

URGENT ACTION

ANTI-DEATH PENALTY ACTIVIST VIOLENTLY ARRESTED

Iranian human rights defender and anti-death penalty campaigner Atena Daemi was violently arrested on 26 November and taken to Evin Prison to begin serving a seven-year prison sentence. She is a prisoner of conscience held for her human rights work.

Anti-death penalty campaigner and human rights defender **Atena Daemi** was arrested on 26 November 2016 when three Revolutionary Guard officials raided her parents' house and took her away to Tehran's Evin Prison to begin serving her seven-year prison sentence. In a letter leaked from prison on 1 December, Atena Daemi said that she was beaten and pepper sprayed by the officials arresting her after she insisted peacefully that they present an arrest warrant. She has said that her sister was also punched in her chest when she attempted to intervene to stop the officials. She also described how, on the way to prison, the Revolutionary Guard officials blindfolded her and repeatedly threatened her by saying that they would open new cases against her and had "cooked up a plan so that she gets the thought of ever getting released from prison out of her mind".

Atena Daemi has been sentenced to seven years in prison for peacefully defending human rights, including through: writing posts on Facebook criticizing the authorities' execution record; painting anti-death penalty slogans on walls; 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. 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.

Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French and Spanish 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;
- Calling on them to investigate her allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, including being subjected to prolonged solitary confinement and to violence during her arrest, and ensure that those suspected of responsibility are brought to justice in fair trials;
- Urging them to publicly recognize the work of human rights defenders, stop criminalizing their peaceful human rights activities, and take all measures to protect them from intimidation, harassment, retaliation, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, as set out in the 1998 UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 JANUARY 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani

Prosecutor General of Tehran
Abbas Ja'fari Dolat Abadi

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals to the Iranian embassy 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 127/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/3777/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a letter from prison on 1 December 2016, Atena Daemi writes: "I, Atena Daemi, write from inside Evin Prison, the prison that has become the place of loving people for whom human beings and humanity are their sole concerns... My voice cannot be silenced by your cruel and unjust actions... Atena Daemi is one person but there are thousands of Atena Daemis outside prison who will raise their voice against the injustice [inflicted on] political prisoners."

Atena Daemi was first arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guards on 21 October 2014. 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". With the exception of the weekends, she was interrogated every day for a period of a month and a half, often for long hours at a time. During most of her lengthy interrogations, she had to sit blindfolded, facing a wall.

Atena Daemi was charged with several trumped-up charges including "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", "spreading propaganda against the system", "insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Supreme Leader" and "concealing evidence". The insult charge was in connection with a Facebook post in which she sarcastically adapted a famous statement by Iran's first Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, to criticize Iran's execution record over the past three decades, and another post where she said his successor, Ayatollah Khamenei, was widely regarded by Iranians as a "dictator". The charge of "concealing evidence" for which she originally received four years in prison related to her "changing the passwords to the Facebook and email accounts" of another activist. She was acquitted of this charge on appeal. Atena Daemi's trial in March 2015 took place at the same time as the trial of three other human rights activists, including Omid Alishenas, who has also been sentenced to seven years in prison (see "Activists jailed after unfair trial for protest", <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2627/2015/en/>). He was arrested by Revolutionary Guards officials on 10 December 2016 and taken to Evin Prison to begin serving his sentence.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the dire situation of human rights defenders in Iran. The Iranian authorities have intensified their crackdown on human rights defenders, subjecting them to surveillance, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and harsh prison sentences. Peaceful human rights activities such as documenting and reporting on human rights violations, campaigning for the abolition of the death penalty in Iran, associating with the families of political prisoners, challenging state-sanctioned gender discrimination, advancing trade union rights, and communicating with international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, are increasingly cited by courts as evidence of "criminal" activism deemed threatening to "national security" and relied upon to sentence human rights defenders to lengthy prison sentences.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders highlights states' obligation to create conditions in the social, economic, political and other fields, as well as the legal guarantees and legislative and administrative measures that are necessary to ensure that all persons under their jurisdiction are able to enjoy their rights and freedoms, including the right to defend human rights. States have an obligation not to interfere, obstruct or violate the right to defend human rights and to protect that right from interference, obstruction and abuse by others, whether they are state agents or not. States also have a responsibility to take necessary measures to protect everyone against any violence, threats, retaliation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of the right to defend human rights.

Further information on UA: 127/15 Index: MDE 13/5324/2016 Issue Date: 12 December 2016