

IRAN
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IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS 2025

Front cover: Jailed lawyer Javad Alikordi speaking at the memorial service for his brother, Khosrow Alikordi who died under suspicious circumstances on 6 December 2025.

This report has been prepared by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and covers updates from 1st December 2024 until 31st December 2025.

IHRNGO is an independent non-partisan NGO based in Norway focused on the abolition of the death penalty, supporting human rights defenders and the rule of law.

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Table of Contents

About this report	1
Introduction.....	2
Anti-death penalty activists.....	4

LAWYERS

Javad Alikordi	11
Khosrow Alikordi.....	12
Amirsalar Davoudi	13
Mohammadreza Faghihi	14
Mohammad Najafi	15
Behnam Nezadi.....	16
Mohammad Seifzadeh.....	17
Saeed Sheikh.....	18
Nasrin Sotoudeh.....	19
Farzaneh Zilabi	20

JOURNALISTS

Kamyar Fakoor	22
Ajdar Piri Samanlu	23
Vida Rabani	24

FAMILIES SEEKING JUSTICE

Adinehzadeh family	26
Maryam Akbari-Monafared.....	27
Feizollah Azarnoush	28
Manouchehr Bakhtiari	29
Mashallah Karami	30
Raheleh Rahemipour	31
Zahra Saeedianju	32
Nahid Shirpisheh	33
Mina Soltan Zare.....	34

CIVIL ACTIVISTS

Zartosht Ahmadi-Ragheb	36
Rezvaneh Ahmadkhan Beigi.....	37
Hasti Amiri	38
Samaneh Asghari	39
Hassan Bagherinia	40
Golrokh Ebrahimi-Irayi.....	41
Motahareh Goonei.....	42
Ahmadreza Haeri	43
Leila Hosseinzadeh.....	44
Reza Khandan	45
Behfar Lalehzari	46
Narges Mohammadi	47
Mehdi Mahmoudian.....	48
Zia Nabavi	49
Pouran Nazemi	50
Arash Sadeghi.....	51
Khashayar Sefidi	52
Sayeh Seydal	53
Association for the Protection of Child Labourers and Street Children.....	55

TEACHERS

Kokab Bodaghi Pegah	57
Masoud Farhikhteh.....	58
Mohammad Habibi	59
Ali Koroshati	60
Hossein Ramezanzadeh.....	61
Mohammadreza Ramezanzadeh	62
Afshin Razmjooei	63
Siamak Sadeghi Chehrazi	64
Iraj Toubiha Najafabadi	65
Hossein Vahedi	66

Table of Contents

MINORITY RIGHTS

Anisa Fanaeeyan	68
Serveh Pirmohammadi	69
Samad Rigi	70
Semko Yousefi	71

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

Karim Esmailzadeh	73
Yousef Farhadi Babadi	74
Horr Mansouri	75

WORKERS RIGHTS

Anisha Asadollahi	77
Esmail Gerami	78
Nasrin Javadi	79
Sharifeh Mohammadi	80
Mehran Raouf	81
Maziar Seyednejad	82

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Aida Amouei	84
Jina Modares Gorij	85

ARTISTS

Vafa Ahmadpour Damab	87
Danial Moghaddam	88
Jafar Panahi	89
Navab Ghezelbash	90
Mehdi Yarrahi	91

Recommendations	92
Endnotes	93

LEGAL CONTEXT

LEGISLATION

Article 48 of the Code of Criminal Procedure:

“The accused can demand the presence of a lawyer from the start of detention. The lawyer can meet the detainee paying due attention to the confidentiality of the investigations and negotiations. At the end of the meeting, which should be no longer than one hour, the lawyer can give their written observations for documentation in the case file.”

Note to Article 48:

“Those charged with organised crimes and crimes against national and international security, who are subject to Article 302 of the Criminal Procedure, may choose a lawyer/lawyers from the list confirmed by the head of the judicial system. The list of the lawyers is announced by the head of the judicial system.”

Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code:

“In the cases of offences punishable by *ta'zir* (...), where the offences committed are not more than three, the court shall impose the maximum punishment provided for each offence; and if the offences committed are more than three, [the court] shall impose more than the maximum punishment provided for each crime provided that it does not exceed more than the maximum plus one half of each punishment. In any of the abovementioned cases, only the most severe punishment shall be executed and if the most severe punishment is reduced or replaced or becomes non-executable for any legal reason, the next most severe punishment shall be executed. In any case where there is no maximum and minimum provided for the punishment, if the offences committed are not more than three, up to one-fourth, and if the offences committed are more than three, up to half of the punishment prescribed by law shall be added to the original punishment.”

LEGAL CONTEXT

REVOLUTIONARY COURTS

Established in 1979 on the orders of Ayatollah Khomeini to try former officials of the Pahlavi government, Iran's Revolutionary Courts have continued to operate and are responsible for issuing heavy sentences to human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents and all those criticising the authorities. Additionally, they are responsible for the vast majority of all death sentences issued in the last 40 years.

Article 303 of the Code of Criminal Procedure determines the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts as for: "crimes against national and international security, *moharebeh* (enmity against God), *efsad fil-arz* (corruption on earth), *baghy* (armed rebellion), assembly and collusion against the Islamic Republic of Iran or armed action or arson, destruction and loss of property in order to oppose the system, insulting the position of the founder of the Islamic Republic and the Supreme Leader, all crimes related to drugs, controlled substances, weapons, ammunition...and other cases according to special laws." Of those, *moharebeh*, *efsad fil-arz* and *baghy* carry the death penalty.

The courts are not transparent and Revolutionary Court judges are known for greater abuse of their legal powers than other judges. Revolutionary Court judges routinely deny lawyers access to individuals who are subjected to extensive interrogations under severe conditions.

A December 2019 European Parliament resolution affirmed that Iranian courts regularly fail to ensure fair trials, with the denial of access to legal counsel and denial of visits by representatives from consulates, the UN or humanitarian organisations, and permit the use of confessions obtained under torture as evidence; there are no independent mechanisms for ensuring accountability within the judiciary, and serious concerns remain over the politicisation of judges, particularly those presiding over Revolutionary Courts.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been compiled by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO), an independent, non-governmental, and non-partisan organisation based in Norway. The organisation's core mandate encompasses campaigning for the abolition of the death penalty, promoting due process and the rule of law, and supporting human rights defenders in Iran. By providing a comprehensive overview of the judicial status of various human rights defenders in Iran, this report seeks to amplify the voices of imprisoned activists, protect those at risk, and foster a safer environment for their advocacy.

The human rights defenders featured in this report are individuals who, acting individually or in association with others, work peacefully to promote and protect human rights in accordance with international standards. They are recognised as human rights defenders by virtue of their actions and advocacy, irrespective of their profession, employment status, or formal organisational affiliation.

Observed annually on 10 December, International Human Rights Day serves as the parameter for this report, which documents individuals who faced judicial prosecution or arbitrary detention between 10 December 2024 and 10 December 2025. These defenders span diverse sectors, including anti-death penalty campaigners, defence lawyers, journalists, justice-seeking families, civil activists, teachers, minority rights advocates, workers' rights activists, women's rights defenders, environmental activists and artists.

The initial draft of this report, intended for release at the end of 2025, examined the judicial status of one non-governmental organisation (NGO), 68 human rights defenders, two justice-seeking families and an anti-death penalty campaign along with its members, documenting the systemic rights violations and security pressures they faced from December 2024 to December 2025.

However, since late 2025, Iran has experienced a succession of compounding crises. These include the suspicious death of lawyer Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12) and the subsequent mass arrest of human rights defenders at his memorial service, the nationwide protests of January 2026 alongside their violent state suppression, and subsequent military strikes on Iran by the United States and Israel. This state of conflict has intensified the ongoing crackdown on civil society, generating an unprecedented wave of human rights abuses, heightened security threats, and the widespread persecution of defenders. Consequently, the publication of this report was significantly delayed, requiring repeated updates to the cases under review.

This final edition retains the original scope of 68 human rights defenders, two families seeking justice, one NGO and the anti-death penalty campaign with their cases comprehensively updated until 20 May 2026. Defenders who faced judicial prosecution or harassment after the 10 December 2025 cutoff have been excluded from this iteration and will be documented in the 2026 report.

It is important to note that this report offers only a partial overview of the situation of human rights defenders in Iran. Individuals for whom accurate data was unavailable, or who did not wish to publicise their situations, are omitted. Furthermore, the report does not name the dozens of human rights defenders who have been forced into exile due to state pressure, nor the hundreds or thousands who have been targeted with harassment, threats, or security summonses as a result of their human rights activities.

In compiling this report, IHRNGO has made every effort to cross-reference data obtained from sources close to the defenders, including families, lawyers and verified digital footprints, ensuring the highest standards of evidentiary accuracy. The report is published concurrently in English and Farsi. To maintain structural consistency across both language editions, the profiles in each section are arranged alphabetically by surname according to the English alphabet.

The overarching objective of these annual publications is to galvanise international and media attention regarding the perilous environment in which Iranian human rights defenders operate. While highlighting prominent figures, this report aims equally to secure visibility for the thousands of lesser-known activists who endure systematic state repression on a daily basis.

INTRODUCTION

Human Rights Defenders in Iran – 2025 is the sixth report published by IHRNGO on the situation of human rights defenders in the country. Originally scheduled for publication at the beginning of 2026, the report has been delayed due to the bloody suppression of the nationwide protests of December 2025–January 2026, the 40-Day War and the internet blackout.

The human rights defenders featured in this report stand at the forefront of peaceful efforts to uphold fundamental human rights. Through civic engagement, documentation and public awareness activities, they bear heavy costs in their pursuit of human rights for all people in Iran. These costs include threats, arrest and imprisonment, denial of access to medical care, restrictions or complete bans on family contact, loss of employment, and other forms of systematic pressure and harassment. These practices are not isolated incidents but constitute part of a persistent pattern of state conduct toward human rights defenders in Iran.

This report is being published at a time when Iranian society has endured one of the largest mass killings of protesters in its contemporary history, as well as a large-scale war. In the shadow of war, the authorities have sought to intensify repression and intimidation through daily executions and mass arrests, imposing an atmosphere of fear and despair on society. Human rights defenders have been among the principal targets of this intensified crackdown.

By publishing this report, IHRNGO calls on the international community, civil society, governments, and the public in Iran and around the world to stand in solidarity with Iranian human rights defenders and provide them with practical support in their difficult struggle to secure fundamental rights for all citizens. Visibility, naming and sustained monitoring of their situation are essential components of effective human rights protection.

Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam, director of the organisation, stated: “Human rights defenders in Iran today need the support and solidarity of the international community more than ever. The release of all political prisoners, including imprisoned human rights defenders, and an end to the criminalisation of peaceful civic activities must be treated as central conditions in any dialogue, negotiation or agreement between the international community and the Islamic Republic.”

Addressing the public and civil society, Amiry-Moghaddam added: “The human rights defenders featured in this report are among the bravest citizens of Iran; individuals who, despite being deprived of their freedom, livelihoods and family life, and while facing threats, torture, and ill-treatment, have not retreated from their demands. Their resistance is part of a collective effort to defend the fundamental rights of all. Our responsibility is to ensure that, wherever we are, these individuals are not forgotten, that their names are remembered, and that they receive sustained support.”

Among the human rights defenders documented in this report are those who, from inside prison and despite intensified pressure and threats, continue to advance the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” movement. The report also includes lawyers who have been sentenced to imprisonment and banned from practicing law for upholding the legal rights of their clients. Another section focuses on families seeking truth and justice—families who, solely for informing the public and attempting to uncover the truth about the fate of their loved ones who have been killed, injured or imprisoned, have faced arrest, imprisonment and severe restrictions, including being prevented from visiting the graves of family members.

One such justice-seeker is 73-year-old Rahleh Rahimpour. Her brother, Hossein Rahimpour, was executed in 1984 on charges of membership in a banned opposition group, Organisation of Revolutionary Workers of Iran, and his daughter, Golrou, died only days after birth in Evin Prison, according to prison authorities. However, the family has never received her body and to this day has not been able to determine where she was buried. Raheleh’s persistent efforts to seek truth, clarify

the circumstances surrounding these events and pursue justice have resulted in a prison sentence of several years.

Other human rights defenders featured in this report include teachers and workers prosecuted for insisting on their labour and professional rights; activists advocating for children's right to education, combating discrimination based on gender, religion, ethnicity and mother language, or working to protect the environment; as well as artists who have been arbitrarily arrested and sentenced to imprisonment or professional bans for artistic expression in defence of human rights. The cases documented in this report demonstrate that repression of human rights defenders in Iran spans a wide range of civil, social, labour, cultural and environmental spheres.

The individuals listed in the original version of this report were those who faced some form of judicial prosecution for defending human rights between 10 December 2024 and 10 December 2025, and whose latest known status had been recorded up to the end of that reporting period. However, between 10 December 2025 and the publication of this report, other human rights defenders have also been arrested or subjected to judicial proceedings, but are not included in this list.

On 12 December 2025, during a memorial ceremony marking the seventh day after the suspicious death of human rights lawyer Khosrow Alikordi, whose case is discussed in the Lawyers section of this report, around 40 people, many of them human rights defenders, were violently arrested and beaten in Mashhad.¹ Among those detained, Javad Alikordi, Narges Mohammadi, Sepideh Gholian, Hasti Amiri and Ali Adinehzadeh had already been included in this report due to previous judicial cases, and their information was subsequently updated following this incident. However, several other individuals who were arrested at the same ceremony are also considered human rights defenders but are not covered in this report. They include Aliyeh Motalebzadeh, Tayyebeh Nazari (the justice-seeking mother of Dr Maryam Arvin), Abolfazl Abri, Kamal Jafari Yazdi, Heidar Chahchamandi and Noura Haghi.

Following these events, during the nationwide protests of January 2026, their bloody suppression, and the subsequent war and its aftermath, the arrest and judicial prosecution of human rights defenders intensified further. Lawyers, journalists, civil society activists, workers' rights activists, healthcare workers, teachers, minority rights activists, justice-seekers, women's rights activists, environmental activists and many others have faced judicial prosecution during this period because of their human rights activities. IHRNGO will address their cases in its Human Rights Defenders in Iran – 2026 report.

With the publication of this report, IHRNGO calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all imprisoned human rights defenders, full access to healthcare and medical services for all detainees, and an end to the repression of freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and civic activity. The organisation urges the international community to prioritise human rights in all engagements and to use all available legal and diplomatic tools to ensure effective support for human rights defenders, accountability and justice, cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur and the Fact-Finding Mission, independent and impartial investigations into suspicious deaths of human rights defenders, and judicial accountability for those responsible for torture, ill-treatment, and other serious human rights violations.

International human rights law recognise the right to life as one of the most fundamental and inalienable human rights. As all other rights lose their meaning without it, many legal scholars consider it the most essential or foundational human right. On this basis, groups of civil activists, lawyers, non-governmental and human rights organisations, survivors of death sentences, and families of victims of the death penalty around the world — referred to as anti-death penalty activists — emphasise that no government or authority, under any circumstances, should have the power to deprive individuals of this most basic human right. These activists oppose the death penalty for anyone, for any charge, under any conditions, and anywhere in the world, and work towards the practical and legal abolition of capital punishment worldwide.

A number of Iranian human rights activists discussed in later sections of this report also fall within the category of anti-death penalty activists, including: Ahmadreza Haeri, Khosrow Alikordi, Amirshah Davoudi, Mohammad Seifzadeh, Nasrin Sotoudeh, Farzaneh Zilabi, Vida Rabani, Feyzollah Azarnoush, Zartosht Ahmadi Raghheb, Hasti Amiri, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, Motahareh Gonaei, Narges Mohammadi, Poursan Nazemi, Arash Sadeghi, Khashayar Safidi, Sayeh Seydal, Mehdi Mahmoudian, Masoud Farhikhteh, Samad Rigi, Anisha Asadollahi, Nasrin Javadi, Sharifeh Mohammadi, Vafa Ahmadpour, Danial Moghaddam, Jafar Panahi, and Mehdi Yarrahi.

In addition to individual opposition to the death penalty, various local and national campaigns have emerged in Iran in recent years opposing capital punishment and seeking its abolition. One such campaign is LEGAM (Step-by-Step Abolition of the Death Penalty), which has faced severe repression by the Islamic Republic, with its members repeatedly arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Some of the founders of this movement are no longer with us, including Mohammad Maleki, Simin Behbahani, Fariborz Raisdana, Alireza Jabbari and Esmail Muftizadeh. Among those covered in this report, Jafar Panahi, Nasrin Sotoudeh and Narges Mohammadi were among the founders of the campaign in 2013, while Arash Sadeghi joined it at a later stage.

“No Death Penalty Tuesdays” Movement

Another campaign opposing the death penalty emerged from inside Iran’s prisons. Initially launched in 2023 under the name “Black Tuesdays”, it continues today as the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” movement and has grown week by week, spreading to 56 prisons across the country.

On 28 January 2024, following the execution of “Woman, Life, Freedom” protester Mohammad Ghobadlu³ and Kurdish Sunni political prisoner Farhad Salimi⁴, as well as the continuation of weekly group hangings, a group of prisoners in Ghezelhesar Prison published an open letter addressed to the people of Iran. They wrote: “Our demand is for you to support all prisoners on death row, regardless of whether their charges are political or non-political, as we have all been subjected to unfair trials



and they seek to strip us of our right to life. Perhaps with your help these executions can be halted; please use every means possible to be our voice and the voice of our families..”⁴

The individuals, who described themselves as a group of death-row prisoners in Ghezelhesar Prison, noted in the letter that among them were prisoners convicted of a wide range of charges — including drug and murder cases. They wrote: “In order for our voices to be heard, we have no choice but to begin a hunger strike every Tuesday starting this week.” They also warned that if they disclosed their names, the execution of their sentences would be accelerated.

Explaining the choice of Tuesdays for the hunger strike, the prisoners wrote: “Because this day is often the last day of life for our fellow prisoners, who are transferred to solitary confinement on that day.”

The following day, ten political prisoners at the prison issued a statement announcing that, in response to "the plea for justice by these prisoners" and in protest against the escalating wave of executions of both political and non-political inmates, they were joining the "Stop the Execution Machine Campaign". They stated that, "in solidarity with other prisoners", they would go on a hunger strike every Tuesday. The ten political prisoners in alphabetical order: Zartosht Ahmadi Ragheb, Loghman Aminpour, Meisam Dabbanzadeh, Jafar Ebrahimi, Sephr Emam Jomeh, Ahmadreza Haeri, Reza Mohammad Hosseini, Saeed Masouri, Reza Salmanzadeh and Hamzeh Savari.

The first weekly hunger strike by prisoners in Ghezelhesar Prison took place on Tuesday, 30 January 2024, marking the beginning of the "No Death penalty Tuesdays" movement which continues to this day under sustained and severe repression.

In its weekly statement of 22 July 2025, the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” campaign reported an intensification of pressure on political activists and imprisoned members of the campaign, stating: “Threats, torture, exile, arrests, summonses of family members, and deprivation of basic rights are only part of this systematic repression against the protesting voice of society.”⁶ Despite violent repression — particularly in Ghezelhesar Prison — prisoners’ weekly Tuesday hunger strikes continue, and participants persist in their demand for the abolition of the death penalty.

A number of members of "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" who, over the past year, have faced intensified pressure and repression in prison, and in some cases new judicial cases because

of their participation in the mass hunger strikes, as well as some of the rights violations they have experienced in detention, are listed below:

- **Zartosht Ahmadi-Ragheb** (see page 36): repeated transfers to solitary confinement, beatings and violent treatment in prison; denial of contact with family.
- **Loghman Aminpour**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings and violent treatment in prison.
- **Akbar Bagheri**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings and violent treatment in prison.
- **Meysam Dehbanzadeh**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings and violent treatment in prison.
- **Sepehr Emam Jomeh**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Asadollah Hadi**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Ahmadreza Haeri** (see page 43): transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison; harassment of family members.
- **Ali Moezzi**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Reza Mohammadhosseini**: repeated transfers to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Khosrow Rahnama**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Mostafa Ramazani**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Arsham Rezaei**: repeated transfers to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison; denial of access to a lawyer.
- **Reza Salmanzadeh**: transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.

- **Hamzeh Savari:** transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Mohammad Shafei:** transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.
- **Salahoddin Ziaei:** transfer to solitary confinement, beatings, and violent treatment in prison.

Following a violent raid by prison guards and intelligence forces on the political prisoners' ward in Unit 4 of Ghezelhesar Prison on 26 July 2025, all of the above-named prisoners were transferred — handcuffed, shackled, and with bags placed over their heads — to solitary confinement cells in the secure ward of Unit 3 of the prison, where they were held for at least four to eight days.

During the 26 July raid on the political prisoners' ward — referred to by prisoners as the Bloody Saturday of Ghezelhesar⁷ — Mehdi Hassani, Behrouz Ehsani Eslamalu and Saeed Masouri, three members of "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" were transferred to an unknown location. Mehdi and Behrouz were executed the following day, while authorities attempted to exile Saeed Masouri to another province.



Saeed Masouri

Saeed Masouri, 61, is one of Iran's longest-held political prisoners. He was arrested in 2000 on charges of cooperation with the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran and sentenced to death in 2002, though his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2007. He has spent more than 25 years in prison without a single day of furlough and has repeatedly protested the death penalty, human rights violations and inhumane prison conditions through open letters and multiple hunger strikes. Throughout his time behind bars, Saeed has faced repeated transfers between wards and prisons, prolonged

solitary confinement, beatings and violent treatment, denial of furlough, denial of access to a lawyer and family contact, and denied medical care. Following the suppression of protests by political prisoners in Ghezelhesar against the transfer of Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani to the gallows, Saeed was transferred without prior notice to Zahedan Central Prison on 26 July 2025. However, Zahedan prison authorities there refused to admit him, and after a period during which his whereabouts were unknown, Saeed was returned to Ghezelhesar Prison. He was first held incommunicado in solitary confinement in a special ward of Unit 2 and was later returned to Unit 4, the political prisoner unit.

On the night of 29 March 2026, anti-riot guards, accompanied by Ghezelhesar Prison officials, once again raided Unit 4 to transfer six more political prisoners to the gallows. They were met with resistance from the other political prisoners in the ward. Using severe violence, they transferred all prisoners in the ward—most of whom were members of “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” —to solitary confinement cells in Unit 3 (known as the “Suite”) for a period of time. Vahid Baniamerian, Pouya Ghobadi, Shahrokh (Akbar) Daneshvarkar, Babak Alipour, Mohammad Taghavi and Abolhassan Montazer’s executions were announced over the next days. All six political prisoners were also members of “No Death Penalty Tuesdays.”

The weekly mass hunger strike, which has received widespread support from Iranian and international human rights activists and organisations,⁸ has now continued for more than 120 consecutive weeks. What began in Ghezelhesar Prison has since spread to at least 56 prisons across Iran.



On 11 February 2025, activists including Hasti Amiri, Narges Mohammadi, Shaghayegh Moradi, Kambiz Norouzizadeh, Jafar Panahi, Hossein Razagh, Arash Sadeghi and Aria Sheikhi joined the families of death row political prisoners in their weekly "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" protest outside Evin Prison.

Outside prisons, every Tuesday, families of death row prisoners, as well as abolitionist activists and organisations abroad, hold solidarity protests in support of the prisoners' hunger strike.

On 8 October 2024, Iran Human Rights, together with the Global Campaign No to Executions in Iran and with the participation of a wide range of Iranian and international human rights defenders and numerous civil, political, and human rights organisations opposed to the death penalty from around the world, held a 24-hour live programme in support of "No Death Penalty Tuesdays".¹⁰ In addition, IHRNGO currently holds weekly online discussions every Tuesday in support of the campaign through the "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" House on Clubhouse, focusing on issues related to the death penalty.¹¹

LAWYERS

For years, Iranian lawyers defending prisoners of conscience have faced direct and indirect pressure from the judicial and security apparatuses of the Islamic Republic. Many defence lawyers have been imprisoned for years solely for carrying out their professional duties, and the practising licences of several have been revoked.

Following the 12-Day War between Iran and Israel, state pressure on lawyers has intensified; since August alone, dozens of lawyers have been summoned, prosecuted, detained or targeted with fabricated legal cases.

This section examines the situation of ten lawyers who have either been imprisoned over the past year for defending human rights or who continue to face open judicial cases.



