

IMPRISONED IN EVIN FOR DEFENDING RIGHTS

Spotlighting Cases of Imprisoned Iranian Women
Human Rights Defenders



29 November 2023

INTRODUCTION



Iran's women human rights defenders (WHRDs) have long been at the forefront of the country's struggle against discrimination and inequality. For four decades, legal and systematic discrimination against women in that country has rendered women one of the most significant forces of resistance and change. Consequently, they have consistently been suppressed in political and social arenas, more than other groups. Women's efforts have publicly exposed ongoing discrimination, oppression, and injustice, contributing to the promotion and strengthening of feminist and human rights discourses and justice-oriented values in Iranian society. This struggle, in both private and public spheres, has faced various risks and costs, including detention, imprisonment, house arrest, internal exile, travel bans, government-sponsored sexual and gender-based violence, social pressures, and more for these activists.

In this report, Femena highlights the cases of WHRDs currently imprisoned in Evin Prison. It includes women and girls working to promote women's rights and gender equality and justice as well as those engaged in promoting human rights issues as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN's definition also encompasses all members of civil society who may not explicitly identify themselves as human rights defenders, as well as individuals working in non-traditional human rights fields such as journalists, healthcare activists, environmental defenders, peace activists, among others.

These women have been sentenced to prison as a result of their fight against oppression and discrimination. Even though, the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted in 1988, by unanimous approval of UN member countries recognizes the crucial role of human rights defenders and serves as a warning about the threats and risks they face. The Declaration also states that governments not only should not impede the work of rights defenders, but should facilitate it.

INTRODUCTION



This report is a continuation of Femena's series aimed at supporting imprisoned WHRDs in Iran. In previous reports, we focused on detained women activists during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprising. In this report, we highlight the cases of WHRDs who are serving their prison terms in Evin Prison—those who, in their quest to build a better, more humane, and equitable society, have found themselves behind bars.

Anisha Asadollahi

Anisha Asadollahi, a teacher, labor activist, and official translator of the Union of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, began serving a five-year and eight-month sentence on August 5, 2023, in the Women's Ward of Evin Prison.

This sentence is in relation to her detention the previous year on May 9, 2022, when Anisha and her husband, Keyvan Mohtadi, were both arrested at their home in Tehran following their work as translators for French citizens and labor union activists, Cécile Kohler and Jacques Paris, who were visiting Iran at the time. Anisha and her husband were subsequently arrested on charges of collaborating with them. Prior to this, Cecile and Jacques had also been detained on their way to the airport, as they were trying to leave Iran and were accused of organizing riots and inciting instability in Iran.



Three months after she was detained, Anisha was temporarily released from prison, pending trial. She was once again arrested on April 28, 2023, at the residence of Mohammad Habibi, the imprisoned teacher's rights activist, just days before International Workers' Day, along with other union and labor rights activists, and was taken to Evin prison. She was released on bail a week later.

On April 16, 2023, the initial verdict was handed down by the Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, on charges of "propaganda against the state" and "assembly and collusion against national security." Anisha was sentenced to five years and eight months in prison. After the court's verdict, she posted on her Instagram, stating that the judge handling her case considered her Instagram stories in which she had expressed opposition to the execution of protesters Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavard as evidence of "propaganda against the state." The appeal court upheld her sentence in June 2023. She began serving her sentence in August of 2023.

Before this, Anisha had been detained multiple times and experienced solitary confinement. Anisha was arrested for the first time on May 1, 2019, at a peaceful protest on International Workers' Day along with dozens of other protesters in front of the Parliament.

She was transferred to the women's ward in Qarchak Prison. After her temporary release on bail, she was re-arrested by the security forces on June 18, 2019, and was sentenced to one year in prison and 74 lashes. She was released from prison on January 21, 2020 after serving her sentence. Anisha Asadollahi's civic activities have revolved around supporting workers' rights, and her literary works and translations primarily focus on women, feminism, capitalist critique, and workers' rights. Her husband, Keyvan Mohtadi, is also a translator, writer, labor activist, and child labor rights advocate, who is currently serving a six-year prison sentence in Evin Prison.



Anisha and her husband Keyvan Mohtadi

Bahareh Hedayat

Bahareh Hedayat is a well-known political and human rights activist who has been detained and imprisoned multiple times during her years of activism. In October 2022, following the start of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” Uprising, she was once again arrested and transferred to Security Ward 209 and later to the Women's Ward of Evin Prison for a four year prison sentence.



This sentence is related to her arrest in February 2020, when she was charged with organizing a protest following the downing of the Ukrainian plane by the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) which resulted in the death of 176 passengers. She was sentenced to four years in prison by the Revolutionary Court, a verdict that was upheld in appeals court.

