



Iran

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Parents of Iranian woman killed during protests 'harassed by security forces'

Forces reportedly told parents of Ghazaleh Chalabi, who died after being shot, they would withhold her body 'if they made a noise'

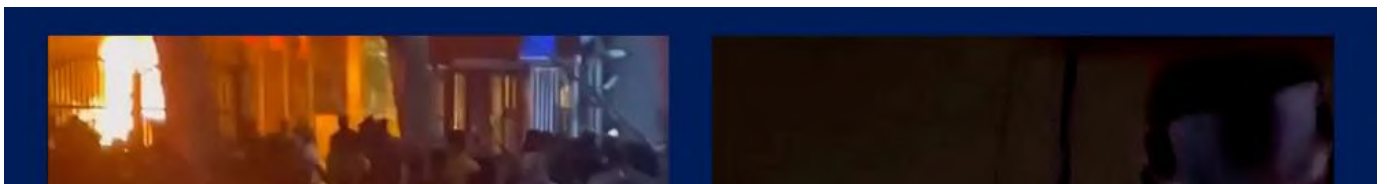
Maryam Foumani and Patrick Wintour

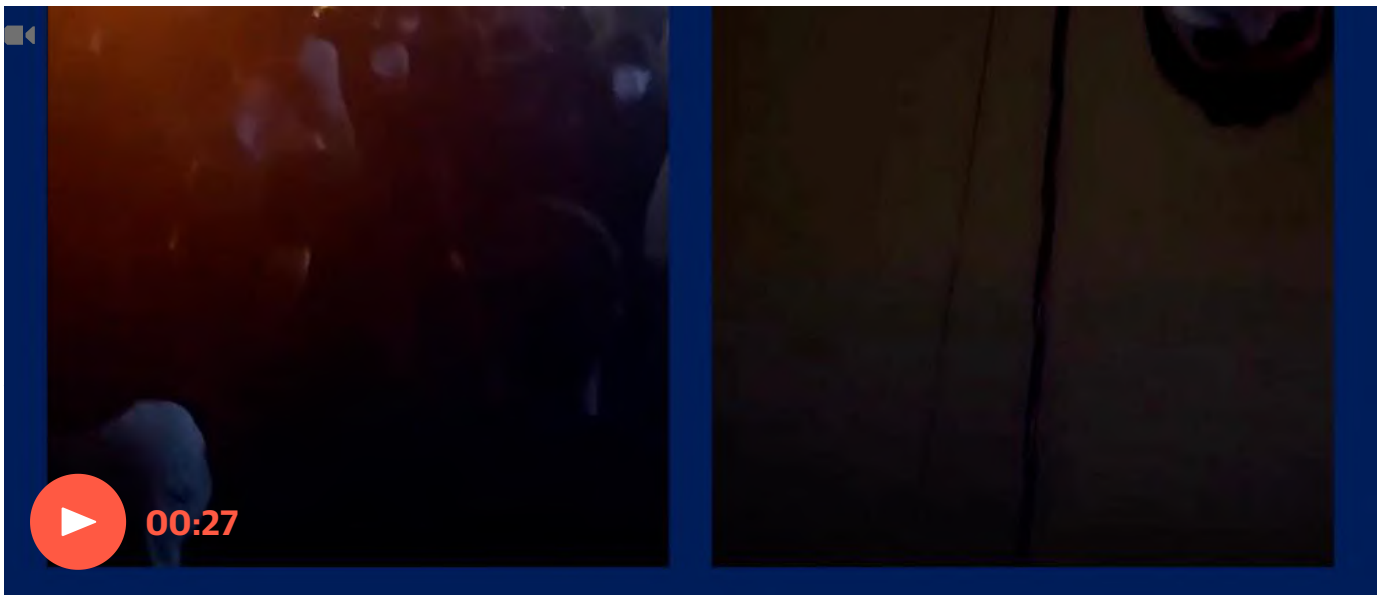
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The parents of an Iranian woman who died six days after being shot while filming protests in her home town have been subjected to a sustained harassment campaign by security forces, a relative and a friend of the family have told the Guardian.

