

# Iranian students feel overwhelmed as they cannot contact their families.



Protest in support of Iran in Central London. Photo: John Smith

By Harry Shaw

Iranian students at Kingston University feel overwhelmed following the recent death of Mahsa Amini resulting in no contact with their families in Iran.

22-year-old Mahsa Amini was arrested and beaten to death by Iran's "morality" police. She was detained for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly and violating the country's oppressive dress code law enforcing women to wear a hijab regardless of their personal choice and beliefs.

Fashion student Soheila Diba said: "It is so scary to even think about my country's situation right now. I feel threatened and overwhelmed as I have not spoken with my family for more than three weeks now.

"The protests in Iran are for basic human rights and for demolishing the oppressive Islamic Republic regime. Why must we condone? Do we not have a voice? Can we not live freely? I guess not, not in Iran, not yet."

Students in Kingston are most shocked to know how the Iranian Government has responded to this as they discover that it has had a negative impact and the government has failed to understand the significance of this issue.

Mechanical Engineering student Salar Mohseni said: "The most appalling and horrifying thing is how the Iranian Government has reacted and responded to such a serious matter. The

protest movement was to raise awareness for the Government to understand the crux of this and urgently deal with it.

"But what do we get in return? Their awful response of arresting protestors, firing shots and tear gas into civilian homes and completely cutting off internet access."

**"Do we not have a voice? Can we not live freely?"**

Students mentioned how unity is of utmost importance right now. Now more than ever. Not just unity among Iranians, but support from other countries.

Moreover, they feel not only

Iranians and Iranian journalists should raise awareness about this but also people who do not have "Iranian backgrounds".

Dr Laleh Tangsiri said: "I am quite downhearted and sad to only see Iranian journalists cover news stories. We need every little support and help that we can get, even from people who are not remotely related to Iranian culture and roots.

"We are in dire need of any help that we can get. We need the rest of the world now the most. Major news outlets are either quiet or give out insufficient information which truly makes me wonder if Iranian rights don't matter to them."

Iranians at Kingston University are dejected to see this crisis not get enough attention that it needs and deserves. Most international students from Iran are terrified to voice their opinion because it always "comes with a price".

Diba said: "Majority of Iranians are scared to raise their voice even outside of Iran because speaking up means going against the oppressive commands that we are told to follow."

Mohseni said: "It is daunting and frightening to express and

put forth our opinions because it means I can never go back to my country ever again. Being vocal can put my family in grave danger as they could be harassed."

# Kingston University offers support to overwhelmed international staff and students affected by the Russia-Ukraine war.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine started on Thursday morning, and began trying to take over the country by force, which overwhelmed international Ukrainian and Russian students.

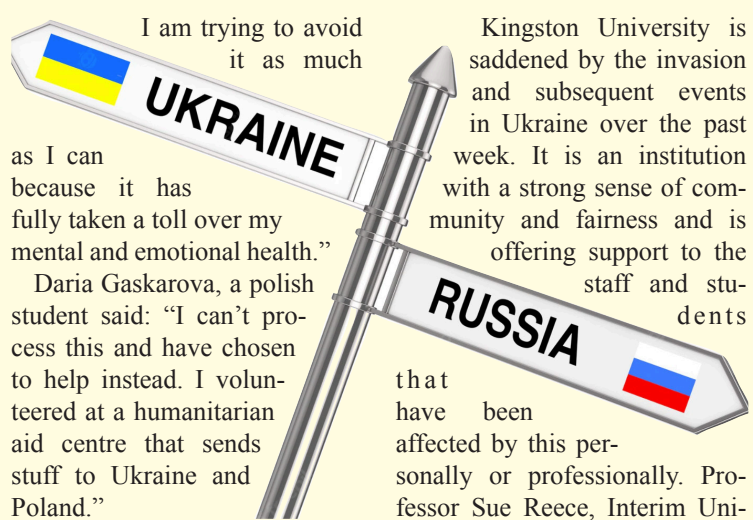
Russia and Ukraine have had a difficult relationship for centuries but this invasion has shocked many people as this is the first major war in Europe in decades. It is been a difficult time for everyone, especially Ukrainian and Russian students here, away from home, in constant worry of their family in their countries.

Anastasia Saveleva, an international student from Russia said: "This is all so overwhelming and feels surreal. I am safe here, but I am so anxious because my family is in Russia. I have been to the protests in London to show my support."

Most Ukrainians disagree to let Russia take charge as they want peace and will defend their country for independence as conveyed by the Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Olha Liesova, a Ukrainian student said: "Constant fear. All news is distressing.

I am trying to avoid it as much as I can because it has fully taken a toll over my mental and emotional health."

Daria Gaskarova, a Polish student said: "I can't process this and have chosen to help instead. I volunteered at a humanitarian aid centre that sends stuff to Ukraine and Poland."



Kingston University is saddened by the invasion and subsequent events in Ukraine over the past week. It is an institution with a strong sense of community and fairness and is offering support to the staff and students

that have been affected by this personally or professionally. Professor Sue Reece, Interim Uni-

versity Registrar said: "We offer 1:1 support session to students. The Faith & Spirituality Advisor offer confidential pastoral support, counselling, wellbeing team offers stress management, emergency financial support, reporting harassment." Professor Steven Spier, Vice-Chancellor said: "We offer visa concessions for Ukrainian students."

Kingston university will continue to show their support and empathy in these hard times, to staff and students affected by these events.