



URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

New information
IRN 005 / 0619 / OBS 049.2

Arbitrary detention /
Critical health condition /
Harassment

Iran

July 16, 2020

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint partnership of FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Iran**.

New information:

The Observatory has been informed by the League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI) that Ms. **Narges Mohammadi**, a journalist and Vice-President of the Defenders of Human Rights Center (DHRC), may have contracted COVID-19 in Zanjan prison, Zanjan Province, where she is currently serving a 16-year prison sentence.

According to the information received, in a letter dated July 11, 2020 and published by her family members on July 13, 2020, Ms. Narges Mohammadi reported she was experiencing severe muscle pains, loss of sense of smell, extreme lethargy, stomachache, diarrhoea, and vomiting and lack of medical care since late June. In her letter, Ms. Mohammadi revealed that a month earlier, 30 new prisoners had arrived at the prison and some of them had COVID-19 symptoms. One of them had tested positive. They were subsequently sent on furlough. Ms. Mohammadi asked the Minister of Health to send a representative to Zanjan prison for an inspection. Additionally, Ms. Mohammadi reported that she had been deprived of having books and had not been allowed to have a call with her two children for about a year.

Following pressure from Ms. Mohammadi's family, the authorities agreed to perform a COVID-19 test, but authorities have withheld the result. Ms. Mohammadi and 11 other prisoners who also experienced COVID-19 symptoms have now been separated from the other six prisoners who were held in the same cell and quarantined.

According to her family members who were able to talk to her by phone, prison officials, following the Prosecutor's orders, have refused to provide treatment to Ms. Mohammadi or to transfer her to medical facilities outside the prison. Judiciary officials have also refused to provide Ms. Mohammadi with adequately nutritional food, even at her own expense. She has been given bread and yogurt or bread, tomato, and onions since being transferred to Zanjan prison over six months ago.

The Observatory expresses its strong concern over the deteriorating health of Ms. Narges Mohammadi while in prison, and recalls that her health was already of high concern, as she has been suffering from several serious health conditions, including a pulmonary embolism and a neurological disorder that resulted in partial paralysis. Her health condition has worsened as a result of the authorities' refusal to provide adequate medical care to her.

The Observatory calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally allow Ms. Narges Mohammadi's immediate access to adequate medical care and to release her, as her detention is arbitrary since it only aims at punishing her for her human rights activities.

Background information:

On May 18, 2016, Branch 15 of the Tehran Islamic Revolution Court found Ms. Narges Mohammadi guilty of “assembly and collusion to commit crimes against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the State” and “establishing and running the illegal splinter group LEGAM¹” under Article 498 of the Islamic Penal Code, and sentenced her respectively to five years, one year, and 10 years of prison, for a total of 16 years in prison.

On September 28, 2016, Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeals upheld the sentence and asserted that pursuant to Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, she must serve the maximum sentence, i.e. 10 years. At the time of her sentencing, she was already serving the remainder of another six-year sentence handed down in September 2011, when she had been found guilty of acting against national security, propaganda against the system, and membership of the banned DHRC.

On December 26, 2019, Ms. Narges Mohammadi was transferred from Evin prison to Zanjan prison, around 350 kilometres from Tehran, as a punishment for taking part in a sit-in protest with several other prisoners in Evin prison’s Women’s Ward on December 21, 2019, in solidarity with the families of the victims of the November 2019 nationwide protests. In a letter from Zanjan prison, Ms. Mohammadi said that several prison and security agents headed by the Governor of Evin prison, and including her interrogator from the Ministry of Intelligence, had beaten her and forcefully thrown her into a car before transferring her to Zanjan prison.

On December 28, 2019, Ms. Narges Mohammadi was examined by two doctors in Zanjan prison. According to her brother, “there were bruises, cuts and even traces of fingernails on her chest and throat as well as traces of fingers and fists on her body.” Evin prison authorities and the Spokesperson of the Judiciary denied any ill-treatment and maintained that Ms. Mohammadi had been sent to Zanjan prison by a judicial order, which was never presented to her. No investigation has ever been conducted about Ms. Narges Mohammadi’s allegations of mistreatment, although even Deputy Chairperson of Parliament’s judicial committee has called for it.

On February 22, 2020, judicial authorities communicated two sets of new charges in two cases against her. In the first case, she has been charged with “spreading propaganda against the system” (Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code) and “assembly and collusion with intent to take action against national security” (Article 610), which she is alleged to have committed while in prison. The Prosecutor cited “issuing of political statements, holding educational classes and staging a protest sit-in at Tehran’s Evin prison” as the reasons for those charges. The second case was brought against her following a complaint by the Governor of Evin prison, who accused Ms. Narges Mohammadi of “disrupting order in prison”, “disrupting general calm in Women’s Ward by organising gatherings and singing loudly,” and “insulting government agents including the prison governor and defaming him by accusing him of torturing and beating and injuring her”.

Ms. Narges Mohammadi denied all new charges and refused to defend herself.

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Iran asking them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical integrity and psychological well-being of Ms. Narges Mohammadi, and allow her immediate access to adequate medical care;

¹ Step by step abolition of the death penalty, also known as LEGAM, is a human rights group that campaigned for the abolition of death penalty in Iran.



- ii. Immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Narges Mohammadi and all other human rights defenders arbitrarily detained in the country;
- iii. Put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Ms. Narges Mohammadi and all other human rights defenders in Iran, and ensure they are able to carry out their activities without hindrance;
- iv. Conform to all the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998, in particular its Articles 1, 6, 9, 11 and 12;
- v. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Iran.

Addresses:

- Leader of the Islamic Republic, H.E. Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, Email: info_leader@leader.ir; Twitter: @khamenei_ir
- President Hassan Rouhani, Islamic Republic of Iran, Email: media@rouhani.ir; Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and @Rouhani_ir (Persian).
- Head of the Judiciary, H.E. Hojattolislam Ebrahim Ra'eesi, Islamic Republic of Iran, Email: info@dadiran.ir / info@dadgostary-tehran.ir / info@bia-judiciary.ir
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mohammad Javad Zarif, Islamic Republic of Iran, Email: matbuat@mfa.gov.ir
- Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights, Mr. Ali Bagheri Kani, Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
- H.E. Mr. Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Email: mission.iran@ties.itu.int
- H.E. Mr. Peiman Seadat, Ambassador, Embassy of Iran in Brussels, Belgium, Email: secreteriat@iranembassy.be

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of Iran in your respective countries.

Paris-Geneva, July 16, 2020

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of [ProtectDefenders.eu](https://www.protectdefenders.eu), the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

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