Bahareh Hedayat, a prominent figure in the student movement and a long time member of the women's movement, had previously been arrested on multiple counts, including during the 2009 protest following the contested results of presidential elections, known as the Green Movement. During that time, she was detained by security forces and sentenced to 10 years in prison. She ultimately served seven and half years in prison but continued her activism against the policies of the Islamic Republic even after her release. To date, Bahareh has spent 9 years of her life in prison and by the time she is released she will have spent over 11 years in prison.

Elaheh Mohammadi

On September 28, 2022, Elaheh Mohammadi, a women's rights activist and well-known journalist for the Ham-Mihan newspaper, was arrested after publishing a report on the funeral ceremony of Mahsa Jina Amini, a young Kurdish woman arrested for improper hijab, who died in the custody of Morality police. Elaheh had been dispatched to Saqqez by the newspaper's editorial team to cover this event. However, after the report was published, authorities raided her home, and confiscated her electronic devices. Three days later, while en route to an interrogation session, she was detained by security forces.



On October 28, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) of Iran, in a joint statement, attributed the “Woman, Life, Freedom” uprisings to a “Western conspiracy.” They also labeled Elahe and Niloufar Hamed, another journalist who was arrested following her reporting on the death of Mahsa Amin, as trained agents of foreign intelligence services.

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Throughout my entire professional career, I have strived to speak up for the people and aimed only to improve their lives, and beyond that I have not engaged in any other activities.

After several months of arbitrary detention, Elaheh's first court session was held on May 29th, 2023, and the second session took place on July 26, 2023. Both sessions were conducted in closed proceedings. In her defense during the court proceedings, Elahe stated, "throughout my entire professional career, I have strived to speak up for the people and aimed only to improve their lives, and beyond that I have not engaged in any other activities. I have had no connection with any foreign government, and I take pride in standing alongside the people to be their voice."

According to the verdict of the preliminary court on October 22, 2023, Elaheh Mohammadi has been sentenced to six years in prison on charges of "collaborating with the hostile government of the United States."

She has received a five-year prison term for "conspiracy to commit crimes against national security" and a one-year imprisonment for "spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran." If this sentence is upheld, Elaheh will spend six years of her life in Evin Prison, which is the mandatory term to be served in line with the charges against her. She is also banned from membership in political parties, groups, and factions, as well as engaging in activities in cyberspace, media, and the press for a period of two years, following the end of her 6 year prison term.



Faezeh Hashemi

Faezeh Hashemi, a political activist, a former MP, and former editor-in-chief of “Zan” [woman] newspaper, the first newspaper dedicated to women’s issues in the Islamic Republic of Iran. She is also the daughter of former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Faezeh has consistently criticized government policies, especially regarding women, and has experienced multiple confrontations with security institutions and faced legal legal proceedings.

Faezeh was arrested on September 27, 2022, following the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests. Three months later, she was sentenced to five years in prison on charges of "propaganda against the state and insulting sanctities," a verdict that was confirmed in appeals.

Prior to this, Faezeh Hashemi had been arrested twice for participating in protests during the Green Movement, spending six months in Evin Prison until March 2013.



Fariba Kamalabadi

On July 31, 2022, Fariba Kamalabadi, one of the former leaders of the Baha'i community, was arrested and transferred to solitary confinement in ward 209 of Evin prison. She was sentenced to ten years in prison following a one-hour trial on November 21, 2022. In August 2023, the Tehran Court of Appeal upheld Kamalabadi's sentence under the charges of "forming and leading groups to act against national security," and the appeal court upheld the sentence.

Prior to this recent arrest, Fariba had already served a 10-year prison sentence after she was arrested in May 2008 as part of a larger case against Baha'i community leaders. In this case, she initially received a 20-year sentence for "organizing and managing a group to act against national security," which was later reduced to 10 years. Fariba served her ten-year sentence in Evin, Gohardasht, and Qarchak prisons and was finally released in 2017.

The Baha'i community in Iran, a religious minority, has faced the most significant suppression and discrimination among believers of various faiths. They are not only arrested and imprisoned for their religious activities but are also deprived of access to higher education.



Their businesses are regularly shut down, and many have had their properties confiscated. Currently, dozens of Baha'is in Iran are enduring imprisonment simply for being Baha'is. At present Fariba has spent 11 years of her life behind bars and at the end of her current sentence she will have served a total of 20 years.

Golrokh Iraee

Golrokh Iraee, a human rights activist, was arrested on September 26, 2022, during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests by security forces. Her arrest occurred just five months after her release from prison. She was sentenced to seven years in prison in court on charges of “social agitation, conspiracy to disrupt national security, and spreading of propaganda against the state”. However, this sentence was reduced to five years on appeal. Golrokh is currently serving her five-year sentence in Evin Prison.