JAVAD ALIKORDI

Age: 48

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison

Judicial status: 10 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to a lawyer; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; unlawful summons; familial punishment; judicial harassment

BACKGROUND

Javad Alikordi is a lawyer, university lecturer and former member of the Sabzevar City Council who provided pro bono legal representation to a number of political prisoners and protesters¹² During the imprisonment of his brother, Khosrow Alikordi, who was also a lawyer, he represented political activist Fatemeh Sepehri and the justice-seeking family of Abolfazl Adinehzadeh, a teenager killed during the 2022 protests.¹³ Javad was first arrested on 14 August 2004, while serving as a member of the Sabzevar City Council, and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and 148 lashes on charges of "disturbing public opinion" and "insulting national and provincial officials". He was transferred to Sabzevar Central Prison. The sentence was later converted into a fine and he was released on bail. During the nationwide protests following the 2009 presidential election, Alikordi was injured in the eye and lip by pellet gunfire from security forces, in such a way that several pellets remain lodged in his mouth to this day. On 22 April 2020, he was rearrested at his work and held for more than 30 days in solitary confinement at the Ministry of Intelligence's detention centre for interrogations. The Mashhad Revolutionary Court sentenced him to six years and six months' imprisonment on the charge of "forming and running a Telegram group named (Hope, Awareness and Freedom) with the aim of overthrowing the government", eight months' imprisonment for "acting against the system", and one year and five months' imprisonment for "insulting the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic". He was also sentenced to two-year bans on professional activity and teaching in educational and university settings, leaving the country, and membership in political and social parties. Following an appeal at Branch 37 of the Razavi Khorasan Court of Appeal, his sentence was reduced to two years' imprisonment, while the supplementary punishments were upheld. Javad was arrested on 15 July 2021 and transferred to Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison to serve his sentence. He was released on bail in March 2022.

UPDATE

The suspension of the enforcement of Javad's sentence was revoked on 1 March 2025 by Branch 37 of the Razavi Khorasan Court of Appeal. He was arrested at his law office in Mashhad and transferred to Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison to serve the remaining 16 months of his sentence.¹⁴ On 11 August 2025, after serving more than five months, he was released on bail with an electronic tag. Javad was barred from teaching at university and his wife, Somayeh Zandi, has been prevented by order of the Ministry of Intelligence from obtaining a law licence. Her complaint to the High Disciplinary Court for Judges has so far yielded no result. Following the suspicious death of his brother, Khosrow Alikordi, on 6 December 2025, Javad Alikordi publicly stated that security forces had confiscated the CCTV footage from Khosrow's office and called for the footage to be made public, leading to his summons and interrogation.

Javad was arrested on 12 December 2025 after protesting the violent arrest of a number of civil society activists attending the memorial ceremony marking the seventh day after his brother's death. In an Instagram live broadcast, he also warned that he would disclose information concerning the circumstances surrounding his brother's death. On 20 April 2026, the lawyer was tried before the Revolutionary Court in Mashhad without access to legal counsel and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

KHOSROW ALIKORDI

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Deceased under suspicious circumstances

Judicial status: Open judicial case at the time of death

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; deprivation of employment and education; judicial harassment



BACKGROUND

Khosrow Alikordi was a human rights lawyer who represented a number of protesters arrested in relation to the post-election protests in 2009, becoming a regular target of summons and interrogations by the Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS). In 2010, he was admitted to study for a master's degree in public law at Allameh Tabataba'i University; however, at the request of the MOIS, the university refused to register him. Despite his complaint to the Administrative Justice Court and the issuance of a final ruling ordering the lifting of the ban on his studies, Sadr al-Din Shariati, then president of Allameh Tabataba'i University, refused to implement the ruling, and Javad was barred from studying at that university. He later continued his studies at the Islamic Azad University.

Following the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests in 2022, Javad represented a number of political prisoners and civil activists, including Hassan Bagherinia, Fatemeh Sepehri and justice-seeking families such as the family of Abolfazl Adinehzadeh, a teenager killed during the 2022 protests. He repeatedly criticised the Islamic Republic on social media for repression and violations of civil and political freedoms, and reported on the poor conditions of political prisoners.

On 28 November 2023, Branch One of the Mashhad Revolutionary Court, presided over by Hadi Mansouri, sentenced Khosrow to one year's imprisonment on the charge of "propaganda activity against the system", two years of exile to the city of Nehbandan, two years' bans on leaving the country and practising law, and a ban on online activities. His interviews with Farsi-language diaspora media and his comments on social media were used as examples of the charges.¹⁵

This ruling was upheld by the Khorasan Razavi Court of Appeal, and on 16 February 2024, Khosrow surrendered to Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison to serve his one-year prison sentence.¹⁶

After serving eight months in prison, in October 2024 he was released on temporary licence, which allowed him to serve the remainder of his sentence outside prison. However, on 24 December 2024, while 45 days of his sentence remained, he was summoned by the prison supervising judge, Tabataba'i, to Mashhad Central Prison and detained without any explanation.

UPDATE

Khosrow was released from prison after serving his sentence on 30 January 2025. He stated that despite having completed five years of doctoral studies in public law, he had been barred from continuing his studies due to the case.¹⁷

On the morning of 6 December 2025, Khosrow's lifeless body was found in his office. Authorities announced his cause of death as a heart attack. However, in light of information raised by sources close to the Alikordi family in conversations with IHRNGO, there are serious suspicions that the case involves a killing with the involvement of state institutions. Accordingly, IHRNGO called for the establishment of an independent international fact-finding inquiry to investigate the circumstances of Khosrow Alikordi's death.¹⁸



AMIRSALAR DAVOUDI

Age: 45

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 30 years' imprisonment and 111 lashes; awaiting retrial

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; judicial harassment; torture; denial of medical care; denial of access to a lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of family contact and visits; prison exile; judicial harassment

BACKGROUND

Amirsalar Davoudi is a lawyer who has represented a number of political prisoners and civil activists, religious converts, and members of the Baha'i community. He was arrested by security forces on 19 November 2018 and transferred to Ward 241 of Evin Prison. Prior to his arrest, security officers had raided his office and home, confiscating a number of his personal files and belongings.¹⁹ He spent 190 days in solitary confinement.

He was arrested in relation to his Telegram channel "Without Retouch," where he discussed breaches in the judicial process, the judicial harassment of lawyers and human rights abuses. On 1 June 2019, Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court presided over by "Death Judge" Salavati, sentenced Amirsalar to 111 lashes and a total of 30 years in prison: 15 years for "forming a group to overthrow the political system (through his Telegram channel), propaganda against the system, publishing lies and insulting officials and the leader" amongst other charges. The sentence was upheld by the Court of Appeal on 30 July 2019.²⁰

On 13 April 2021, Amirsalar was prison-exiled from Evin Prison to Rajai Shahr Prison. His request for a retrial was granted by Branch 41 of the Supreme Court on June 13, and he was released on bail. A month later, Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court upheld the original ruling by Branch 15. On 26 June 2022, while Amirsalar was attending the Evin Prosecutor's Office, he was unexpectedly arrested by order of the judge of Branch One of the Sentence Enforcement Unit and transferred to Ward 4 of Evin Prison.²² The 2022 Ludovic-Trarieux International Human Rights Award was presented to Amirsalar in absentia on 23 September.²³

He survived the 15 October 2022 attack on Evin Prison during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" nationwide protests. He was deprived of the right to contact his family for two months due to publishing a post about the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement.

In February 2024, Amirsalar filed a complaint against three current and former security officials of the Islamic Republic judiciary on charges of "commission of proven disciplinary offences and violations".

UPDATE

On 2 September 2024, Amirsalar was granted a three-day prison furlough, and the enforcement of his sentence was suspended following the acceptance of his request for a retrial.²⁴ He remains free on bail while awaiting a hearing before a parallel branch of the Court of Appeal.

MOHAMMADREZA FAGHIHI

Age: 54

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Evin Prison

Judicial status: 5 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; denial of access to a lawyer; judicial harassment



BACKGROUND

Mohammadreza Faghihi is a lawyer and member of the Iranian Association for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights. On 14 August 2021, he went to file a complaint against the National Task Force Against Coronavirus and the Supreme Leader at the Tehran Citizen's Rights Protection Association for their mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁵ According to sources, 15 forces and two judicial officials entered the meeting and arrested all seven claimants. At the time the complaint was being filed, 15 security agents and two judicial officials entered the meeting and arrested all seven complainants, including Mohammad Reza Faghihi.²⁶

On 25 August, Saeed Khalili reported that after going to Evin court to introduce himself as the lawyer in Mohammadreza's case, he was turned away at the door and told that there would be no lawyers or bail. At the same time, security forces raided his home and confiscated his belongings.²⁷

On 30 August 2021, Faghihi was released on bail. Approximately ten months later, on 20 June 2022, he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on the charge of "assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security".²⁸ This sentence was upheld on 16 August 2022 by Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal.²⁹

On 14 October 2022, Mohammadreza was arrested at the lawyers' peaceful protest outside the Iranian Bar Association in Tehran after security forces attacked the gathering with teargas during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" nationwide protests.³⁰ He was released on bail on 25 October 2022. On 5 October 2024 Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him to five years' imprisonment, two years' ban on leaving the country, and two years' deprivation of the right to practise law and membership of political parties and groups, on the charge of "assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security".³¹

UPDATE

Mohammadreza's sentence was enforced from 21 January 2025 and he was transferred to Evin Prison to begin serving his five-year term.³² Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison in July 2025, Mohammadreza was transferred overnight to Greater Tehran Penitentiary in handcuffs and electronic restraints,³³ and was later transferred back to Evin Prison.

In November 2025, Saleh Noghrehkar, Mohammadreza's lawyer, reported that despite the Supreme Court having accepted the request for retrial and issued an order to suspend the enforcement of the sentence, the order has not yet been implemented.



MOHAMMAD NAJAFI

Age: 51

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Evin Prison

Judicial status: 22 years and 6 months' imprisonment

Violations: Judicial harassment; torture and ill-treatment; arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement; harassment of family members; familial punishment

BACKGROUND

Mohammad Najafi is a lawyer and human rights activist who has faced multiple arrests since the 2009 protests. Since 2018, he has been caught in a web of fabricated cases that overlap and ensure he is kept behind bars for years to come. Authorities also threatened to open a fabricated cases against his son, Amirhossein Najafi.³⁴ On 15 January 2018, after publicly disclosing the suspicious death of detained protester Vahid Heydari in Arak, Najafi was arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment and 74 lashes.³⁵ In November 2018, Branch One of the Arak Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 13 years' imprisonment on charges including "assisting a hostile government", "insulting the leadership", and "propaganda against the system"; the sentence was upheld on appeal.^{36,37} In separate cases before the Shazand Judiciary, he was later sentenced to an additional one year's imprisonment,³⁸ and two years for publishing a critical letter addressed to the Supreme Leader; the latter sentence was also upheld on appeal.^{39,40} While on furlough, Mohammad was sentenced on 7 February 2020 by Branch 23 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court to 6 months' imprisonment for delivering a speech at the home of Gohar Eshghi, mother of Sattar Beheshti, a blogger who died under torture in cyber police detention. Mohammad suffered a heart attack in Arak Central Prison in August 2021 but was denied urgent medical treatment outside prison.⁴¹ He went on medical furlough on 19 December 2021 after going on hunger strike and returned to prison on 11 July 2022 before completing the necessary medical treatment.⁴² In 2023, after publication of an audio file from prison and his support for the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, he was sentenced by Branch 106 of Criminal Court of Arak to 2 years' imprisonment and a fine for "spreading false information", and by Branch 2 of the Arak Revolutionary Court to 1 year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system". In April 2023, while on medical furlough and before completing treatment, Mohammad was summoned back to prison and transferred to Evin Prison in Tehran, far from his family in Arak.⁴³

UPDATE

In 2025, Branch One of the High Disciplinary Court for Judges revoked Mohammad Najafi's law licence and permanently disbarred him.⁴⁴ In the same year, he received the International Human Rights Prize of the International Center for Human Rights (ICHR) in recognition of his efforts to defend human rights and justice.⁴⁵ Mohammad survived the Israeli attack on Evin Prison in June 2025 but sustained injuries and suffered hearing problems. That night, security forces forcibly transferred him and dozens of other prisoners from Evin Prison to Greater Tehran Prison (Fashafuyeh) in handcuffs and leg shackles. In August 2025, he was transferred back to Evin Prison amid violent treatment by prison officials. In November 2025, following publication of an audio file criticising the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Mohammad was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, a fine, a 2-year ban on membership in political and social groups, and a travel ban on charges of "propaganda activity against the system" and "spreading false information". On 26 January 2026, in an audio message from prison, he described the Leader of the Islamic Republic as the "Leader of Crime" who had built "minarets from the corpses of Iranians" to preserve his power. In response, Evin Prison authorities prevented his transfer to hospital for treatment of his heart condition, diabetes, and blast-related injuries.

BEHNAM NEZADI

Age: 37

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 7 months and one day of imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; judicial harassment



BACKGROUND

Behnam Nezadi is a lawyer and a member of the Central Bar Association (Tehran). During the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests, he launched an Instagram page titled Judges’ Disciplinary Violations to educate citizens on how to use legal mechanisms to file and pursue complaints.⁴⁶ On 28 November 2024, Behnam was sentenced by Branch Two of the Arak Revolutionary Court to one year’s imprisonment and a two-year ban on practising law on the charge of “propaganda against the system” for the Instagram page and publishing the recorded voice of an investigating judge.⁴⁷ He has stated that the evidence presented by the Judiciary’s Intelligence Protection Unit was fabricated, that the screenshots included in the case file were unrelated to his page, and that no examination by the cyber police had been conducted.⁴⁸ On appeal, the Central Province Court of Appeal reduced the sentence to four months’ imprisonment and one year’s ban on practising law.⁴⁹ The one-year ban on practising law was removed from his sentence at retrial.

UPDATE

On 1 March 2025, Behnam was transferred to Evin Prison to serve his sentence.⁵⁰ On 14 April 2025, he was released on bail after his application for an appeal was accepted.⁵¹ A month later, Branch Eight of the Central Province Court of Appeal rejected Behnam’s appeal and upheld the conviction of four months’ imprisonment and a one-year ban on practising law. In June 2025, in a separate case related to administering the same Instagram page, he was sentenced by Branch 106 of the Arak Criminal Court to imprisonment on charges of “spreading false information and disclosure of secrets”. On appeal, this sentence was reduced to three months and one day of imprisonment. Behnam was also sentenced by Branch 103 of Khavaran Court to six months’ imprisonment, six months’ participation in a mental health programme and six months’ ban on practising law on the charge of “impersonation and interference in the practice of law”.⁵² This ruling was overturned by the Tehran Province Court of Appeal, and he was acquitted of the charge. In August 2025, Behnam was summoned to prison to serve the four-month sentence of imprisonment.⁵³ However, despite having spent one and a half months in Evin Prison, the Arak Sentence Enforcement Prosecutor’s Office has refused to count it as time served, and he was required to serve the full four months. In October 2025, the Arak County Judiciary summoned Behnam who resides in Tehran and had already served part of his sentence in Evin Prison, to Arak Central Prison.⁵⁴ Despite announcing his willingness to surrender to Evin Prison, Behnam’s bank accounts and mobile phone were blocked on the pretext of non-compliance with the implementation of the sentence. Instructions were also issued to all judicial districts and law enforcement agencies to arrest him and transfer him to the Arak Sentence Enforcement Branch. In November 2025, Behnam published a statement warning of the risks of his forced transfer to Arak Central Prison, noting that the judicial authorities’ insistence on the move could create “difficult and dangerous” conditions for him.



MOHAMMAD SEIFZADEH

Age: 78

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released; enforcement of sentence suspended due to illness

Judicial status: 1 year's imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; torture; denial of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement; failure to observe separation of offences; judicial harassment

BACKGROUND

Mohammad Seifzadeh Mohammad Seifzadeh is a veteran lawyer and one of the co-founders of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran who has previously jailed 13 times for his human rights work. : five times during under the Pahlavi rule and eight times following the establishment of the Islamic Republic. He served as a judge from before the 1979 Revolution until 1982, when he resigned from the judiciary after refusing to apply the Islamic Penal Code. In November 2010, Mohammad was sentenced to nine years' imprisonment and a ten-year ban on practising law on the charge of "action against national security through participation in the establishment of the Defenders of Human Rights Center of Iran". On appeal, the Tehran Court of Appeal reduced the sentence to two years. On 6 April 2011, he was arrested in the city of Urmia on the charge of illegal exit from the country. After one month in solitary confinement, he was transferred to the general ward of Evin Prison. In 2012, while already serving a prison sentence, Mohammad was charged with 'assembly and collusion against national security' for signing collective statements and writing a letter to the former president, Mohammad. Following a trial presided over by "Death Judge" Salavati, he was handed a six-year prison term. In January 2013, he was exiled to Rajai Shahr Prison and held in violation of the principle of the separation of offences.⁵⁵ He was released from prison 10 March 2016 upon completion of his sentence. While imprisoned in Evin and Rajai Shahr prisons, he suffered seven heart attacks due to poor conditions and the denial of medical care.

In December 2022, Mohammad and several human rights activists signed a letter addressed to the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, calling for a response to executions and the suppression of the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' protests.⁵⁶ In April 2023, Branch 29 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Ali Mazloumi, sentenced him to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "spreading false information" for the letter. This ruling was upheld by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeal, although both courts held proceedings in absentia, as he had described the Revolutionary Courts as unlawful and refused to attend their sessions.⁵⁷

Following the confirmation of his sentence, the authorities demanded that Mohammad sign a letter of repentance requesting a pardon from the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, which he refused.⁵⁸ After being summoned several times to serve his sentence, the enforcement of his term was temporarily suspended on 26 July 2023 following a medical assessment by the Legal Medicine Organisation.

UPDATE

In April 2024, Mohammad was summoned to the Evin Prosecutor's Office once more for the enforcement of his sentence, which was subsequently suspended following his hospitalisation for heart surgery.⁵⁹

SAEED SHEIKH

Age: 39

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released; awaiting appeal hearing

Judicial status: 1 year and 6 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of the right of access to a lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement; judicial harassment



BACKGROUND

Saeed Sheikh is a lawyer and a member of the Central Bar Association. He was first arrested on 12 October 2022 during a gathering of lawyers outside the Bar Association building in the context of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests. After spending two months behind bars, he was released on bail from the Greater Tehran Penitentiary.⁶⁰

In January 2023, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced him to a total of three years' imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion with intent to act against national security” and “propaganda against the system”.⁶¹ He was subsequently granted an amnesty and the case was closed.

UPDATE

In November 2025, Saeed was sentenced by Branch 103 of the Tehran Criminal Court to one year and six months in prison, a fine and a ban on practising law. The court cited his online activities and commentary as the basis for the ruling, and the case is currently under appeal.



NASRIN SOTOUDEH

Age: 63

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 27 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of medical care; denial of access to a lawyer; harassment of family members; judicial harassment

BACKGROUND

Nasrin Sotoudeh is a lawyer, a member of the Defenders of Human Rights Association of Iran, and a board member of the Society for Protecting the Rights of the Child. She has represented dozens of cases involving human rights activists, children who are victims of abuse, children at risk of execution, and the “Girls of Revolution Street”.⁶² She is also a member of Legam: Step-by-Step Abolition of the Death Penalty campaign, recipient of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought and the Robert Badinter Prize for the fight against the death penalty.⁶³ She was previously jailed from August 2010 to September 2013 for her professional and human rights activities. Nasrin was rearrested on 13 June 2018⁶⁴ and sentenced to five years in prison in absentia on the charge of “concealing a spy”⁶⁵ which was later changed to “assembly and collusion against national security”. In March 2019, in a separate case involving seven charges, she was sentenced to 33 years and six months' imprisonment and 148 lashes.⁶⁶ One of the charges against her was “promoting corruption and prostitution” in relation to her legal representation of the Girls of Revolution Street. Behind bars, Nasrin continued to fight for civil rights, including the release of political prisoners.⁶⁷ Her prison sentence was later reduced to a total of 27 years following international pressure, and the punishment of lashes was removed. Despite the deterioration of her physical condition and medical specialists' recommendations for cardiac examinations and angiography, on 20 October 2020 she was transferred to Qarchak Prison under the pretext of being taken to hospital.⁶⁸

For years, Nasrin and her family were under pressure. Her daughter, Mehraveh Khandan, was arrested in 2020,⁶⁹ and the bank accounts of Nasrin and her husband, Reza Khandan, were frozen.⁷⁰ Mehraveh was ultimately forced to leave Iran due to pressure on the family. In another incident, her son, Nima, was beaten and arrested by prison officers while visiting his father in prison.⁷¹

Due to her critical health condition, she was granted medical furlough from prison on 23 July 2021. However, on 30 October 2023, during the funeral of Armita Garavand⁷²—a schoolgirl who died under suspicious circumstances in the Tehran metro—she was arrested again while attempting to prevent security forces from attacking a justice-seeking mother.⁷³ Nasrin was subjected to physical torture at the Tehran Police Security detention centre and transferred first to Qarchak Prison and then to Evin Prison. The state-affiliated Fars News Agency cited the reason for her arrest as “removing her hijab and disrupting the psychological security of society”.⁷⁴ She was released on bail on 15 November 2023.⁷⁵

UPDATE

In October 2025, Nasrin reported that she has been denied visits with her husband, Reza Khandan, in prison due to her refusal to comply with compulsory hijab regulations.

On 1 April 2026, Nasrin was arrested at her home and held incommunicado for 17 days. In a brief phone call to her family, Nasrin said she was being held in one of the Ministry of Intelligence detention centres. She was ultimately released on bail on 13 May 2026.

FARZANEH ZILABI

Age: 47

Activism/rights: Human rights lawyer

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Awaiting appeals

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; judicial harassment; lack of a fair trial and due process



BACKGROUND

Farzaneh Zilabi is a lawyer and a member of the Khuzestan Bar Association. She has represented a number of individuals detained during the 2022 protests, Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers and workers of the National Steel Group of Ahvaz, labour activists, retirees, journalists, and teachers, primarily in Khuzestan Province. She has also worked to pursue labour-related demands and to secure the release of detained workers. She has repeatedly been summoned and threatened by security authorities.⁷⁶ In 2019, Farzaneh reported the physical and psychological torture and threats inflicted on Esmail Bakhshi, a protesting Haft Tappeh worker, while held in a security detention centre,⁷⁷ and criticised the lack of independence of the judiciary and judges, as well as the interference of security forces in judicial proceedings against protesters.⁷⁸ Following these disclosures, the prosecutor and the Judiciary's Intelligence Protection Unit in Shush opened a new case against her on the charge of "spreading false information". Although Branch 4 of the Prosecutor's Office later declared the case closed, Branch 112 of the Ahvaz Criminal Court of Ahvaz subsequently sentenced Farzaneh to three months' imprisonment. On 24 July 2019, while only one week remained before the court hearing of the Haft Tappeh workers, Farzaneh was summoned to the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Ahvaz County.⁷⁹ The charges raised against her at the prosecutor's office included "assembly and collusion against national security", "propaganda against the system", "insulting the leadership", "membership of opposition groups", and "spreading false information".⁸⁰ After the President of the Supreme Audit Court announced in April 2021 that, "with the support of the judiciary", the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Company had been returned to public ownership and nationalised, security authorities repeatedly threatened her in an effort to force her to withdraw from the Haft Tappeh case. On 14 September 2021, Branch Two of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court sentenced her to one year's imprisonment and a two-year travel ban on the charge of "propaganda against the system", while acquitting her of the other charges.⁸¹ Following the execution of the first protester of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising in December 2022, Farzaneh together with several Iranian human rights activists, signed a letter addressed to António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, calling for a response to the executions in Iran.⁸² Two months later, Branch 13 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office summoned her on charges of "insulting the leadership", "spreading false information online to disturb public opinion", "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion against national security", and "membership of opposition groups".⁸³ On 21 May 2023, Branch 4 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court sentenced Farzaneh to one year and six months' imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "insulting the leadership".⁸⁴

UPDATE

Farzaneh Zilabi is currently released on bail, and all three of her cases are under review before the Khuzestan Province Court of Appeal.

JOURNALISTS

Amid heightened political tensions, regional conflict and compounding economic, social and environmental crises in Iran over the past year, the authorities have intensified their crackdown on freedom of expression and the flow of information. Judicial and security pressure on journalists has escalated, resulting in the closure of several media outlets and the blocking of news websites.

In its 2025 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders declared Iran the most repressive country for media and one of the world's largest jailers of journalists, with 21 media professionals behind bars. According to the index, Iran again ranked near the bottom of the global standings, placing 176th out of 180 countries.⁸⁵

The authorities systematically target not only domestic media professionals but also Iranian journalists based abroad who work with Farsi-language outlets, subjecting them to continuous harassment, pressure and even death threats.⁸⁶ Furthermore, this state-sponsored intimidation extends beyond Iranian nationals. Within the period covered by this report, an Italian journalist, Cecilia, was detained in Tehran in December 2024 and released approximately three weeks later, in January 2025.

