

# Exploring The Undercover Directing Style of Iranian Filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof: A Study of Execution and Censorship ‘In There Is No Evil’ (2020) and ‘The Seed of The Sacred Fig’ (2024)

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## Abstract

This research is based on the undercover directing of the Iranian filmmaker Muhammad Rasoulof, who has directed the controversial films like “There Is No Evil (2020)” “The seed of a sacred fig”. The films question the Government’s strict policies and the strictness of the Censor Board. Making a film in Iran is much tougher than anything. The Iranian filmmaker is banned from making a film, and in some cases, the Government puts the filmmaker in jail. Every filmmaker wants to submit the script of the film to the Government before making that particular film. In this case, the filmmaker like Rasoulof shoots the entire film undercover and releases them outside Iran. The filmmaker also flees the country. The research is based on the qualitative methodology analysis of the 2 films made by the filmmaker Rasoulof: “There Is No Evil (2020)” and “The seed of a sacred fig”. Both the films have the same story line: “Execution”. Iran is one of the countries that has the highest rate of “Execution” in the world. The 2 films by the filmmaker Rasoulof are about the people involved in the process of “Execution” and the people caught in the web of the unknowing political game. The movie There Is No Evil (2020) explores the 4 short stories about the government representative who signs the execution, as well as the soldiers who witness the scene of the citizens hanging, who either don’t know if the culprit is guilty or not guilty. The other movie, The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024), explores political issues a bit deeper, as it belongs to the genre of action, drama, thriller, etc. The movie probably belongs to the pressure and paranoia experienced by the family/community, as it shows the political pressure experienced in the state, wherein the life of the citizen is threatened because of the presence of state violence/ideas.

**Keywords:** Mohammad Rasoulof, Undercover Directing, Film Censorship, Iranian Cinema

## Introduction

The world of cinema has always been a world of freedom, imagination, and truth. However, for a filmmaker who has to produce films in a world dominated by dictatorial governments, the process of

filmmaking itself has become not just a process of creativity but a process of risk and morality. In the current state of cinema in Iran, it is not just the world of cinema that dictates the content of the films produced but also dictates the process by which these films are made. It is extremely difficult to find filmmakers such as Rasoulof who represent a dichotomy between creativity and politics in cinema. "The international-standard cinema productions of Rasoulof, such as 'There Is No Evil (2020)' in 2020 and 'The Sacred Fig Insect' in 2024, represent an outstanding example of films made under stringent circumstances. "The cinematic productions carry themes such as execution, power, fear, morality, etc. This feeling of responsibility is a result of living in a society that is under the impact of surveillance and ideological control. The significance of these films is not only related to their political content, but rather to how these films were made. These films were made under a low profile, cautiously, and even secretly. This "undercover" method of filmmaking becomes a characteristic of Mohammad Rasoulof's directing, rather than a limitation of filmmaking. The political courage of Rasoulof, alongside the risks he took while making these films, is discussed extensively in journalism and media. However, academic studies have paid more attention to the themes presented by his films, rather than how he directs them. There is much discussion about what is presented by his films, while there is little discussion about how these films have been presented. This is further highlighted if one compares the directing styles of "There Is No Evil (2020)" and "The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)," both of which were directed under censorship, though there is a difference between them in terms of narrative, visual, and emotional content. This further emphasizes that there is a certain directing style of Rasoulof, irrespective of political constraints.

Auteur Theory: A filmmaker's personal imprint is found in their body of work through the consistent appearance of their personal stylistics, themes, and ethical preoccupations. In this analysis, the Auteur Theory is used to analyze the body of work of the Iranian filmmaker, Mohamad Rasoulof, through the lens of the parameters of Technical Competency, Distinguishable Personality, and Interior Meaning. In the analysis of the films of Rasoulof, the parameter of Technical Competency is concerned with the ways in which the filmmaker uses the tools of cinematic language, including the camera, space, and the use of narrative and sound, while working under the constraints of a heavily censored and controlled cinematic environment. As the films of Rasoulof were shot in secret, the analysis is concerned with the ways in which the constraints of the filmmaking process affect the visual language of the films. The parameter of Distinguishable Personality is concerned with the ways in which the filmmaker demonstrates a personal vision and style in their body of work. The analysis is concerned with the ways in which the constraints of the filmmaking process and the personal politics of the filmmaker result in a distinctive directing style.

