complicity, focusing on German responsibility and guilt in the time of the Second World War. Because of the thinker's focus on individuals, I will expand these theories to the complicity of groups and specifically states. After this, I will expand on how theories of decolonization can be applied to the case of Iran and the lasting impacts of other states.

6.1.3. Contribution without Constitution

Levi's (1986) theory on complicity entails that if individuals contribute to wrongdoing without constituting, they are complicit. Because of the focus of Levi on the individual as an autonomic actor, I will expand this theory by considering all states as different actors with their own decision-making mechanisms. To make Levi's theory and the distinction between

contribution and constitution more comprehensible, I will illustrate this theory with an example. Imagine there are five soldiers in a row, all pointing their weapons towards one person and shooting simultaneously. In this situation, it does not matter which bullet was the fatal one or even which bullets hit the person and which did not, for we would all intrinsically consider these five soldiers equally responsible for the target's death. To extend this example to the example of Iran, this means that even if there is no proof of the constitution of states in the international community to the current events in Iran, the contribution of these states in attempting to gain power and economic wealth in Iran by their influences on Iran's politics, knowing that it could lead to political turbulence, is enough to establish complicity. Therefore, I argue that no proof of a causal contribution is necessary, and the international community is complicit through its past role in Iranian politics.

6.1.4. Decolonization

Furthermore, even though the influences of other states in Iran are in the past, this does not mean that there are no effects of these influences visible today. Following decolonization theory, strong influences of states from the Global North often result in visible remains in all institutions and structures of the states in which the influences were expressed. Here, I want to note that I am not stating that Iran is a former colonized country, or that the influences on Iran have been of the same evil basis as colonization of other areas, which have involved slavery, and the systematic removal of original land owners. Instead, I argue that theories on decolonization offer strong rhetoric evidence that impact of states on other states for the purpose of political influence and monetary ends can have strong, long-lasting impacts on the structures and institutions within former colonized states.

As decolonization theories explain, influences from countries from the Global North on countries from the Global South has made the political and domestic structures within

these countries dependent on the colonizers. Even if the influences from these colonizing countries have disappeared, this does not mean that the colonized countries are free of all outside influences. Therefore, colonizing countries can still be complicit in recent wrongdoings of former colonized countries, even if the country has been labelled as independent (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

If we apply this argument to the case of human rights violations in Iran, we can argue that it is possible that states in the international community still have influence on the structures and institutions in Iran, even though their strong influences have only lasted until 1979. Therefore, Lee's argument based on the time difference between state's former influences and the current human rights violations does not stand.

6.2. The Complicity of States through Capacity

The complicity of states within the international community can not only be established through the historical background of Iran but also through the capacity of these states. States in the international community have the capacity to intervene in the current events in Iran, for example, by putting sanctions in place or pleading the case to the Security Council. I argue that through the capacity of states, they are complicit in the current human rights violations in Iran. To support this argument, I will present the theory on the remedial responsibility of David Miller.

Remedial responsibility is the kind of responsibility that arises when there is a state of affairs in need of remedy (Miller, 2007). To return to the classroom example, this would be the messy classroom with the overturned tables. Remedial responsibility belongs to the person responsible for acting to improve the state of affairs, in this case, the teacher who comes back to the classroom. What determines that the teacher has this responsibility is the job of the teacher, which comes with a certain set of tasks, including tidying up the

classroom. In the case of global crises, this responsibility needs to be clarified to be identified due to the absence of straightforward tasks of all states. Therefore Miller proposes six ways in which remedial responsibilities can be identified: moral responsibility, outcome responsibility, causal responsibility, benefit, capacity and community. For the sake of my argument, I will use the fifth way: capacity, which entails that actors who have the capacity to supply the remedy should do so. In the case of multiple identifying actors, responsibility can be assigned to the most capable actor, or the responsibility can be divided according to each actor's abilities, depending on effectiveness and cost. Furthermore, Miller explains that if we look at remedial responsibility from the global context, we, as individuals and as members of collective bodies, are responsible for responding to global injustices (Miller, 2007). If we apply this theory to the case of Iran, this means that all other states that have the capacity to offer a remedy to the human rights violations in Iran have the responsibility to do so. Practically, this would mean that these states should express their power by pleading a case to the Security Council or applying their own sanctions based on the estimated efficiency and costs.

