

## [LIFE★ ★] THIS IRANIAN POP STAR HAS A POINT

(P1) After fleeing Iran as a child, the singer known as **Arghavan** is out to **unmuzzle** her **countrywomen**. So what if it's **risky**?

(P2) On May 10 in Stockholm, Sweden, Arghavan, 31, smiled as she posted a YouTube video on Facebook. In the four-minute clip, "Happy in Tehran," six young Iranian men and women—one of them a close friend of hers—**camped it up**, dancing on **rooftops** and **lip-synching** to **Pharrell Williams'** **megahit**. Arghavan, an **aspiring** Iranian pop star who'd left the country at age three, sent her friend an email and **captioned** her post "JUST LOVE IT!!"

(P3) Nine days later the dancers were **detained**. Why? Because in Iran women are **effectively not allowed** to sing or perform in public, one of the many freedoms **severely** limited after the **1979 revolution** (which **prompted** Arghavan's family to flee the country). Arghavan tried everything to reach her friend, but no luck. Says the singer, "I was up the whole night worrying."

(P4) The **shutdown** of the "Happy" dancers (who were **convicted** of producing a **vulgar** video and given **suspended sentences**) hit home for Arghavan. In 2010 she'd won a **coveted** spot on the TV show **Googoosh Music Academy**, a wildly popular American Idol-style competition filmed in London and accessible only illegally in Iran. (It's named for the country's biggest pop singer, who has **lived in exile** since 2000.) Each week that Arghavan advanced in the competition, she found herself **flooded with** emails from female fans. It wasn't just her **choreography** or costumes—"though they did like my hats," she jokes—it was that Arghavan was an Iranian girl **belting her heart out** in front of a massive crowd, an impossible feat for a woman actually living in Iran. "They wrote, 'I wish I could sing on a stage like you.' They were telling me their stories," she explains. "They were asking me for help."

(P5) Arghavan decided to use her **newfound** fame to **give voice to** her silenced sisters, who, like her, "can't breathe without music." Recently she headed back to Iran for the first time in 15 years, risking **imprisonment** to convince women artists to share their **plight** in a documentary; she also wrote a book *Zan* ("woman" in **Farsi**), published this summer in Swedish. "It wasn't easy to find women who **dared to** speak, but these girls are very brave," she says. Since then she's been lecturing constantly, including becoming an **ambassador** for the Swedish National Committee for U.N. Women and giving a TEDx talk this month, trying to **rally outrage** at women's **oppression** not just in Iran but around the world. "This kind of **activism** is very important," says **Shirin Ebadi**, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human rights lawyer in Iran. "All these performances, albums, books, and films get sent to Iran through YouTube, and everyone ends up seeing them. So effectively the government fails in its aims at  **censorship**." To Julia Wiklander, founder of the advocacy network Girls' Globe, "Arghavan is a true activist and one of the most passionate individuals I've met. She takes **substantial** risks to get the word out. She won't give up."

(P6) Arghavan welcomes the support. "We have to stand together and shout, 'No, you cannot stop us from singing,'" she says. "'We want change, and we have the guts to make it happen.'"

(P7) **HER WORDS TO LIVE BY:** I know how it feels to have big dreams and be told, 'You can't, you can't.' Don't wait for someone else to believe in you. You have to believe in yourself first."

**Words:** 583

**Source** <http://www.glamour.com/inspired/2014/10/iranian-pop-star-arghavan-fights-for-womens-rights>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

If you found the passage difficult to read or had problems understanding specific words or idiomatic expressions, please discuss them with your tutor. The following discussion questions should be answered in your own words and with your own arguments.

1. Briefly summarize the content of the article in your own words.
  2. Describe what happened to “Happy in Tehran”. Why were they given suspended sentences (P2&3)?
  3. What kinds of emails was Arghavan getting from Iranian women when she was on Googoosh Music Academy? Why would they write such messages (P4)?
  4. How is Arghavan giving voice to her silenced sisters (P5)?
  5. How is female musicians (and dancers) viewed in your culture? Has it ever has a history of oppression in the past?
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## WHO / WHAT / WHERE ARE THEY?

### Arghavan

(Person) a Persian Swedish popartist. She grew up in Sweden and has worked with music the past twelve years. She was one of the contestants in GOOGOOSH MUSIC ACADEMY in London.

### Pharrell Williams

(Person) also known simply as Pharrell, is an American singer-songwriter, rapper, record producer, musician, and fashion designer.

### 1979 revolution

(History) The Iranian Revolution refers to events involving the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was supported by the United States, and its eventual replacement with an Islamic republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, supported by various leftist and Islamic organizations and Iranian student movements.

### Googoosh (Music Academy)

(Person) Faegheh Atashin, also known by her stage name Googoosh is an Iranian singer and actress. She is known for her contributions to Iranian pop music, but also starred in a variety of movies from the 1950s to the 1970s. She achieved the pinnacle of her fame and success towards the end of the 1970s. Her overall impact and contributions to Middle Eastern and Central Asian pop-music earned her the title of the most iconic female pop-singer from those regions. She has recorded songs in Italian and in Spanish language. Due to her great talents and overall endearment to her people, she is a symbol of national pride to the people from Iran.

### Shirin Ebadi

(Person) an Iranian lawyer, a former judge and human rights activist and founder of Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran.

## VOCABULARY

Unmuzzle	(v) ...에 언론의 자유를 주다, ...의 함구령을 해제하다
Countrywomen	(n) 동포 (여자), 같은 나라 사람
Risky	(adj) 위험한
Camp it up	(expression) (일부러) 우스꽝스러운[과장된] 행동을 하다
Rooftop	(n) (건물의) 옥상
Lip-synching	(n) 립싱크로 노래하기
Megahit	(n) (영화 등의) 대히트 (작품)
Aspiring	(adj) 장차 ...가 되려는
Caption	(v) 캡션(사진·삽화 등에 붙인 설명); 캡션을 쓰다
Detain	(v) (어디에 가지 못하게) 붙들다, 지체하게 하다
Severely	(adv) 심하게, 엄하게, 엄격하게, 혹독하게
Prompt	(v) (사람에게 어떤 결정을 내리도록·어떤 일이 일어나도록) 하다
Shutdown	(n) (공장·사업체 등의) 폐쇄
Vulgar	(adj) 저속한, 천박한
Suspend sentence	(n) 집행 유예
Coveted	(adj) 탐내는
Live in exile	(expression) 망명생활[귀양살이]을 하다
Flood with	(v) ...이 넘쳐나다.
Choreography	(n) 안무, 연출
Belt [smth] out	(expression) 큰 소리로 노래하다[연주하다]
Newfound	(adj) 새로 발견된; 최근에 눈에 띄는
Give voice to	(expression) ...을 말로 나타내다; (감정·걱정 등을) 토로[표현]하다
Plight	(n) 역경, 곤경
Farsi	(n) 이란 사람이 자기 언어 (페르시아어)를 부르는 말
Dare to [do smth]	(expression) 감히 ...하다
Ambassador	(n) 대사
Rally	(v) (특히 어떤 생각·정당을 지지하기 위한 대규모) 집회
Outrage	(n) 격분, 격노
Oppression	(n) 압박, 압제, 억압, 탄압, 학대; 심한 차별
Activism	(n) (정치적 목적을 위한) 행동주의
Censorship	(n) 검열
Substantial	(adj) (양·가치·중요성이) 상당한