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## Review of Literature

1. The study "Censorship of family violence in cinema in Iran" written by Atefeh Batyari (2024) indicates that the research is informed by the connection between Iranian cinema, family violence, censorship, Islamization, and political issues in Iran. The main discussion in the study is about censorship in Iran. Iran is a country where it is not easy to practice art because the art has to be within the limits of the politics of the country. The politics of the country dictate the limits within which art should be. Therefore, if the art is beyond the limits, it may be banned, and the artist may even be sent to jail. The study indicates that art is a reflection of society. If there is a strong censorship of art, then there is a limit to the reality of that particular society as well. Due to such a reality, Iranian filmmakers often use family problems as a tool to portray their political ideas indirectly. Through hidden symbolism and

unique ways of storytelling, filmmakers are able to show their criticism without opposing the government directly. Another aspect of this research is the concept of honor killing in Iran, which is shown through violence in families to portray social and political control in Iran. This study has a qualitative approach to it. The films chosen for this particular study are Friday Evening, The Paternal House, and Girl's House. The researcher concludes that Iranian filmmakers, as part of their society, have a right to portray social problems of their time through their films, despite strong censorship in Iran.

2. The research "Iranian Women and Cinema: Negotiating Ideology and Tradition" written by Moradiyan Rizi (2015) discusses the impact of social and sexual changes on the lives of women in Iran. The research highlights the way women are portrayed in the context of modernity and femininity in the context of the mandatory veil and segregation of the sexes. The research states that the films produced in Iran are based on the mandatory rules and regulations that are based on the culture and religion of the people. The research states that the way female characters are portrayed in the film is based on the mandatory rules and regulations. The research highlights the way actresses are required to wear the veil even in the context of indoor and domestic scenes. The research states that this impacts the way the film is perceived by the viewers. According to the study, there is a problem faced by filmmakers in Iran, where they struggle to portray the true experiences of women while adhering to political and religious guidelines. Therefore, filmmakers use storytelling techniques to portray issues concerning women while adhering to censorship guidelines. This study is significant, especially because of its contribution to gender-based storytelling in Iran
3. The study "Filmmaking with Smartphones: A Renewed Dialogue with the Discourse of Cinema" authored by Lian Yao Zhuo discusses the role of smartphone technology in subversive filmmaking practices. The research uses case studies such as Tangerine and This Is Not a Film to explain how digital devices change the process of film production. The paper argues that smartphone filmmaking makes cinema more accessible and challenges traditional production systems, especially in countries where filmmakers face political restrictions on equipment, funding, and distribution. The study explains that mobile technology allows directors to work with small crews, limited resources, and hidden production methods. This becomes important in authoritarian environments where official permission is required for filmmaking. Zhuo states that filmmakers such as Mohammad Rasoulof and Jafar Panahi use fewer tools and stealthy filming techniques to continue making movies in spite of censorship. The utilization of smartphones and fewer cameras makes it harder for the government to take control and enables the filmmakers to capture real-life surroundings without arousing suspicion
4. Family as Political Metaphor in Iranian Cinema It has been noted several times by researchers who deal with the analysis of Iranian cinema that the family is an artistic way to reflect the state and the society, especially in the cinema that is produced in the context of tight censorship. The researchers have noted that the film makers reflect the conflict in the family, the process of differences in generations, and parental power as metaphors for political control, conditioning a society, and opposition. The character of the father in most films about political cinema in Iran is seen as a metaphor for power in the state, and the children or the younger generation is seen as a metaphor for the average citizens who struggle with the opposition of obedience and non-obedience. The literature on Iranian New Wave film also points to the fact that home has served as a protective concept in which the directors can talk indirectly about certain political issues. This indirect way of dealing with family life

allows a director to criticize authoritarianism, morality, and social pressures without ever mentioning the government, so family is one of the most important concepts in Iranian political film studies.