6.3. The Complicity of Individuals

Until now, this paper has used states in the international community as actors. However, after establishing the complicity of states in the current human rights violations in Iran, the question of the complicity and responsibility of individuals arises. Is political pressure enough, or do all citizens within these states also have a duty to intervene due to their possible complicity? In this section, I argue that individuals are complicit in the current events in Iran, which leads to a positive responsibility to act. First, I will use Jaspers' theory of political guilt to prove that individuals within states are complicit through the actions of the state they live in and through their metaphysical guilt. After this, I argue that even if

individuals do not know about these violations, they can be considered complicit through their lack of knowledge.

6.3.1. Political Guilt

I argue that individuals are complicit in Iran's current human rights violations, following their citizenship of a state where complicity has been established. This connects well with political guilt, explained by Karl Jaspers. In his book *The Question of German Guilt* (2001), Jaspers distinguishes between four types of guilt: criminal, political, moral and metaphysical, where metaphysical guilt is labelled as the most important. Political guilt results from belonging to a state because, as Jaspers argues, everyone is responsible for how the nation they live in is governed. Suppose we use the theory of political guilt in the case of Iran. In that case, this means that if states in the international community are complicit in the current human rights violations in Iran, the members of these states are too.

6.3.2. Metaphysical Guilt

Apart from being complicit through one's citizenship, I argue that individuals are also complicit through their belonging to humankind. Returning to Jaspers' four types of guilt, the fourth type, metaphysical guilt, entails that all individuals hold a co-responsibility in global injustices through the solidarity among all human beings. This means that whatever individuals fail to do to prevent injustices makes them guilty of these injustices, especially when they happen in their presence or with their knowledge (Jaspers, 2001). This can be connected to the capacity theory of Miller (2007), which entails that when there is the capacity to change something in order to solve a crisis, there is a responsibility to do so. Extending this example to the case of Iran means that all individuals who know about the injustices and fail to do anything as an attempt to offer a remedy are complicit through their metaphysical guilt.

As has become clear from the theory of Jaspers, he does not consider individuals unaware of injustices complicit for these injustices. However, I argue that through their culpable ignorance, individuals still are complicit when they fail to know about the human rights violations in Iran. For this argument, I will use the theories of Sandra Lee Bartky.

6.3.3. The Culpable Ignorant

As explained by Sandra Lee Bartky (2002), the culpable ignorant are those who fail to know what they ought to know because of their position and access to information. An example of this can be people with privilege not noticing the actions of racism within their educational institution. In the case of Iran, many individuals have been exposed to the news on human rights violations in Iran, as well as social media posts and protests. Suppose they still do not know about these human rights violations but have had access to these communication channels by their access to newspapers, television, social media, protests or word of mouth. In that case, they are culpably ignorant and, therefore, complicit by not informing themselves.

To conclude, individuals are complicit through their political and metaphysical guilt, even if they are not informed about the current human rights violations in Iran.

7. Implications

Now that we have established that states within the international community and individuals within these states are complicit in the human rights violations in Iran, following to them being responsible for taking action, the next step is to investigate what this responsibility looks like and what the implications of this responsibility are.

7.1. Implications for States

According to utilitarianism, explained by Peter Singer (1972), we should strive for the greater good and the least amount of suffering for the ones that suffer most in every decision. People in Iran are being harassed, prosecuted and killed because of their attempts towards freedom, and people are actively being harmed by the strict regime. Other states could intervene in these human rights violations by using the power of the Security Council or by implementing measures themselves. This would result in the trade-off between intervening states giving up money or political influence and neutrality and the other possible negative outcomes of intervening and the potential freedom of thousands of protesters and all women in Iran. The other possible drawbacks of intervening are more political turbulence through Western influences, more dependence of the country, and violation of Iranian sovereignty. These drawbacks can be minimised when implementations are issued by one central, politically neutral and informed party. Through the theory of utilitarianism, it can be concluded that intervening would be the best option for states concerning the current situation in Iran. It is recommended that states use their political influence to plead the case of Iran to the Security Council and explain how this case falls under the R2P. In this way, one decision-making mechanism, the Security Council, will decide what interventions should take place and which parties should act on them. In addition, states should strive to maintain cultural and religious diversity by keeping in mind that their norms are not universal, and no religion or way of living should be enforced on citizens who do not want this.