Golrokh, with a history of multiple arrests and convictions for civic activism, was first arrested in September 2014 and sentenced to six years in prison for charges of “Insulting sacred religious values” and “spreading propaganda against the state”. In the end, she served two and a half years in prison and was then released April 8, 2019. Several months after her release from prison, in November 2019, she was arrested again due to a case brought against her while she was in prison. She was sentenced to 25 months in prison for this case on the charges of “spreading propaganda against the state, insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic, insulting the supreme leader of Iran, and disrupting the prison order.” She was released from prison in May 2022 after serving her full sentence and was free for about 4 months before being rearrested and sentenced again.

Hoda Tohidi

Hoda Tohidi, a social researcher and political activist, was arrested during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests September 2022. After three months detention, she was temporarily released on bail from Evin Prison's Ward 209. Subsequently, she was sentenced to one year of imprisonment by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Afshari, on charges of "conspiracy and collusion with the intention of acting against national security" and "spreading of propaganda against the state." On May 31, 2023, Hoda and her sister Zahra were summoned to the Shahid Moghaddas Prosecutor office by phone. Despite being eligible for amnesty, she was arrested without prior notice and sent to Evin Prison to serve her sentence.



Hoda, a former member of the Ettihad-e Mellat, reformist political party, had previously been detained during the Green Movement protests in 2009 and spent some time in detention in Ward 209, managed by the Intelligence Ministry.

Mahvash Shahriari Sabet

Mahvash Shahriari Sabet, one of the former leaders of the Baha'i community in Iran was also arrested along with Friba Kamalabadi on July 31, 2022. The revolutionary court in Tehran handed a 10 years prison sentence to Mahvash Shahriari for accusations of "founding and leading an organization aimed at acting against national security." The sentence was confirmed by the appeal court.



Prior to this sentence, Mahvash who was one of the leaders of Yaran-e Iran [Friends of Iran], which oversaw the religious affairs of the Baha'i community in Iran, was arrested in March 2008, and later in May of the same year, all of the other members of this group were arrested and the group was dissolved.

Mahvash Shahriari Sabet was charged with "leading and managing Baha'i community affairs in Iran." After two years of temporary detention in a security prison, she was sentenced to twenty years in prison. This sentence was later reduced to ten years, and Mahvash was released from prison in 2017 after serving this period of imprisonment.

Mahvash Sabet is a poet and the winner of The Writer of Courage Prize from PEN International association. At present Mahvash has spent 11 years of her life behind bars and at the end of her current sentence she will have served a total of 20 years.

Nahid Taghavi

Nahid Taghavi, a retired architect and 68-year-old Iranian-German citizen, has been in Evin Prison since October 2020. She has been sentenced to 10 years and 8 months of imprisonment on charges of "participating in the management of an illegal group" and "propaganda activities against the state."

Nahid was arrested in her home in Tehran in October 2020 and was transferred to one of the solitary cells managed by the IRGC intelligence services, known as Ward 2-A of Evin Prison. Five months later, she was moved to the Women's Ward of Evin Prison, and ultimately, in August 2021, she was tried in Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran presided over by Judge Iman Afshari.

The International Society for Human Rights in Germany had cited Nahid Taghavi's "long-standing activities in the field of human rights defense in Iran, especially women's rights and advocacy for freedom of expression" as the reason for her detention.



Narges Mohammadi

Narges Mohammadi is a well-known human rights activist in Iran who has been arrested and imprisoned multiple times. Every time after her release, she faces new charges as she persists in her human rights advocacy. Nargess Mohammadi is currently serving a sentence of 10 years, nine months in prison, and 154 lashes in her case, in relation to multiple cases brought against her.

On November 16, 2021, Narges Mohammadi was arrested in Karaj during a ceremony honoring the second anniversary of Ebrahim Ketabdar, who was killed by the security forces in November 2019.

She has been kept behind bars since. Shortly after arrest, Narges was sentenced to eight years and two months in prison, along with lashes and social deprivation. Additionally, in September 2022, Narges was sentenced to 15 months of imprisonment along with additional punishments by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court for another case that was brought against her while serving her sentence in prison.



In October 2020, after serving eight years in prison, Narges was released from Zanzan Prison due to a law that allowed for the reduction of imprisonment sentences. However, she was deprived of the right to have a passport and leave the country to visit her children, who live in exile with their father in France. One of Narges Mohammadi's most effective activities has been her efforts to abolish solitary confinement. Under the slogan "Solitary Confinement is Torture," she launched a campaign against the imprisonment of rights activists in solitary cells. She exposed the political and psychological consequences of this method of punishment on Iranian rights defenders. She compiled the experiences of several other prisoners, from detention and solitary confinement to interrogation, in a two-volume book titled "White Torture," which has been published in Sweden.

