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AND ALONG CAME A SPIDER (Va Ankaboot Amad)

Director: Maziar Bahari

Country: Iran

21 women were murdered in a single year in the Iranian holy city of Mashad. Strangled, their bodies were cocooned in their long, black chadors, knotted at both ends and dumped beside roads or in sewers. Iranian media referred to the events as 'The Spider Killings'. Saeed Hanaei, a 39 year old contractor and family man, was eventually captured when one of the victims he had lured into his web punched him in the stomach and fled to police.

Maziar Bahari, director of *Football, Iranian Style* (MIFF 2002), has pieced together this horrifying indictment of the treatment of women in Iran. All of Hanaei's victims were prostitutes, many forced into the trade when abandoned by their husbands for seemingly insignificant reasons. 'The Spider' enthusiastically confessed to 16 of the slayings, claiming he was doing God's work (he was encouraged that a drought lifted after his 12th murder and took it as a sign to continue). Shockingly, many agreed with him. Fundamentalist religious figures and many locals came out in support of Hanaei as "cleansing society of corrupt elements".

"Unforgettable excursion into the minds of those raised in religious intolerance...the explosive topic renders it a must-see."—*Variety*