This section examines the cases of several journalists who have been imprisoned or face open judicial cases due to their human rights reporting and media activities. rights-related media activities.

KAMYAR FAKOOR

Age: 30

Activism/rights: Journalist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; media censorship; denial of medical care; denial of visits; forced transfer to Ghezelhesar Prison



BACKGROUND

Kamyar Fakoor is an environment and economics journalist, labour rights activist, poet, rapper and one of the signatories of the campaign in support of the Ahvaz Steel workers and Haft Tappeh sugarcane workers. He has been summoned and arrested on multiple occasions. In 2019, Kamyar was arrested during Labour Day demonstrations outside the Parliament building and released several days later. He was violently arrested at pensioners' protest outside the Ministry of Labour on 7 March 2021⁸⁷ and transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison.⁸⁸ He was released on bail on 17 March.⁸⁹ On 2 November, Kamyar was sentenced to two years and eight months imprisonment, 50 lashes and a 15 million tomans fine by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, on charges of “propaganda against the system and spreading lies to disturb public opinion and order.” The sentence was suspended on conditions including “obtaining permission from a judicial official to travel abroad, participating in counselling sessions to control excitement and prevent hopelessness at the Mavay Institute of Psychology in Qom, reporting any job or residence changes and a ban on social and political activities on social media.”⁹⁰

In April 2022, he was rearrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment on the charge of “propaganda against the system”. After serving two months in prison, his case was closed after being included in the mass prison amnesties. During the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests, he was arrested with his wife, WHRD Sarvenaz Ahmadi, after their home was raided on 6 November 2022.⁹¹ Despite bail having been set and his need for treatment for a lumbar disc condition, he was transferred to Evin Prison in December to serve his sentence.⁹² Fakoor was released on 8 February 2023; however, one month later Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced him to one year's imprisonment on the charge of “propaganda against the system”. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to eight months' imprisonment.⁹³

However, he was re-arrested while visiting jailed teacher Mohammad Habibi's family with other activists on 28 April and his sentence was implemented. Kamyar was transferred to Ghezelhesar Prison by force on 3 September where he was held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions with death row prisoners awaiting the gallows. On the same day, his lawyer announced that a new case had been opened against him and Jafar Ebrahimi for charges of “disrupting public order and peace, insulting prison officials and officers” by Branch 3 of Evin court. Following a group hunger strike, he was transferred back to Evin Prison on 27 September.

After serving eight months in prison, his two-year suspended sentence from the 2021 case was implemented in December 2023.⁹⁷

UPDATE

Kamyar was released on licence from Evin Prison on 23 October 2024 and he served the remainder of his sentence outside prison.⁹⁸



AJDAR PIRI SARMANLU

Age: 36

Activism/rights: Journalist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer

BACKGROUND

Ajdar Piri Sarmanlu is a journalist, researcher and editor-in-chief of the international monthly Pajouhesh-e Melal. He was arrested on 21 October 2024 following a raid on his home and transferred to the Karaj Intelligence Office detention facility where he was denied access to a lawyer. After 21 days of interrogation, he was transferred to Karaj Penitentiary (Central Prison), and was released on bail three days later.

UPDATE

In February 2025, Branch Three of the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced Ajdar to one year’s imprisonment and a two-year ban on using the internet on charges of “propaganda against the system” and “insulting officials”. He was arrested on 4 May 2025 after reporting to the Sentence Enforcement Branch of the Karaj Prosecutor’s Office and was transferred to Karaj Penitentiary to serve his sentence.⁹⁹

On 10 September 2025, he was released on licence and is serving the remainder of his sentence outside prison.¹⁰⁰

VIDA RABBANI

Age: 36

Activism/rights: Journalist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 2-year suspended sentence

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care; solitary confinement



BACKGROUND

Vida Rabbani is a journalist and member of the Journalists' Trade Association, and has published articles in newspapers such as Shargh and the weekly Seda. She is among the human rights defenders who has protested against the death penalty from behind bars.¹⁰¹ Vida has been arrested multiple times since January 2020, when she was detained while reporting on public protests over the IRGC shooting down flight PS752 with missiles, causing the death of 176 passengers and crew. In August 2022, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment on the charge of "insulting the sanctities", four years' imprisonment for "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security", eight months' imprisonment for "propaganda against the system", and eight months' imprisonment and 74 lashes for "disrupting public order". The court suspended two fifths of the enforceable sentence.¹⁰² Vida was rearrested on 24 September 2022 during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests and transferred to Evin Prison. In January 2023, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, sentenced her to seven years' imprisonment on the charge of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security" and 15 months' imprisonment for "propaganda against the system". Participation in a gathering outside Kasra Hospital—where Jina (Mahsa) Amini had been hospitalised after being beaten by morality police officers—and participation in protests against compulsory hijab were cited as grounds for the charges. Her sentence was upheld on appeal but was later included in the general amnesties. Vida went on hunger strike after being denied adequate medical care and medical treatment outside prison.¹⁰³ She was ultimately transferred to a hospital in April 2023 due to the deterioration of her physical condition. In June 2023, she published an open letter accusing Mizan News Agency, the Islamic Republic judiciary's news agency, of disclosing her private medical information. She wrote that the authorities use mental and psychological illness as a stigma to "discredit" political and civil activists. The state media outlet had claimed that the reason for her transfer not being approved was her prior use of psychiatric medication.¹⁰⁴ In her letter, she also exposed the widespread and unregulated distribution of psychiatric and sedative medications among detainees during the protests.

UPDATE

On 8 April 2025, Vida Rabani was released from Evin Prison on bail, despite having approximately four months remaining of her sentence, while two years of her imprisonment had been suspended for a period of five years. Following the crackdown on the December 2025–January 2026 protests, she was among the signatories of a statement holding the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic responsible for the killing of protesters and calling for the prosecution of those responsible and an end to the government. Following the publication of the statement, she was arrested on 31 January 2026 and transferred to Tonekabon Central Prison. Vida was beaten both in the detention centre of the Criminal Investigation Department in Sari and later in prison; bruises were reportedly observed on her body. She was also subjected to violence for not complying with compulsory hijab rules, including having her hair pulled out. Vida began a hunger strike on 6 February 2026 in protest against being held in a prison outside her home city. She was released on bail from Tonekabon Prison 17 February 2026.

FAMILIES SEEKING JUSTICE

Justice-seeking families are relatives of individuals who have been killed, imprisoned, executed or subjected to enforced disappearance by the state, as well as those injured during anti-government protests. These families actively campaign to uncover the truth, demand accountability for both perpetrators and commanders and seek the administration of justice.

Surviving victims who actively pursue redress for their violated rights are also considered justice-seekers, including individuals who sustained blinding or severe eye injuries during successive waves of protests.

In recent years, families seeking justice have faced severe security and judicial persecution. Despite filing formal complaints to identify those responsible for their loved ones' deaths, military and judicial authorities have ignored their demands. Instead, the state has brought charges against the families themselves, including 'propaganda against the system' and 'assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security'. This systematic pressure has resulted in harsh prison sentences for numerous justice-seekers, many of whom remain behind bars.

Security agencies maintain constant surveillance over these families, using threats, harassment of relatives, physical assault, repeated summonses, arbitrary arrest and dismissal from employment to silence them. Memorial services for the deceased are routinely restricted, blocked or met with the arrest of family members. Similarly, posting critical content online triggers immediate threats and legal prosecution. Ultimately, this relentless intimidation has forced many justice-seeking families to flee the country.

This section of the report examines the cases of justice-seeking family members who have faced judicial prosecution over the past year for their pursuit of truth and justice.

Crucially, in the months following the period covered by this report, thousands more families have joined the ranks of justice-seekers across Iran after the bloody crackdown on the January 2026 protests. Many have already faced intense pressure, threats and judicial prosecution by the authorities, the documentation of which falls outside the scope of this current report.

ADINEZADEH FAMILY

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; torture and ill-treatment; failure to investigate the killing of his son; constant surveillance, summonses, and threats; prohibition on visiting the grave and holding commemorative ceremonies; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of family contact; familial punishment



BACKGROUND

Abolfazl Adinezadeh, a 17-year-old protester, was killed on 8 October 2022 in the city of Mashhad during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests after being struck by dozens of pellets fired by the Mashhad Special Unit forces.¹⁰⁵ Since then, his family—including his father Ali Adinezadeh, mother Goldasteh Hosseini Jahanabad, and sister Marzieh Adinezadeh—have repeatedly been summoned and detained, with judicial cases opened against them solely for their pursuit of justice and demanding and investigation into Abolfazl’s killing.

Ali, who published images of his son’s grave accompanied by messages demanding justice on his Instagram page, has been summoned on multiple occasions to Revolutionary Court prosecutors on charges including “spreading false information”, “disturbing public opinion”,¹⁰⁶ “propaganda against the system”, and even “publishing obscene images”.¹⁰⁷ In 2022, this justice-seeking father filed a complaint against law-enforcement and military forces with the Military Prosecutor’s Office of Khorasan Razavi Province, requesting a review of CCTV footage from the time of his son’s killing.¹⁰⁸ However, after approximately one year, not only was no investigation carried out into his son’s death, but intelligence agents stated that any consideration of the case was conditional upon the family’s silence and cooperation with the authorities. Ahead of Abolfazl’s birthday on 16 June 2023, as the family were preparing to hold a ceremony, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence arrested Marzieh. When her father protested, he was also arrested after being beaten, and security forces subsequently raided the family home and detained other family members.

On 25 July 2024, Ali was rearrested after being summoned to Branch One of the Investigative Unit of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office of Quchan.¹⁰⁹ He was released on bail from Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison after 48 days.¹¹⁰

UPDATE

In May 2025, Marzieh reported that judicial cases had been opened against her parents, sister, and two uncles on charges including “disruption of public order”, “spreading false information”, “intentional assault”, and “resisting officers”.¹¹¹ On 21 December 2025, Ali was arrested while attending the seventh-day memorial of Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12) and held incommunicado and access to legal counsel. During the subsequent proceedings, the investigator, Mohsen Vahedian Azimi, reportedly acted abusively, threatening the family with arrest and confiscating their bank cards. Ali was ultimately released on bail on 29 December.

On 31 January 2026, Marzieh announced on social media that Branch 118 of Mashhad Criminal Court had ordered her father to pay 386 million tomans (approx. €3,058) in compensation to plainclothes agents. The ruling was issued on charges of “intentional assault against officers” stemming from the violent arrest of family members in June 2023.

MARYAM AKBARI MONFARED



Age: 51

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; familial punishment; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care; failure to observe the principle of separation of offences

BACKGROUND

Maryam Akbari Monfared has been demanding justice for her siblings, 25-year-old Abdolreza who was arrested at 17 and executed in the 1988 Massacre, 20-year-old Alireza who was executed by firing squad at 20, her sister 30-year-old Roghieh who had a 3 year old daughter at the time of her arrest and also executed in the 1988 massacre, and her 29-year-old brother Gholamreza who was killed under torture in 1985. Maryam was arrested on 31 December 2009 and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on the charge of moharebeh (enmity against god) for a phone call from her dissident sibling in May 2010. On 15 October 2016, she filed an official complaint from behind bars for an investigation into the execution of her siblings in the summer of 1988. In an open letter, she discussed the killings of her four siblings and the pressure her family had endured. Her complaint was rejected by the judiciary and she was warned that such petitions would exacerbate her situation and prevent her release. At trial, she was told by the judge that "she was paying for the activities of her brother and sister." Undeterred, she sent another complaint two weeks later. In February 2017, she also submitted a complaint to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, requesting that they hold the Islamic Republic accountable in relation to the case of her siblings. Roghieh and Abdolreza were recognised as victims of enforced disappearance. In March 2021, she was forcibly transferred from Evin Prison to Semnan Central Prison and subjected to intensified pressures,¹¹² In August 2022, Semnan Prison authorities prevented Maryam's daughters from visiting their mother for refusing to wear a *chador*. The officer in charge of visitation brutally beat Maryam, grabbing her neck and began strangling her until she was suffocating,¹¹³ and she was then denied family visits for three months.¹¹⁴ To isolate Maryam, prison authorities prohibited other prisoners from communicating with her. Despite suffering from fatty liver disease and doctors' emphasis on the urgent need for back and knee surgery, she was denied treatment and medical facilities. In the thirteenth year of her imprisonment, the Ministry of Intelligence opened a new case against her.¹¹⁵ A year later, Branch 101 of Semnan Criminal Court sentenced her on the charge of "spreading false information" to two years' imprisonment and a fine in absentia.¹¹⁶ In July 2024, her lawyer, Hassan Taj, reported that a new case had been opened against her, with the request that her family's assets be confiscated for the benefit of Setad-e Ejra'i-ye Farman-e Emam.¹¹⁷

UPDATE

On 22 October 2024, after serving her 15-year prison sentence, Maryam was transferred to Qarchak Prison to serve the additional two-year term. She was also denied the right to family visits while held at the prison.¹¹⁸

Maryam released from the prison on 8 April 2026 after serving 17 years without any furlough.

FEIZOLLAH AZARNOUSH

Age: 60

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Unknown

Judicial status: 5 years' imprisonment

Violations: Failure to investigate the killing of his son; arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of family visits and contact



BACKGROUND

Feizollah Azarnoush is the father of Pedram Azarnoush, who was killed during the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" nationwide protests in the city of Dehdasht. Pedram, an 18-year-old protester, was shot in the heart and killed by a sniper using live ammunition on 23 September 2022 during a protest gathering by residents of Dehdasht near the governor's office. He demanded the identification and prosecution of those who ordered and carried out his son's killing.

On his Instagram account,¹¹⁹ Feizollah criticised government policies related to the suppression of protesters and, while pursuing justice and demanding punishment for his son's killers, expressed solidarity with other justice-seeking families. This justice-seeking father has also repeatedly called for the release of political prisoners, the abolition of the death penalty and an end to the oppression of women.

UPDATE

On 19 June 2025, Feizollah was arrested in Yasuj and transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility, and subsequently to Yasuj Central Prison. Despite suffering from multiple medical conditions, he was denied access to medical treatment. He was also denied family visits and telephone contact, as well as access to a lawyer. He suffers from prostate disease and spinal canal stenosis, and his family learned of his condition only through other prisoners. Feizollah was temporarily released from prison on 4 August 2025.

In December 2025, Branch 102 of Criminal Court in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province sentenced Feizollah to 23 years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security", "propaganda against the system", and "forming and membership of a group opposed to the system".¹²⁰

In May 2026, Branch One of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province Court of Appeal overturned this verdict and sentenced Feizollah to five years' imprisonment for "participation in establishing a group with the intent to disrupt national security," three years for "propaganda activities to support and strengthen Israel," three years for "assembly and collusion against national security," two years for "insulting the Supreme Leader," one year for "propaganda against the system," and one year for "insulting Islamic sanctities." While the cumulative sentences total 15 years, the application of Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code means that the terms will run concurrently, making the single heaviest sentence of five years enforceable.



MANOUCHEHR BAKHTIARI

Age: 63

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Bandar Abbas Central Prison

Judicial status: 2 years' exile and open case

Violations: Failure to investigate the killing of his son; summonses and threats; prohibition on visiting his son's grave and holding commemorative ceremonies; arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care, lack of access to a lawyer, prolonged solitary confinement; failure to observe the principle of separation of offences in prison; familial punishment

BACKGROUND

Manouchehr Bakhtiari is the father of Pouya Bakhtiari a 27-year-old protester of those killed during the November 2019 protests. Pouya was shot in the head and killed by forces of the Islamic Republic during protests in the city of Karaj on 16 November 2019. Despite his efforts, no one has ever been arrested or prosecuted in connection with his son's killing. Instead, judicial authorities have opened multiple cases against him. On 13 July 2020, Manouchehr was arrested at the airport while returning from Kish to Tehran and transferred to Bandar Abbas Central Prison. He was held in the Ministry of Intelligence's solitary confinement for around five months before being released on bail. On 29 April 2021, he was violently rearrested while visiting his son's grave.¹²¹ The Revolutionary Court sentenced him to three years and six months' imprisonment, two years of exile to Bandar Abbas and a two-year travel ban prohibiting him from leaving Iran.¹²² In Karaj Penitentiary, Manouchehr was housed with prisoners convicted of theft, in violation of the separation of crimes and was denied transfer to a hospital despite confirmation by the Legal Medicine Organisation that treatment outside prison and urgent prostate surgery were medically necessary. This followed opposition by the Karaj Prosecutor, the head of the Karaj Revolutionary Court and the head of the Prisons Organisation.¹²³ Manouchehr went on hunger strike in protest. Instead of receiving medical care, on 20 July 2022 he was transferred to solitary confinement in Qazvin Central Prison and deprived of family visits and telephone contact.

On 1 November 2023, Branch 1 of the Qazvin Revolutionary Court sentenced Manouchehr to six months' imprisonment on the charge of "insulting the Supreme Leader".¹²⁴ Two months later, Branch 1 of the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 18 years' imprisonment and 74 lashes on charges of "propaganda against the system", "forming a group with the aim of disrupting security", "membership in hostile groups", and "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security".¹²⁵ On 20 April 2024, Branch One of the Alborz Province Court of Appeal quashed the verdict on the grounds that the presiding court lacked jurisdiction, referring the case to the Kish Revolutionary Court.

In April 2024, Branch 110 of the Qazvin Criminal Court sentenced Manouchehr to 13 months and 15 days' imprisonment on the charge of "spreading false information through computer systems"¹²⁶ which was subsequently upheld. In December of the same year, Saba Bakhtiari, his sister, stated that security forces had attempted to transfer him from hospital—where he had been admitted for a second surgical procedure due to blood clotting—to prison. However, doctors prevented the transfer after he suffered a heart attack.¹²⁷

UPDATE

Manouchehr was released on 29 September 2025 after completing his sentence. Authorities left him in Bandar Abbas to serve his exile, without clothing, money or a telephone. He was not even permitted to meet his wife and young child before being sent into exile. In a continuation of the security pressures against him, he was rearrested in February 2026 at his place of exile and transferred to Bandar Abbas Central Prison.

MASHALLAH KARAMI

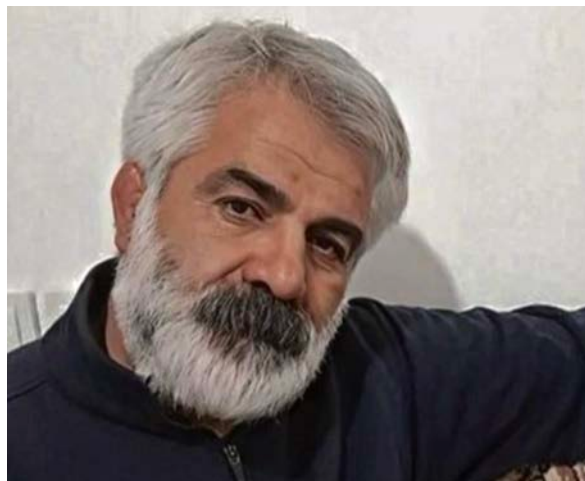
Age: 52

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 3 years and 7 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care; denial of prison leave; prolonged solitary confinement; harassment of family members; unlawful confiscation of property



BACKGROUND

Mashallah Karami is a Kurdish street vendor and the father of Mohammad Mehdi Karami, a "Woman, Life, Freedom" protester who was arrested for participating in the 40th day memorial service for slain protester Hadis Najafi and executed in January 2023. In remembrance of his son, Karami prepared and distributed food to people in need through his personal Instagram page. He also supported other justice-seeking families by visiting the graves of those killed during the protests. Mashallah was arrested at his home on 22 August 2023, the eve of the anniversary of those killed during the "Woman, Life, Freedom". All electronic devices, bank cards, and mobile phones belonging to the family were also confiscated. His lawyer, Amirhossein Kouhkan, was also arrested while attempting to follow up on the case. Mashallah was transferred to Karaj Penitentiary after being held in solitary confinement for three months. His wife and other son were also forced to leave their home due to sustained pressure and repeated raids by security forces. Security forces also smashed Mohammad Mehdi's sports medals and commemorative plaques, burned his clothing and destroyed the greenery the family had planted around his grave.

In May 2024, Branch 2 of the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced Mashallah to five years' imprisonment on the charge of "acquiring property through illegitimate means", one year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system", and ordered the confiscation of his property.¹²⁸ In September 2024, the Alborz Province Court of Appeal reduced the five-year sentence to three years and seven months and the one-year sentence to eight months. The order for confiscation of property was upheld.¹²⁹

In a separate case, on 16 August 2024, Branch 102 of Criminal Court II in Nazarabad sentenced Mashallah to seven years and eight months' imprisonment, a fine and confiscation of property on the charge of "money laundering", and to 14 months' imprisonment on the charge of "acquiring property through illegitimate means".¹³⁰ All three punishments were imposed as the most severe penalties. However, his lawyer, Ali Sharifzadeh Ardakani stated that the funds and property in question had been donated by members of the public to support him and that there was no private complainant in relation to these payments.¹³¹

On appeal, the two charges of money laundering and acquiring property through illegitimate means were merged into a single charge titled "acquiring property deemed illegitimate". The sentence of eight years and ten months' imprisonment was overturned and reduced to one year's imprisonment, and both the fine and the confiscation of property were annulled.

UPDATE

In August 2025, Shahla Orouji, Mashallah's lawyer, reported that his appeal had been rejected for the second time.¹³² Following the consolidation of his cases, Mashallah's prison term was reduced to three years and seven months. He was conditionally released from Karaj Penitentiary in February 2026.



RAHELEH RAHEMIPOUR

Age: 73

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Released on parole

Judicial sentence: 4 years and 2 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care

BACKGROUND

Raheleh Rahemipour is a justice-seeking sister and aunt who has pursued the fate of her brother, Hossein Rahemipour, and the enforced disappearance of her niece, Golrou Rahemipour. Hossein Rahemipour was executed in 1984 for membership of the "Worker's Way Organisation" during the 1988 Massacre. Hossein's pregnant wife was arrested alongside him, and their child, Golrou, was born in Evin Prison. Prison authorities separated Golrou from her mother on the pretext that she was suffering from jaundice and informed the family two days later that the child had died. Golrou's body was never returned to the family. In March 2016, Raheleh Rahemipour filed a complaint with the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, seeking clarification of the fate of Golrou.¹³³ In February 2017, Raheleh was sentenced to one year's imprisonment on the charge of "propaganda against the system" by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court, presided over by "Death Judge" Salavati. This sentence was commuted on 29 January 2019 by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeal to a fine of eighty million rials,¹³⁴ with her lawyer served on 14 April 2019.

On 12 November 2019, Raheleh was arrested at the "Laleh Park Assembly" of justice-seeking families, transferred to Ward 2A of Evin Prison, and later released on bail. On 16 June 2020, Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Rahemipour to six years and four months' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the system". On 18 November 2023, she was arrested after appearing at the Evin Prosecutor's Office and transferred to Evin Prison to serve the sentence. After an appeal on March 2025, her sentence was reduced to four years and two months' imprisonment.

Raheleh suffers from multiple serious medical conditions, including a brain tumour, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, joint pain, cataracts, and thalassaemia minor. According to the Legal Medicine Organisation, she was deemed unfit to serve a prison sentence and required immediate transfer outside prison for medical treatment.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, she was deprived of medical care for an extended period and, despite the deterioration of her health, her requests for furlough were denied.

UPDATE

Following Israel's attack on Evin Prison in July 2025, Raheleh was transferred to Qarchak Prison in Varamin. She was later granted furlough, and was released on bail in October 2025.

SAEEDIANJU FAMILY

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; solitary confinement; deprivation of employment; familial punishment



BACKGROUND

Milad Saeedianju was a 26-year-old protester who was shot dead by state forces on 16 November 2022 in Izeh during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests. Following Milad Saeedianju's killing, his family filed a formal complaint requesting the CCTV footage from the site of the killing. To date, they have received no response from the authorities.

In March 2023, Zahra and Omid, Milad's sister and brother, were arrested while holding a birthday commemoration at his grave and were released several days later. A month later, Zahra was dismissed from her job at Mofid and Kian Children's Hospitals in Tehran. On 9 July 2023, after meeting with other justice-seeking families, Zahra was arrested in Tehran and transferred to solitary confinement at an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organisation detention facility. After approximately a month, she was released on bail from Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz. On 21 October 2023, unidentified motorcyclists issued death threats against her. Zahra was arrested after reporting on the incident on social media.

