

URGENT ACTION

11 WOMEN ILL-TREATED AND ARBITRARILY DETAINED

At least 11 women from Iran's Gonabadi Dervish religious minority have been arbitrarily detained in inhumane conditions, without access to their lawyers, since 20 February following the violent dispersal of a protest held by Gonabadi Derivshes in Tehran. Some urgently need medical care for injuries sustained from beatings at the time of their arrest.

On 19 February, security forces violently arrested at least 60 women from Iran's persecuted Gonabadi Dervish community for participating in a protest in Tehran which turned violent after security forces resorted to beatings, firearm use, water cannons and tear gas to disperse the crowd. The women were taken to Vozara detention centre where they said they were subjected to intrusive body searches by female officers, intimidating interrogations, insults and yelling. In the following 24 hours, the authorities transferred 10 of the women to the quarantine section of Shahr-e Rey prison near Tehran and released the rest. Those transferred are **Shokoufeh Yadollahi, Sepideh Moradi, Maryam Farisani, Nazila Nouri, Sima Entesari, Shima Entesari, Shahnaz Kiani, Maryam Barakouhi, Elham Ahmadi, and Avisha Jalaledin**. After several days, an 11th woman, **Sedigheh Safabakht**, who was apparently held in Evin prison before, was also transferred to Shahr-e Rey prison. There are reports that some women are undergoing late-night interrogations involving verbal abuse and threats.

Shahr-e Rey prison is a disused chicken farm that holds hundreds of women convicted of violent offences in conditions falling far below the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Common complaints include urine-stained floors, lack of ventilation, insufficient and filthy bathroom facilities, prevalence of contagious diseases, poor quality food containing small pieces of stone and salty water. In recent days, women prisoners have complained that fumes have escaped from the drainage system, filling their rooms with foul odours. As a result, Shima Entesari, who suffers from asthma, has experienced severe breathing difficulties requiring supplemental oxygen. Additionally, eyewitnesses have said that security forces severely beat Shokoufeh Yadollahi at the time of her arrest, resulting in head injuries. The authorities have denied her access to medical care apparently after she refused to be transferred to hospital in handcuffs and leg cuffs. There are reports that several women are suffering from vaginal bleeding due to blows inflicted to their perineum at the time of arrest.

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

- Release Shokoufeh Yadollahi, Sepideh Moradi, Maryam Farisani, Nazila Nouri, Sima Entesari, Shima Entesari, Shahnaz Kiani, Maryam Barakouhi, Elham Ahmadi, Avisha Jalaledin and Sedigheh Safabakht immediately and unconditionally as they are held for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of association and assembly;
- Ensure that, pending their release, they are granted access to their lawyers, provided with any medical care they need, and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Take immediate steps to improve prison conditions at Shahr-e Rey prison in accordance with international law and standards, including the Nelson Mandela Rules, and allow international monitors to conduct inspection visits;
- Conduct an independent and transparent investigation into reports of the excessive use of force by security forces to suppress the protest held by Gonabadi Dervishes and bring those suspected of responsibility to account in fair trials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 MAY 2018 TO:

High Council for Human Rights
 Mohammad Javad Larijani
 Esfaniar Boulevard, Niayesh Intersection
 Vali Asr Avenue, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of Shahr-e Rey Prison
 Mehdi Mohammadi
 Highway, Gharchak
 Shahr-e Rey, Iran
Salutation: Mr. Mehdi Mohammadi

And copies to:
President
 Hassan Rouhani
 Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
 Tehran, Iran
 Twitter: @HassanRouhani

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
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Several hundred Gonabadi Dervishes, both men and women, gathered outside the residence of their spiritual leader, Noor Ali Tabandeh, in an area of Tehran known as Golestan Haftom on the night of 19 February to protest against the authorities' intensified persecution of their community and to prevent the possible arrest of their leader. Those present at the protest reported that police and plain-clothes Basiji forces resorted to beatings with batons, electric cables and sharp objects, and the use of tear gas, water cannons and live ammunition to disperse the crowd, arresting over 300 people, including 60 women. Those present reported that security forces raided a nearby five-storey apartment building to which the protesters had escaped, released tear gas into the staircases of the building, formed a "tunnel" of batons and struck protesters repeatedly on their backs, heads and faces as they violently dragged them down the stairs and into police vans. Pictures and videos from the incident show protesters with lacerations and other wounds to their faces and bodies and bandaged heads and other body parts.

Amnesty International understands that about 170 of those arrested, many of whom had fallen unconscious, were transferred from the scene of the incident to hospital to undergo emergency treatment. In the days that followed, some of them were released while others were taken to Fashafouyeh prison near Tehran even though their medical treatment had not been completed. Some detainees were subsequently transferred from there to solitary confinement in Evin prison or Shapour detention centre, both in Tehran, for interrogations. During this period, their families were kept in the dark about their fate and whereabouts. There are serious concerns that they are facing torture and other ill-treatment, including through the denial of medical care for their injuries, and are under pressure to "confess". On 15 March, Tehran's Chief Prosecutor stated that 20 indictments have so far been issued against Gonabadi Dervishes and that number may increase to 100.

On 4 March, the family of one of the detainees, Mohammad Raji, was informed by the police that he had died from the injuries caused by repeated blows to his head. The details concerning the exact manner, place and time of death remain unclear. The authorities have only stated that he was fatally injured during the clashes and he died either during his transfer to hospital or after his admission. His family have emphasized that he was injured but alive at the time of his arrest on 19 February and expressed outrage at the concealment of his fate and whereabouts for 15 days following the arrest, and the authorities' refusal to clarify the sequence and timing of events that led to his death. In the clashes that occurred on 19 February, three police officers, Reza Emami, Mohammad Ali Bayrami and Reza Moradi Alamdar, and one Basij militiaman, Mohammad Hossein Haddadian, were also left dead. The officers were killed after they were run over by a bus. On 19 March, a Dervish man, Mohammad Salas, was held responsible for the fatal incident and sentenced to death for intentional murder. He had denied the charge during his trial and insisted that his act was not intentional. In his defence, he argued that the accident was due to his poor eyesight, the disorienting effect of his injuries, which included a fractured skull and a broken arm, and his panicked rush to escape the area to avoid further beatings. On 20 February, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) aired a video "confession" from Mohammad Salas that was filmed while he was lying on a hospital bed severely injured. This violated the presumption of innocence and raised concerns that the statement may have been taken in coercive circumstances.

Gonabadi Dervishes in Iran consider themselves Shi'a Muslims. However, because of their Sufi beliefs and practices, the authorities have persistently subjected them to discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention and attacks on their prayer houses. On 6 March 2018, the spiritual leader of Gonabadi Dervishes, Noor Ali Tabandeh, revealed in a video statement that the authorities were preventing him from leaving his home. He did not provide further information about his circumstances.