7.2. Implications for Individuals

Surrounding the implications for complicit individuals, I suggest a future-looking view on complicity, which involves self-transformation, critical thinking, and an

intersectional and contextual view. To provide a thorough understanding of this, I will elaborate on each of these aspects.

The first aspect of this implication is future-looking, with which I mean that the implications should not focus on what individuals have done, which might have made them complicit in the human rights violations. Instead, implications should focus on what individuals can do to improve the situation for the protesters, women and all others suffering from the strict regime in Iran. As explained in philosopher Anita Superson's (1993) article focusing on the blame and transformation surrounding complicity, the implications should not be focused on blame but on transformation, which connects with the next aspect, self-transformation. To connect this aspect back to the case of Iran, individuals should not focus on blaming themselves or each other for their complicity but instead, assess what influence they can have on the state of affairs.

The aspect of self-transformation is well explained by Marilyn Frye (1985, p.216): '[...] assuming responsibility and wanting others to assume responsibility for the profound reconstruction of our Selves and (inseparably from that) for changing the historical determinants which shape the possible'. With this sentence, Frye means that we should all assume responsibility for our own complicity by reconstructing ourselves and aiming for structural change, for self-transformation that fits within old structures is not possible. Following this aspect, individuals should attempt to transform whatever it is that makes them complicit through their positive responsibility. Practically, this could, for example, mean challenging their biases surrounding their own privilege leading to feeling more deserving of human rights or informing themselves of the issues going on in other countries.

The third aspect I call critical thinking is connected to Hannah Arendt's (1984) understanding of thinking, to which I add a thirst for knowledge. Arendt's understanding of

thinking surrounds the quest for meaning and a collective effort of thinking towards freedom. A strong opposite of an individual showing the ability to think would be the blind rule follower, which is someone who listens to orders without critically thinking about the set of rules and motives behind these orders (Arendt, 1984). This definition should not be confused with a thirst for knowledge, although I believe this is also an important aspect of critical thinking. A thirst for knowledge could be described as looking for new definitions, as well as informing oneself about important subjects, like global injustices. The reason that I include the aspect of critical thinking is an attempt to combat culpable ignorance, which has been elaborated on above. Practically, this leads to the implication of individuals informing themselves about the political and humanitarian issues in Iran and attempting to understand why these issues are occurring and how their positionality might influence their attitudes and actions.

The last aspect, "an intersectional and contextual view," mostly includes the aspects of connecting the implications with the structures in which they happen while considering the intersection of different patterns of injustice which Iranian citizens have to face. I argue that no implementation of measures should be undertaken without consideration of the historical background of Iran, which involves many international forces destabilising the country, and the role of religion, race and gender in the current events. As explained in the introduction, white saviourism involves the need of individuals in the Global North to 'save' people in the Global South, arising from the normalisation of Western norms and the undermining of cultural and religious diversity. Furthermore, citizens in Iran do not only face oppression based on their gender, but also on their race and religion. Therefore, individuals striving to take action to improve the human rights of citizens in Iran must take into account the context in which these events are happening and take an intersectional approach while attempting to avoid white saviourism.

To summarise, individuals should attempt to self-transform and face action as an attempt to overcome their complicity while keeping a future-looking aim, thinking critically and taking into account the context and intersectionality of the current events in Iran.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, as an answer to the research question: *Does the international community have the duty to intervene to attempt to end the women's rights violations and harsh reactions targeted at current protesters by the Iranian government, according to theories of responsibility and complicity?*, in this paper I argue that states within the international community are complicit in the human rights violations in Iran, and therefore have a duty to intervene as an attempt to improve the situation. This complicity is an effect of the historical background of these states and their capacity to intervene. Additionally, individuals within these states are complicit through their political and metaphysical responsibility. Implications of this complicity for states are that they should plead the case to the Security Council of the UN. Implications for individuals within these states are that they should attempt to self-transform while thinking critically and taking into account the context and intersectionality surrounding the case.

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