She spent one week in solitary confinement at an IRGC Intelligence Organisation facility and was then transferred to Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz. Zahra's lawyer, Reza Shafakhah, stated that despite a formal declaration of legal representation and an in-person appearance at Branch 2 of the Izeh Prosecutor's Office, Hashemi, the investigating judge of the branch, refused to accept the representation.¹³⁶ Zahra was released on 10 December 2023.¹³⁷

Zahra and Omid Saeedianjoo were summoned on 25 March 2024 to Branch 2 of the Izeh Prosecutor's Office on charges of “propaganda against the system” and “disruption of public order”.¹³⁸

UPDATE

In April 2025, unidentified individuals with covered faces assaulted Narges, Milad's teenage sister, causing injuries to her face and eye. On 3 November 2025, Zahra was summoned to appear before the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court, accused of “encouraging and inciting young people to killing with the aim of disrupting national security” and “propaganda against the system.”



NAHID SHIRPISHEH

Age: 59

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; failure to observe the principle of separation of offences in prison; denial of family visits; denial of medical care; familial punishment

BACKGROUND

Nahid Shirpisheh is the mother of Pouya Bakhtiari, a 27-year-old protester shot dead by security forces on 16 November 2019. Following her son's killing, she resigned from her teaching position at the request of the Ministry of Education.¹³⁹ Nahid was arrested on 6 April 2021 in Isfahan, together with a group of justice-seeking families, and released a day later. On 13 September 2021, security agents raided her home and confiscated her mobile phone.¹⁴⁰ Amid widespread arrests of civil activists and justice-seeking families across various cities, security forces rearrested Nahid at home on 11 July 2022.¹⁴¹ After several days of interrogation, she was transferred on 28 July 2022 to the women's ward of Kachouii Prison in Karaj. The state-affiliated Fars News Agency accused Nahid and other justice-seeking family members of "receiving money from abroad to create unrest and insecurity".¹⁴²

In September 2022, Branch 1 of the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced Nahid to five years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security" and "propaganda against the system". On 29 October 2022, she was transferred from Kachouii Prison to Zanjan Central Prison. On 10 November 2022, on the eve of the anniversary of Pouya Bakhtiari's killing, security forces broke into her home while she was imprisoned, vandalising the property.¹⁴³

On 2 July 2023, Nahid was assaulted by several prisoners. She was subsequently requested transfer to solitary confinement due to concerns for her personal safety in the general ward. In July 2024, Mona Bakhtiari, her daughter, stated that security agents had attempted to extract a forced confession from her mother in exchange for granting a ten-day furlough.¹⁴⁴ Throughout her imprisonment, despite severe physical and psychological distress, she was repeatedly denied telephone contact, family visits, access to medical care, and transfer to external medical facilities.

UPDATE

In February 2025, Nahid Shirpisheh attempted to commit suicide due to severe psychological and physical distress and was transferred to solitary confinement.¹⁴⁵ ¹⁴⁶ Having been barred from making telephone calls by order of judicial authorities, she began a hunger strike on 27 February 2025, resulting in significant weight loss and further deterioration of her condition.¹⁴⁷

On 24 September 2025, Nahid was released from Zanjan Central Prison after serving her sentence.

MINA SOLTANI ZARE

Age: 56

Activism/rights: Justice-seeking family

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 8 months' imprisonment and a fine

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; harassment of family members; prolonged solitary confinement; torture and ill-treatment



BACKGROUND

Mina Soltani Zare, known as *Daye Mina (mother Mina)*, is the mother of Shahriar Mohammadi, who was killed during the 2022 protests in Bukan. Her 28-year-old son was killed during the nationwide demonstrations sparked by the death of Jina (Mahsa) Amini in the custody of the morality police, after state security forces fired live ammunition at his car. Mina was subjected to threats, harassment and repeated summonses to deter her from seeking justice against the perpetrators and commanders of the murder. Despite this intense pressure, she has remained resolute in her pursuit of accountability and continues to express solidarity during meetings with other justice-seeking families.¹⁴⁸

In addition to Mina, her family has faced systematic pressure and intimidation from security agencies. During Shahriar's funeral, which was heavily controlled by state forces, security agents began kicking his corpse. When his brother, Milad, protested against this desecration, agents shot him twice in the legs at close range and forcibly injected him with sedatives. Later, on the eve of the first anniversary of her son's death, Mina was arrested and subjected to psychological torture, while her daughter, Asrin, was violently detained during a security raid two days prior to the commemoration.

On 11 September 2024, during the second anniversary of Shahriar's death, security forces surrounded and arrested Mina on the street, assaulting her with an electric stun gun. She was taken to the Bukan Intelligence Bureau for interrogation before being transferred to an Urmia intelligence facility. Her home was subsequently raided and vandalised, Mina's home, confiscating her late son's photographs and personal belongings.

UPDATE

Mina was released on bail from Urmia (Darya) Central Prison in October 2024. She was sentenced in March 2025 by Branch 101 of the Bukan Criminal Court to eight months' imprisonment and payment of a fine of one million tomans on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "appearing in public spaces without hijab".¹⁴⁹

On the eve of the third anniversary of Shahriar's killing, security forces threatened other justice-seeking families and pressuring them to distance themselves from Mina to ostracise her.

Her other children, Milad and Asrin, were forced to leave Iran as a result of continued harassment and threats by security forces.

CIVIL ACTIVISTS

Civil activists operate peacefully outside formal power structures to defend fundamental rights, promote civil liberties, and advance social justice. In Iran, these individuals play a crucial role across a diverse spectrum of activities, including raising public awareness, documenting human rights violations, organising civic initiatives, engaging on social media, and participating in peaceful protest campaigns.

Despite enduring targeted repression and lengthy prison terms, these human rights defenders have steadfastly continued their struggle across the country. Over the past year, however, they have faced a marked escalation in security pressures, judicial restrictions, and systematic crackdowns on their social initiatives. This onslaught has manifested in arbitrary arrests, frequent interrogations, and the widespread fabrication of legal files, often leading to politically motivated charges and severe prison sentences.

To exert pressure on civil society actors, security agencies routinely employ hostile tactics such as telephone threats, the harassment and summoning of family members, the imposition of employment bans, and denial of access to education. Furthermore, the pervasive monitoring of social media means that publishing any dissent now risks swift judicial prosecution. Retaliation has been triggered by online content condemning the chemical attacks on girls' schools, expressions of solidarity with justice-seeking families, or participation in anti-death penalty campaigns.

Frequently acting at the behest of security agencies, judicial authorities have convicted activists on broad, security-related charges. These typically include "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion to against national security", "disrupting public order", and "maintaining links with foreign-based media". The legal proceedings in the majority of these cases are conducted behind closed doors, completely lacking fair trial standards and denying defendants effective access to legal counsel. In several instances, the judiciary has even unlawfully reactivated dormant or closed cases to impose fresh prison terms on active dissidents.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have similarly contended with profound structural challenges in recent years. Security agencies have systematically sought to cripple or entirely halt their operations by arresting their members, sealing their offices, and imposing sweeping operational bans.

ZARTOSHT AHMADI RAGHEB

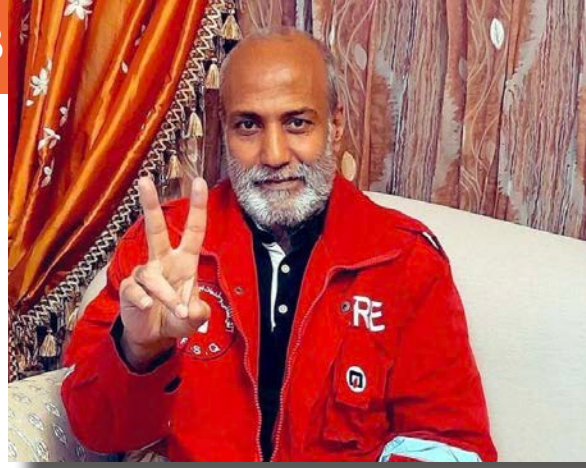
Age: 60

Field of activity: Human rights activist

Status: Karaj Penitentiary

Judicial status: 6 years and 8 months' imprisonment and two years' internal exile

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care; deprivation of employment



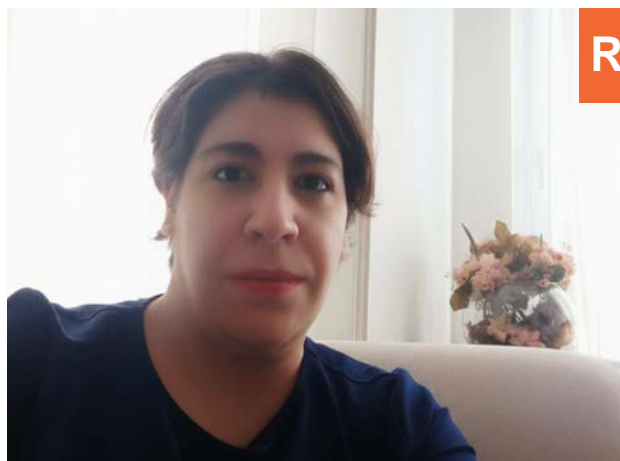
BACKGROUND

Zartosht Ahmadi-Ragheb is a human rights activist and death penalty abolitionist who has previously been arrested and imprisoned several times, with multiple cases against him. Zartosht is one of the 14 activists who signed a letter to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei demanding his resignation. He was a firefighter at the Tehran Fire Department for 17 years but was fired from his job for his civil activities. In May 2017, Zartosht was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court of Shahriar to nine months' imprisonment. After protesting against his dismissal from the fire service and a sit-in outside the Shahriar municipality in January 2019, he was briefly detained and later released.¹⁵⁰ He was rearrested by security agents at his home on 27 August 2019 and transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. He was charged with "propaganda against the system, insulting the leadership and insulting the heads of the three branches of state." After spending five months in temporary detention, Zartosht was released on bail on 13 January 2020. On 30 May 2020, Zartosht was summoned to Evin Court for "photographing prohibited areas." He surrendered at Branch 4 of the Execution of Criminal Sentences of the Public and Revolutionary Court of Shahriar on 15 June 2020, where he was arrested. Zartosht was released from prison on 3 January 2021 after completing his sentence and pending his other charges.¹⁵¹ Zartosht was re-arrested on 21 February 2022 and taken to Evin Prison,¹⁵² and subsequently transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary and from there to Rajai Shahr Prison in March. On 23 May, he was informed that he was sentenced to a year imprisonment in absentia three months prior. Zartosht was released from prison on 13 February 2023 after being included in the general amnesty list. However, he was rearrested at a protest against the mass poisoning of school children on 16 March and taken to Evin Prison. On 29 May, he was sentenced to five years imprisonment for "assembly and collusion against national and international security" and 8 months for "propaganda against the system" by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court.¹⁵³ He was sentenced in absentia due to his refusal to be shackled and handcuffed.

After being transferred to Ghezlhesar Prison in September 2023, Zartosht announced in February 2024 that he had joined the "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" movement and that he would go on hunger strike every Tuesday in protest against the wave of executions.¹⁵⁴ In June 2024, following his protest against the transfer of Ahmadreza Haeri to solitary confinement, he himself was transferred to solitary confinement in Unit 3, which houses death row prisoners.¹⁵⁵ One month later, in a separate case opened against him for protesting and participating in teachers' demonstrations against the serial poisoning of school children, he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and two years' exile to the city of Qeydar on a charge of "propaganda against the system."¹⁵⁶

UPDATE

Zartosht has been on several hunger strikes behind bars which has severely deteriorated his health. On 15 November 2025, he was transferred to Karaj Penitentiary on the orders of the Karaj prosecutor. On 22 November 2025, he was transferred to solitary confinement as punishment after protesting restrictions imposed on prisoners, including limitations on telephone calls and compulsory yard time. He was returned to the general ward in late December 2025.



REZVANEH AHMADKHAN BEIGI

Age: 36

Activism/rights: Human rights activist

Status: Released

Judicial status: 20 months' imprisonment and one open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; lack of fair trial and due process; unfair trial; denial of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement

BACKGROUND

Rezvaneh Ahmad-Khanbeigi is a human rights activist who was first arrested in 2018 sentenced by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court to four years and five months' imprisonment and was released on 10 February 2019. She was rearrested when 11 intelligence forces stormed her home on 18 November 2019 and transferred to the IRGC Intelligence's Ward 2A of Evin Prison following her participation in the November 2019 nationwide protests where she was beaten. Rezvaneh's trial was held on 1 February 2020 at Branch 24 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court and in the judgement issued the following day, she was sentenced to five years in prison for "assembly and collusion against national security" and a year in prison for "propaganda against the system" for her peaceful participation in the November 2019 protests and Instagram posts in support of political prisoners' rights. On May 12, her husband, Behfar Lalezary announced on his Instagram page that Branch 36 of the Court of Appeals had upheld Rezvaneh's six year sentence. Rezvaneh suffered from epileptic seizures in prison and was granted furlough in August 2020 and 25 June 2021 and subsequently released after being pardoned. However, she has been regularly summoned by the IRGC Intelligence Organisation.

Rezvaneh, who was pregnant at the time, and her husband were arrested on 18 September 2023 and transferred to Evin Prison. She was tried in December 2023 before Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, on charges of "assembly and collusion against internal security" and "propaganda against the system", and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. This ruling was upheld by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeal,¹⁵⁸ but was later reduced to 20 months.

As her delivery date approached, and amid repeated obstruction by judicial authorities and prison officials, Rezvaneh was granted a ten-day furlough on 18 September 2024. Despite an eight-month furlough being registered in the judicial system, authorities ordered her return on 29 September 2024. As the sole caregiver of her newborn, she stated that the supervising prosecutor had unlawfully recorded her sentence as absconded and, citing the illegality of this action, she refused to return to prison.

UPDATE

Rezvaneh was arrested at her home on 6 July 2025 while having a breastfeeding baby. She was released hours later after being subjected to interrogations. She was threatened and warned to stop posting about the situation of political prisoners.

Rezvaneh's sentence has temporarily been suspended to allow her to care for her young child, but she has been issued a warning that she will be recalled to prison to serve the remainder of her term if she persists with her civic activities.

HASTI AMIRI

Age: 30

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 3 years' imprisonment and an open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; deprivation of education



BACKGROUND

Hasti Amiri is a civil and anti-death penalty activist who regularly joined Narges Mohammadi and other activists in protests against executions outside prisons. On 14 March 2022, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced Hasti to one year's imprisonment on a charge of "propaganda against the system".¹⁵⁹ She was also sentenced to supplementary punishments, including confiscation of her mobile phone, a ban on membership in political parties and a prohibition on activity on social media for two years. Hasti, who was a student activist at the time, was barred from participating in any student gatherings other than compulsory classes.¹⁶⁰ The acts cited as evidence against her included publishing photographs on 8 March and posting tweets opposing the death penalty. The Tehran Province Court of Appeal later upheld the sentence.¹⁶¹ In August 2022, while on the verge of defending her university thesis, Hasti was arrested at her home¹⁶² and transferred to Evin Prison to serve the one-year sentence. She was released six months later.¹⁶³ One month after her release, in March 2023, following her participation in protests against mass poisoning of school children, she and 35 other students were barred from entering Allameh Tabataba'i University. Cases were also brought against four students, including Hasti.¹⁶⁴ Her case, involving charges including participation in protest gatherings and opposition to the death penalty, was tried in July 2023 by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court, presided over by Iman Afshari. Hasti was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system".¹⁶⁵ Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal upheld the verdict. Following her summons to Branch 1 of the Enforcement of Judgments Office of the Evin Prosecutor's Office, she was transferred to Evin Prison on 6 April 2024.¹⁶⁶ Hasti was released from Evin Prison on 4 August 2024 while holding a photograph of Pakhshan Azizi, a female Kurdish political prisoner on death row.¹⁶⁷

UPDATE

Hasti was arrested on 26 April 2025 after appearing before the Security Prosecutor's Office to be formally notified of the charges. She was transferred to the women's ward of Evin Prison due to a delay in posting bail and was released the next day. Several months later, in an in absentia ruling, she was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, a monetary fine, and a two-year ban on leaving Iran and on membership in political and social groups.¹⁶⁸

On 12 December 2025, Hasti was rearrested while attending the seventh-day memorial ceremony for Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12). She was held incommunicado in solitary confinement until she was released on bail on 23 January 2026.



SAMANEH ASGHARI

Age: 32

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement

BACKGROUND

Samaneh Asghari, a civil activist and an industrial engineering student at Kharazmi University, was arrested on 11 October 2022 during the nationwide "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests. In March 2023, she was sentenced to 18 years and 3 months' imprisonment³¹⁵ and was released from Qarchak Prison in May 2023 after being included in the general amnesty.³¹⁶ A few months later, in September 2023, Samaneh was rearrested after security forces raided her home³¹⁷, and was released on bail on 4 October.³¹⁸ In December 2023, Branch 29 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced her to one year's imprisonment on the charge of "propaganda against the state," which was subsequently upheld.³¹⁹ On 3 April 2024, after presenting herself at the Shahr-e Rey Prosecutor's Office, she was transferred to Evin Prison to begin serving her sentence. Behind bars, she and other women prisoners at Evin Prison issued a statement calling for an end to and investigation into sexual harassment during body searches.³²⁰

UPDATE

Samaneh Asghari was released from Evin Prison on 8 March 2025 after completing her sentence.

HASSAN BAGHERINIA

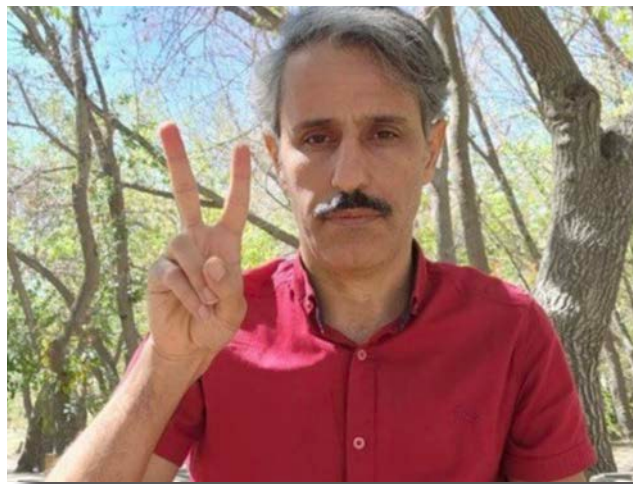
Age: 50

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 10 years and 9 months' imprisonment (five years of the sentence suspended for a period of five years)

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; lack of a fair trial and due process; ban on teaching; forced retirement; deprivation of salary and employment benefits



BACKGROUND

Hassan Bagherinia is a psychotherapist, former professor of educational sciences and former faculty member of the Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences at Hakim Sabzevari University. Following the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in 2022, he supported protesting students and objected to disciplinary rulings issued against them, which resulted in his suspension from the university. He also supported justice-seeking families by visiting the graves of those killed during the protests and, through videos published on social media, criticised government policies, the suppression of protests, and Ali Khamenei. Due to his continued civil activities, and following a complaint by the IRGC Intelligence Organisation, Hassan was summoned on 19 February 2023 to Branch 902 of the Mashhad Prosecutor’s Office. One month later, his case was closed by Branch 902 of the Mashhad Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office, the Disciplinary Board, and the Mashhad Revolutionary Court, and a stay of prosecution was issued.¹⁷⁵ Despite this, the administration of Hakim Sabzevari University continued to prevent him from entering the university and resuming teaching. In October 2023, in an unlawful move, the university president compelled him to apply for early retirement, while the university’s security office threatened him with dismissal if he refused. Hassan announced his “forced retirement” in December 2023.¹⁷⁶ Following the publication of a protest video in which he described Ali Khamenei as a tyrant, Hassan was arrested on 2 June 2024 after appearing at the Mashhad Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office. He was released a short time later on bail from Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison.

UPDATE

In March 2025, Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Mashhad, presided over by Judge Gholamreza Akbari-Moghaddam, sentenced Hassan to 10 years and 9 months' imprisonment on charges of “forming and administering a group with the aim of disrupting national security”, “insulting the Leader of the Islamic Republic”, and “assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security”. Five years of this sentence were suspended for a period of five years. He was also sentenced to a two-year ban on teaching at universities, higher education institutions, schools and educational centres, as well as a ban on leaving the country.¹⁷⁷ Following the outbreak of the 12-Day War, he stated on his Telegram channel that Ali Khamenei, together with Israel, was directly responsible for the killing of civilians in both countries.¹⁷⁸ Following these remarks, Hassan and his wife, Fatemeh Noradi, were arrested at their home in Mashhad on 18 June 2025 on charges of “insulting the leadership”, “propaganda against the system”, and “disturbing public opinion through support for Israel”.¹⁷⁹ Security forces confiscated all of the family’s electronic devices, including mobile phones, laptops, hard drives, and other digital equipment. His wife was released the following day, but Hassan was released on bail after one month from one of the IRGC Intelligence detention centres in Mashhad.¹⁸⁰

On 12 December 2025, Hassan was arrested while attending the seventh-day memorial ceremony for Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12) and was released several days later.



GOLROKH EBRAHIMI IRAEE

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Imprisoned in Evin Prison

Judicial status: 5 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair trial and due process; torture and ill-treatment; denial of access to lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement

BACKGROUND

Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee is a prominent activist and writer who was first arrested in 2014 and has been arrested multiple times and spent years behind bars since. In 2014, she was arrested for writing a novel about the stoning of a woman and was sentenced to six years' imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "insulting the sanctities". Following the confirmation of this sentence on 22 December 2015, she was arrested on 24 October 2016 to serve her sentence.¹⁸¹ After serving three years in prison, Golrokh was released in March 2019 upon completion of her sentence.¹⁸² Six months after her release, Golrokh was rearrested in connection with a new case that had been opened against while she was behind bars.¹⁸³ After being transferred to Qarchak Prison, she was beaten with an electric shock device in December 2019,¹⁸⁴ and was forcibly transferred to Ward 2A of the IRGC in Evin Prison. After 43 days of interrogation, she was returned to Qarchak Prison on 24 January 2021, but a few hours later was exiled to Amol Central Prison.¹⁸⁵ Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran subsequently sentenced her to three years and seven months' imprisonment on charges of "insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic" and "propaganda against the system". Singing a song in protest against the execution of Zanyar and Loghman Moradi (two Kurdish cousins executed on 8 September 2018 on charges of assassinating the son of the Friday prayer leader of Marivan), as well as letters she had sent from prison to human rights organisations, were cited as examples of "propaganda against the system". In April 2021, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran tried Iraee in absentia in relation to a new case opened against her in Qarchak Prison and sentenced her to one year's imprisonment on the charge of "propaganda against the system", along with a two-year ban on membership in political groups and a ban on leaving the country.¹⁸⁶ Following the consolidation of her sentences and her release from Amol Central Prison on 9 May 2022,¹⁸⁷ she was violently re-arrested five months later, on 26 September 2022, during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests.¹⁸⁸

In April 2023, Judge Iman Afshari presiding over Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, sentenced Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee to seven years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security" and "propaganda against the system", along with a two-year travel ban, a ban on residing in Tehran, a ban on membership in political parties and the confiscation of her mobile phone. This sentence was later reduced on appeal to five years' imprisonment, while the additional punishments were upheld.¹⁸⁹ Behind bars, Golrokh has repeatedly been denied family visits and subjected to physical assault. She has been forcibly transferred between different prisons on multiple occasions and has repeatedly gone on hunger strike in protest against the death penalty.

UPDATE

Golrokh was transferred to Qarchak Prison after the Israeli military strike on Evin Prison.¹⁹⁰ She was returned to Evin Prison on 9 October 2025. In April 2026, she was awarded the 2026 PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award by PEN America.

MOTAHARE GOONEI

Age: 29

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 21 months' imprisonment and two open judicial cases

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of fair trial and due process; denial of access to legal counsel; denial of medical care; denial of family visits; familial punishment; deprivation of education



BACKGROUND

Motahare Goonei is a civil activist, a dentistry student at Tehran University of Medical Sciences and a former political secretary of the Islamic Association of the University of Tehran. She has faced judicial prosecution and security pressure due to her outspoken criticism of the policies of the Islamic Republic and Ali Khamenei, as well as her opposition to the death penalty. Motahare was arrested in October 2022 during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprising and was released after several days. One year later, by a decision of the central committee of the Ministry of Health, she was transferred from Tehran University of Medical Sciences to Ardabil University of Medical Sciences on charges of “creating unrest and disorder” and was sentenced to 24 months’ suspension from her studies.¹⁹¹ Following a sit-in at the House of Music in protest against the death sentence of Toomaj Salehi, she was arrested on 1 May 2024 after a raid by IRGC Intelligence agents on her home and was released on bail several days later.¹⁹² In July 2024, Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced her to one year’s imprisonment.¹⁹³ On 8 October 2024, after being summoned to the Culture and Media Prosecutor’s Office in Tehran, she was arrested and transferred to Evin Prison to serve her sentence. Due to her continued protests against death sentences while in prison, she was for a period deprived of visitation rights. Motahare was released from prison on 16 March 2025 upon completion of her sentence.¹⁹⁴

UPDATE

Motahare was arrested on 14 June 2025 following a raid by Ministry of Intelligence agents on her home due to her protests against state policies regarding the war, and was transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. After her release, she published images of used bullet casings and bullet impact marks in her home, stating that the agents had entered with firearms during her arrest, broken her elbow, and severely beaten her parents.¹⁹⁵

Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison on 23 June 2025 and the severe damage to Ward 209, where Motahare was held, concerns about her condition increased due to lack of information, until it was announced on 16 July 2025 that she had been released on bail.¹⁹⁶

After her release, she criticised prison authorities for their disregard for prisoners’ lives during the attack, stating that the cell doors remained locked, even during the explosions, for 15 female prisoners, including herself, without any attempt by officials to ensure their safety. She added that the prisoners themselves were forced to break the doors and accused the authorities of the Islamic Republic of planning to kill political prisoners.