5. **Censorship and Underground Cinema in Iran** The history of Iranian cinema often discusses how the extremely censored government has affected the development of underground films and how to tell symbolic stories. Since film directors are often limited in how to criticize the political field, most film directors would use indirect narration as a way to communicate social and political issues in Iran. According to researchers, underground/semi-autonomous films in Iran are often based on realism, minimalism, and metaphor to avoid censorship while at the same time including themes such as government control, surveillance, and personal freedoms. Family functioning as a political metaphor is one of the discussed techniques, where family relationships function as a form of power in society. Here, the role of the father is related to the role of the state, while the children or young people function as a symbol of citizens, being between loyalty and rebellion. Thus, the filmmakers in Iran can show the political conflict in the family area of the house, which is a way of criticizing authoritarian power in a sensitive way.

### Research Gap

Undercover filmmaking has been documented, but it has never been analyzed as a directing method. Many sources have talked about the concept of secrecy, censorship, and filmmaking limits, particularly how filmmaking is threatened politically. However, very little literature has been found to show how limits influence repeated directing elements such as blocking, location of cameras, coverage of shots, sound, and editing styles. Interviews and documentaries have also shown that there is a concept of secrecy, but none of them has shown how limits influence directing styles. In many sources, it has remained a threat to filmmaking rather than how it is being transformed into film language (Rasoulof, 2020; Schindel, 2024; Associated Press, 2024). There is also a lot written about *\*There Is No Evil (2020)\** and *\*The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)\** is gaining more critical acclaim, yet there is a scarcity of studies comparing these two films. Most studies focus on one film, not comparing them, while not analyzing how the directing method progresses from one film to another. If these two films are compared, differences can be noted, especially in their form and method of directing. *\*There Is No Evil (2020)\** uses an anthology form, while *\*The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)\** uses scenes created, scenes of protest, tension created through confinements, and psychological fear. This shows that undercover directing is not static, rather it changes according to political pressure, risk, and narrative requirement.

### Research Methodology

The methodology for this research is qualitative research methodology because the research is more focused on meaning, style, and creativity than numbers and statistical measurement. The objective of this research is to study the way Mohammad Rasoulof directs his films under the circumstances of censorship and political restriction. The films are shot in secret, and this style of filmmaking has become an integral part of Mohammad Rasoulof's creativity as a filmmaker. The objective of this research is to study the way Mohammad Rasoulof's filmmaking is influenced by the restrictions and the way he has converted this restriction into creativity. Since this research involves interpretation and creativity, the research methodology for this study is more appropriate than the quantitative research methodology.

### **Theoretical Framework: Auteur Theory**

The study is grounded on Auteur Theory, which emphasizes that a film director is considered to be at the core of a film's creation. Auteur Theory explains that a film director is not just a person who oversees a film's production; rather, he also establishes a film's artistic personality. An auteur is a film director whose personality can still be seen in a film he has directed, regardless of how many films he has directed. A film director leaves a unique mark on a film through his choices regarding a film's look, storytelling, acting, sound, and editing. A director's mark can still be seen throughout an entire film's creation, including planning and production. It is also possible for the personal signature of the filmmaker to be seen even in cases where the director is working with certain restrictions or limitations. This theory is used in this research to examine the ways in which a film director is able to maintain his or her own style even in cases where the director is forced to work under certain political controls or censorship and limitations. The theory of auteurism gives the film director the central role in the making of a film. It sees the film director as the major author of the film. Although filmmaking is a collaborative process, the final product is the result of the direction given by the film director. All aspects of the film work in conjunction with this direction.

