

# URGENT ACTION



UANetwork Office AIUSA 600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington DC 20003 T. 202.544.0200 F. 202.675.8566 E. [uan@aiusa.org](mailto:uan@aiusa.org) [amnestyusa.org/urgent/](http://amnestyusa.org/urgent/)

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Further Information on UA 280/08 (14 October 2008) - Arbitrary arrest/Fear of Torture

**IRAN**                      **Negin Sheikholeslami, (f) Human rights defender and journalist, aged 34**

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Negin Sheikholeslami was released from Section 209 of Evin Prison in the capital, Tehran, on bail of 500,000,000 rials, equivalent to almost US\$50,000, on 23 November. During her detention, Negin Sheikholeslami was able to meet with family members twice.

Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran ordered Negin Sheikholeslami's release until her trial begins, for which no date has yet been set. There is no precise information available concerning what charges she may be facing, but many human rights defenders in Iran have faced vaguely-worded charges of "acting against state security."

A human rights defender from the Kurdish minority in Iran, Negin Sheikholeslami was arrested at her home in Tehran on the night of 4 October. A guest who was staying with her was also detained for about an hour, and then released. Negin Sheikholeslami's initial whereabouts were unknown, but her husband was told on 9 October 2008 that she was being held in Section 209 of Evin Prison, which is controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence. He was not told the reasons for her arrest and was informed that she would not be allowed to meet anyone until the investigation into her case was complete.

A month before Negin Sheikholeslami was arrested she underwent heart surgery and was still recovering from the operation at the time of her arrest. Her health following her release is said to be reasonably good.

Negin Sheikholeslami is the founder of the Azar Mehr Women's Social and Cultural Society of Kurdistan, which was founded in Sanandaj in Kordestan Province in 2000. It organizes training and sports activities for women in the city of Sanandaj and elsewhere in Kordestan Province. She is also associated with another human rights organization, the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK), which reports on human rights violations against Kurds in Iran.

Negin Sheikholeslami was previously arrested in February 2001 for participating in a demonstration in front of the United Nations office in Tehran, and was released two months later. She was again arrested in January 2002 and was released three months later.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Several prominent human rights defenders from Iran's Kurdish minority are currently detained or imprisoned in Iran after being charged or sentenced on vaguely-worded "security" charges in violation of their right to freedom of expression and association. The founder of the HROK, prisoner of conscience Mohammad Sadigh Kabudvand is serving an 11-year sentence in Tehran. Another activist associated with the HROK and with the women's movement, Zeynab Beyezidi, was arrested in July 2008 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment to be spent in internal exile. Her sentence was confirmed on appeal on 23 August 2008. Two other members of Azar Mehr, Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi, have been detained since October and November 2007. Hana Abdi was sentenced to five years' imprisonment to be spent in internal exile; this was reduced on appeal to 18 month's imprisonment to be spent in Razan, Hamedan

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

province. Ronak Safarzadeh is still awaiting the outcome of her trial on the charge of “moharebeh” (enmity against God) which can carry the death penalty, although she was sentenced to nine months imprisonment in a “side” case for crossing the border illegally and possessing a satellite dish (see UA 197/07, 7 November 2007 and follow-ups).

Iran’s Kurdish minority lives mainly in the west and north-west of the country, in Kordestan and neighboring provinces, bordering Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraq. They have long suffered extensive discrimination. Human rights defenders from this community, including community activists and journalists, risk arbitrary arrest and torture.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- welcoming the release on bail of Negin Sheikholeslami;
- asking to be informed of any charges against her and the date of her trial;
- urging that any charges relating solely to her peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association, including in the context of her work as a human rights defender, be dropped, as if convicted and imprisoned on the basis of such charges, she would be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association and Amnesty International would call for her immediate and unconditional release.

**APPEALS TO:**

**Head of the Tehran Judiciary**

Ali Reza Avaie  
No. 152, corner of 17th Alley  
Before Shahid Motahary Ave.  
Sanaei Ave., Karimkhan Zand Ave.  
Tehran  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**Fax:** 011 98 21 8832 6700  
(works intermittently)

**Email:** [avaei@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:avaei@dadgostary-tehran.ir)  
[info@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:info@dadgostary-tehran.ir)

**Salutation:** Dear Mr Avaie

**President**

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad  
The Presidency  
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection  
Tehran  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**Email:** [dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir](mailto:dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir)

**Via website:** [www.president.ir/email](http://www.president.ir/email)

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

**Head of the Judiciary**

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi  
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh  
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.  
south of Serah-e Jomhuri  
Tehran 1316814737  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**Email:** [info@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:info@dadgostary-tehran.ir)  
(In the subject line write: FAO  
Ayatollah Shahroudi)

**Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran**

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani  
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh  
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave.  
south of Serah-e Jomhuri  
Tehran 1316814737

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**Fax:** 011 98 21 3390 4986

(please keep trying)

**Email:** [fsharafi@bia-judiciary.ir](mailto:fsharafi@bia-judiciary.ir)

(In the subject line: FAO

Mohammad Javad Larijani)

[int\\_aff@judiciary.ir](mailto:int_aff@judiciary.ir)

(In the subject line: FAO

Mohammad Javad Larijani)

*Iran does not presently have an embassy in the United States.  
Instead, please send copies to:*

Iranian Interests Section  
Embassy of Pakistan  
2209 Wisconsin Ave NW  
Washington DC 20007

**Phone:** 202 965 4990

**Fax:** 202 965 1073

**Email:** [requests@daftar.org](mailto:requests@daftar.org)

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 23 January 2009.