Narges, who was the spokesperson for the Center for Human Rights Defenders in Iran, was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023. She is currently serving her sentence in Evin Prison.



Nasim Soltan Beigi

Nasim Soltan Beigi, a journalist, former student activist of Allameh Tabataba'i University and a WHRD, went to Evin prison following a summons, on November 21, 2023 to begin serving a three-year and seven-month prison sentence. This sentence was in relation to her arrest in January 2023, at the airport as she was about to leave the country. Her travel coincided with the "Woman, Life, Freedom" uprisings.



She was temporarily released on bail after a month of solitary confinement.

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There is a sea of blood between us, I detest you, long live Woman, Life, Freedom.

In July 2023, Nasim, like Saeedeh Shafiei, was sentenced in Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court to 8 months of imprisonment on charges of "spreading propaganda against the state" and three years and seven months of imprisonment on charges of "gathering and conspiring against the national security of the country."

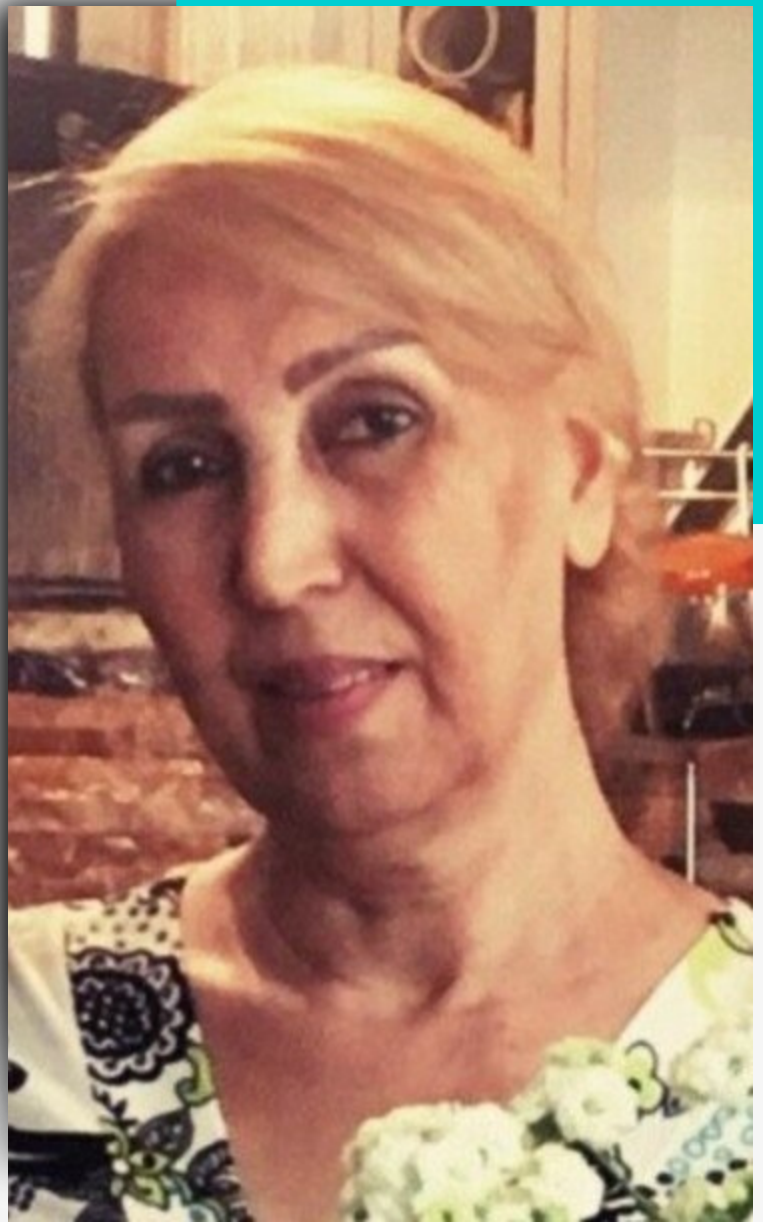
Nasim was also sentenced to two years of prohibition from membership in political and social groups, as well as a two-year ban on leaving the country, which will be enforced once her prison sentence is completed. The appeals court, in September 2023, confirmed the same verdict with a slight reduction in the number of days. In response to the confirmation of her sentence, Nasim wrote: "There is a sea of blood between us, I detest you, long live Woman, Life, Freedom."