### **The Director as the Primary Creative Force**

In this parameter, the director is considered the primary creative force behind the film. This is because filmmaking is a collaborative effort; however, the director is the primary person behind the vision of the film. The story line, the visual style, the tone of the performances, and the theme are all determined by the director's vision. This parameter looks at the director's ability to control the film's meaning despite the production constraints and the pressure of censorship and politics.

### **Interior Meaning**

Interior meaning refers to deeper ideas, such as morality, emotion, and philosophy, which lie at the heart of a narrative but are often not explicitly stated. Instead, they are shown through a series of situations, behaviors, and images. This parameter explores how the director uses film to communicate ideas related to responsibility, power, fear, obedience, and humanity without actually speaking them out loud.

### **Distinguishable Personality**

Distinguishable personality is a term that describes stylistic patterns that are repeated throughout a director's filmography, which can be identified as their personal style. This can include visual composition, pacing, types of characters, stories, etc. When a series of stylistic choices are repeated throughout a director's filmography, their personal style can be identified. This parameter can help identify if a director's personal style is evident through their films despite a difference in stories and settings.

### **Consistency Across Films**

This parameter is concerned with the consistency of the director's style and ideas in a series of films. Although the content of the films, the genres, and the circumstances may differ, the auteur will generally reveal his consistency in visual treatment, interest, and morality. This parameter will reveal the growth of the director's auteurism through a series of films and how personal vision is maintained even at different levels of restraint.

### Area of the research

The area of the research is based in the Film Studies aspect pertaining to the direction style, censorship, and authorship in the contemporary Iranian film industry. The paper is based in the subject matter of film theory and film analysis in which Auteur Theory is adopted in assessing the direction style in filmmaking by Mohammad Rasoulof in films such as *There Is No Evil* (2020) and *The Seed of The Sacred Fig* (2024). The following are the research areas in which this research fits in as an aspect of film studies:

**Film Studies:** The paper is based on assessing the film form, film narrative, film style, and direction in film as an aspect in which the use of cinematic methods is suppressed as an aspect in film censorship in the emergence of style in film.

**Auteur Studies:** This section is about the role of the director, who is the main subject of study, and how a personal style is carried out within a number of films. It is about how authorship is carried out despite filmmaking taking place under censorship.

**Iranian Cinema Studies:** This study is related to modern Iranian filmmaking, specifically those films made under the authoritarian regime and monitored by them. It is about how filmmakers carry out their role under strict guidelines, including how the political climate influences the narration.

**Cinema and Censorship Studies.:** This paper is about how censorship, secret, and restriction have influenced filmmaking. Specifically, how undercover filmmaking is incorporated into one's style of directing.

**Cinema of Politics/Resistance Cinema:** Another category that the research falls under is the politics of film since the films are all about execution, power, fear, and morality. It looks at how films speak out against oppression but do so as a personal story and not as a political discourse.

### Aim of the research

How the film maker directs his film under the Restricted Space And how he creates his own directing freedom.

### Scope of the research

This study is based on two important films by Rasoulof, *There Is No Evil* (2020) and *The Seed of The Sacred Fig* (2024), which were made under the ban by the Iranian government. The significance of this particular piece of research is that it is not just about the content of the films, but also about the production of the films. Most of the existing body of work is about what is being depicted in the films. However, there is a need to understand how the films are made, especially when the filmmaker is under surveillance and restrictions. Through the Auteur Theory, this piece of research introduces Mohammad Rasoulof as a filmmaker whose vision still exists even in the most challenging of situations. This is because, in the midst of restrictions, there is the authorship of the filmmaker. This piece of research adds to the auteur theory by including the element of political repression in the making of the films. In most cases, the decision of the director is not just about the film but about survival. Camera use, limited locations, small crews, and performances could all be a result of restriction, yet they form part of a distinctive personal style.