Ghazaleh Chalabi, 33, was shot in the head in Amol on 21 September. A commemoration to mark the 40th day since her death - the end of the traditional mourning period in Islam - will be held on Thursday.

Her death was particularly shocking because footage of the protests that she was making on her phone at the time she was shot was conserved and uploaded on social media. Her last words were: "Do not be afraid, do not be afraid."





because it would make her seem a martyr, she said.

A close family friend said: “There were a lot of plainclothes officers at her burial, and they were filming people to scare them. So far, the intelligence service has summoned her family members and threatened them over the phone.”

The threats are typical of the intimidation tactics used by the security services to try to suppress the protests that have gripped the country for weeks since [the death in police custody on 16 September of Mahsa Amini](#).

The protests have posed one of the boldest challenges to Iran’s clerical leaders in decades, gaining increasing traction and frustrating authorities, who have unleashed a fierce crackdown.

In the latest example of police brutality, a video appeared late on Tuesday showing officers savagely beating a protester, purportedly in a district of Tehran. In the footage a squad of about a dozen policemen kick and beat a man with their batons, as other officers on motorbikes look on.

The man initially tries to cover his head with his hands, before the sound of a gunshot is heard and he is run over by a police motorbike. His motionless body is then abandoned.

Authorities announced an investigation into the incident on Wednesday as Amnesty decried what it called “a crisis of impunity” in the country.

On Wednesday, US vice-president, Kamala Harris, announced America’s intention to remove Iran from the UN commission on the status of women, saying: “Given Iran’s brutal crackdown on women and girls protesting peacefully for their rights, Iran is unfit to serve on this commission. To the protesters: we see you and we hear you.”

Speaking at an informal session of the UN security council, the Iranian actor and human rights campaigner Nazanin Boniadi denounced as a “myth” the idea that the hijab was a part of Iran’s culture.

“When “schoolgirls are defying a lifetime of indoctrination and [protesters] risk death at the hands of the authorities, you can safely assume that’s not part of their culture,” she said.

Chalabi’s aunt said her niece had not been a regular participant in rallies and protests before Amini’s death, “but after ... she could not be silent”.

The family friend said: “During the last week of her life, she kept sending photos from the protests on the streets to her friends and family. She was sending pictures of herself while no longer wearing a headscarf.

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“In the last days of her life, she was talking to people everywhere on the street about these protests. She encouraged everyone not to be silent. She had become fearless, more than ever in her life. There was something in her eyes as if she wanted to show and reproduce her courage.”

On the night of her death, her aunt said, there was a fire in front of the governor’s building.

“Only a few minutes had passed since the fire began when the first aerial shots were fired. Then they [the security forces] started to shoot directly at people,” the aunt said.

“Some witnesses told us that she was shot from the roof of the governor’s building. A bullet hit Ghazaleh’s forehead, and she immediately fell to the ground.

“According to a trusted doctor, three or four more people were shot in Amol and died immediately that night. The same night, 300 to 350 people were arrested. Many people witnessed the moment when Ghazaleh was shot.”

Some protesters have called on western governments to apply sanctions to the chiefs of police in provincial towns where verifiable killings have occurred. The value of

sanctions such as asset freezes and travel bans is disputed, since many Iranian security officials have no assets abroad and no intention of travelling to the west.

Chalabi, who had a bachelor's degree in banking, was close to her 34th birthday when she died. In her spare time, she loved mountaineering, or searching out new novels.

Her aunt said she loved friends and had a passion for life. As well as her brother, she leaves behind her mother, who works for a charity association for cancer patients, and her father, a municipal employee.

In preparation for Thursday's 40-day commemoration, Chalabi's brother wrote of his "beautiful sister", saying: "Even after 40 years have passed I won't be able to believe that you've gone."

● This article was amended on 2 November 2022 to remove an image that was incorrectly captioned as showing Ghazaleh Chalabi.

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