Nasim Soltan Beigi had previously experienced detention twice. The first time was due to her participation in a women's protest rally against discriminatory laws on June 12, 2006, and the second time in December 2007 during the widespread arrest of leftist students. In October 2012, Nasim went to prison to serve a six-year sentence, but after six months, she received her release order.



Nasrin Javadi

Nasrin Javadi, a founding member of the Workers' Council of Retirees of the Social Security Organization and a member of the Free Union of Iranian Workers, has been serving a five-year prison sentence in Evin Prison since July 2022. Nasrin, who is 64 years old and a former worker at a medical equipment distribution company, was detained during a protest rally on International Labor Day, May 1, 2019, at the Iranian Parliament building. She was released temporarily from Qarchak Prison the following month after posting bail.



In the subsequent stages of her trial, branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced this labor activist on charges of "conspiracy and collusion against national security," "disruption of public order and tranquility," and "spreading of propaganda against the state" to a total of seven years in prison and 74 lashes. According to Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, she must serve five-years of her sentence.

One of the accusations against Nasrin Javadi is her "attendance in workers' and retirees' gatherings to defend union demands," and she was also charged for holding a placard that read: "One percent is secure and satiated, the other 99 percent is hungry."

Niloufar Bayani

Niloufar Bayani, an environmental activist, has been in Evin Prison since her arrest in January 2018. Niloufar, was detained along with Sepideh Kashani and several other environmental activists by the IRGC intelligence forces. After two years of temporary detention, Niloufar was sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of “collaborating with the hostile government of the United States.”

From 2012 to May 2017, Niloufar worked as a consultant on the Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch of the United Nations Environment Program in Geneva. She returned to Iran in the summer of 2017 and began her collaboration with the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation as a planning manager. Six months later, she was arrested by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Intelligence Organization.



During her trial, Niloufar Bayani revealed instances of physical and sexual torture inflicted upon her during detention and interrogation. She then exposed the repeated harassment, abuse, and sexual insults she endured from her interrogators throughout the detention period. Bayani detailed how she was subjected to beatings aimed at coercing false confessions, both against herself and her colleagues.

Niloufar Hamedei

Niloufar Hamedei, is a women's rights activist and a well-known journalist for Shargh newspaper. She was arrested on September 22, 2022, after preparing a report from Kasra Hospital on the situation of Mahsa Jina Amini, a young Kurdish woman who was arrested by the morality police for improper observance of hijab and died in police custody.



Niloufar also published on social media a photo of the Amini family embracing one another after being informed of her death. The photo went viral.

Both Niloufar Hamedei and Elaheh Mohammadi, journalists covering the case of Mahsa Jina Amini, were detained and remained in temporary detention for a year and a month, spending part of that period in Qarchak prison and another part in Evin prison. Finally, on October 22, 2023 Niloufar was sentenced to seven years in prison for "collaborating with the hostile government of the United States," one year for "conspiracy and collusion to commit crimes against national security," and one year for "spreading of propaganda against the state." If this verdict is confirmed in the appeals court, Niloufar will have to spend seven years of her life in prison.

Niloufar Hamedei is a well-known journalist and feminist in the Iranian press, who has written numerous reports with a focus on women's issues. She is also an active member of the Iranian Women's Movement.

Reyhaneh Ansari-Nejad

On November 6, 2023, Reyhaneh Ansari-Nejad, a retired labor activist, was sent to Evin Prison to serve a four-year prison sentence. On May 12, 2022, she, and several other trade union activists, including Anisha Asadollahi, Keyvan Mohtadi, Rasoul Bodaghi, Reza Shahabi, were arrested on charges of collaborating with two French nationals who were members of France's National Federation of Education, Culture and Vocational Training Union. Ansari-Nejad spent a total of three months in Ward 209 of Evin, which included a period of solitary confinement. She was temporarily released in August 2022.

In July 2023, in Tehran Revolutionary Court presided over by Judge Salavati, she was sentenced to four years in prison. Following her 4 year prison term, and in accordance with her sentence she will be prohibited from membership in political parties, political groups, and organizations, and prohibited from engaging in online and social media activities, media, and press for two years.



Additionally, she will be banned from leaving the country for two years. This sentence was confirmed during the appeal process.

Ansari-Nejad is a member of the Coordination Committee to assist in the establishment of labor associations. After her retirement, she devoted herself to empowering workers and encouraging them to establish grass-root organizations.

Saeedeh Shafiei

Saeedeh Shafiei, a fiction writer and economic journalist, went to Evin Prison on November 19, 2023 to serve a three-year and seven-month sentence. Saeedeh was detained during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in January 2022 and was temporarily released from prison after two weeks after posting bail. The charges relate to articles she wrote in the monthly magazine Khat-e Solh about the spread of poverty and the government's mismanagement of energy subsidies and public resources.

