

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN MUSICIANS AND FILMMAKER SUMMONED TO JAIL
Iranian musicians Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi, and filmmaker Hossein Rajabian have been summoned to start serving a three-year prison sentence, imposed for their artistic work. They must report to the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran's Evin Prison by 31 May. If imprisoned, they will be prisoners of conscience.

Filmmaker **Hossein Rajabian**, his brother **Mehdi Rajabian** and **Yousef Emadi**, both musicians, were summoned on 26 May to report to the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran's Evin prison within five days to start serving their prison sentences. All three were sentenced, following a grossly unfair trial, to six years' imprisonment and fined 200 million rials (about US\$6,625) on charges related to their artistic work. In February 2016, the men were told that a Court of Appeal in Tehran had ruled that they must serve three years of their six-year prison sentences. The court suspended the rest of the sentence for a period of five years, conditional on their "good behaviour".

Hossein Rajabian, Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi had been convicted of "insulting Islamic sanctities", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "illegal audio-visual activities", after a three-minute trial on 26 April 2015 before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The charges had arisen from their artistic work, including Hossein Rajabian's feature film dealing with women's right to divorce in Iran and Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi's distribution of unlicensed music by Iranian singers from outside the country, some of whose lyrics and messages are political or cover taboo subjects. The men have been out on bail since December 2013. Before that, they were held for two months in solitary confinement, where they have said they were subjected to beatings and electric shocks to make video "confessions". Their "confessions" were used as evidence against them to secure their convictions even though they told the judge that they were obtained through torture and other ill-treatment. They have had no access to a lawyer at any stage of their arrest, detention, trial or appeal.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to ensure the convictions of Mehdi Rajabian, Hossein Rajabian and Yousef Emadi are quashed as they arise solely from the men's peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association through music and film;
- Urging the authorities to order a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, and bring to justice anyone found responsible in a trial that meets international fair trial standards;
- Expressing concern that trials by Revolutionary Courts continue to be seriously flawed and do not meet international fair trial standards;
- Reminding them that Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party, protects the right to freedom of expression, including in the form of art.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 JULY 2016 TO:

Office of the Supreme Leader
 Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
 Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
 Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
 Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
 Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals care of diplomatic representatives accredited to your country, listed below. H.E. Mohammad Hassan Habibollahzadeh, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: iranemb.lon@mfa.gov.ir

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 41/16. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3563/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hossein Rajabian, Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi were arrested, incapacitated with a stun gun, and blindfolded by Revolutionary Guards officials on 5 October 2013 while they were working in their office in the northern city of Sari, Mazandaran Province. For the next 18 days, they were held at 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 2A of Tehran's Evin Prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. Their interrogators apparently pressured them into making video "confessions", threatening them with life in jail if they failed to do so. All three were released on bail in December 2013. At their appeal hearing, the judge told them that having a lawyer was "pointless".

For most of the time they were detained, Hossein Rajabian, Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi were held incommunicado. In the last few weeks in custody, and after they had been forced to "confess" in front of a video camera, they were allowed short intermittent calls with their families. Ten days after their three-minute long trial on 26 April 2015, they were told the verdict had been issued and they should go to the courthouse to read it. They were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "insulting Islamic sanctities", one year's imprisonment for "spreading propaganda against the system", and a fine of 200 million rials for "illegal audio-visual activities". They were not given the written judgement, but were told by a court clerk they had 20 days to lodge an appeal, which they did without the assistance of a lawyer. They represented themselves during their appeal hearing on 22 December 2015, as they were told by the presiding judge that they were not entitled to have a lawyer present. At both trial and appeal, the men told the presiding judges that their "confessions" had been extracted under torture and other ill-treatment while they were held incommunicado. The investigator at the Office of the Prosecution in Evin Prison told them that being tortured in the city of Sari was irrelevant in Tehran. The presiding judge at their appeal hearing before the Court of Appeal in Tehran warned them against talking about their alleged torture and other ill-treatment and threatened to give them harsher sentences if they did so. Mehdi Rajabian suffered a seizure following beatings while he was detained in Sari and has suffered more seizures since. Following his release, he was diagnosed with epilepsy and has been taking daily medication to treat the condition.

Mehdi Rajabian is the founder of the Iranian website Barg Music, which was launched in 2009 and distributed unlicensed music. In Iran, only music that passes official censors receives licences, and musicians without licences operate underground. Barg Music distributed Persian-language music by Iranian singers from outside the country, some of whose lyrics and messages are political or cover taboo social subjects. They include famous Germany-based Iranian rapper Shahin Najafi, whose 2012 song referencing a Shi'a religious figure caused such controversy that some Iranian clerics issued fatwas calling him an "apostate", which is considered punishable by death under Iranian law. The Barg Music website had apparently attracted 300,000 visitors a day and had exclusive contracts with Iranian artists who mentioned the website's name in their videos. Mehdi Rajabian had been recording the history of an Iranian musical instrument called the *setar* when he was arrested. The arresting officers searched his studio, confiscating his recordings and other materials related to this project. Hossein Rajabian was arrested after making his first feature film, called "Inverted Triangle", about women's right to divorce in Iran. The arresting officials confiscated all the materials related to the film. The film has not been allowed to be broadcast. Mehdi Rajabian and Yousef Emadi have been accused of broadcasting the voices of female singers, as well as those of "anti-Islamic Revolution" singers. The Iranian authorities place restrictions on female singers, with a ban on women singing solo in front of men. Conservative clerics say that women's voices have the potential to trigger immoral sensual arousal. In February 2015, conservative cleric Grand Ayatollah Hassan Nouri Hamedani said: "We will stop any film, book, or music that is anti-Islamic and anti-revolutionary... No action can normalize women's singing, and we will stop it."

Further information on UA: 41/16 Index: MDE 13/4133/2016 Issue Date: 27 May 2016