

UNNOTICED.

UNHEARD.

UNCOVERED.

A deeper look into how the violence in various Middle Eastern conflicts affects the students involved and how the BVNW community can help

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As a Pakistani, junior Wania Munir said she has noticed people have become desensitized to violence in the Middle East, and the media does not give those countries the attention they deserve.

“When people think of the Middle East, they generally think of a war-torn area...but no one ever talks about it, it’s never discussed, you barely see anything in the media,” Munir said. “Hundreds of people are dying, but it’s kind of like ‘whatever it’s a war-torn area.’”

Sophomore Safa Qureshi, who is also Pakistani and Muslim, said that because violence in the Middle East has been occurring for decades, it has become more normalized.

“You can’t compare and contrast the blood of wars because honestly, that’s not even relevant. But you can definitely compare the reactions of people outside of it, like [in] America,” Qureshi said.

Qureshi said it is typical of the Western narrative to only post about what is being shown in Western media and never take action beyond posting, such as attempting to aid those in need.

“People don’t even realize that they’re biased because they don’t realize they’re only posting for something or like they’re only talking about one thing, [or] they’re only aiding one thing,” Qureshi said.

Munir explained that false information from illegitimate news sources also plays a part in whether people choose to educate themselves on Middle Eastern news.

“When there’s false information present, people don’t know what’s true

and what’s not, [so] people just tend to stay out of it,” Munir said.

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- SAFA QURESHI

Senior Hiba Issawi has seen the results of a false narrative spreading in the recent news over the death of Mahsa Amini and the related protests in Iran.

According to press reports, Mahsa Amini was an Iranian woman arrested on Sept. 13 for wearing “inappropriate attire.” Shortly after being arrested, she fell into a coma and had bruises on her legs. Amini died in a hospital, but questions were raised as to whether her death was caused by the

authorities.

Issawi said she believes that the media is emphasizing the wrong details of the protests occurring in Iran.

“The way that the media is portraying it, they’re kind of making [all] Muslim women look oppressed because I wouldn’t say that’s a bad thing that women want to wear the hijab,” Issawi said. “Like, there are [more] women that have the choice than are forced to put on the hijab.”

Munir said it is heartbreaking to see women lose their choice in whether or not they wear a hijab. In Iran, women are legally obligated to wear a hijab, while women in other parts of the world, such as France, are not allowed to wear one.

“Iran has very strict policies on the hijab and, Islamically speaking, that’s not allowed. You’re not allowed to force anyone to do anything, especially wear the hijab,” Munir said.

Freshman Melika Zabet emphasized the difference between simply being a citizen under the Islamic Republic of Iran and being a practicing Muslim.

“Islamic Republic regime is very different from the religion of Islam and very different from being Muslim. Islam is a personal choice, a personal family thing,” Zabet said.

Munir does not believe Islam is constricting, and she said the fact that the media portrays it as such, highlights the bias in news.

“I feel like the religion of Islam does get a bad reputation for some things, and we’re associated with terrorism, even though a group of bad people doesn’t make the whole religion bad,” Munir said.

Issawi said she believes religious bias plays a part in the lack

Sophomore Safa Qureshi said she believes current Middle Eastern conflicts have been censored, taking away the voice of those affected.

of media coverage Middle Eastern wars receive, partially because of the increased prejudice toward Muslims after 9/11.

“The way people used to feel sympathetic for [Middle Eastern countries] kind of left because [people] think in their head, ‘Oh, they’re deserving of this because of what they did in 9/11’ even though that has nothing to do with us,” Issawi said.

Issawi said the media needs to do a better job of portraying the violence occurring in many Middle Eastern countries because of the chaos it is creating.

“I’ve seen little kids be killed. I’ve seen families be torn apart. I’ve seen it all,” Issawi said.

Zabet said that while her immediate family now lives in the United States, they are still aware of the

immense afflictions citizens of the Middle East endure, specifically in Iran.

“Even though they’re here, they see all those people fighting for their basic human rights...[and] they can feel the pain that they felt when they were raised in that country,” Zabet said.

In an attempt to spread awareness regarding conflicts in the Middle East, Munir said her content was taken down and her account was threatened to be banned by Instagram.

“My people are dying. People are dying and I can’t even post about it? It sucks,” Munir said.

Issawi experienced something similar when she tried to share about the Palestinian War on social media and she said her content was taken down, as well.

“There was one time where my account was under surveillance by Instagram because I was supporting a fundraiser [for Palestinian hospitals], and I had it attached to my bio on Instagram,” Issawi said.

Qureshi said she has seen censorship occur on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram.

When The Express contacted Instagram for a statement on this issue, they had no response.

“Posts are repeatedly taken down because they’re about Palestine, the [Chinese] Uyghur Muslims, or Syria. Anything [about] any Muslim country or anything Muslim is repeatedly taken down,” Qureshi said.

Qureshi encourages everyone to seek more information on these issues, but understands it may seem daunting to some.

“If you’re not like Muslim, you may feel like





Sophomore Safa Qureshi and senior Hiba Issawi hold signs to represent protests in Middle Eastern countries and their own beliefs.

you're less connected to it. You feel like you don't need to have knowledge of it, because you feel like you can't do anything," Qureshi said.

To overcome this, Zabet said teenagers can help by educating themselves and paying attention to legitimate news sources.

"Finding authentic sources...on social media, then going out and doing your research on articles written by

Middle Eastern people, [gives] a good explanation on what's happening in the Middle East," Zabet said.

Issawi emphasized the importance of teens receiving their news from primary sources rather than mass media.

"It's really important that people read or educate themselves with firsthand resources, rather than paying attention to what Fox is saying or what

CNN is saying," Issawi said.

Munir also emphasized how big of an issue this is, and urges readers to maintain awareness.

"People are dying, [there] are holy places being destroyed, and it's not a small thing because this is a big issue," Munir said. "It just sucks. People are being thrown out of their homes, being killed and torn apart."