In July 2023, she received an 8-month prison sentence from Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court for "spreading propaganda against the state" and a separate three-year and seven month imprisonment for "collusion and conspiracy against national security."



Additionally, she was banned from membership in political and social groups for two years and prohibited from leaving the country for two years, after completion of her prison term. The appeal court, in September, confirmed the same sentence with a slight reduction in the number of days.

Saeideh Shafiei is also the author of the two novels "Dokhtar-pich" and "Istgah-e Gurkhano."

Sarvenaz Ahmadi

Sarvenaz Ahmadi is a children's rights activist, social worker, translator, and women's rights advocate. On November 6, 2022, during the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests, just three weeks into her marriage with Kamyar Fakoor, she and her husband were both arrested. She was placed in solitary confinement in Ward 209 of Evin Prison.



She was temporarily released from Evin Prison one month later. Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, led by Judge Salavati, sentenced Sarvenaz to six years in prison on charges of "spreading of propaganda against the state" and "collusion and conspiracy to commit crimes against national security," which was later reduced to three years and six months in Branch 36 of the appeals court.

On April 28th, 2023, on the eve of Teacher's Day, while visiting the home of Mohammad Habibi, a detained teacher, along with a group of other civil rights activists, Sarvenaz Ahmadi was re-arrested. Ultimately, she was sent to the Women's Ward of Evin Prison to serve her sentence. Despite her case becoming eligible for amnesty according to the judicial system, her sentence was carried out.

In addition to her activism, Sarvenaz Ahmadi was also the translator of the book "Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle" by Silvia Federici. Her husband, Kamyar Fakour, an environmental journalist, and social activist, is currently serving his prison term as well.

Sepideh Gholian

Sepideh Gholian is a labor rights activist who has been arrested and imprisoned on multiple occasions. In March 2023, upon the completion of her sentence, she was released from prison. She exited the prison, without wearing the mandatory hijab, and immediately began chanting slogans against the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, a scene which was caught on video and went viral. A few hours later, while she was on her way home, she was once again detained, this time on charges of insulting the Supreme Leader, and was sentenced to two years in prison. She has been serving this two year prison sentence since March 2023.



Previously, in November 2018, Sepideh was arrested during the labor protests in Khuzestan along with Esmail Bakhshi and other workers of Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industrial Company. A month later, she was temporarily released from prison. Following her temporary release, she disclosed details about sexual assault and threats being used by interrogators as a tool to torture and punish prisoners and revealed that she too had been subjected to torture while in detention.

She was also one of the people who exposed the identity of a female reporter at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) involved in broadcasting coerced confessions from political prisoners.

Sepideh was initially sentenced to 19 years in prison, but this verdict was reduced to five years upon appeal. During her imprisonment, she was transferred to various prisons, including those in Ahvaz, Bushehr, and Evin.

Sepideh Gholian has repeatedly written about and exposed the inhumane conditions of prisons as well as ill treatment including sexual and gender-based violence used against women incarcerated for social and political crimes. In her book titled: *Tilapia Slurps the Blood of the Hur al-Azim* or in Farsi “*Tilapia khoon-e Hur al-Azim ra hurt mikeshad*” she narrates the life and hardships of both male and female Arab prisoners in the Sheyban Prison in Ahvaz.



Sepide Gholian after being released from prison

Sepideh Kashani

Sepideh Kashani, an environmental activist, is serving her sixth year of imprisonment in Evin Prison. She was arrested in January 2018 during the detention of a group of environmental activists by the intelligence organization of the IRGC. She remained in temporary detention for two years, until after trial she was finally sentenced to serve 6 years in February 2020 on charges of “collaborating with the hostile government of the United States.”

Hooman Jokar, Sepideh’s spouse, a member of the founding board of the NGO, Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, and the head of the International Project for the Conservation of the Iranian Cheetah, was arrested in connection with the same case and sentenced to eight years in prison.



In January 2023, Sepideh Kashani, for the first time, released details of torture and pressures imposed on herself and other environmental activists detained by the intelligence organization of the IRGC. In a letter sent from prison to the outside world, she provided details about the symbolic execution of her husband, Hooman Jokar, the broadcast of a video depicting Kavous Seyed Emami's lifeless body, another environmentalist arrested at the same time as Kashani, who died under suspicious circumstances shortly after arrest. Sepideh Kashani’s letter also exposed details about how she was interrogated in the dark and in bloody rooms, which aimed to create fear and despair.

Soha Mortezaei

Soha Mortezaei, resident of Tehran, is a civil rights and student activist who has been barred from continuing her studies. She has been in prison since November 2022 due to her participation in the nationwide protests of November 2019 and the protest gathering against the university dress code bill at Tehran University. In November, she was detained, on her way to work, by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence and subjected to such violence and assault that she was taken to Shohadaye Tajrish Hospital for examination after being transferred to Evin Prison.