Two months after her release, Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced her to 15 months’ imprisonment on the charge of “propaganda against the system” and to six months’ imprisonment on the charge of insulting the Leader of the Islamic Republic.¹⁹⁷ was upheld on appeal in December 2025. Motahare continues to be banned from higher education.



AHMADREZA HAERI

Age: 43

Activism/rights: Human rights activist

Status: Ghezelhesar Prison

Judicial status: 6 years and 3 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of fair trial and due process; failure to observe the principle of separation of prisoners based on charges; denial of access to legal counsel; denial of medical care; seizure of property and freezing of bank accounts

BACKGROUND

Ahmadreza Haeri is a civil activist and one of the founders of the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” movement. He has faced multiple judicial cases and prison sentences due to his disclosures about human rights violations in Iranian prisons and open letters from prison. In 2014, after participating in a protest gathering outside the Presidential Office against the assault of political prisoners in Ward 350 of Evin Prison, he was sentenced to 3 years and 6 months' imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security”. On appeal, the sentence was reduced to 6 months' imprisonment and 74 lashes. After the flogging sentence was carried out, Ahmadreza was transferred to Evin Prison on 25 July 2020 to serve his sentence and was later transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary.¹⁹⁸ He was released on bail in October 2020.¹⁹⁹ In 2021, a new case was opened against him because of his disclosures about prison abuses. He was rearrested on 27 June 2022 and transferred to Ward 2A of Evin Prison.²⁰⁰ After being released on bail in August, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to 3 years and 8 months' imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security” and 8 months' imprisonment for “propaganda against the system”.²⁰¹ Ahmadreza was transferred to Evin Prison on 10 May 2023 to serve his sentence.²⁰² One month later, following disclosures about the deaths of prisoners Sasan Niknafs and Amirhossein Hatami in Greater Tehran Penitentiary, he was sentenced in absentia to 3 months and 1 day's imprisonment on charges of “spreading falsehoods”.²⁰³ Before his imprisonment in May 2023, security authorities had threatened the bail provider with confiscation of the bail, while his bank accounts were frozen and his personal vehicle seized.²⁰⁴ In July 2023, after exposing torture and describing the mock execution of death-row protester Saman Seydi (Yassin), Ahmadreza was again sentenced in absentia to 3 months and 1 day's imprisonment on charges of “spreading falsehoods”. In September, he was exiled to Ghezelhesar Prison.²⁰⁵ In November 2024, Ahmadreza announced that his prison sentence, which had secretly and unlawfully been withheld for one year by the Revolutionary Court and the Security Prosecutor's Office, had been increased to 6 years and 3 months.²⁰⁶

UPDATE

Ahmadreza's appeal was granted in September 2025 by Branch 39 of the Supreme Court. Due to his protest against the execution of Babak Shahbazi and criticism of the government, he has repeatedly been summoned to the Karaj Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office for interrogation.²⁰⁷ Ahmadreza also revealed that although he was twice included among those eligible for sentence reduction, security agencies directly intervened each time to prevent his release.²⁰⁸ On 29 March 2026, Ahmadreza and several other political prisoners in Unit 4 of Ghezelhesar Prison were transferred to solitary confinement after attempting to prevent the transfer of six political prisoners to the gallows. Ahmadreza was returned to the general ward in late April 2026. He was tried by Branch 1 of the Karaj Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office via videoconference on 19 May 2026 on the charge of “propaganda against the system” for publishing accounts and narratives concerning executions, advocating against the death penalty and drawing attention to violations of defendants' right to a fair trial.

LEILA HOSSEINZADEH

Age: 35

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement; failure to observe the principle of separation of offences; denial of medical care; deprivation of education



BACKGROUND

Leila Hosseinzadeh, former secretary of the University of Tehran Students' Union Council, was first arrested in December 2017 for participating in protests at the University of Tehran and was released on bail two weeks later.²⁰⁹ Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced her on 7 March 2018 to six years' imprisonment and a two-year ban on leaving Iran on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the system".²¹⁰ This sentence was reduced on appeal to three and a half years' imprisonment and a two-year travel ban. She was arrested on 28 July 2019²¹¹ and transferred to Evin Prison to serve her sentence.²¹² In March 2020, Leila was granted furlough and, due to a serious illness, was released after being deemed medically unfit to serve her sentence.²¹³ One year later, Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced her to an additional five years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and a two-year ban on online activities.²¹⁴ Among the charges against her were holding a birthday celebration for Mohammad Sharifi-Moghaddam, a Gonabadi dervish, and singing the song "Khun-e Arghavanha" in front of Sharif University of Technology.²¹⁵ This sentence was upheld on appeal,²¹⁶ and on 7 December 2021, agents arrested this civil activist with the use of force, without regard for her medical condition, and transferred her to Ward 20 of Evin Prison, while she was denied access to her required medication.²¹⁷ She was released on bail after 26 days behind bars.

One year later, on 20 August 2022, Leila was rearrested on the order of the Shiraz Prosecutor's Office and initially transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. She was then transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Shiraz, known as Ward 100.²¹⁸ One month later, she was transferred to the quarantine ward and the narcotics ward of Shiraz (Adel Abad) Central Prison, where she was held incommunicado. In early January 2023, without prior notice and with the use of force by prison officials, she was transferred back to Evin Prison.²¹⁹

In September 2024, Leila announced that, following confirmation by the Forensic Medical Commission that she was permanently unable to serve her sentence, the remainder of her sentence had been converted into a fine of 100 million tomans.²²⁰

UPDATE

In January 2025, Leila was sentenced by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "women appearing in public thoroughfares and public spaces without the Islamic hijab", after attending her Master's thesis defence in anthropology at the University of Tehran without a headscarf.²²¹ Following the issuance of this sentence, she stated that, during an in-person visit to the central administration of the University of Tehran, she learned that, in addition to her Master's programme, she had also been unlawfully expelled from her Bachelor's programme six years after graduation.²²²

In November 2025, Leila revealed that she had left Iran in a television interview.²²³



REZA KHANDAN

Age: 61

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Evin Prison

Judicial status: 4 years, 1 month and 16 days' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; detention in prison quarantine; harassment of family members

BACKGROUND

Reza Khandan, a civil activist who together with Farhad Meysami produced and distributed thousands of badges bearing the slogan "I Protest Against Mandatory Hijab" in 2018.²²⁴ This led to his arrest at his home on 4 September 2018.²²⁵ Reza, who had been released on bail on 23 December of the same year, was one month later sentenced by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, presided over by Abolqasem Salavati, to six years' imprisonment and bans on membership in political parties and groups, activities in cyberspace, media and press activities, and leaving the country, on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security" and "propaganda against the system". Following the acceptance of his request for retrial by the Supreme Court, this sentence was reduced to four years, one month and 16 days' imprisonment.²²⁶ Security forces again arrested him at his home on 14 December 2024. Nasrin Sotoudeh, a human rights lawyer and Khandan's wife, described the arrest as unlawful and stated that he had previously been granted amnesty and that his case had been closed.²²⁷ Mahmoud Behzadi-Rad, Khandan's lawyer, also stated that the Ministry of Intelligence, as the investigating authority in the case, had previously opposed the enforcement of this sentence.²²⁸ On 23 December 2024, this civil activist was transferred from the prison quarantine ward to Ward 8 of Evin Prison. According to his wife, Ward 8 is infested with bedbugs, prisoners sleep on the floor with a single blanket, and access to telephone calls is limited.²²⁹ On 24 December 2024, Reza Khandan began a hunger strike in protest against his transfer and the inhumane conditions in Ward 8, as well as the death of Mehdi Khodayari, a political activist, in police custody.²³⁰ Six days later, he ended his hunger strike following assurances by officials that conditions would improve.

UPDATE

Reza Khandan has repeatedly been denied visits with his wife and daughter, Mehraveh, on the pretext that they did not comply with the hijab requirement in prison. Mehraveh was forced to leave Iran due to pressure by the authorities on the family. His son, Nima, was beaten by prison officials during a visit with his father on 29 January 2025 and was arrested. His grandmother, who was accompanying him, lost consciousness and was transferred to hospital.²³¹ Following this incident, Reza went on hunger strike in protest against the beating of his son and the ban on family visits. Officials transferred him from Ward 8 of Evin Prison to the quarantine ward. A few days later, due to the psychological pressure this caused on his children, he ended his hunger strike.²³² Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison on 23 June 2025, Reza, in a report from Greater Tehran Prison entitled "Report of a Crime", described the violent and unlawful nighttime transfer of hundreds of prisoners in handcuffs and shackles, under threat of weapons, from Evin Prison to Greater Tehran Penitentiary.²³³ In August 2025, they were violently transferred back to Evin Prison. In November 2025, Reza announced that, due to being denied visits with his wife and daughter for 10 months on the pretext of "non-compliance with hijab", he had for about one month been staging a daily sit-in in front of the office of Ward 7 of the prison in protest. On 1 April 2026, his daughter, Mehraveh Khandan, stated that his life and the lives of other prisoners were in serious danger due to wartime conditions and the authorities' practice of "welding shut the ward doors".

BEHFAR LALEHZARI

Age: 44

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Imprisoned in Evin Prison

Judicial status: 5 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; lack of a fair trial and due process; solitary confinement; denial of medical care; denial of family visits



BACKGROUND

Behfar Lalezari, a civil activist and legal professional, was first arrested on 11 July 1999 during the student movement protests (the attack on Tehran University dormitories). He was only 17 years old at the time of his arrest and was released after six months. He was arrested again in 2008, this time for writing slogans and publishing an article criticising the Islamic Penal Code. Judge Pirabbasi sentenced him to five years' imprisonment on charges of insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic. This sentence was reduced on appeal to three and a half years' imprisonment, and he was released from Evin Prison in March 2012. In 2015, Behfar was once again arrested for writing an article and was sentenced by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Moghiseh, to seven years' imprisonment on charges of "insulting Islam and sacred values through the press" and "insulting the Leader". This sentence was upheld on appeal, and after serving three years in prison, he was released from Evin Prison in late February 2019.²³⁴ Following increased pressure on civil activists after the suppression of the 2022 protests, Behfar was arrested again on 18 September 2023 in the street together with his wife, Rezvaneh Ahmad Khanbigi.²³⁵ Police from the Yaftabad Security Police in Tehran subsequently raided their home, searched the premises, and confiscated electronic devices and work materials belonging to both him and his wife, before taking Behfar to the Yaftabad Security Police facility. After eight days, he was transferred to Vozara detention centre and subsequently to Evin Prison. In January 2024, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, sentenced him to five years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against internal security". This sentence was upheld by Branch 36 of the Tehran Province Court of Appeal. Behfar who suffers from asthma and heart disease, lost vision in his left eye while in prison, and his right eye has also developed impaired vision. He has lost his teeth as a result of beatings and torture, and his requests for medical leave have repeatedly been denied. For a prolonged period, Behfar was deprived of medical care and access to his heart medication and asthma inhaler, and prison authorities refused his family's requests to deliver his medication. Judicial authorities and prison officials have repeatedly rejected his requests for temporary leave and for visits with his child, who was born after his imprisonment.

UPDATE

Behfar went on hunger strike in 2024 in protest against the failure to examine his appeal and only ended it after assurances by officials that his demands would be reviewed.²³⁶ Both his appeals were rejected by the Supreme Court after months of waiting. A third appeal was granted in October 2025, and the case was referred to Branch 21 of the Court of Appeal for review. However, the Tehran Province Court of Appeal upheld his five-year prison sentence.²³⁷



NARGES MOHAMMADI

Age: 54

Activism/rights: Human rights activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 18 years' imprisonment, 2-year ban on leaving the country and 2 years of exile

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; denial of access to a lawyer; sexual harassment; prolonged solitary confinement; torture and inhuman punishment; failure to observe the principle of separation of offences; deprivation of the right to leave the country and obtain a passport

BACKGROUND

Narges Mohammadi is the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize winner, human rights and anti-death penalty activist, vice president of the Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC) and a member of the “Legam” campaign (Step by Step to Stop the Death Penalty). First arrested in 1998, fired from her job for her activism in 2009, Narges has become one of the most prominent human rights activists. In 2011, she was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment,²³⁸ later reduced on appeal to six years and enforced in May 2012. She was released several months later on medical grounds after the Legal Medicine Organisation declared her unfit to serve her sentence. Narges was rearrested in May 2014. In May 2016, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Salavati, sentenced her to 16 years' imprisonment on charges including “assembly and collusion”, “propaganda against the system”, and forming and administering the “Legam” group. The sentence was upheld on appeal.²³⁹ In December 2019, after joining a sit-in by female prisoners in solidarity with the families of those killed during the November 2019 protests, she was assaulted by the prison director and transferred to Zanjan Central Prison. After her release, she stated that she had been sexually assaulted during the transfer, but her complaint yielded no result. A month later, two new security-related cases were opened against her, which she rejected as “baseless”. She was released on 9 October 2020,²⁴⁰ but rearrested in November 2021. One month later, she was sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment and 80 lashes.²⁴¹ On 24 January 2022, in a five-minute trial, Narges was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment and 70 lashes.²⁴² In March 2022, she was arrested at home and transferred to Qarchak Prison,²⁴³ where she was denied medical treatment and medication.²⁴⁴ In June 2024, Branch 29 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced her to one year's imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system”, citing, among other things, her boycott of parliamentary elections and letters to the Swedish and Norwegian parliaments.²⁴⁵ She was also denied access to medical treatment outside prison because she refused to comply with compulsory hijab rules, until she went on hunger strike.

UPDATE

The enforcement of Narges Mohammadi's prison sentence was suspended for three weeks in December 2024 following tumour-removal surgery and a bone graft, after confirmation by the Legal Medicine Organisation, and she was granted medical furlough.²⁴⁶ While on furlough, she announced in December 2025 that she had been denied a passport and banned from leaving the country, and that she would face an additional 10 years' imprisonment if returned to prison.²⁴⁷ In December 2025, during the seventh-day memorial ceremony for Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12), Narges was violently arrested and beaten with batons to the head and neck. She later said she had been threatened with death during the arrest and transferred twice to hospital because of the severity of the beatings. On 2 February 2026, she began a hunger strike protesting her arrest, detention, communication ban and visitation rights. She was also denied adequate medical care. On 7 February 2026, the Revolutionary Court in Mashhad sentenced her to seven years and six months' imprisonment, a two-year travel ban, and two years of internal exile on charges of “assembly and collusion” and “propaganda against the system”. Several days later, she was transferred to Zanjan Prison. According to her brother, Hamidreza Mohammadi, she suffered a heart attack on 24 March 2026. During visits on 29 March and 11 April 2026, her family and legal team observed clear signs of serious deterioration in her physical condition. Around one month later, her lawyer reported that on 10 May 2026, after spending 10 days in a hospital in Zanjan, his client had been transferred by ambulance to Pars Hospital in Tehran. Following the posting of a heavy bail, she was admitted for urgent treatment under the supervision of her own medical team.

MEHDI MAHMOUDIAN

Age: 47

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Subject to an open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer and medical leave



BACKGROUND

Mehdi Mahmoudian is a civil activist who has been repeatedly arrested due to his disclosures²⁴⁸ regarding ill-treatment, torture, the killing of protesters and other human rights violations in Iran. During the 2009 protests, after exposing information about those killed and about the Kahrizak detention facility—a site used by the Islamic Republic to detain and torture arrested protesters—he was arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. After completing his sentence, Mahmoudian was released from prison in 2014. Mehdi was rearrested on 4 February 2020²⁴⁹ after signing a letter protesting the suppression of the November 2019 protests and for publishing a call to light candles in solidarity with the families of those killed in the Ukrainian plane shooting. He was released on bail 12 days later. On 22 August 2020, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced Mehdi Mahmoudian to four years' imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion with intent to disrupt national security” and to one year's imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system”, along with a two-year ban on membership in political parties and a ban on leaving the country. This sentence was upheld on appeal. On 14 August 2021, he, along with several human rights defenders, went to the Tehran Association for the Protection of Citizens' Rights to file a complaint against the National Headquarters for Combating Coronavirus and Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Republic, for mismanagement of the COVID-19 crisis.²⁵⁰ However, security agents and two judicial officials entered the meeting and arrested the complainants. In February 2022, Mehdi was sentenced to four months' imprisonment on charges of “spreading falsehoods”, following a complaint by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps regarding information he had published on his Twitter account about a critical interview concerning the IRGC's involvement in the economy.²⁵¹ In June 2022, Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran also sentenced Mehdi, in a case related to the COVID-19 crisis, to four years' imprisonment, a two-year ban on membership in political parties, a ban on leaving the country, and four months of public service.²⁵² This sentence was upheld on appeal. He was released from Evin Prison on 3 January 2024.²⁵³

UPDATE

In February 2025, Mehdi was sentenced by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court to 8 months' imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system” following his disclosures about bedbugs in Evin Prison, and was transferred to Evin Prison on 3 February 2025 to serve his sentence. The next day, he began a dry hunger strike, refusing food and medication in protest against “unjust sentences and repression”.²⁵⁴ Three days later, due to deterioration in his physical condition, he was granted medical furlough and later returned to prison. Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison, Mehdi and other political prisoners were transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary in July 2025 and returned to Evin Prison in August 2025. He was released from Evin Prison on 15 September 2025 after completing his sentence.²⁵⁵ In November 2025, Mizan, the judiciary's news agency, announced that legal proceedings had been initiated against him on charges of “spreading falsehoods regarding the the case of Mostafa Tajzadeh”.²⁵⁶ On 31 January 2026, Mahmoudian was arrested for signing the “Statement of 17”, which described Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Republic, as the main person responsible for the killings of protesters in January 2026. He was transferred to Noshahr Prison, where he was held alongside prisoners convicted of violent crimes and subjected to deprivation of warm clothing, inadequate food, severe restrictions on yard time and psychological pressure. He was released on bail on 17 February 2026.



ZIA NABAVI

Age: 42

Activism/rights: Student activist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; prolonged solitary confinement; deprivation of education

BACKGROUND

Zia Nabavi (Seyed Ziaeddin Nabavi Chashmi), a civil activist, was arrested following the 2009 protests and initially sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. Upon review, the Court of Appeal acquitted him of the charge of "enmity against God (*moharebeh*) through links with the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran" and ultimately sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion, propaganda against the system, and disruption of public order". Zia was released from Semnan Central Prison on 15 June 2017 after serving approximately nine years in prison.²⁵⁷

In July 2021, Branch 26 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court sentenced him to one year's imprisonment, a two-year ban on leaving the country, and restrictions on attending Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery, veterans' care facilities, and emotional control classes in Qom.²⁵⁸ His activities in "student organisations" and participation in mourning gatherings with students following the shooting down of the Ukrainian passenger plane by missiles fired by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps were cited among the charges against him.²⁵⁹ Zia was also charged with "propaganda against the system" for participating in a student gathering at Allameh Tabataba'i University in protest against the poisoning of school children during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests. In August 2023, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to one year's imprisonment.²⁶⁰ Following the confirmation of this sentence on appeal on 6 April 2024, Zia reported to the Evin Prosecutor's Office and was transferred to Evin Prison to serve his one-year sentence.

UPDATE

In May 2024, Zia reported in a letter from prison that Ward 8 of Evin Prison was infested with bedbugs and described the resulting health problems.²⁶¹ Following this disclosure, the prison disciplinary council deprived him of contact with his family and transferred him to punitive solitary confinement as punishment.²⁶² Zia was released from Evin Prison on 1 December 2025.

Previously barred from higher education as a "starred student" — a label used in Iran for students punished over political activities — Zia returned to university after his release and is currently pursuing a PhD in sociology at Tarbiat Modares University.

POURAN NAZEMI

Age: 55

Activism/rights: Human rights activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Subject to an open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of access to a lawyer; lack of a fair trial and due process; physical and sexual abuse during detention; harassment of family members



BACKGROUND

Pouran Nazemi, a civil activist, poet, and writer, has for many years supported political prisoners and civil activists and has worked in southeastern Iran to empower women and support children. She has participated in anti-death penalty campaigns and is one of the signatories of a statement by 14 political activists calling for the resignation of Ali Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Republic. Due to her civil activities, Pouran has been repeatedly summoned and arrested since 1986, when she was a 15-year-old teenager. On 27 May 2021, together with a group of former prisoners, she filed a complaint at judicial offices in Tehran against those responsible for abuses in solitary confinement cells.²⁶³ A few days later, she participated in a protest gathering in front of Shiraz (Adel Abad) Central Prison in support of the Afkari brothers, where she was again arrested and released after several hours.²⁶⁴ One month later, Pouran was arrested during two protest gatherings—one in support of protesters in Khuzestan and another against the Taliban—and was released on the same day on both occasions. During an attack by security and plainclothes agents on the second gathering, her nose and ribs were fractured. On 19 October 2022, she was arrested at her home and transferred her to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. On 1 February 2023, she was rearrested, along with her sister, while they were visiting their ill father at Mehrگان Hospital in Kerman. She was subjected to violence and sexual assault during the arrest. She was initially taken to Police Station 21 in Kerman (a narcotics detention facility) and subsequently transferred to Kerman Central Prison, and was released on bail after several days. On 2 September 2023, Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court of Jiroft charged her with “enmity against God (*moharebeh*)” and “corruption on earth (*efsad-fil-arz*)”. Among the charges against her were “insulting Islamic sanctities, disrupting national security, inciting people to commit crimes, insulting officials, armed action against the Islamic Republic and propaganda against the system”. Pouran stated that she would not participate in the courts of the Islamic Republic and lived in hiding for approximately two years, while continuing her civil activism. The documentary film “Panahgah 25” was made based on her life in hiding.

UPDATE

On 6 February 2025, Pouran stated in a video message that, due to her disclosures regarding systemic corruption among officials in southern Kerman, judicial authorities and the IRGC Intelligence Organisation had declared her *mahdur al-dam* (a person whose killing is legal) and had called on the public to kill her.²⁶⁵ After months of uncertainty, and at a time when it appeared that her case had been closed, Branch 1 of the Jiroft Prosecutor’s Office issued another indictment against her in September 2025 and informed her that her previous case, involving the charges of “corruption on earth” and “enmity against God”, had been reopened for reconsideration. On 12 December 2025, Pouran was violently arrested with several other civil activists, during the seventh-day memorial ceremony for Khosrow Alikordi (see page 12). Following her transfer to prison, Pouran’s physical condition severely deteriorated as a result of interrogation pressure, to the extent that her sister announced that she had been transferred to hospital in a coma in early February 2026. Ultimately, on 4 February 2026, after the end of interrogations and due to the deterioration of her physical condition, she was temporarily released on bail.



