



Behrouz Hosseinpour, an Imam at Resalat Islamic Center in Helsinki

## Iranian Dissident In Finland Targeted By Pro-Regime Imam

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Author: Nasser Tahmasbi

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Calls to shut down an Iran-linked mosque are growing among Iranians in Finland after the Islamic center admitted that one of its imams snatched a protester's cellphone.

Parvin Shokri, an Iranian protest organizer based in Helsinki, was returning from an anti-regime demonstration on April 24, when her cellphone was seized by a stranger in the street. She was streaming live on Instagram, something the snatcher was not aware of. As the footage shows, he grabbed the phone, ran away for nearly a minute and while panting took a peek at the phone screen, making his face seen by Shokri's followers.

Upon seeing his face on the phone screen, the snatcher decided to bury the phone in a nearby lawn in eastern Helsinki, where Shokri would ultimately find it via geolocation, she told Iran International.

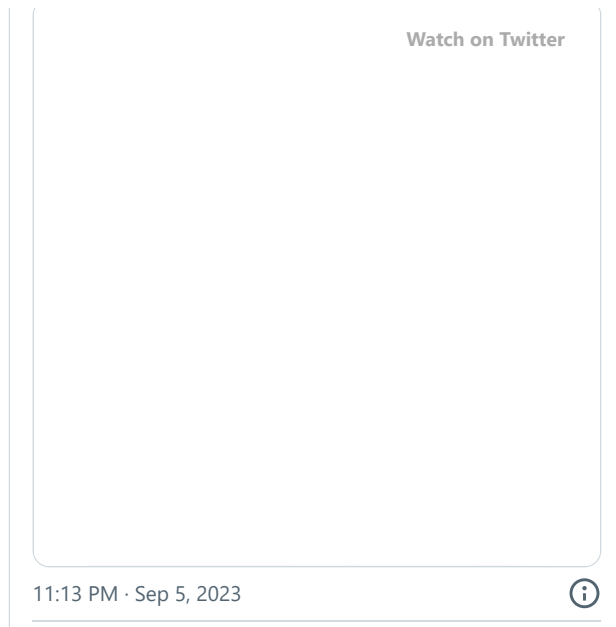
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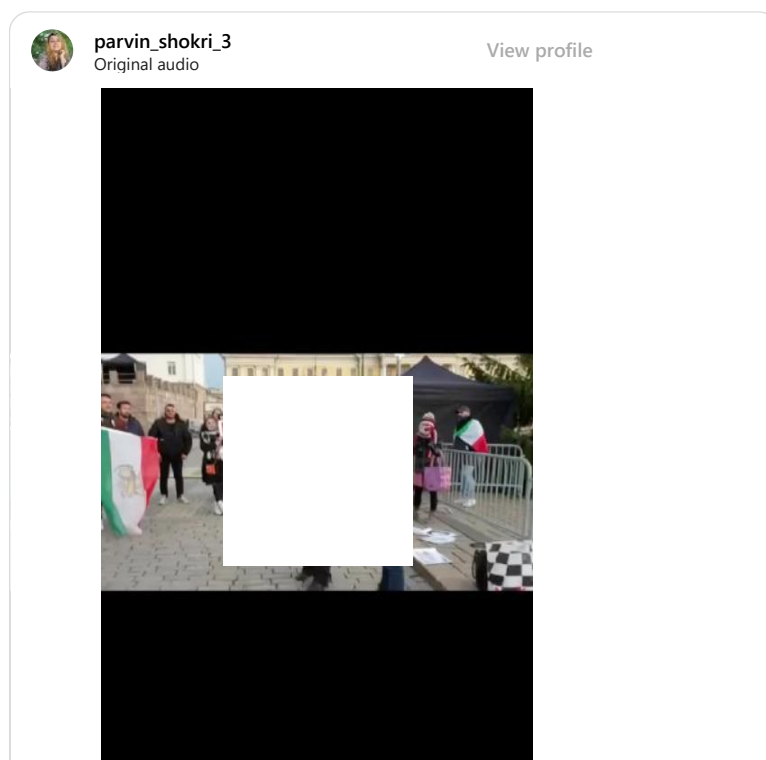
Stealing a phone that's streaming live has consequences especially if the snatcher looks at the camera. The Islamic center of #Helsinki had to admit that their imam snatched the phone of @ParvinShokri

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The protester, who has been an active organizer of anti-regime events in Finland, immediately reported the matter to the police, triggering an ongoing investigation. She also started spreading the word by talking to **Finnish** and **Persian** media, saying that the man, who appeared on her Instagram Live video, is actually Behrouz Hosseinpour, an imam connected to Resalat Islamic center in Helsinki.

Shokri said that she "did not even know" the man before the incident, and that she learned of his identity through other anti-regime activists after releasing the footage on social media.





Upon these revelations, Resalat Islamic Community released a statement on its Telegram channel on September 1, admitting that it was indeed Hosseinpour, a “guest speaker,” who grabbed Shokri’s phone. The regime-linked Islamic Community cited her “threats” against members of the mosque as well as attempts to record video of religious events “without permission” as reasons that prompted the imam to act.

After reviewing the recorded video, Shokri noticed that Hosseinpour and another man had been following her prior to the attack and she believes they must have tracked her by following her 11-year-old daughter, who was supposed to meet her at a flea market in eastern Helsinki following the protest.

**Behrouz Hosseinpour (left) and Abbas Bahmanpour, the main imam of the Resalat Islamic Center in Helsinki**

Shokri, who is originally from the southern Iranian city of Izeh, an epicenter of protests in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, told Iran International that

her daughter also recognized the snatcher as the man who had been following her to and from school for a while.

The Iranian diaspora in Finland has been calling for a shutdown of the center, arguing that similar to many other so-called Islamic centers such as the ones in [Frankfurt](#) or [London](#), it is funded by Iran's regime to track and bully Iranian dissidents.

### Resalat Islamic Center in Helsinki

Resalat Islamic Center said in its statement, published in both Finnish and Persian, that Hosseinpour "notified us later" of the incident, indirectly



right-wing activists, who frequently vandalize its premises and intimidate its members.

The statement also described Hosseinpour's phone grabbing as an attempt to delete videos and photos that the protester had shot to "destroy his character". Shokri said that her 42-minute live streaming, whose footage is still available on her phone, was merely about the flea market in Helsinki and had nothing to do with the mosque. She also said that this is not the first time she has been assaulted by people allegedly linked to the mosque.

The Islamic center claims that it is independent but has also shrugged off calls by Finno-Iranians to condemn violence perpetrated by Iran's regime against protesters and activists. According to [Helsingin Sanomat](#), Finland's largest subscription newspaper, Resalat founder Madjid Bahmanpour has "said in several interviews that the mosque received funding from ayatollahs in Iran and Iraq."

Bahmanpour, whose son, Abbas, is an imam at the Islamic center, is a former member of the Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States. Majid and Abbas Bahmanpour, who are quite well known among the Iranian diaspora in Finland, have been at the helm of the center since 2001 and managed to recruit some 1,500 members, who are mostly first-generation immigrants from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran.

### Majid Bahmanpour

While an investigation into the matter continues, the Islamic center is also busy holding events in and outside of the mosque, which occasionally draw ire from the Iranian community in the Helsinki area.

Ever since Mahsa Amini's death in custody of hijab police in Iran on September 16, 2022, Finnish Iranians have held several protests, some in front of the Resalat mosque, calling on the Finnish government to support the movement and shut down the Islamic center. Protests against Iran's regime in Finland have taken place not only in the capital, but also in much smaller cities, where the number of resident Finno-Iranians is not necessarily large.

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