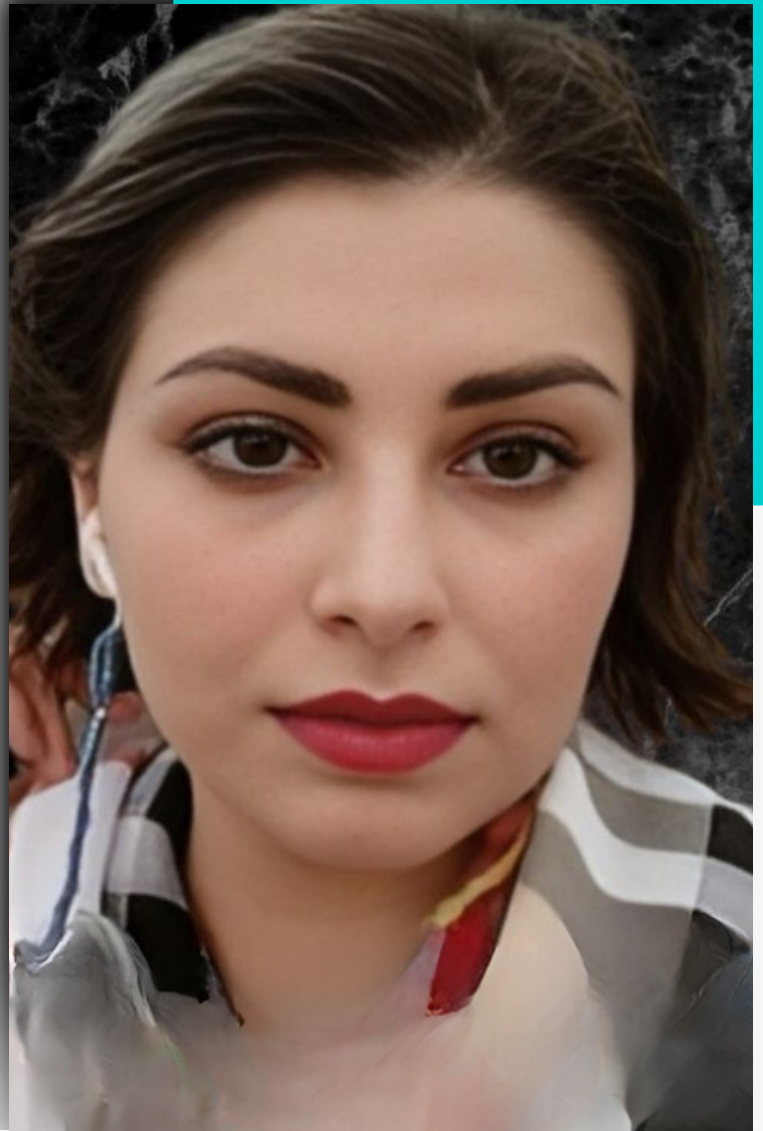


Soha was first arrested in January 2015 by the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and she spent forty days in prison. In 2018, while serving as the secretary of the University of Tehran's Student Union and advocating for rights of detained students during the protests of January 2018, she was arrested again. In the summer of 2018, in the revolutionary court, she was sentenced to six years of imprisonment, which was reduced to one year on appeal.

Soha had staged a solitary sit-in at the University of Tehran, since October 2019, in protest against being blacklisted and being deprived of pursuing a Phd. She was arrested on November 17 and temporarily released from prison on bail in January. Later, in Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Salavati, she was sentenced to six years in prison, which was upheld by the appeals court.

Vida Rabbani

Vida Rabani, a journalist and political activist with a history of four arrests, has been serving her three year sentence since September 2022 in Evin Prison. On September 24, 2022, following the start of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, Vida Rabani was arrested in Tehran and spent several weeks in Ward 209 of Evin Prison.



She was later transferred to Qarchak Prison and then to the Women's Political Ward of Evin Prison. Vida Rabani was sentenced by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Iman Afshari, to seven years and three months of mandatory imprisonment on charges of "conspiracy and collusion against national security and spreading of propaganda against the state."

This sentence was pardoned during widespread judicial amnesties in February 2023, but she remained in prison to serve the three-year prison sentence from her prior arrest in November 2020 which she received on charges of “insulting sanctities.”

In a letter objecting to this sentence, Vida’s mother, Fatemeh Mohajeri, explained that the verdict was based on the fact that Vida had published on social media a poem by a young Afghan poet, Ramin Mazhar. The particular line that was viewed as an insult to sanctities reads: “You are a believer, and your kisses are your namaz [prayers].”

