Iranian singer ready 'to pay price for freedom' after 74 lashes

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By Stuart Williams, AFP

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A prominent Iranian pop singer who made a song urging women to remove their headscarves said Wednesday that he was willing to pay "a price for freedom" after being flogged 74 times by the authorities as part of his sentence.

Mehdi Yarrahi, arrested in 2023, was released last year after being convicted for his song in support of the "Woman. Life. Freedom" protests that erupted in 2022 and rocked Iran's clerical leadership.

"Today, the final part of the verdict issued by the Revolutionary Court -- 74 lashes -- was fully and completely implemented at branch 4 of the office for enforcement of judgements of the Tehran moral security prosecutor," his lawyer Zahra Minouei wrote on X.

"The case was closed," she added.

In a defiant subsequent post, Yarrahi added: "The person who is not willing to pay a price for freedom, is not worthy of freedom."

Yarrahi was arrested in August 2023 for releasing what the authorities termed an "illegal song", namely the track "Roosarito" ("Your Headscarf" in Persian) and voiced support for women's right to remove the garment that must be worn in public in the Islamic republic.

The implementation of his sentence sparked uproar among supporters.

Taraneh Alidoosti, an actor who was arrested during the protest movement after she posed without the headscarf, said on Instagram in response to the flogging: "Shame on backwardness, shame on torture, shame on violence, shame on anti-human laws, and shame and disgrace on our helplessness."

Nobel peace prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, on temporary release from a prison sentence, said in a statement the flogging was "retaliation" for Yarrahi's support of women in Iran.

"The lashes on Mehdi's body are a whip against the proud and resilient women of Iran and the thriving, powerful spirit of the "Woman. Life. Freedom." movement, she said.

Iran's sharia law provides for flogging sentences that are frequently handed out by judges, though far from always implemented.

Yarrahi's 2022 song "Soroode Zan" (Woman's Anthem) also became a protest anthem, especially at universities.

The death in custody on September 16, 2022 of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd arrested for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress rules for women, sparked months of protests that included calls for an end to Iran's Islamic regime.

The protests have now largely been quashed despite occasional outbursts after a crackdown that saw thousands detained, according to the United Nations, and hundreds shot dead by security forces, according to activists.