

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN ACTIVIST COUPLE JAILED IN EVIN PRISON

The health of jailed Iranian human rights defender Arash Sadeghi has deteriorated. He has been on hunger strike since 24 October in protest at the imprisonment of his wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, a human rights defender jailed for writing a story about stoning.

Human rights defender **Arash Sadeghi**, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence imposed for his human rights activism, started a hunger strike on 24 October to protest against the imprisonment of his wife, writer and human rights defender **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee**. According to information given to Amnesty International by an informed source, Arash Sadeghi is experiencing a rapid heartbeat, breathing difficulties, severe drops in his blood pressure, gastro-intestinal and kidney problems, and slurred speech. He has been imprisoned since June 2016. His wife Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee has been sentenced to six years in prison on charges including “insulting Islamic sanctities”. On 24 October, officials violently broke through the front door of her house and arrested her to begin serving her sentence. Her conviction relates to an unpublished fictional story that she had written about the practice of stoning. The story describes the emotional reaction of a young woman who watches the film *The Stoning of Soraya M*, which tells the true story of a young woman stoned to death for adultery, and becomes so enraged that she burns a copy of the Qur’an. Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee are both detained in Evin Prison.

The fictional story written by Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee was discovered by authorities when she was arrested together with her husband on 6 September 2014. After their arrest, Arash Sadeghi was moved to Evin Prison and held in solitary confinement for six months and then released on bail. Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee was taken to a secret location. She was detained there for one night before being transferred to Evin Prison, where she was held without access to her family and lawyer until 27 September 2014, before being released on bail. While detained, she was subjected to extended interrogations while blindfolded and threatened with execution for “insulting Islam”. During interrogations, she could hear interrogators threatening and abusing her husband in the next cell. Arash Sadeghi has since said that he was punched in the head, kicked, slapped and choked while in custody between September 2014 and March 2015. Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee were both convicted and sentenced after an unfair trial that consisted only of two brief sessions. They had no legal representation at the trial. Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee was not given the chance to speak in her own defence because the first session in May 2015 was focused on Arash Sadeghi’s activism, and the second session in June 2015 was held in her absence while she was in hospital recovering from major surgery. The court rejected her request for adjournment, despite her providing them with her medical records. They were both sentenced to harsh prison sentences.

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

- Urging the Iranian authorities to release Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience targeted solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Calling on the authorities to conduct a thorough, independent investigation into Arash Sadeghi’s allegations of torture and bring those suspected of responsibility to justice, without recourse to the death penalty;
- Immediately abolish the penalty of stoning, in law and practice, and ensure that consensual sexual activity between adults is decriminalized, in particular by the repeal of Article 225 of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 JANUARY 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani

Prosecutor General of Tehran
Abbas Ja’fari Dolat Abadi

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhan

Please send your appeals to the Iranian embassy in 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. This is the third update of UA 174/13. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/2520/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In a letter to her husband on 29 November 2016, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee wrote: "I know you are crying out against the injustice inflicted upon us by sacrificing your own life. The day that we eagerly long for will come. I implore you to stay alive until we can watch with joy the dawn of freedom. Your defiance is admirable my dearest Arash. Please stay alive for I love your precious life far more than my own freedom."

Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee had no legal representation at their trial as their first lawyer was put under pressure by intelligence and security officials to withdraw from the case and the second was barred from reading their court case and representing them. They have said that when they objected, the court told them they could not have a lawyer of their own choosing and could only be represented by a lawyer appointed by the court, which they did not accept. Arash Sadeghi was informed in August 2015 that he had been sentenced by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran to 15 years' imprisonment on charges including "spreading propaganda against the system", "gathering and colluding against national security" and "insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic". The charges stemmed solely from his peaceful human rights activities. These include: speaking out against torture, including prolonged solitary confinement, in interviews with international media outlets; writing critical posts on Facebook about the mass execution of political prisoners in Iran during the 1980s; communicating with Amnesty International and other human rights groups; and participating in several peaceful gatherings protesting physical assaults against political prisoners during a raid on Section 350 of Evin Prison in April 2014, the detention of human rights defender Narges Mohammadi, and the 2014 execution of political prisoner Gholamreza Khosravi Savadjani after an unfair trial.

Arash Sadeghi has suffered repeated arrests and periods of arbitrary detention. He was first arrested on 9 July 2009 for his involvement in the demonstrations that followed the disputed 2009 presidential elections and held for 90 days in Section 2A of Evin Prison before being released on bail. He has said that during this period he suffered torture and other ill-treatment: he was hung from the ceiling and left hanging for up to five hours at a time; he was beaten so severely that his shoulder was dislocated twice and his teeth were broken; and, he suffered damage to his eardrum after interrogators repeatedly slapped his head. He has also alleged that interrogators degraded him by forcing him to lick a soiled toilet bowl, urinating on his face and into his mouth and preventing him from bathing. He has said interrogators also kicked him and punched him in the face while he was blindfolded, harming his eyes and causing him temporary loss of vision.

He was arrested again in December 2009 and held until March 2010 when he was released on bail. However, five days after his release he was arrested again and detained until 21 October 2010. A week after his release, the security forces broke a window to enter his home in the middle of the night and rearrest him. Arash Sadeghi, who had been spending the night at his grandmother's home, later said in an interview that his mother suffered a heart attack when the security forces broke in. She died four days later in hospital. He was arrested several weeks later in December 2010 to begin serving a one-year prison sentence imposed for his peaceful political activities. He was released in October 2011 after completing the sentence but was rearrested in January 2012 and transferred to solitary confinement. He was held without charge for eight months and then charged with "gathering and colluding against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system" for his peaceful activism. He was held for 22 months in total in Sections 209 and 240 of Evin Prison and then released on bail. During this period, he was allowed only two visits from his family and given no access to a lawyer. He also said he was tortured and pressured to stop pursuing the complaint against the security forces for raiding his house in October 2010, allegedly causing his mother's fatal heart attack. Amnesty International understands that after his release, he did not face any judicial proceedings in relation to the charges until he was arrested again in September 2014 and ultimately sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Further information on UA: 174/13 Index: MDE 13/5231/2016 Issue Date: 30 November 2016