ARASH SADEGHI

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Human rights activist

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 4 years and 3 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged solitary confinement; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; harassment of family members

BACKGROUND

Arash Sadeghi is a prominent human rights and anti-death penalty activist who was first arrested in 2009 during a student gathering in front of Allameh Tabataba'i University released three months later on bail. In November 2010, his mother died during a raid by IRGC Intelligence agents on their home. The Legal Medicine Organisation determined the cause of death to be "blunt force trauma to the head".²⁶⁶ He was subsequently sentenced to one year's imprisonment and five years' suspended imprisonment. In September 2014, he was arrested again, and on 21 February 2016, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to 15 years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security", "insulting sanctities", "forming illegal groups", and "insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic". The Court of Appeal upheld this sentence and also enforced his previously suspended four-year sentence, bringing his total sentence to 19 years' imprisonment. On 7 June 2016, he was arrested when he appeared at the Evin Prosecutor's Office and was transferred to Evin Prison to serve his sentence.²⁶⁷ On 24 October of the same year, he began a hunger strike in protest against legal violations.²⁶⁸ Despite his deteriorating physical condition, authorities failed to transfer him to hospital.²⁶⁹ In September 2018, Arash was diagnosed with chondrosarcoma, a rare type of bone cancer, for which he underwent surgery to remove a tumour from his shoulder.²⁷⁰ Despite doctors' recommendations that he remain hospitalised after the operation, security agents returned him to prison, resulting in infection and loss of function in his arm.²⁷¹ In May 2021, Arash was released after serving five and a half years of imprisonment. However, two months later, during a gathering in support of protests in Khuzestan, he was violently arrested, and released after several hours.²⁷²

On 4 October 2022, Arash was arrested again and transferred to Evin Prison. He was temporarily released from Evin Prison on 21 January 2023 pending the completion of judicial proceedings. On 25 January 2023, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced him to five years and eight months' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the system", along with a two-year ban on leaving the country and residing in Tehran (his place of residence).²⁷³

On appeal, his sentence was reduced to four years and three months' imprisonment,²⁷⁴ but he was also sentenced to a two-year ban on leaving the country, membership in political groups, online activity and exile for a period of two years. This sentence was upheld by Branch 36 of the Tehran Province Court of Appeal.²⁷⁵

UPDATE

Arash was beaten on the street by IRGC forces from Sarallah Division on 21 June 2025 who left him there despite his critical physical condition.²⁷⁶

KHASHAYAR SEFIDI

Age: 33

Activism/rights: Student activist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; deprivation of education; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care



BACKGROUND

Khashayar Sefidi, a Master's student in music at the University of Art, Tehran, organised protest gatherings in the university courtyard alongside a group of students during the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests. He also published videos on Instagram in which, by playing musical pieces, he protested against the repression of citizens, commemorating Armita Geravand (a student opposed to mandatory hijab who died under suspicious circumstances in the Tehran metro) and Kian Pirlalak (a child killed during the protests).²⁷⁷ University security officials repeatedly summoned and threatened him by telephone in response to these activities. In November 2022, Khashayar was summoned to a meeting of the Student Affairs Office and accused of disrupting order at the university and dormitories.²⁷⁸ Shortly thereafter, despite being invited by the university and expressing his willingness to attend a disciplinary committee hearing, the university's security office prevented him from attending and presenting his defence.²⁷⁹ Although university authorities declared his case closed in the same month, he was again summoned to the security office, where he was interrogated, threatened, and at times encouraged to cooperate. He was ultimately assured that there would be no obstacle to the continuation of his studies. However, in December 2022, while Khashayar was working on his thesis, he was suspended from the university for one semester by an initial ruling of the Central Disciplinary Committee of the Ministry of Science. His appeal was unsuccessful, and the initial ruling was upheld in full. During the period between the issuance of the initial ruling and the appeal decision, which lasted two academic semesters, he was effectively denied access to the university's educational system and was unable to select courses, resulting in a deprivation of education for two semesters. Furthermore, because the university had incorrectly recorded his academic status for the first semester as "enrolled" and "normal", his request for an extension of study was denied, and he was expelled from the university on 19 December 2023.²⁸⁰

On 27 April 2024, Khashayar announced that he would stage a sit-in and hunger strike for three days at the Iran House of Music in protest against the death sentence issued against Toomaj Salehi.²⁸¹ Five days later, after being summoned and appearing before the Evin Prosecutor's Office, he was released on bail. On 3 July, he was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court of Tehran to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system". Following the rejection of his request for retrial on appeal, Khashayar was transferred to Evin Prison on 17 November 2024 to serve his one-year sentence.

UPDATE

Khashayar went on a wet hunger strike for five days from 27 January 2025 in protest against political Mehdi Hassani and Behrouz Ehsani being sentenced to death.²⁸² Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison on 23 June 2025, he was transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary in handcuffs and shackles. Despite a leg injury and psychological harm resulting from the bombardment, he was denied access to medical care and treatment. He was transferred back to Evin Prison in August and ultimately released on 30 September 2025 upon completion of his sentence.



SAYEH SEYDAL

Age: 47

Activism/rights: Civil activist

Status: Qarchak Prison

Judicial status: 3 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of medical care; deprivation of employment; torture and ill-treatment; familial punishment

BACKGROUND

Mahvash (Sayeh) Seydal, a civil activist with a PhD in international law, has been active on Clubhouse and social media, where she has openly criticised the policies of officials of the Islamic Republic and opposed mandatory hijab and the issuance of death sentences. She has also supported families seeking justice and the families of those killed during protests. Sayeh was dismissed from her position at the Tehran Municipality due to her activities and support for the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests. She was arrested on 21 June 2023 and transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison.²⁸³ She was released on bail on 23 July 2023. In October 2023, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, sentenced Sayeh to one year's imprisonment on charges of “spreading falsehoods”, along with a monetary fine, a five-year ban on the use of social media, and a ban on leaving the country. Although this sentence had been suspended for a period of five years, she was arrested on 7 October 2024 after appearing before the Evin Prosecutor's Office, without being formally informed of the charges, and was transferred to the women's ward of Evin Prison. Her suspended sentence was converted into an enforceable custodial sentence. Two months later, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced her to two years' imprisonment and a monetary fine on charges of “spreading falsehoods”, “propaganda against the system”, and appearing without the mandatory hijab. Posts published on social media concerning the poisoning of school children, support for families seeking justice, and participation in “No Death Penalty” campaigns were cited as grounds for these charges.

UPDATE

On 3 February 2025, after returning from medical furlough, Sayeh refused to wear a chador and was beaten and insulted by a security officer at Branch 1 of the Enforcement of Sentences Office of the Evin Prosecutor's Office. One month later, in a new case at the Evin Prosecutor's Office, Sayeh was formally charged with “destruction of property” and “disturbing public order”. In protest against the lack of medical attention and treatment for prisoners, Seydal began a hunger strike and refused medication on 25 May 2025. After 16 days, she ended her strike following the agreement of the director of Evin Prison to address her demands.²⁸⁴ Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison, she was transferred to Qarchak Prison. In a letter dated 23 December 2025 from that prison,²⁸⁵ she criticised the “warmongering” policies of the Islamic Republic, the failure of authorities to uphold the law, and the neglect of prison conditions, and called for the release of political prisoners during wartime.²⁸⁵ Shortly thereafter, in an audio message from prison, referring to the catastrophic conditions in Qarchak Prison, she stated that the Islamic Republic had deliberately transferred political prisoners there in order to expose them to death.²⁸⁶ Fatemeh Seydal, Sayeh's sister, was dismissed from the North Drilling Company after publishing the audio file. On 18 August 2025, Sayeh was granted medical furlough. In an image published at the time of her release, the phrase “Qarchak Torture Facility” was written on her hand.²⁸⁷ Following this brief seven-day furlough, she returned to prison in late August 2025 and is currently imprisoned in Qarchak Prison.

**ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION
OF CHILD LABOURERS
AND STREET CHILDREN**



جمعیت دفاع از کودکان کار و خیابان



Hossein Mirbahari



Afshin Heiratiyan

BACKGROUND

The Association for the Protection of Child Laborers and Street Children (Jamiat Defa az Koodakane Kar va Khiaban) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation established in 2000 in Tehran. The NGO conducts research and advocacy on the abolition of child labour and the protection of children's rights. It received its licence to operate in 2003. The Association is composed of a group of civil activists and has identified its main objectives as ensuring the fundamental rights and basic needs of working children, supporting them in confronting exploitation and arbitrary arrest, and promoting the participation of working children in matters affecting their own lives.²⁸⁸ Members have continued their activities for years under pressure from security institutions. Its premises have been sealed on multiple occasions, and some of its members have been arrested.²⁸⁹ Among them is Afsaneh Azimzadeh, a children's, women's and labour rights activist and a member of the organisation, who was arrested in January 2021.

UPDATE

Following increased government pressure after the outbreak of the 12-Day War between Iran and Israel, Hossein Mirbahari, one of the founders of the NGO, was arrested on 21 June 2025.²⁹⁰ Security forces in Pardis raided his home, searched his personal belongings, and, without informing his family, arrested him and transferred him to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. He was released after 30 days of interrogation and detention in solitary confinement.²⁹¹ Several months later, in October 2025, security agents arrested Hossein at his sister Nadia's home. They also confiscated Nadia's mobile phone and instructed her to report to the Moghaddasi Prosecutor's Office on 18 October.²⁹²

Following Hossein's arrest, security forces raided the premises of NGO, confiscating the belongings of beneficiaries, social workers, and activists present at the centre in front of terrified children, and sealed the premises.²⁹³ Afshin Heiratiyan, another member of the NGO, was also arrested on 11 November 2025 during a violent raid by security forces on his mother's home.²⁹⁴

Hossein Mirbahari was released on bail from Evin Prison on 27 November 2025, where he spent 33 days in solitary confinement.²⁹⁵

TEACHERS

Despite facing increasingly dire economic hardships over the past year, Iranian teachers have been subjected to an unprecedented escalation in security and judicial persecution. Rather than addressing legitimate trade union grievances, the authorities have treated teachers' demands strictly as a national security threat.

Dozens of union activists, including members of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teacher Trade Associations, have been summoned and arbitrarily detained across various cities for participating in peaceful rallies or expressing dissent on social media. Prosecuted under broad charges such as "propaganda against the system" and "assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security", many have received heavy prison sentences, exile or face permanent dismissal. In several egregious instances, teachers were assaulted and detained inside educational facilities, directly in front of their students and colleagues. In at least one documented case, security forces resorted to using firearms to arrest a teacher on school premises.

Additional punitive measures deployed against educators include forced termination of employment, intimidation, and coercion to delete online content and cease social media activism. Furthermore, security agencies have systematically targeted and arrested prominent figures within these associations to undermine their influence and fracture their operational capacity. Driven by this relentless state pressure, several active union members were forced into exile over the past year.

This section profiles the educators who have faced state harassment and judicial prosecution over the past calendar year.



KOKAB BODAGHI PEGAH

Age: 41

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Incommunicado after arrest

Judicial status: Unknown

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; deprivation of salary and benefits; harassment and ill-treatment; unlawful confiscation of property; deprivation of public services; enforced disappearance

BACKGROUND

Kokab Bodaghi Pegah, a physical education teacher at secondary schools in Izeh, Khuzestan, and a trade union activist, has participated in numerous teachers' protests and has criticised government policies regarding the suppression of teachers in her speeches. She has called on the government to take action to ensure free education and the right to education for all children. Kokab has also strongly criticised, in a letter to the Minister of Education, the presence of clerics and seminary students in schools. Due to her trade union activities, Kokab has been repeatedly summoned, threatened with dismissal, and deprived of teachers' salaries and benefits. In December 2022, the Department of Education of Izeh unlawfully removed her eligibility for benefits under the teacher ranking scheme from her new salary ruling, despite her qualification for it.²⁹⁶ In February 2023, the Khuzestan Primary Board for Administrative Violations sentenced this trade union activist to three months' suspension from employment.²⁹⁷ In July 2023, this penalty was reduced on appeal to one month. On 17 June 2023, a hearing was held at the Revolutionary Court of Ahvaz to examine the charges against Kokab and other teacher activists.²⁹⁸ The charges included "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion against national security", and "membership in groups whose aim is to disrupt national security". Although Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court acquitted her and other members of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Union, this ruling was challenged by the prosecutor's representative under pressure from security institutions, and the case was referred to the Court of Appeal in August 2023.²⁹⁹ On 20 June 2024, the Primary Board for Administrative Violations of the Khuzestan Department of Education sentenced this teacher to four months' suspension from employment on charges including "membership in a trade union WhatsApp group" and "cooperation and communication with the channel of the illegal Coordinating Council".³⁰⁰ Her court hearing in October 2024 was held without her chosen lawyer being allowed to attend.³⁰¹ Following the conclusion of the hearing, she was temporarily released on bail set at one billion tomans (approximately \$15,000).

UPDATE

On 7 January 2025, Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court sentenced Kokab to five years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system".³⁰² This ruling was later overturned by the Court of Appeal, and she was acquitted.

During the mass arrests that followed the January 2026 nationwide protests, Kokab was arrested at her home in Izeh on 26 January 2026, with her mobile phone confiscated and a summons served for her to appear before the Intelligence Office. She has been held incommunicado and her husband has officially filed a missing person complaint with judicial authorities.

MASOUD FARHIKHTEH

Age: 59

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Karaj Penitentiary

Judicial status: 3 years and 6 months imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; denial of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement



BACKGROUND

Masoud Farhikhteh, a school teacher, a member of the Islamshahr Teachers' Trade Union, and a member of the Coordinating Council and the committee for negotiating the release of detained teachers, has for years been active in advocating for free and quality education for students, improving teachers' living conditions, and securing the release of imprisoned teachers. He has been repeatedly summoned and arrested since 2017.³⁰³ In 2022, Massoud travelled to Sanandaj to negotiate with the Director General of the Kurdistan Department of Education and to support imprisoned teachers. He was arrested prior to the Teachers' Day gathering on 1 May and was released on bail on 11 May. The following day, however, security forces raided his home and arrested him again.³⁰⁴ He was temporarily released on bail on 8 June of the same year. In September 2022, this member of the Teachers' Trade Association was sentenced by Branch 2 of the Criminal Court of the Vali-Asr Judicial Complex in Tehran to one year's imprisonment and 74 lashes for participating in unauthorised gatherings. He was arrested on 3 December in front of the Alborz Province Department of Education.³⁰⁵ Massoud, who was transferred to the security ward 209 of Evin Prison, was later moved on 7 January 2023 to Ward 6 of Greater Tehran Prison and was temporarily released on 1 February 2023.³⁰⁶ On 1 May 2023, he was rearrested during a raid by security forces on his home in Karaj. After 23 days of detention in solitary confinement in Evin Prison and two days in Ghezelhesar Prison, he was released.³⁰⁷ In April 2024, the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court charged Massoud with "propaganda against the system" for participating in protests, delivering speeches and supporting imprisoned teachers, and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment. Due to the absence of a prior criminal record, this sentence was converted into a monetary fine.³⁰⁸ The Kurdistan Province Court of Appeal later acquitted him of these charges.³⁰⁹

UPDATE

On 18 December 2024, Branch 2 of the Karaj Revolutionary Court sentenced Massoud to six years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the system", together with a two-year ban on participation in groups, a travel ban, and a ban on residing in the provinces of Tehran, Alborz, Qazvin, Lorestan, and Kurdistan.³¹⁰ On appeal, the sentence was reduced to three years, six months, and one day's imprisonment.³¹¹ On 16 September 2025, during the general assembly of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations in Shahreza, he was arrested alongside other trade union activists and transferred two days later from Isfahan to Karaj Penitentiary.³¹² In October 2025, after publishing a statement from prison, he was held in solitary confinement for 12 days and temporarily denied contact with his family.³¹³ In December 2025, Masoud announced that he had joined the "No Death Penalty Tuesdays" movement and had been participating in the weekly hunger strikes.³¹⁴ Consequently, he was transferred to solitary confinement for the third time in two months. On 29 January 2026, together with several political prisoners, he issued a joint statement condemning the widespread and violent suppression of the nationwide January 2026 protests and expressing solidarity with them. On 16 March 2026, he began another hunger strike in protest against prison conditions and the Prisons Organisation's failure to address prisoners' situation. Despite suffering from a thyroid condition, he continues to be denied adequate medical care in prison.



MOHAMMAD HABIBI

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Teacher trade unionist

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to a lawyer; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of medical care; dismissal from employment and deprivation of employment; denial of family visits; torture and ill-treatment

BACKGROUND

Mohammad Habibi, a teacher, spokesperson for the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, and former spokesperson of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association, has carried out extensive activities to advance teachers' demands and promote justice within the education system. He has repeatedly condemned the poisoning of school children and called for the perpetrators to be held accountable. In March 2018, security agents raided his school and arrested him in front of students and fellow teachers using pepper spray.³¹⁵ He was released on bail 44 days later, but during a peaceful teachers' protest on 10 May 2018, he was violently rearrested by security forces.³¹⁶ Mohammad was held in solitary confinement for one week with a bruised body and injured ribs, without any medical care, and was subsequently transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary where he was denied medical treatment for three months, during which his fractured rib healed without specialised care. In August 2018, Mohammad was sentenced to 10 years and six months' imprisonment, 74 lashes, a two-year ban on participation in political and social parties, and a ban on leaving the country on charges of "assembly and collusion" and "propaganda against national security".³¹⁷ This sentence was upheld in late December 2018 by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeal.³¹⁸ He was repeatedly transferred between Evin Prison and the Greater Tehran Penitentiary and, despite underlying health conditions, was repeatedly denied medical care. Prison authorities also prevented him from meeting with his family as a form of punishment. Habibi was dismissed from his job by order of the Ministry of Education. After serving two and a half years of imprisonment, he was released from Greater Tehran Prison on 10 November 2020 under an early release directive.³¹⁹ As his trade union activities continued, Mohammad was again arrested on 30 April 2022 and held in solitary confinement for more than 50 days. On 23 October 2022, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him to three years and seven months' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system".

Mohammad was released from prison on 8 February 2023 after being included in a general amnesty.³²⁰ However, on 5 April 2023, security forces violently arrested him during a raid on his workplace and transferred him to Evin Prison.³²¹ After 47 days of detention in solitary confinement, he was released on bail on 22 May.³²² In October 2023, the Administrative Violations Board of the Ministry of Education issued a dismissal order against Habibi. This decision was upheld by the Administrative Justice Court.³²³ Participation in and organisation of trade union gatherings and membership in the Teachers' Trade Association were among the charges against him.

In August 2024, the Shahriar Revolutionary Court sentenced Mohammad to six months and one day's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system" for protesting the poisoning of school children.³²⁴ Following the confirmation of this sentence on appeal and the issuance of a summons, he was arrested on 10 November 2024 and transferred to Evin Prison.

UPDATE

Mohammad Habibi was released from Evin Prison in March 2025 upon completion of his sentence.³²⁵

ALI KOROSHATI

Age: 52

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; summonses and threats; deprivation of employment benefits



BACKGROUND

Ali Koroshati, a teacher, vice-chair of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Union, a member of the Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, and a trade union activist, has for years been engaged in advocating for the rights and demands of teachers. He has been repeatedly summoned, threatened with dismissal, and deprived of promotion and professional advancement due to his trade union activities. The Ahvaz Revolutionary Court has repeatedly summoned him in connection with his union activities. On 12 November 2018 (on the morning of a teachers' sit-in and strike), Ali was arrested along with Pirouz Nami, secretary of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Association, following a raid by IRGC forces in Ahvaz. Using Pirouz Nami's mobile phone—who was an administrator of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Association channel—security forces posted a message that same night announcing the cancellation of the sit-in and strike.³²⁶ Ali was released on bail on 12 December 2018.

On 12 May 2022, while he had gone to the Ahvaz Security Police to follow up on the situation of one of his detained colleagues, Ali was again arrested and released after a day of interrogation.

Security bodies within the Ministry of Education subjected Ali to sustained pressure throughout his teaching career. In December 2022, the Ministry of Education unlawfully removed the ranking scheme provision from his new salary ruling.³²⁷ In 2023, he was suspended from service for two months. With increasing pressure on activists, the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court summoned him on 17 June 2023 on charges of “propaganda against the system”, “assembly and collusion against internal security”, and “disrupting national security”.³²⁸

Although Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court of Ahvaz acquitted him and other members of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Association, this ruling was challenged by the prosecutor's representative under pressure from security institutions, and the case was referred to the Court of Appeal in August 2023.³²⁹

UPDATE

On 8 January 2025, Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court, presided over by a newly appointed judge, sentenced Ali to five years' imprisonment on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security” and to one year's imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system”.³³⁰ This sentence was later overturned on appeal, and he was ultimately acquitted.



HOSSEIN RAMEZANPOUR

Age: 44

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: New case pending

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and attention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged detention; torture and ill-treatment during detention

BACKGROUND

Hossein Ramezani, a teacher, member of the board of directors of the North Khorasan Teachers' Union, and member of the Teachers' Assembly, has faced security and judicial pressure because of his activism. In 2017, when security institutions and the Cyber Police (FATA) repeatedly summoned him because of criticism expressed on social media. In 2018, after participating in teachers' protest, Hossein was arrested and interrogated in solitary confinement for three weeks. In 2019, in two separate cases, he was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment and two sentences of 74 lashes each (148 lashes in total).³³¹ One of the 74-lash sentences was immediately carried out, while the prison sentence, later reduced to 2 years, was not immediately enforced. Because of his support for public protests on social media and his union activities, Hossein was sentenced in 2021 by Branch 1 of the Enforcement of Sentences Office of the Bojnourd Prosecutor's Office to 1 year's imprisonment on charges of "spreading falsehoods" and "propaganda against the system". He was transferred to Bojnourd Central Prison in February of that year,³³² and conditionally released around 6 months later. In the same year, the Administrative Violations Board of the Ministry of Education opened a case against him and ordered his one-year internal exile to Maneh and Samalqan County in North Khorasan Province.

During the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests in 2022 and the intensification of security pressure on civil society, his previous 2-year prison sentence was reactivated. In March 2023, IRGC Intelligence agents violently arrested him during a school ceremony, in front of students and teachers and at gunpoint,³³³ and transferred him to Bojnourd Central Prison to serve the earlier sentence. After serving half of his sentence, his imprisonment was converted into a licenced release in October 2023, and following the suspension of the final 4 months of his sentence, Hossein Ramezani was released from prison in late October 2024.

UPDATE

In April 2025, Hossein was sentenced by Branch 105 of the Bojnourd Criminal Court to 2 years' imprisonment on charges of "spreading falsehoods with intent to disturb public opinion". The sentence was based on his online activities in 2022, although the case had previously been declared closed following the issuance of a general amnesty. During the January 2026 protests, Hossein was arrested in Bojnourd on 9 January 2026 and held incommunicado for 21 days in solitary confinement in the detention centre of the Bojnourd Intelligence Department.

Hossein was temporarily released from Bojnourd Central Prison in late March 2026 after posting bail of 1 billion tomans (approximately €13,000).

MOHAMMADREZA RAMEZNADEH

Age: 52

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 14 months' imprisonment and a fine

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; forced retirement



BACKGROUND

Mohammadreza Rameznadeh is a retired teacher, former head of the Coordination Council of Iranian Teachers' Association and head of the North Khorasan Teachers' Union. In 2018, he was detained twice because of his union activism— first for 9 days and then for 35 days — and spent a total of 38 days in solitary confinement. In February 2020, the Primary Board for Administrative Violations of the Ministry of Education sentenced Mohammadreza to early retirement with a one-grade demotion because of his participation in teachers' protests and gatherings. The punishment reduced his pension salary and benefits to a lower employment grade.³³⁴ In addition, the Bojnourd Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 15 years' imprisonment, 74 lashes, a fine of nearly 3 million tomans, and a 2-year ban on political activities.³³⁵ On appeal, the sentence was reduced to 6 years' imprisonment.

Mohammadreza reported to Bojnourd Central Prison on 19 January 2021³³⁶ and, after around 17 months behind bars, he was released under electronic monitoring. Three months later, the electronic tag was removed and he was conditionally released.

Following the poisoning of school children during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests in 2022,³³⁷ Mohammadreza was summoned to the prosecutor's office in March 2023 because of his participation in the protests and a new case was opened against him. In June 2023, he was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment, a fine of 12 million tomans (approximately €215), and 2 years' internal exile to the city of Tabas on charges of "spreading falsehoods." On appeal, the exile punishment was overturned while the remaining punishments were upheld.

UPDATE

Mohammadreza was recently summoned to begin serving his sentence, and despite pressure to surrender, he remains free at the time of writing.



AFSHIN RAZMJOOEI

Age:

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process

BACKGROUND

Afshin Razmjooei, a retired physics teacher residing in Shiraz and a member of the Fars Teachers' Association, was arrested on 12 May 2022 during a raid by security forces on a teachers' protest gathering in Fars Province³³⁸ and was later temporarily released. In July 2023, the Shiraz Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 5 years' imprisonment, a 2-year ban on online activities, a 2-year travel ban, and revocation of his passport. In February 2024, the Supreme Court overturned the ruling and, following retrial proceedings, his prison sentence was reduced to 2 years, while the additional punishments remained in force.

Afshin was arrested on 20 November 2023 to serve his sentence. However, on 12 February 2024, his custodial sentence was converted into judicially supervised imprisonment, and he was released from Shiraz Central Prison to serve his 2-year sentence outside prison under electronic monitoring.

UPDATE

Afshin was released on 20 October 2025 upon completion of his sentence and the termination of electronic monitoring.³³⁹

SIAMAK SADEGHI CHEHRAZI

Age: 49

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Ahvaz Sheiban Prison

Judicial status: Awaiting trial

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; torture and ill-treatment; lack of a fair trial and due process; familial punishment; denial of access to a lawyer; deprivation of salary and benefits



BACKGROUND

Siamak Sadeghi Chehrazi is a retired teacher and trade union activist who was arrested during widespread teachers' protests in May 2022 over reductions in the budget for the ranking scheme. During the arrest, officers violently beat the teachers, threatened them with weapons, slammed Siamak's head against the curb, dragged him on the ground, and took him away.³⁴⁰ He was released on bail after one day of interrogation at the Lashkarabad District Security Police in Ahvaz.