### Research Objectives

1. To analyze the secretive directing style of Mohammad Rasoulof
2. Exploring the Islamic Revolution, veil, and death penalty in Iranian cinema
3. Analyzing the bans, restrictions, and hard censorship in Iran cinema

4. To determine the rationale behind the impact of Rasoulof, being the chief creative talent, despite the collaborative process of filmmaking and how much his work is controlled

### Research Questions

1. How did Mohammad Rasoulof manage to direct his oscar nominated film in total secrecy?
2. What impact did the Islamic Revolution have on Iranian cinema?
3. How Iranian filmmakers cope with the ban and severe censorship?
4. What ways did Rasoulof use to assert himself as the main creative individual in a situation where there is a lack of artistic freedom?

### Data Analysis

There Is No Evil (2020), 2020, directed by Mohammad Rasoulof, is a movie with a total running time of two hours and thirty minutes. The movie is composed of four short stories, each of which reflects a different view of the system of executions in Iran. All parts of the movie deal with the psychological effects of capital punishment and the role played by common people in this system. The movie generated much discussion all over the world due to its political theme, as well as because of the strict censorship rules under which the movie was made, affecting the life of the director. The four short stories included in There Is No Evil (2020) are There Is No Evil (2020), She Said You Can Do It, Birthday, and Kiss Me. Each segment describes a unique situation in relation to execution, such as the life of the person who signs the execution order, the soldier who is required to execute the order, and the people who have to deal with the consequences. In relation to this research, the analysis is focused mainly on the first act and the third act of the film because these segments clearly describe the use of space and movement by the director, which is essential in relation to undercover directing style. In relation to execution in Iran, it is widely noted that Iran is ranked as one of the countries with the highest number of executions worldwide. It is noted that over 1,000 executions have been recorded since January 1, 2025, but the exact number is unknown due to the lack of transparency in official records. The executions are mainly for drug-related crimes and murder cases, followed by security-related cases and rape.

It is also mentioned in the reports that dozens of Afghan nationals, including men and women, were also executed. This is important background information because it will help us understand the social and political background in which the movie was made, as the movie reflects the fear and obedience of the people in the country.

### Findings

The research work, which is based on the paper "Exploring the Undercover Directing Style of Mohammad Rasoulof through his films There Is No Evil (2020) and The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)," aimed to examine the impact of censorship and political control on the directing style of Mohammad Rasoulof. The research is based on Auteur Theory as the major theory and examined the films "There Is No Evil (2020)" and "The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)" to explore the aspect of undercover filmmaking as an extension of the film director's personality. The parameters of Auteur Theory were the focus in this research work. These parameters include the film director as the major creative force behind the film, technical skill, personality, and finally, interior meaning. Qualitative research methods were used in this study to examine the film director's style in making films while under censorship or political control through an analysis of selected acts in "There Is No Evil (2020)" and "The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)" films.

### **There Is No Evil (2020)**

There Is No Evil (2020), First Short Film One of the questions raised in the films used for this research is whether all persons executed are really guilty of the crimes for which they were killed. When hundreds of people are hanged annually, the films pose the question of whether they are all really murderers, drug dealers, and criminals, or whether they are just victims of a political regime of punishment. In the first short film, the story is about an ordinary man who leaves a safe government facility and goes home to his family. The film depicts the man's daily life, his responsibility towards his family, and his mundane life. Throughout the film, there is a feeling that something is bothering the man, but the reason for this is not revealed until the final part. In the last scene, the film reveals that this normal man works as an executioner. This revelation completely changes the meaning of everything that has been shown until this part. What has been shown as normal life turns out to be the life of a man who takes part in the ordered killing by the state. Rasoulof does not show this man as a cruel and violent person. On the contrary, the film presents him as a normal person who finds himself in an ideological situation where execution is considered a duty.

### **She Said You Can Do It**

The second episode is titled She Said You Can Do It. This part shows the pressure faced by a young soldier who is ordered to take part in an execution for the first time. The character has no knowledge about the crime committed by the prisoner, yet he is expected to carry out the order without question. The episode focuses on the fear and psychological conflict of a person who is forced to choose between obedience and conscience. The main tension in the story comes from the emotional pressure placed on the young executioner, Pouya. He is afraid of refusing the order because refusal can lead to punishment, loss of freedom, or travel restrictions. His girlfriend tells him, "You can do it," but this line does not come from cruelty

### **Birthday**

The third episode, titled Birthday, is one of the most disturbing segments of the movie \*There Is No Evil (2020)\* because it demonstrates the consequences after the execution has already been carried out. Contrary to the previous segment, in this segment, the main character has already fulfilled his duty and carried out the execution as ordered by the system.

