

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN FILMMAKER JAILED, AT RISK OF FLOGGING

Iranian filmmaker **Keywan Karimi** was jailed on 23 November after being summoned to start serving his prison sentence. The authorities have told **Keywan Karimi** they also intend to carry out his flogging sentence of 223 lashes. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Iranian filmmaker **Keywan Karimi**, from Iran's Kurdish minority, began serving his prison sentence on 23 November. Although he had never received an official written summons, the Office for the Implementation of Sentences had repeatedly telephoned him since February 2016, ordering him to present himself to Tehran's Evin Prison to begin serving his sentence. The authorities have also told him that they intend to implement his flogging sentence of 223 lashes.

Keywan Karimi had been on bail since December 2013. He had obtained a letter from doctors which certified that his mother was undergoing cancer treatment, including chemotherapy, and Keywan Karimi had hoped that the authorities would not summon him to serve his prison sentence before her course of treatment was complete. He had also wanted to remain at liberty long enough to finish making his latest film.

Keywan Karimi was arrested on 14 December 2013 and held for 12 days in solitary confinement without access to a lawyer in Section 2-A of Evin Prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, before being released on bail. In October 2015, following an unfair trial before a Revolutionary Court in Tehran, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment on the charge of "insulting Islamic sanctities" and 223 lashes on the charge of "illicit relations falling short of adultery". The former charge was imposed in connection with a music video clip the authorities found on his hard drive; the latter was brought against him for "shaking hands" and "being under one roof" with a female friend and poet "who had not covered her head and neck". On 20 February 2016, Keywan Karimi was told that an appeal court had upheld his flogging sentence and ruled that he must serve one year of his six-year prison sentence. It suspended the rest of the prison sentence for a period of five years, conditional on his "good behaviour".

Please write immediately in Persian, English, Arabic, French, Spanish, or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Keywan Karimi as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and association;
- Calling on them, in the meantime, to provide him with regular access to his family and lawyer of his own choosing and to provide him with any medical care he may require;
- Urging them to abolish flogging sentences, as they violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under international law;
- Urging them to end their crackdown on artistic expression and protect the rights to privacy, and freedom of expression and association, which are enshrined in Articles 17, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 JANUARY 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani

Salutation: Your Excellency

Office of the Supreme Leader

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President

Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals to the care of Iranian embassies in your country, listed below. 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. This is the second update of UA 19/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/3528/2016/en/>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Keywan Karimi was arrested on 14 December 2013 by Revolutionary Guards officials and held in solitary confinement for 12 days in Section 2-A of Evin Prison without access to a lawyer. He was only allowed to make a brief telephone call to his family one week after his arrest but was not allowed to tell them that he had been arrested or where he was being held. He was released on bail after 12 days. Keywan Karimi's trial, held before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, started on 11 May 2014 and concluded on 13 October 2015. He had seven hearings in total, each lasting only around 15 to 20 minutes. His lawyer was present during the trial sessions but it appears that the court did not give him adequate time to present his defence. There were also irregularities in the court's conviction and sentencing. Keywan Karimi had also faced the charge of "spreading propaganda against the system" in connection with his 2012 film *Neveshtan Rooye Shahr* (Writing on the City) about graffiti written on the walls of Tehran's streets but this charge was not mentioned at all in the court verdict. Instead, the verdict imposed six years' imprisonment for "insulting Islamic sanctities", a charge which the authorities had failed to inform him of until his last trial session. Keywan Karimi's hearing before an appeal court, at which representatives of security and intelligence bodies were present, was held on 23 December 2015.

Keywan Karimi is the director of 12 films, including documentaries and fictional works. His documentary *The Broken Border* was awarded the best short documentary prize at the 2013 Beirut International Film Festival. The film focuses on the issue of smuggling state-subsidized petrol from Iran to Iraq by an impoverished section of the Kurdish community in the western province of Kurdistan. Another film directed by him, *The Adventure of a Married Couple*, was screened at Freiburg, San Sebastián and Zurich film festivals.

Keywan Karimi is among a number of artists arrested and convicted of charges based on their peaceful artistic activities. They include brothers Mehdi Rajabian, a musician, and Hossein Rajabian, a filmmaker, who have both been sentenced to six years' imprisonment. They had been arrested together with another musician, Yousef Emadi, in October 2013. During their arrest by Revolutionary Guards officials on 5 October 2013, all three were incapacitated with a stun gun and blindfolded. For the next 18 days, they were held in an unknown location where they say they were tortured, including by electric shocks. They were then held for two months in solitary confinement in Section 2-A of Evin Prison. They were released on bail in December 2013. Following an unfair trial in April 2015, they were convicted of "insulting Islamic sanctities", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "illegal audio-visual activities". Their charges are based on their artistic work, including a feature film by Hossein Rajabian dealing with women's rights to divorce in Iran, and Mehdi Rajabian's distribution of unlicensed music by Iranian singers and bands from outside the country, some of whose lyrics are political or cover taboo subjects or which the Iranian authorities deem them to be "un-Islamic", "perverse" or "anti-revolutionary". Three years of their six-year prison sentences were later suspended for five years on appeal, conditional on their "good behaviour". They began serving their prison terms on 4 June 2016 and have been on two hunger strikes in protest at their imprisonment and the lack of medical care provided to them.

In November 2016, Amnesty International and renowned Iranian music band Kiosk launched a joint campaign to mobilize people around the world to raise awareness about the crackdown on artists, including musicians and filmmakers, in Iran and to inundate the Iranian authorities with messages in support of jailed artists in the country. The crackdown has led to harsh prison terms and flogging sentences against artists who are being branded as criminals merely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression through art, including music and film. See Amnesty International's press release: "Iran: Musicians and activists launch campaign to free jailed artists", 8 November 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/11/iran-musicians-and-activists-launch-campaign-to-free-jailed-artists/>

Further information on UA: 19/16 Index: MDE 13/5258/2016 Issue Date: 1 December 2016