He was summoned by the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court on 7 March 2023 and charged with "propaganda against the system" and "assembly and collusion".³⁴¹ On 17 June 2023, he was tried for charges including "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion against internal security", and "membership in groups whose aim is to disrupt national security".³⁴² On 6 November 2023, during a protest gathering of retired public sector workers in Tehran, Siamak was arrested and released after several hours. One month later, Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court again summoned him on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security", "propaganda against the system", "forming a group", and "disrupting public order".³⁴³

Although Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court later acquitted him and other members of the Khuzestan Teachers' Trade Union, this ruling was challenged by the prosecutor's representative under pressure from security institutions, and the case was referred to the Court of Appeal in August 2023.³⁴⁴

UPDATE

On 8 January 2025, Branch 3 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court sentenced Siamak to five years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system".³⁴⁵ This sentence was later overturned on appeal, and he was acquitted.

On 28 March 2026, he was again arrested at his home in Ahvaz. During the arrest, security agents searched the house and threatened his family. "Use of a VPN" was reportedly cited as one of the accusations against him. He was then transferred to Sheiban Prison in Ahvaz and, on 16 April 2026, was formally charged in Branch 12 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office with "propaganda against the system" and "insulting the leadership".

IRAJ TOUBIHA NAJAFABADI



Age: 65

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Isfahan Central Prison

Judicial status: 2 years and 1 month's imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of access to a lawyer

BACKGROUND

Iraj Toubiha Najafabadi is a retired teacher, board member and head of public relations of the Najafabad Teachers' Union in Isfahan. He was first arrested on 12 October 2022 during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, when plainclothes security agents raided his workplace. He was interrogated for 30 days in solitary confinement in the A-T Ward of Isfahan Central Prison and for 10 days in the general ward before being released on bail. In April 2023, plainclothes security agents violently rearrested him in front of the Najafabad Department of Education without presenting a warrant or identification card and transferred him to Najafabad Prison. After 5 days in solitary confinement and interrogation, he was released on bail. On 12 October 2023, plainclothes security agents abducted him in the street and again transferred him to the same prison. After 13 days of interrogation, he was released on bail.

Following repeated summonses and new cases, Branch 102 of the Najafabad Revolutionary Court sentenced Iraj on 4 May 2024 to a total of 11 years' imprisonment, a fine, and 2 years' exile to Dehsalm Rural District in Nehbandan County, South Khorasan Province.³⁴⁶ He was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment each on two charges of "insulting the Leader of the Islamic Republic"; 1 year each on four charges of "propaganda against the system"; 1 year on charges of "participation in illegal gatherings, particularly teachers' gatherings, and inciting teachers"; and 2 years' imprisonment on charges of "spreading falsehoods through telecommunications systems and insulting officials".

After he appealed the initial ruling, the Isfahan Province Court of Appeal upheld the sentences in July 2024. However, following the consolidation of his sentences, he would be required to serve two years and one month.

UPDATE

On 4 January 2025, Iraj was transferred to Isfahan Central Prison to begin serving his sentence.

HOSSEIN VAHEDI

Age: 59

Activism/rights: Trade unionist teacher

Status: Released

Judicial status: 1 year imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of a fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer



BACKGROUND

Hossein Vahedi, known as Daryoush Ashkani, is a retired teacher and inspector of the North Khorasan Teachers' Union. In 2018, he was sentenced in 2018 to 1 year's imprisonment and a fine on charges of "spreading falsehoods". The North Khorasan Province Court of Appeal later suspended the sentence. Following the widespread crackdown on teachers after the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, Hossein was summoned in September 2022 to Branch 5 of the Bojnourd Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office on charges of "spreading falsehoods" and released on bail. In November of the same year, Branch 103 of Criminal Court of Bojnourd sentenced him to 1 year's imprisonment on the same charge; however, the sentence was suspended for 3 years. In March 2023, IRGC Intelligence Organisation agents confiscated this teacher's mobile phone and blocked his Instagram page.³⁴⁷

UPDATE

In January 2025, Branch 1 of the Bojnourd Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 1 year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system".³⁴⁸ The sentence was upheld by the North Khorasan Court of Appeal.³⁴⁹ In another case, the Bojnourd Revolutionary Court again sentenced Vahedi to 3 months' discretionary imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system", mainly related to his online activities and publication of teachers' rights content. Under a ruling by the Court of Appeal in March 2025, this sentence was converted into a fine.³⁵⁰

On 29 June 2025, Hossein was transferred to Bojnourd Central Prison to serve his 1-year prison sentence.³⁵¹ On 6 August 2025, he was granted 5 days' furlough, but intelligence agents rearrested him on the second day and returned him to prison.³⁵²

On 13 November 2025, after serving part of his sentence in Bojnourd Central Prison, and with his time served, he was furloughed leading to his release.

MINORITY RIGHTS

In March 2025, a coalition of 42 international human rights organisations, including IHRNGO and "Together Against the Death Penalty" (ECPM), issued a joint statement highlighting that the systematic discrimination and violence against members of ethnic and religious or belief minorities "is not limited to the repression they face in times of public protests but permeates many aspects of their daily lives."³⁵³

Simply for advocating minority rights, including the right to education in their mother tongue, these human rights defenders frequently face harassment, repeated summonses, arbitrary arrest, and lengthy prison sentences.

This section examines the legal status of several human rights defenders who have faced persecution due to their ethnic and religious rights advocacy.

ANISA FANAEEYAN

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Religious rights

Status: Semnan Central Prison

Judicial status: 8 years' imprisonment

Violations: Religious discrimination and persecution; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process



BACKGROUND

Anisa Fanaeeyan is a Baha'i citizen who provided educational support to children deprived of schooling, including Afghan migrant children.³⁵⁴ In April 2012, the Semnan Revolutionary Court sentenced her to one year's imprisonment on charges including "forming and establishing illegal groups affiliated with the Baha'i faith" and "propaganda activities against the system in favour of the Baha'i sect." She was arrested on 19 January 2013, after being summoned and transferred to the Women's Ward of Semnan Central Prison to serve her sentence.³⁵⁵ At the same time, her husband, Siamak Ighani, was also serving a prison sentence at the prison, while their two young children, aged 3 and 8, spent that one-year period without either parent and in the care of relatives.

Anisa was rearrested in August 2023 and released on bail in mid-September of the same year.³⁵⁶ In March 2024, Branch 1 of the Semnan Revolutionary Court, presided over by Ali Isari, sentenced her to 16 years' imprisonment, a fine, 15 years' deprivation of social rights and a 2-year ban on membership in political and social groups on charges including "forming, establishing and administering a group with the intent to disrupt national security," "deviant educational and propaganda activities contrary to or disruptive of Islamic law," and "propaganda against the regime."³⁵⁷

According to the court ruling, approximately €3,750 of Anisa's personal assets, confiscated during a raid on her home, were also seized. Teaching children deprived of education and participating in an online memorial ceremony for Ataollah Rezvani in 2020 were among the activities cited as evidence in support of the sentence.

In December 2024, Branch 7 of the Semnan Province Court of Appeal reduced her sentence to 8 years' imprisonment.³⁵⁸

UPDATE

In December 2024, Branch 7 of the Semnan Province Court of Appeal sentenced Anisa to seven years' imprisonment on charges of "forming a group with the aim of disrupting national security" and to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system."³⁵⁸ Following the issuance of this ruling, security forces arrested Fanaeeyan on 11 March 2025 while she was at a hospital with her child in order to enforce the sentence.³⁵⁹

On 2 October 2025, an appeal was granted by the Supreme Court and she was released on bail from Semnan Central Prison.³⁶⁰ However, one month later, on 26 October 2025, Branch 10 of the Semnan Province Court of Appeal, presided over by Mohammad Balouchi, sentenced Anisa to eight years' imprisonment despite the Supreme Court's acceptance of the retrial and referral of the case to a parallel branch. She was arrested on 11 May 2026 to serve her sentence and is currently being held in Semnan Central Prison.



SARVEH POURMOHAMMADI

Age: 36

Activism/rights: Kurdish rights

Status: Sanandaj Central Prison

Judicial status: 5 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process; deprivation of contact with family; ethnic persecution; mother language rights

BACKGROUND

Sarveh Pourmohammadi is a Kurdish language instructor and a member of Nojin Cultural Association, teaching Kurdish language and culture. She was arrested on 29 January 2023 when she appeared before the Sanandaj court to follow up on the judicial status of detained members of the organisation.³⁶¹

After two weeks of detention, she was temporarily released on bail on 13 February 2023 from the women's ward of Sanandaj Central Prison, pending her trial. In November 2023, Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Karami, sentenced Sarveh Pourmohammadi to 10 years' imprisonment on charges of "forming groups and associations with the intent to disrupt national security".³⁶² This sentence was reduced to five years on appeal by the Sanandaj Court of Appeal.³⁶³

UPDATE

Sarveh Pourmohammadi was arrested on 19 April 2025 after being summoned to the Enforcement of Sentences Office in Sanandaj and was transferred to the women's ward of Sanandaj Central Prison to serve her sentence.³⁶⁴

SAMAD RIGI

Age: 30

Activism/rights: Baluch rights

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Subject to an open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer; deprivation of telephone contact and family visits; ethnic persecution



BACKGROUND

Samad Rigi, a Baluch civil activist and an employee of Bank Melli from Iranshahr in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, has become known as the “Voice of Baluchestan” due to his civil activities, advocacy for the rights of the Baluch people, and criticism of government conduct and systemic corruption among officials of the Islamic Republic. He has repeatedly called on judicial authorities to take action to prevent shootings by military and law enforcement forces against Baluch people.³⁶⁵ As his civil activities continued and he protested against insecurity in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, on 27 September 2021 dozens of military and security forces raided the village of Tamp-e Rigan to arrest him. When they encountered resistance from local residents, the agents opened fire on civilians, injuring several people.³⁶⁶ However, they were unsuccessful in arresting Samad. He was ultimately arrested in February 2022 while he was at the Zahedan Prosecutor’s Office and transferred to Zahedan Central Prison.³⁶⁷

Samad was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment by the Zahedan Revolutionary Court. During his imprisonment, two additional prison sentences were issued against him: one of three months and one day for “insulting judges” and another related to his disclosures and protests concerning the torture and execution of Baluch protesters following the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests. After the consolidation of sentences, his three-year sentence was upheld by Branch 7 of the Sistan and Baluchestan Province Court of Appeal, presided over by Judge Masoud Moazallahi. He was released from prison after completing his sentence.

UPDATE

In October 2025, Samad published posts on social media reporting allegations of the “rape of several children” in Iranshahr, criticising the Legal Medicine Organisation for failing to pursue these cases and describing the silence and inaction of responsible authorities as a factor discouraging many families from filing complaints. Following these disclosures, Reza Abdi, Director General of the Sistan and Baluchestan Legal Medicine Organisation, filed a complaint against Samad³⁶⁸ who was arrested on 7 October 2025 at his workplace in a bank in Iranshahr.³⁶⁹

After his arrest, Intelligence agents in Iranshahr took Samad to his home, searched the premises, confiscated the mobile phones of family members and some personal belongings, and then transferred him to the Intelligence Office in Iranshahr.³⁷⁰ Two days later, he was transferred to the detention facility of the Intelligence Office in Zahedan, where he was held incommunicado without access to a lawyer. Samad was released from prison on 2 November 2025 after a four-day hunger strike. He is still facing charges including “spreading falsehoods” and “disturbing public opinion.”



SEMKO YOUSEFI

Age:

Activism/rights: Kurdish right

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: 6 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to legal counsel; denial of due process and fair trial; mother language rights; ethnic rights

BACKGROUND

Semko Yousefi, known as Semko Salamat, is a writer, poet, and Kurdish language teacher at the Adab Institute, as well as a core member of the environmental organisation “Jinbanan”. He was arrested on 26 May 2025 following a violent raid by intelligence agents on his home.³⁷¹ The agents searched his residence without presenting a judicial warrant and confiscated all mobile phones belonging to his family, including his children. Semko was transferred to the Intelligence Office in Urmia for interrogation and was subsequently moved to Bukan Prison.

UPDATE

On 9 January 2026, Semko Yousefi was summoned to the Bukan Revolutionary Court of Bukan and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

The widespread degradation of water resources and the environment has severely jeopardised habitability across vast swathes of Iran. Civic protests first emerged in the early 1990s in response to the implementation of ecologically destructive state development projects. Activists opposing the construction of the Tehran-Shomal highway, which initially lacked an environmental impact assessment, staged multiple sit-ins at the project site and were subjected to physical assaults by state authorities. Subsequently, in the late 2000s, as a heavily securitised approach took hold, the procurement of permits for public assemblies was further restricted.

Following the critical desiccation of Lake Urmia, a widespread wave of protests erupted in 2011. Peaceful demonstrations, during which citizens symbolically poured water into the dying lake bed, were met with severe state crackdowns and arbitrary mass arrests. In the mid2010-s, this repressive pattern was repeated against environmental defenders protesting the drying up of the Karun River. February 2018 marked a critical turning point in the state's aggressive crackdowns, when approximately 55 environmental experts and activists were arbitrarily detained. Six individuals received lengthy prison sentences, whilst one died in custody.

The systematic targeting and judicial harassment of environmental defenders and experts continue unabated through various mechanisms, including judicial summonses, intimidation, threats, and prolonged imprisonment. The following section documents the cases of individuals who have faced judicial prosecution over the past year due to their peaceful advocacy in this field.



KARIM ESMAILZADEH

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Environmental activists

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Awaiting verdict

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process; deprivation of contact and visits with family; deprivation of medical care; torture and ill-treatment; prolonged solitary confinement

BACKGROUND

Karim Esmailzadeh, an environmental activist, boxer and powerlifting champion, is a well-known athlete from Tabriz who has extensively raised awareness about environmental issues in Azerbaijan, particularly the condition of Lake Urmia and pollution in the Aras River. Karim was first arrested on 16 August 2023 while entering Yadegar Emam (Sahand) Stadium in Tabriz to watch a football match between Tractor Cultural and Sports Club of Azerbaijan (Tractor SC) and Tehran's Persepolis FC. He was severely beaten by security forces before being arrested. One day later, Branch 10 of the Tabriz Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office charged him with "inciting and encouraging people to commit violent acts online" The charge stemmed from his social media activities in the days leading up to the match, during which he had published videos calling on Tractor SC supporters to protest the critical condition of Lake Urmia by chanting slogans and displaying banners during the game. Karim was temporarily released on bail on 19 August 2023 pending his trial. In January 2024, Branch 1 of the Tabriz Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 6 months' imprisonment,³⁷² and in March of the same year, Branch 2 of the East Azerbaijan Province Court of Appeal upheld the verdict. Karim was rearrested on 17 April 2024 and transferred to Tabriz Central Prison to serve his sentence.³⁷³ During the first two months of his imprisonment, despite suffering from illness and severe stomach ulcers, he was deprived of medical care as well as telephone contact and visits with his family.³⁷⁴ He was eventually released on bail in September 2024.

UPDATE

Karim Esmailzadeh was rearrested on 10 March 2025 and held in solitary confinement for 49 days, during which he was interrogated and tortured. His lawyer, Sina Yousefi, later reported that Karim was in extremely poor physical condition due to severe physical and psychological torture in the Tabriz Intelligence Department's solitary confinement cells. His hands and feet had been bound during the entire 49-day period in solitary confinement and that he had lost around 40 kilograms in weight. Security authorities had also subjected him to further pressure by depriving him of sleep and threatening to kill members of his family.³⁷⁵ He was subsequently transferred to Ward 5 (the security ward) of Tabriz Central Prison, where he was held incommunicado in a state of limbo. Karim was temporarily released on a heavy bail in July 2025. After calling on the public in autumn 2025 to participate in a protest gathering against the drying of Lake Urmia,³⁷⁶ Esmailzadeh was once again summoned on charges of "disturbing public opinion" and "propaganda against the regime" and arrested on 18 October. Security forces transferred him to the Tabriz Intelligence Department detention centre for interrogation, but after several days, his daughter announced in an Instagram post that the family had no information regarding his condition or whereabouts.³⁷⁷

Karim went on hunger strike in protest against his unlawful detention and prolonged uncertainty in prison.³⁷⁸ On 29 October, the ninth day of his hunger strike, he was transferred to hospital due to the deterioration of his physical condition and severe bleeding from his mouth and nose.³⁷⁹ Karim was released on bail on 1 November 2025 and is currently awaiting a verdict.

YUSEF FARHADI BABADI

Age: 44

Activism/rights: Environmental activists

Status: Released

Judicial Status: Subject to an open case

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; denial of fair trial and due process



BACKGROUND

Yousef Farhadi Babadi is an environmental activist from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province who is an opponent of water transfer projects — including the transfer of water from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari to Isfahan — a member of the grassroots campaign “Support Kind Zagros” and administrator of the Telegram channel “Sedaye Paye Ab” (“The Sound of Water’s Footsteps”). He has been repeatedly summoned and arrested due to his criticism of water transfer projects. In May 2018, following a complaint filed by members of Isfahan’s parliamentary delegation regarding critical content published on the “Sedaye Paye Ab” channel about water transfers, he was summoned and arrested. After 9 days in detention, he was temporarily released on bail on 8 May.

He was rearrested on 17 February of the same year, when intelligence agents in Shahrekord stopped his car after a chase operation and abducted him and his brother.³⁸⁰ Behind bars, security forces threatened him with death,³⁸¹ and according to reports published by the “Sedaye Paye Ab” Telegram channel, the main reason for these actions was his exposés on Karun water transfer projects and what he described as the “water mafia.”³⁸² He also stated that he had been pressured in prison to make forced confessions.³⁸³ He was again released on bail on 18 March 2019.

Following further legal proceedings against Yousef, Branch 29 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him in July 2024 to one year’s imprisonment on charges of “propaganda activities against the regime” and an additional one year’s imprisonment and a fine on charges of “spreading falsehoods.”³⁸⁴ Yousef’s sentence was upheld and he was summoned in October 2024 to serve the sentence. On 6 November of the same year, Yousef announced that he had surrendered to begin serving the sentence, and around one month later, he was released on licence.

UPDATE

In December 2024, Yousef was summoned to Branch 1 of the Lordegan Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province in relation to complaints concerning his disclosures about water transfer projects in the Zagros basin. The case is ongoing.



HORR MANSOURI

Age:

Activism/rights: Environmental activists

Status: Released

Judicial status: 7 months' imprisonment

Violations: Denial of fair trial and due process

BACKGROUND

Horr Mansouri Abdolmaleki, a photographer and environmental activist, is among the critics of the “Amirabad Mazandaran Petrochemical” project and has raised awareness about the protection of Miankaleh Wetland and endangered ecosystems in Mazandaran Province.

In July 2023, he was arrested at a press conference held by Miankaleh Petrochemical due to his criticism of the construction of the “Amirabad Mazandaran Petrochemical” project and was released on bail one day later.³⁸⁵

UPDATE

On 6 April 2025, Horr was sentenced by Branch 147 of the Nour Criminal Court to 7 months' imprisonment on charges of “spreading falsehoods” for publishing a video showing trees being cut down by bulldozers and attributing the destruction to the Elimalat tourism complex.³⁸⁶

The tourism complex, located in the forest area of Elimalat in Nour, Mazandaran Province, has been the subject of protests by many environmental activists due to the destruction and cutting down of trees for the unlawful construction of a safari project.³⁸⁷

WORKERS' RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Chronic economic crises in Iran, compounded by systematic wage arrears, deficiencies in insurance coverage, substandard pay, a lack of job security, and a rise in hazardous working conditions, have driven the workforce to stage a continuous wave of strikes and protests over the past year.

The Islamic Republic authorities have consistently disregarded the most fundamental demands of the working class. By refusing to recognise independent trade unions and labour associations, the state has systematically treated peaceful union activities as national security threats, responding to strikes and trade assemblies with intense security pressure and sweeping restrictions. Protesting workers and union members have routinely faced intimidation, judicial summonses, arbitrary detention, interrogation, and retaliatory dismissals or employment suspensions. Furthermore, labour rights defenders have been sentenced to imprisonment, internal exile, punitive fines, and bans on civic activities under vaguely worded charges, including "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion against national security", and "disrupting public order".

This section documents the judicial cases of six labour rights defenders who have faced state prosecution over the past year as a direct consequence of their peaceful advocacy.



ANISHA ASADOLLAHI

Age: 36

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: Imprisoned in Evin Prison

Judicial status: 3 years and 7 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest; denial of fair trial and due process; solitary confinement; denial of access to lawyer

BACKGROUND

Anisha (Maryam) Asadollahi is a workers' rights activist, teacher, translator and writer who was first arrested on 1 May 2019 during a workers' gathering outside the Islamic Consultative Assembly marking International Workers' Day. She was transferred to Qarchak Prison and later temporarily released on bail. Following her rearrest on 18 June of the same year, she was transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison and, after a prolonged period in solitary confinement and interrogations, was again released on bail.³⁸⁸ In autumn 2019, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Anisha to one year's imprisonment and 74 lashes on charges of "disrupting public order," while 6 months of the prison sentence was suspended. Under the ruling, 3 months of her discretionary prison sentence were also converted into alternative punishments, including unpaid service for war veterans and copying several books selected by the court. After being summoned and appearing at the prosecutor's office on 4 January, she was transferred to Evin Prison to serve her sentence and with the time served, was released on 21 January of the same year. On 9 May 2022, security forces once again arrested her and her husband, Keyvan Mehtadi, and transferred them to Ward 209 of Evin Prison.³⁸⁹ The Ministry of Intelligence accused the workers' activist couple of "cooperation with a foreign team" and claimed that they intended to establish an "anti-security cell" with two French citizens, Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, who had allegedly travelled to Iran for "espionage and creating unrest." This was despite the fact that, according to their lawyer, there was no documented legal evidence proving the French citizens were spies, and that Anisha and Keyvan had merely acted as translators during meetings of labour and teachers' rights activists.³⁹⁰ Asadollahi was temporarily released from Evin Prison on bail on 20 August of the same year.

On 29 April 2023, on the eve of International Workers' Day, Anisha and several other workers' rights activists were arrested during a violent raid by security forces on the home of Mohammad Habibi (see page 59). She was released from Evin Prison on bail 11 days later.³⁹¹ On 15 May 2023, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, sentenced Anisha to 5 years' imprisonment on charges of "assembly and collusion against national security" and 8 months' imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the regime." One of her Instagram stories protesting the executions of Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard had been cited as evidence of "propaganda against the regime." In July 2023, the Tehran Province Court of Appeal upheld the verdict in full,³⁹² and one month later she was transferred to Evin Prison to serve her sentence.³⁹³ After being granted an appeal by the Supreme Court in June 2024, Anisha's sentence was reduced to 3 years and 7 months' imprisonment at retrial.

UPDATE

Following Israel's attack on Evin Prison in July 2025, Anisha was transferred to Qarchak Prison and she was returned to Evin Prison on 9 October. She was denied furlough throughout her imprisonment and was ultimately released from Evin Prison on 20 February 2026 after completing her sentence.

ESMAEIL GERAMI

Age: 71

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention, denial of medical care, access to lawyer, lack of due process, unfair trial



BACKGROUND

Esmail Gerami, a retired worker from a carton manufacturing factory, has for years campaigned for sectoral demands and the rights of pensioners and has repeatedly been summoned and arrested. He was arrested on 10 May 2018 during a teachers' gathering outside the Planning and Budget Organisation and transferred to the Evin Prosecutor's Office.³⁹⁴ He was temporarily released a few days later.³⁹⁵ On 3 April 2021, IRGC agents arrested Esmail at his home. He was transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary a few days later.³⁹⁶ Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Esmail to 5 years' imprisonment, 74 lashes and a fine of two million tomans on charges of "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security."³⁹⁷ The verdict was upheld by the Court of Appeal on 20 September 2021. On 8 October 2021, a group of prisoners convicted of violent crimes physically attacked Esmail and several other political prisoners.³⁹⁸ In meetings with prison officials, he had warned about the lack of safety and requested to be transferred to another ward.³⁹⁹ On 24 July 2022, he was transferred to Evin Prison without prior notice. One week later, despite suffering from epilepsy and other underlying health conditions, Esmail was denied medical treatment after contracting COVID-19 because he refused to be taken to hospital in handcuffs and shackles, and he was returned to the prison quarantine ward.⁴⁰⁰

Following the fire at Evin Prison on 15 October 2022, he was transferred to Rajai Shahr Prison, where he also remained deprived of medical care. He was released from prison on 13 February 2023 under the "general amnesty" directive. Esmail was again arrested on 21 November 2023 during a pensioners' gathering outside the Social Security Organisation⁴⁰¹ and released later the same night.