The main character of this segment does not face any consequences for his actions. On the contrary, the system rewards him for his execution. After completing the execution, the main character is given some time off from his military service. This is the reason why the main character goes to visit his girlfriend. It is here that the truth starts to emerge. The segment demonstrates that the system does not just force people to execute the death sentence; it also glorifies the act by making it a duty. The emotional impact of this scene is based on the contrast between celebration and guilt. Javad comes for a visit to celebrate a birthday, but the viewer is aware that his freedom is based on someone's death. This situation is used to Mohammad Rasoulof demonstrates how this system substitutes reward and obedience in place of morality. The horror is not in the violence itself, but in that a man's life is being traded for a few days' liberty.

### **Kiss Me**

The final scene, Kiss Me, in the movie There Is No Evil (2020) is a story about separation, time, and the long-term effects of not complying with the execution system. In this scene, the story is about a man who did not comply with the execution order and had to endure the subsequent punishment. This is different from the previous scenes, which were about people who did comply with the order. The story is about a

young girl named Darya who goes to visit a man she thinks is her uncle. However, as she gets to know him during her visit, she learns about her past. She realizes that the man is her real father and that he refused to execute someone during his time in the army. Because of this refusal, he had to abandon his life and live in isolation away from his family.

This scene also shows us the cost of resistance. The father is not portrayed as a hero, but as someone who tried to follow his conscience and had to pay for it. His choice also meant that there was a certain distance created between him and his daughter. The scene is full of grief, confusion, and unanswered questions. This film also tells us that resistance against the system is not a guarantee of an end to suffering, but it is a guarantee of a certain kind of suffering. This is the last story told by Mohammad Rasoulof, and it is a different look at the act of execution. The other stories were about obedience and compromise, but this one is about resistance and sacrifice. This story also shows us the impact of politics on families over the years, as one moral choice can affect people decades later.

### **The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)**

The film "The Seed of The Sacred Fig (2024)," directed by Mohammad Rasoulof, is considered a problem film due to the danger involved in making the film. The film was made in secret, and the political theme in the film poses a threat to the director. Because of censorship in Iran, the film had to be made in secret. This also affected the style and structure of the film

**The first act** of the movie opens with a picture of a normal family. Iman, the main character, is portrayed as a man who thinks he is doing his duty. He is recently employed as a government investigator, which is a dangerous job. At this point, Iman is not portrayed as a cruel man. He is portrayed as a family man who wants order, security, and respect in society. His family, including his wife and daughters, see him as their protector, their leader, their family man. Iranian cinema uses a play within a story to show that there is another meaning. In the first act of the movie, there is a drama shown on television, which is a play within a play. This is a metaphor for how life is not divided between private and public space, how individuals have roles to play both within their families and within their country's system.

In **The Second act**, the daughters become aware of the political situation in which they are living. News, protests, and unrest are represented through TV, phone video recordings, and conversations. This allows the audience to connect the story with the reality in which people in Iran are living. Fear and observation are part of their daily lives. The fact that the audience is watching video recordings and media in the film gives us the feeling that reality is breaking into the story. The role of the mother is to keep her family calm and united. However, her silence is also a source of pressure for her daughters. She avoids arguments in order to maintain peace in the family. Nevertheless, this silence is also the source of increasing tension. The feeling of control in the home is present, as if the rules of the political system outside are slowly penetrating the home. Act 2 is the turning point in the film. The balance in the story starts to break down, and the audience realizes that the conflict is not only political but also personal

**The third act**, When Silence Breaks, shifts the mood of the movie. There is now conflict, not just underlying tension, as there was in the first part of the movie. Iman is not just a father who works for the government anymore. Inside the house, Iman becomes a representative of the state. His authority enters the family space, and there is fear, not trust. Iman is no longer representative of security to his daughters. Rather, Iman is perceived to be more a part of the system than his family. The mother is between her husband and daughters, trying to maintain harmony by keeping silent. Her silence is a way of keeping the

family together, yet it is also a sign of how fear dominates the family. In the final act, there is no longer family unity, and there is tension, suspicion, and separation within the family space.