Vida Rabani has been suffering from persistent headaches for a long time and has protested the lack of proper and timely medical attention in prison. In response to Vida's protests and the concerns expressed by her relatives, the Judiciary's news agency stated in a release that she is using neurological and psychiatric medications.

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I don't feel any shame admitting my psychological trauma; it's not something to be ashamed of. The system that is designed to inflict these injuries on its opponents should be the one feeling shame.

Vida Rabani has been suffering from persistent headaches for a long time and has protested the lack of proper and timely medical attention in prison. In response to Vida's protests and the concerns expressed by her relatives, the Judiciary's news agency stated in a release that she is using neurological and psychiatric medications. In response to this unlawful and unethical announcement, Vida issued a firm response, revealing the psychological torture endured by women prisoners. She stated that the continuous psychological torture, during four rounds of detention and two months of solitary confinement, has been the cause of inflicted harm and prescription of medication: "I don't feel any shame admitting my psychological trauma; it's not something to be ashamed of. The system that is designed to inflict these injuries on its opponents should be the one feeling shame."

Zahra Tohidi

Zahra Tohidi, a social researcher and political activist, was arrested during the September 2022 protests in the aftermath of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” Uprisings. After three months, she was released on bail from Ward 209 of Evin Prison. Subsequently, in Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court presided over by Judge Afshari, she was sentenced to a one year prison sentence, on charges of "conspiracy to act against national security" and "spreading of propaganda against the state." On May 31, 2023, Zahra and her sister Hoda were summoned to the Shahid Moghaddas Court by phone.



Zahra Tohidi was again accused of "propaganda against the state" for sharing several Instagram posts at the time of her release. Despite the previous announcement of their eligibility for amnesty, Zahra and Hoda were arrested without prior notice and sent to Evin Prison to serve their sentences.

Zahra, a former member of the Ettihad-e Mellat Party—a reformist party that has been critical of the establishment—was also a member of the Council for the Defense of the Right to Education. This council was formed in 2007 to advocate for and follow up on the educational status of students who were deprived of continuing their education due to political activities.

Zeinab Hamrang Seyed-Beglu

Zeinab Hamrang Seyed-Beglu is a retired teacher and a member of the teachers' union, who, since March of this year, has been in prison in Evin Prison since March 2023. In May, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced her to five years of imprisonment on charges of "conspiracy to disrupt the country's security".

Previously, in January 2020, she was detained by security forces and was sentenced to five years of imprisonment on charges of "conspiracy to disrupt the country's security" and one year of "propaganda against the state." In September 2020, Zeinab Hamrang was arrested and transferred to the Women's Ward of Evin Prison to serve her sentence. She received an early release in October 2022.



Zohreh Sayadi

Zohreh Sayadi, an activist in the field of social pathologies and the rights of undocumented children, has been serving a one-year prison sentence in Evin Prison since June 2023. She was charged with distributing food among protesters during the nationwide protests in November 2019.

Zohreh was sentenced to one year in prison by the Special Clerical Court, despite her relatives asserting that there are no clergymen in her family. She was arrested in December 2019 in Shahrak Andisheh, Tehran, and was transferred to Evin Prison. After two weeks, she was temporarily released on bail. In 2022, she was sentenced to one year in prison, without her lawyers having any access to her files.



Zohreh Sayadi is suffering from cancer, and according to the prescribed treatment by her physician, she must undergo regular injections and be under special medical care. In a letter from prison in July of this year, Narges Mohammadi, whose case is highlighted below, warned about Sayadi's health, stating, "She embodies patience, resilience, and determination, yet chemotherapy inflicts a profound toll on her. Even the prison medical staff concede that enduring this condition seems unbearable.

Words cannot fully capture the fragility of her body and the agony coursing through her veins post-chemotherapy. Beloved Zohreh braves each session beneath an excruciatingly cold cap, shielding us from the potential distress of witnessing her hair loss and altered appearance.”

Zohreh Sayadi, a native of Sistan and Baluchestan, has worked to educate Baluchi women who are illiterate.

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She embodies patience, resilience, and determination, yet chemotherapy inflicts a profound toll on her. Even the prison medical staff concede that enduring this condition seems unbearable.

She has also conducted classes in temporary tents for undocumented Baluchi children. Zohreh has published two books, based on her experiences working with children, in which she depicts the lives of marginalized and socially disadvantaged Baluchi Iranians.

Zohreh Sayadi with Balouch Children



Femena supports Woman Human Rights Defenders, their organizations and feminist movements through analysis of trends and policy, documentation, fostering the development of regional communities of practice and advocacy.

Femena's work is primarily focused on contexts of shrinking or closed civic space and contexts complicated by growing extremism and conflict.



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