

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ON HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian human rights defender **Atena Daemi** has been on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin prison since 8 April. She is protesting the suspended prison sentences imposed on two of her sisters, **Hanieh** and **Ensieh**, for "insulting public officers on duty". She has accused Iran's security bodies of harassing family members as a way to inflict further pain and suffering on political prisoners.

Iranian human rights defender **Atena Daemi**, who is unjustly imprisoned for her human rights activities, started a hunger strike on 8 April in Evin prison. According to her family, she has since lost weight and developed heart palpitations as well as kidney and urinary tract infections.

Atena Daemi is protesting the suspended prison sentences of three months and one day imposed by a criminal court in Tehran on her sisters **Hanieh** and **Ensieh Daemi** on 23 March 2017 for "insulting public officers on duty". The court issued Atena Daemi with a prison sentence of the same length, added to her current seven-year sentence. The convictions were in connection with the confrontation that she and her sisters had with three Revolutionary Guards officials on 26 November 2016 when they raided her parents' house to arrest her. Atena Daemi has said that the officials wore face masks and failed to present IDs or an arrest warrant. They beat and pepper sprayed Atena Daemi when she peacefully protested that the manner in which they were carrying out her arrest was illegal. They also punched her sister Hanieh in the chest when she tried to intervene to stop the officials.

Following her arrest, Atena Daemi filed a complaint against the Revolutionary Guards with the Office of the Prosecutor in Evin prison. However, the authorities did not process the complaint and said that "her complaint letter has been lost". Instead, seemingly in reprisal, they started criminal proceedings against Atena Daemi and her sisters. Amnesty International considers that the trial that led to their convictions was unfair and that Hanieh and Ensieh Daemi would be prisoners of conscience if imprisoned, targeted simply on the basis of their family relationship with Atena Daemi. In a letter written from inside prison on 8 April 2017, Atena Daemi said, "I will defend the rights of my sisters until my last breath. I will not allow security bodies, which already violate Iran's own laws, to treat our families as a means to inflict mental torture on us... I would rather die than be a slave of oppression."

Please write immediately in English, Persian or your own language urging the Iranian authorities to:

- Release Atena Daemi immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience targeted solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Ensure, pending her release, that she has access to a qualified health professional who can provide health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Quash the convictions and sentences of Hanieh and Ensieh Daemi, which were issued after an unfair trial;
- Investigate Atena Daemi's allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, including being subjected to violence during her November 2016 arrest, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 JUNE 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, Deadend of 1 Azizi
Above Pasteur Intersection
Vali Asr Street, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

Prosecutor General of Tehran
Abbas Ja'fari Dolat Abadi
Office of the General and Revolutionary
Prosecutor
Corner (Nabsh-e) of 15 Khordad Square
Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Iran

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir This is the third update of UA 127/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5324/2016/en/> Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The authorities' attitude to Atena Daemi's hunger strike has been one of indifference. On 12 April 2017, the Associate Prosecutor (*Dadyar*) of Evin prison told the family, in a tone that they described as "cold and empathetic", that Atena Daemi's situation is "none of his business". When faced by her parents' repeated pleas for assistance, the Associate Prosecutor of Evin prison threatened that the authorities could bring a criminal charge against Atena Daemi for her hunger strike.

In January 2017, the authorities charged Atena Daemi and her sisters with "insulting the Supreme Leader", "intentional assault", "obstructing public officials in the performance of their official duties" and "insulting public officers on duty". In February 2017, Atena Daemi and her sisters received an official letter from the Office of the Prosecutor indicating that the first two charges had been dropped. However, the other two charges remained open and Atena Daemi's sisters were required to pay bail of 400 million rials (equivalent to around US\$12,000) to remain at liberty pending further investigation of the charges. They did not receive any other information about the charges until 22 March 2017 when they received a summons to appear before Branch 1162 of the Criminal Court in Tehran the next day to stand trial. The trial session lasted about an hour. The court issued its verdict the next day, giving them each a prison term of three months and one day. The court suspended the sentences of Hanieh and Ensieh Daemi for a period of one year conditional on their "good behaviour".

In March 2017, Atena Daemi was transferred to the prison medical clinic after she experienced a temporary loss of vision in her right eye. However, she was returned to her cell the same day as the medical clinic did not have the necessary facilities to diagnose her condition. Amnesty International understands that she vomited repeatedly for the next two days, leading the authorities to eventually transfer her to a hospital outside prison. Doctors at the hospital said that she might have a condition involving an inflamed optic nerve and needed to receive a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan of her brain. However, the authorities returned her to prison the same day and have since failed to provide her with the MRI. They have also told her family that the procedure is expensive and the family must cover its costs once an appointment is booked for her. This is in breach of international law, which requires that states provide medical care for all prisoners, free of charge and without discrimination.

Atena Daemi had been sentenced to seven years in prison for peacefully defending human rights, including through: writing posts on Facebook criticizing the authorities' execution record; distributing anti-death penalty leaflets; participating in a peaceful protest against the 2014 execution of a young Iranian woman called Reyhaneh Jabbari; visiting the gravesite of those killed during the protests following the 2009 presidential election; and sending information about abuses against political prisoners to human rights groups based outside Iran. In the court verdict issued against her in April 2015, these peaceful activities were cited by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran as evidence of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", "spreading propaganda against the system", and "insulting the Supreme Leader".

Atena Daemi was first arrested in October 2014. She was held in Section 2A of Evin prison – which is run by the Revolutionary Guards – for 86 days, including 51 days in solitary confinement. During this period, she was denied access to a lawyer even though she was repeatedly interrogated. For the first 28 days, she was held in a cell in Section 2A of Evin prison that she said was infested with insects and had no toilet facilities. She said her interrogators offered to grant her easier access to the toilet in exchange for her "co-operation". During most of her lengthy interrogations, she had to sit blindfolded, facing a wall. Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced her to 14 years in prison after a grossly unfair trial in March 2015 that lasted no more than 15 minutes. In September 2016, Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal in Tehran reduced the sentence to seven years.

Further information on UA: 127/15 Index: MDE 13/6096/2017 Issue Date: 20 April 2017