## Conclusion

In the final stage of this research, *There Is No Evil* (2020) and *The Seed of The Sacred Fig* (2024) are compared and discussed in order to understand not just the films but also the people who are living inside the stories. From this comparison, the research demonstrates how Mohammad Rasoulof creates an undercover directing style based on the issues of censorship, surveillance, and political restrictions. His films are based on political statements but use silence, hesitation, and action instead of political speech. The research demonstrates how this style is reflected in small but significant moments. For instance, a soldier who does not shoot his gun, a person who prefers love but carries the weight of guilt, a daughter who questions the system, and a family that slowly falls apart because of fear. These are not the stories of heroes and villains. These are the stories of people who are just trying to survive and not lose their morality. From these stories, the films show resistance as a personal and individual response.

Emotional struggle rather than a political act. By exploring emotion, relationships, and the everyday, this research breaks with studies that examine the political message of Rasoulof's films. Instead, it offers an exploration of the importance of personal experience and moral struggle in the director's filmmaking practice. The use of undercover filmmaking as a practice is included as part of the director's style and the impact of limitation as a factor. This research has demonstrated that Rasoulof's films are based on a simplistic but powerful idea. Within the confines of a system that regulates speech, movement, and thought, the individual has the capacity for choice. The freedom to choose, no matter how small the act, is an act of resistance. Through this practice, Rasoulof's films argue that survival, morality, and individuality are possible. This research has demonstrated that Rasoulof's undercover directing style is not just a practical solution but also part of the director's style. Filmmaking in Iran is a controlled practice. Rasoulof's use of film language has had to adapt to the limitations. There are several common factors that are evident in the controlled settings and the use of tension and silence. These elements show technical competence under restriction and confirm the presence of a clear authorial identity, through the parameter of interior meaning, the research shows that Rasoulof's films focus on ethical conflict rather than direct political speech. His characters are placed in situations where they must choose between safety and responsibility. Violence is often not shown directly, but its effect is felt through silence, distance, and emotional pressure. This approach reflects a worldview where resistance exists in personal decisions rather than open rebellion.

By comparing the two films, the research concludes that undercover filmmaking becomes a consistent stylistic method. Secrecy, limited resources, and political danger influence camera placement, narrative structure, sound design, and performance style. These limitations do not weaken the films. Instead, they create a recognizable directing language that defines Rasoulof as an auteur working under repression. Therefore, this research concludes that the undercover directing style of Mohammad Rasoulof represents a form of creative survival. His films show that even under censorship, a director can maintain authorship, express moral ideas, and create a consistent cinematic identity. The study contributes to film studies by showing that political repression itself can become a factor that shapes film style, and that contemporary Iranian cinema can be understood as a space of resistance, authorship, and human struggle.

## Conclusion

Studies assert sports news photography is not a piece of paper but a blend of journalism, creativity and emotion. Complex feelings that tend to be concealed in the sporting events such as happiness, sorrow, bravery and helplessness can be captured by use of photographs in case there was a lot of activity during the events. The human empathy is a prism with the help of which the sports photographer makes the viewer perceive the emotional truth of sport victory. The analysis also shows that the subject of the photograph or the event and artistic decisions of the photographer contribute to the depth of sports photography in the realm of emotions significantly. The use of lighting, framing, timing and emphasizing make otherwise ordinary events to look like a visual storytelling that is extraordinary. Barthes refers to the feeling that is caused by such forms of creativity between the spectator and the image and describes it as punctum.

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