On 7 August 2024, security agents raided his home, confiscated his electronic devices and national ID card, and ordered him to report to the Evin Prosecutor's Office within five days.⁴⁰² A few days later, after appearing at the prosecutor's office, he was arrested and transferred to Evin Prison. In September 2024, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him to one year's imprisonment on charges of "propaganda against the system through participation in gatherings".⁴⁰³

UPDATE

Following the Israeli attack on Evin Prison in July 2025, Esmail was transferred, along with other political prisoners, to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary where he was released from on 21 July 2025 upon completion of his sentence.⁴⁰⁴

NASRIN JAVADI



Age: 68

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to a lawyer; lack of fair trial and due process; unfair trial; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of medical care; deprivation of family visits; familial punishment

BACKGROUND

Nasrin Javadi (Azam Khezri Javadi), a retired worker, is a workers' rights activist, a member of the Free Union of Iranian Workers and one of the founding members of the Social Security Pensioners' Council. She was arrested on 1 May 2019 during the International Workers' Day gathering outside the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) building.⁴⁰⁵ After serving 33 days behind bars, including 22 days in solitary confinement under intense interrogation, she was eventually released on bail.⁴⁰⁶ On 6 August, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, sentenced Nasrin to 7 years' imprisonment, 74 lashes, a two-year ban on the use of mobile phones and a ban on political party activities on charges of "assembly and collusion to act against national security," "propaganda against the regime" and "disrupting public order and peace."⁴⁰⁷ At the appeal stage, she was acquitted of the charges of "propaganda against the regime" and "disrupting public order," but her five-year prison sentence was upheld.⁴⁰⁸ In practice, despite the acquittals, no change was made to her enforceable sentence.⁴⁰⁹ Nasrin was summoned in July 2020 to serve her sentence.⁴¹⁰ Due to contracting COVID-19 and suffering from multiple illnesses, she submitted medical furlough in February 2022. Despite doctors confirmed that she was unfit to serve prison time, the sentence enforcement authorities rejected the opinion and referred the matter to the Legal Medicine Organisation, which, contrary to the opinions of specialist physicians, ruled that she was fit to serve her sentence.⁴¹¹ Ultimately, despite requiring daily injections of special osteoporosis medication and cataract surgery, Javadi presented herself at Evin Prison on 2 July 2022 to begin serving her sentence.⁴¹² On 19 November 2022, following a deterioration in her condition, Nasrin was transferred to hospital in a semi-conscious state and, several days later, returned to prison before fully recovering.⁴¹³ In August 2024, a group of female prisoners, including Nasrin, protested against the execution of Kurdish "Woman, Life, Freedom" protester Reza Rasaei, after which prison guard forces raided their ward and she suffered a nervous breakdown.⁴¹⁴ Several months later, when her only child fell into a coma and was transferred to hospital, prison authorities rejected her request for furlough.⁴¹⁵

UPDATE

In January 2025, Nasrin was deprived of family visits. Prison authorities stated that the reason for the restriction was the discovery of "a power bank cable" among the belongings of one of her family members.⁴¹⁶

Nasrin was released from Qarchak Prison on 14 September 2025 after serving approximately 3 years and 4 months behind bars.⁴¹⁷

SHARIFEH MOHAMMADI

Age: 46

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: IRasht Central Prison

Judicial status: 30 years' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process; deprivation of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement; incommunicado detention; torture and ill-treatment



BACKGROUND

Sharifeh Mohammadi is a workers' rights activist from Mianeh in Eastern Azerbaijan who lived in Rasht prior to her arrest on 5 December 2023. She was held incommunicado in solitary confinement where she was subjected to severe psychological and physical torture to extract forced confessions. On 11 January 2024, she was transferred to Sanandaj Central Prison for interrogation. According to her cellmates, signs of torture were visible on her face after she returned to Sanandaj Central Prison.⁴²⁰ During a 26-day period, she was only allowed to make two telephone calls to her family, and after three months she was finally permitted an in-person visit with her husband and 12-year-old son.⁴²¹ Despite suffering severe spinal disc pain and an infection in one of her fingers, she was deprived of medical treatment.⁴²² The initial charge against her was announced as "propaganda against the regime," but after some time, security bodies alleged that the "Coordination Committee to Help Form Workers' Organisations" was affiliated with the Komala Party and accused Sharifeh of *baghy* (armed rebellion). Sharifeh was sentenced to death by Branch 1 of the Rasht Revolutionary Court on 4 July 2024.⁴²³ The sentence was issued despite the fact that the "Coordination Committee to Help Form Workers' Organisations" had denied any links to armed groups and stressed the entirely sectoral nature of its activities. Mohammadi's relatives also stated that she "had never engaged in armed activities and had only been sentenced to death for her peaceful activities in workers' organisations."

Vida Mohammadi, Sharifeh's cousin, stated during Iran Human Rights' weekly Spaces programme⁴²⁴ that the judge had attributed the charge of *baghy* to Sharifeh based on files found on her mobile phone.⁴²⁵ The files included materials relating to left-wing movements, leaflets concerning the release of female prisoners in Rasht, "No Death Penalty" leaflets and an article about the impact of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprising on the workers' movement. On 13 October 2024, Branch 39 of the Supreme Court overturned her death sentence and referred her case to a court of equal standing for retrial.⁴²⁶

UPDATE

On 12 February 2025, Branch 2 of the Rasht Revolutionary Court resentenced Sharifeh to death.⁴²⁷ According to her lawyer, Amir Raeesian, the ruling contained serious flaws and the court, without responding to the lawyers' criticisms, fully accepted the investigating authority's opinion without scrutiny and ignored its deficiencies.⁴²⁸ Her sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on 16 August 2025.⁴²⁹ According to her lawyer, despite all the flaws in the case remaining unresolved, Branch 39 of the Supreme Court upheld her sentence.⁴³⁰ Ultimately, in November 2025, Sharifeh's death sentence was commuted to 30 years' imprisonment.⁴³¹ She remains imprisoned in Rasht (Lakan) Central Prison.



MEHRAN RAOUF

Age: 69

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: Imprisoned in Evin Prison

Judicial status: 7 years and 6 months' imprisonment

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of medical care; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of access to a lawyer; lack of fair trial and due process; unfair trial; denial of furlough

BACKGROUND

Mehran Raouf, a workers' rights activist and English teacher, is a British-Iranian dual national who was arrested on 17 October 2020 after security agents raided his home in Tehran following his trip to Iran.⁴³² After searching the house, security agents confiscated books and other personal belongings, including his computer and mobile phone, and transferred the workers' rights activist to Ward 2A of Evin Prison.⁴³³

In a telephone call from prison, Mehran stated that he was being interrogated on charges of "affiliation with a communist group" and had been deprived of the right to an independent lawyer.⁴³⁴ In protest against these conditions, he went on hunger strike in April 2021 despite his old age and illness.⁴³⁵ After approximately eight months in solitary confinement, he was transferred to the general ward of Evin Prison on 13 June 2021.⁴³⁶ In August 2021, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Afshari, sentenced him to 10 years and 8 months' imprisonment on charges of "participation in administering an illegal group and propaganda activities against the system."⁴³⁷

After a group of prisoners were released under the "general amnesty" in 2023, Mehran wrote a letter from prison protesting discrimination against dual nationals and their exclusion from the amnesty list, and condemned the Islamic Republic's use of dual-national prisoners.⁴³⁸

UPDATE

Following Israel's attack on Evin Prison on 22 June 2025, Mehran was transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary in handcuffs and shackles. The 69-year-old political prisoner, who suffers from diabetes, chronic sinusitis and severe dental pain, was held in poor physical condition and without access to medical care and treatment. During this period, he was not granted a single day of furlough and was also deprived of family visits. Mehran was returned to Evin Prison in August and was eventually granted furlough for only 3 days on 27 December 2025.

MAZIAR SEYEDNEJAD

Age: 44

Activism/rights: Workers' rights activist

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; forced televised confessions; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; deprivation of medical care



BACKGROUND

Maziar Seyednejad, a workers' rights activist, was first arrested on 1 December 2018 during the crackdown on activists affiliated with the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Workers Syndicate and the National Steel Group of Ahvaz. He was temporarily released from Ahvaz Sheiban Prison on bail on 18 March 2019. During detention, the workers' rights activist was pressured into making forced televised confessions. His forced televised confessions were aired on IRIB TV1 in their "20:30" news segment titled "Failed Planning" along with the other Haft Tappeh defendants on 9 January 2019.⁴³⁹ On 19 December 2020, Branch 4 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court sentenced him to 3 years' imprisonment on charges of "membership in an opposition group"⁴⁴⁰ and Branch 16 of the Khuzestan Province Court of Appeal upheld the verdict on 31 May 2021.⁴⁴¹ One week later, security agents arrested him at his home in Tehran and transferred him to Ward 209 of Evin Prison. He was held incommunicado in solitary confinement.⁴⁴² After approximately two months in detention, Maziar was released on bail on 16 August 2021.⁴⁴³ However, judicial pressure against him continued until Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Salavati, sentenced him on 16 January 2023 to 3 years' imprisonment on charges of "membership in communist groups and propaganda against the system." In addition, he was banned for 2 years from leaving the country, joining parties and groups, and engaging in online activities.⁴⁴⁴ Maziar reported to Evin Prison on 21 May 2023 to serve his prison sentence. On 17 September 2024, after his physical condition deteriorated due to sciatica and severe back pain, he was transferred to hospital. Prison authorities had previously refused to transfer him to hospital because he had objected to wearing prison clothes during the transfer.⁴⁴⁵

UPDATE

In February 2025, Maziar's sentence was reduced to 3 years, 3 months and 2 days' discretionary imprisonment, and he was released from Evin Prison on 12 May 2025 on furlough leading to release. However, following the 12-Day War between Iran and Israel in 2025, he was summoned and interrogated once more.⁴⁴⁶

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

In recent years, the Islamic Republic has faced a major challenge to its state apparatus: the systematic and widespread defiance of the compulsory hijab mandate by women. In response, the authorities have escalated their use of coercive mechanisms to enforce mandatory veiling. These punitive measures include deploying digital surveillance cameras to identify women, initiating criminal prosecutions, imposing exorbitant financial penalties, and systematically denying non-compliant women access to public services, education, and employment.

Furthermore, the broader mobilisation of women seeking to reclaim their fundamental rights within Iranian society has intensified. The state has routinely criminalised these forms of expression; for example, multiple women have been arbitrarily detained for singing in public spaces or sharing videos of their performances on social media, with the judiciary subsequently blocking their accounts and restricting their digital space.

This section examines the judicial status of two women's rights defenders who have faced state prosecution as part of this ongoing crackdown.

AIDA AMOUEI

Age: 41

Activism/rights: Women's rights

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Awaiting final verdict - Unknown

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of access to lawyer



BACKGROUND

Aida Amouei is a women's rights activist based in Sanandaj.

UPDATE

On 18 January 2025, Aida was violently arrested at the sports club where she worked, without presenting a judicial warrant.⁴⁴⁷ She had been threatened by the same agents prior to her arrest.⁴⁴⁸

During her detention, she was denied access to a lawyer and visits with her family.⁴⁴⁹ She was released on 3 February 2025 from the women's ward of Sanandaj Central Prison on a bail of 6 billion tomans after 17 days in detention, pending her trial.⁴⁵⁰



JINA MODARES GORJI

Age: 45

Activism/rights: Women's rights

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violated rights: Arbitrary arrest; denial of access to lawyer; denial of fair trial and due process; prolonged solitary confinement; deprivation of medical care; deprivation of furlough

BACKGROUND

Jina Modarres Gorji is a Kurdish women's rights activist, journalist and founder of the Jivana Women's Association, who has been active in advocating for women's rights, particularly in campaigning against "femicide".⁴⁵¹ She was first arrested during the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" nationwide protests in Sanandaj and released on bail 40 days later. Prior to this arrest, security forces had warned her that if she participated in protests in Sanandaj, she "would not see the sun again." Jina was rearrested again in April 2023. During this period, she was denied family visits, and prison officials and security agents pressured her to make forced confessions.⁴⁵² After one month in solitary confinement, she was transferred to the general ward of the Sanandaj Central Prison.⁴⁵³ She was released on bail after 84 days. On 25 May 2024, Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Mohammad Karami, sentenced Jina to 10 years' imprisonment on charges of "forming an illegal group with the aim of overthrowing the system", 10 years' imprisonment for "cooperation with hostile states and groups", and one year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system".⁴⁵⁴ "Establishing the Jivana Association with a feminist ideology aimed at overthrowing the system", "participation in protests and chanting anti-establishment slogans", "links with opposition elements", "attendance at international conferences and training workshops", and "publishing content and giving interviews to foreign media following the death of Mahsa Amini" were cited as examples of the charges. This sentence was later reduced on appeal to two years and four months' imprisonment.⁴⁵⁵

UPDATE

Jina was transferred to Sanandaj Prison on 2 November 2024 to serve her sentence⁴⁵⁶ and was released on 22 September 2025 after serving her sentence.⁴⁵⁷

ARTISTS

Following the 2022 "Woman, Life, Freedom" nationwide protests, many Iranian artists responded to the bloody suppression of protesters by supporting justice-seeking families and opposing prison and death sentences, while producing works in support of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. Their active and influential role led to a sharp increase in security and judicial pressure against artists in recent years. Summonses, arrests and imprisonment were among the measures used by the authorities against them, and a number of these artists were also forced to leave the country.

This section examines the legal situations of artists who have faced judicial prosecution over the past year for defending human rights.



VAFA AHMADPOUR DAMANAB

Age: 41

Activism/rights: Rapper

Status: Released

Judicial status: -

Violations: Violated rights: Arbitrary arrest; denial of fair trial and due process; denial of access to lawyer; failure to observe the principle of separation of crimes in prison; torture and ill-treatment

BACKGROUND

Vafa Ahmadpour Damanab, known by his stage name “Vafadar,” is a protest rapper who has expressed support for the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement and criticism of officials of the Islamic Republic through his music. In addition, by attending the graves of those killed or executed in connection with the protests, he has dedicated his artistic works to them. Following the 2022 “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, security bodies repeatedly summoned and threatened Vafa forcing him to live in hiding for a period of time. A year later, security forces obtained access to his phone number and summoned him to court. Citing the illegality of a telephone summons, Vafa refused to surrender. On 3 February 2024, he announced that security forces had raided his family home and taken his family members hostage. One day later, in order to secure his family’s release, he presented himself to Evin Prison. Following his arrest, for a period of two weeks he was transferred every night to the Shapour Criminal Investigation Department detention centre in Tehran and held in cells with detainees described as “thugs,” while during the day he was returned to Evin Prison for interrogation. He was temporarily released from Evin Prison on bail on 19 February 2024 and, in May 2024, was sentenced by the Tehran Revolutionary Court to one year’s imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system.”

The release of a music video titled “Amadeh Bash” (“Be Ready”)⁴⁵⁸ — filmed in Shiraz at the Persepolis complex and performed by him together with fellow rapper Danial Moghadam — led to the arrest of the two artists in Shiraz on 9 May 2024. The song addressed repression, mass arrests and the economic crisis in Iran. Vafa was transferred to an Intelligence Ministry detention centre and later to Shiraz Central Prison. At the time of arrest, security agents beat Vafa while pointing guns at him, causing his right eardrum to rupture. In August, Vafa was sentenced by the Shiraz Revolutionary Court to an additional one year’s imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system,” along with a 2-year travel ban and a 2-year ban on online activities. Under the ruling, his prison sentence was to be served outside prison under electronic ankle monitoring.

On 15 October 2024, he was transferred from Shiraz Central Prison to Evin Prison.

UPDATE

In February 2025, after serving 9 months, Vafa was released from Evin Prison and began serving the sentence related to his second case under electronic ankle monitoring.⁴⁵⁹ He was released from electronic monitoring on 25 October 2025 after completing his sentence.

DANIAL MOGHADDAM

Age: 32

Activism/rights: Rapper

Status: Released; banned from residing in Tehran and neighbouring provinces

Judicial status: 2-year ban on residence in Tehran and neighbouring provinces and several months' suspended imprisonment

Violations Arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair trial and due process; travel ban; familial punishment; denial of access to lawyer



BACKGROUND

Danial Moghadam is a rapper who has supported the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement through the publication of protest videos on social media and attended the graves of those killed and executed in connection with the protests, dedicating his artistic works to them, and staged a sit-in outside Evin Prison in protest against the death penalty.⁴⁶⁰ In December 2023, together with actresses Sahar Zakaria and Saba Kamali, he released a music video titled “Hourī” on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women,⁴⁶¹ following which they were summoned to the Culture and Media Prosecutor’s Office. Danial and fellow rapper Vafa Ahmadpour were arrested on 9 May 2024 after the release of the music video “Amadeh Bash” (“Be Ready”), which had been filmed at the ancient site of Persepolis. The work addressed repression, mass arrests and the economic crisis in Iran. Danial and Vafa were transferred to an Intelligence Ministry detention centre and later to Shiraz Central Prison. The rapper was released on bail on 6 July of the same year.

UPDATE

In August 2024, Branch 1 of the Shiraz Revolutionary Court sentenced Danial on charges of “propaganda against the system” to one year’s imprisonment under electronic ankle monitoring, a two-year travel ban and a two-year ban on online activities. Despite being under electronic monitoring, Danial continued his civil activities, including supporting truck drivers’ strikes, political prisoners and women, as well as producing protest music videos. One of these videos, titled “Frontline,” featured the families of those killed and people who suffered eye injuries during the 2022 protests. Due to these activities, he was repeatedly summoned to the Tehran Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office.⁴⁶² On 22 June 2025, after being summoned and appearing before the prosecutor’s office at Evin Prison, Danial was transferred to the quarantine ward. One day later, during Israel’s attack on the prison, the walls of the quarantine ward were destroyed by explosions. He was missing for a period of time and, after three weeks, announced in a video message⁴⁶³ that he had “unintentionally” escaped from prison as a result of the blast wave caused by the airstrike.

The rapper was rearrested in Shiraz on 29 July and initially transferred to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary before later being moved to Evin Prison. Security forces repeatedly fired at and stopped his mother’s car in the Sadra district of Shiraz in order to arrest Danial.⁴⁶⁵ Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him on charges of “propaganda against the regime” to 8 months’ imprisonment, a two-year ban on residing in Tehran and neighbouring provinces and a travel ban. Publishing content on social media and sending images to Farsi-language media outlets outside Iran were among the charges brought against him.

On 24 February 2026, he was released from prison after the remainder of his sentence was suspended, and began serving his supplementary punishments, which he himself has described as exile.



JAFAR PANAHI

Age: 65

Activism/rights: Filmmaker

Status: Released on bail

Judicial status: Awaiting the Court of Appeal verdict

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged solitary confinement; denial of fair trial and due process; denial of access to lawyer

BACKGROUND

Jafar Panahi is one of the most internationally renowned Iranian filmmakers and the recipient of prestigious cinematic awards from Venice, Berlin and Cannes. He is also an anti-death penalty activist and one of the principal members of the LEGAM campaign (Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty), and has faced bans, arrests and imprisonment over recent decades. In December 2010, he was sentenced on charges of “assembly and collusion against national security” and “propaganda against the regime” to 6 years’ imprisonment and a 20-year ban on filmmaking, screenwriting, travelling abroad and giving interviews to the media and press.⁴⁶⁶

In July 2022, while visiting the prosecutor’s office at Evin Prison to follow up on the cases of his detained colleagues Mohammad Rasoulof and Mostafa Aleahmad, he was arrested and his six-year prison sentence was enforced.

Despite the Supreme Court granting an appeal and bail being secured, authorities refused to release Jafar. In protest, he went on hunger strike and was ultimately released on bail on 5 February 2023.⁴⁶⁷ One month later, Branch 9 of the Supreme Court overturned his prison sentence and referred the case to Branch 21 of the Tehran Court of Appeal.

In May 2023, after 14 years under a travel ban, Jafar left the country. His passport had been confiscated in 2009 when he intended to travel to Paris, and he was later officially banned from leaving the country by judicial order in 2010.

UPDATE

Jafar was sentenced in absentia to imprisonment, a two-year travel ban and a two-year ban on membership in political and social groups and organisations.⁴⁶⁸ At the time the verdict was issued, Jafar, who was outside the country, stated that he had no intention of seeking asylum and returned to Iran on 30 March 2026. On appeal, the Supreme Court overturned Jafar’s sentence and his case was sent to a court of equal standing for retrial. Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, was scheduled to hear the case. Jafar is currently released on bail.

NAVAB GHEZELBASH

Age:

Activism/rights: Graphic designer

Status: Released

Judicial status: Supplementary punishment of 16 months' ban on online activities

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention



BACKGROUND

Navab Ghezlbash is a designer, graphic artist and former board member of the Iranian Graphic Designers Union. Through the publication of graphic designs on his Instagram page, he has criticised the Islamic Republic and expressed support for civil and student protests. One of his works is a protest poster titled “No”, designed in solidarity with a statement issued by students of the University of Art.⁴⁶⁹ Addressing the authorities, the poster declares: “There’s a sea of blood between us, we have nothing to say to you except one word: No.”

UPDATE

In August 2025, Branch 23 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Navab to four months’ imprisonment on charges of “propaganda against the system” and blocked his Instagram account.⁴⁷⁰ He was transferred to Evin Prison on 17 August 2025 to serve a four-month prison sentence and was released from prison on 12 October.⁴⁷¹ At present, his Instagram page remains accessible, but all posts have been removed from the account.



MEHDI YARAHİ

Age: 44

Activism/rights: Singer

Status: Released

Judicial status:

Violations: Arbitrary arrest and detention; lack of fair trial and due process; denial of access to a lawyer; torture and ill-treatment

BACKGROUND

Mehdi Yarahi is a singer and composer who has released multiple albums and, in recent years, has become known for protest music videos with human rights themes. In 2019, after appearing on stage in workers' clothing during a concert and performing a song in solidarity with protests by workers in Ahvaz, he was banned from performing. Although this ban was initially lifted, it was reimposed after he performed a song commemorating those killed during the nationwide protests of November 2019 and delivered protest speeches at two concerts.

In August 2022, Mehdi announced that state media were no longer permitted to use his works following the arrest of Sepideh Rashno—a poet and writer from Lorestan—on charges of “violating hijab laws”, and the broadcast of her forced confessions on state television while visibly bruised. With the onset of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in September 2022, Mehdi dedicated three songs to the movement. After releasing the music video “Roosarito”, which supported Iranian women’s right to choose their clothing, he was arrested in Tehran on 28 August 2023 and transferred to Evin Prison.⁴⁷² He was released on bail in October of the same year⁴⁷³ and, due to the physical and psychological impact of his detention, was hospitalised for one week.

In January 2024, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him to two years and eight months’ imprisonment and 74 lashes. Due to illness and the need for medical care, his prison sentence was converted to electronic monitoring on 25 February 2024.⁴⁷⁴

UPDATE

On 5 March 2025, Mehdi’s flogging was carried out at Branch 4 of the Enforcement of Judgments Office of the Moral Security Prosecutor’s Office in Tehran, after which his case was closed.⁴⁷⁵ Mehdi had previously stated that he would not appeal or take action to challenge this punishment. The implementation of the flogging sentence against this artist triggered widespread backlash from artists and civil society activists.

On 11 February 2026, Mehdi released a new and highly critical protest single titled “Auschwitz”.

Recommendations

Iran Human Rights calls on the international community to:

1. Make the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defenders and other political prisoners a central condition of any negotiations or engagement with the Islamic Republic.
2. Pursue and ensure prompt, independent and impartial investigations into serious human rights violations, including the suspicious deaths of human rights defenders, through international mechanisms.
3. Invoke the principle of universal jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute those responsible for serious human rights violations and facilitate accountability for those who ordered or carried out such abuses.
4. Use all available legal, political and diplomatic tools to hold accountable officials responsible for the repression, torture and ill-treatment of human rights defenders.
5. Strengthen support for United Nations mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission, and ensure their continuity and effectiveness.

IHRNGO calls on the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders and political prisoners, and put an end to arbitrary arrests and detention.
2. Guarantee all prisoners full and immediate access to adequate medical care and refrain from using denial of medical treatment as a means of pressure.
3. Fully cooperate with United Nations mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur and the Fact-Finding Mission, and grant them unrestricted access to the country, prisons, and private meetings with detainees and other relevant individuals.
4. Guarantee freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and end all forms of repression against human rights defenders.
5. Immediately end torture, ill-treatment and the use of forced confessions.
End the pressure, threats and judicial prosecution of human rights defenders, and cease the criminalisation of peaceful civic activities.

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