

2026 Nowruz Action for Human Rights



Celebrating Nowruz: Traditions and Actions to Promote Human Rights

Nowruz نوروز (“new day”), also known as the Persian New Year, is a celebration marking the first day of spring and the beginning of the year in the Iranian calendar. It is celebrated by millions of Iranians, Kurds, and many other people around the world.

Traditional Nowruz celebrations include the preparation of a Haft Sin table which literally means the seven s’. Seven items beginning with the Persian letter Sin (equivalent to the English s) and which represent spring time are set out.

In keeping with this tradition, Amnesty International has selected seven cases, prisoners of conscience and prisoners held for politically motivated reasons, who have been identified by Amnesty International as “individuals at risk”.

Call to Action:

This year Nowruz will be celebrated on Friday, March 20, 2026. From now and between April 10, 2026 send a greeting card or design your own with a simple Nowruz greeting to spread joy, hope, and renewal to the seven people we are spotlighting for the 2026 Nowruz Action.

Nowruz greetings: “Nowruz Mobarak” نوروز مبارک and or “Thinking of you at Nowruz time” or “hoping you are well.”

DO: Send cards with pictures of landscapes, spring flowers or the like, in keeping with the spirit of the holiday and the message of hope and renewal.

DO NOT: Choose cards that have pictures of people, and do not use cards that depict bottles of wine or other alcoholic beverages or gambling.

Refrain from mentioning Amnesty International, specifics of the recipient’s case, or mentioning the political situation, human rights or U.S.-Iran relations.

Before mailing your Nowruz greeting card, take a photo of your card with you holding it and send the pictures to iar@aiusa.org. Please post them on your social media, tagging Amnesty International's Iran Twitter and Instagram accounts [@AmnestyIran](https://twitter.com/AmnestyIran) and <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyiran/>

The deadline for photos is April 10th. With the photos that we receive we will create a giant collage that will be hand delivered to the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the U.N. or the Iran U.N. Mission in New York.

Amnesty International's previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! **Niloufar Bayani** and **Toomaj Salehi**, featured in the 2024 Nowruz action, were released from prison. **Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani**, featured in the 2023 Nowruz action, had her death sentence set aside and was released on bail while her case is reconsidered. **Farhad Meysami** and **Saba Kordafshari**, featured in the 2020 to 2022 actions, were released in February 2023. Others featured in previous Nowruz actions who have been released from prison thanks to the persevering efforts of many committed activists include **Omid Kokabee**, **Atena Farghadani**, **Majid Tavakkoli**, **Mansour Ossanlu**, **Emadeddin Baghi**, **Abdolfattah Soltani**, **Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand**, and brothers **Kamiar** and **Arash Alaei**. Kamiar and Arash related how they were given a brief medical furlough from prison and went back to their parents' house to find hundreds of Nowruz cards sent to them by Amnesty activists and how much that cheered them up and gave them the strength to go on. Omid Kokabee also received hundreds of Nowruz greetings and he and his family thanked Amnesty members profusely.

The Symbolic Haft-Seen Table

A significant tradition of Nowruz is setting up the Haft-Seen table. This table includes seven symbolic items, each starting with the Persian letter "S" (seen). These items represent different aspects of life and nature:

1. **Sabzeh** (sprouted wheat or lentils): Symbolizes rebirth and growth.
2. **Samanu** (sweet pudding): Represents power and strength.
3. **Senjed** (dried oleaster fruit): Symbolizes love.
4. **Seer** (garlic): Represents health and medicine.
5. **Seeb** (apple): Symbolizes beauty and health.
6. **Somaq** (sumac berries): Represents the sunrise and the triumph of good over evil.
7. **Serkeh** (vinegar): Symbolizes patience and age.

Additional items such as a mirror, candles, painted eggs, goldfish, and hyacinth flowers often accompany the Haft-Seen to enhance its beauty and symbolic meaning.

Nowruz 2026 Spotlights the following Individuals at Risk:



Zeynab Jalalian, a 44-year-old Iranian Kurd who worked to empower women and girls from the oppressed Kurdish minority, has been imprisoned for 18 years and is serving a life sentence in Yazd Prison, very far from her family. Zeynab is being deliberately prevented from receiving specialized medical care despite her deteriorating health, including a lung condition and respiratory problems as a result of having suffered at least two bouts of COVID-19. Authorities have conditioned access to proper medical care and transfer back to a prison closer to her family on her making a filmed “confession” and on agreeing to work with the Ministry of Intelligence.

Zeynab Jalalian was arrested in 2008 as a result of her work to empower Iran’s ethnic minority Kurds, particularly women; for supporting the Kurdish struggle for self determination, and for her association with the political wing of the Kurdish opposition group Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) which also has an armed wing. She was sentenced to death in early 2009 by Branch One of the Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah Province after a grossly unfair trial that lasted only a few minutes. She was convicted of “enmity against God” (moharebeh)—a charge levelled against those accused of taking up arms against the state—based on her former connection with the political wing of PJAK. She was sentenced based on “confessions” she said were made after enduring months of torture and ill-treatment. She was also denied access to a lawyer in solitary confinement during pre-trial detention. Her death sentence was commuted to life in prison in late 2011. In addition to the after effects of Covid-19, Zeynab Jalalian suffers from the severe eye condition pterygium and urgently needs specialist surgery. She also suffers from blood pressure dips and spikes, heart, intestinal and kidney problems as well as an oral thrush condition. In April 2016 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged the Iranian authorities to release Zeynab Jalalian immediately and accord her an enforceable right to compensation

Nowruz greetings to Zeynab Jalalian can be sent:

Yazd Prison

Women’s Ward

End of Imam Street, After Imam Reza Square, Opposite Imam Janab Terminal

Yazd, Yazd Province

Islamic Republic of Iran



Reza Khandan is a graphic artist, women's rights champion, and the husband of prominent humanrights attorney Nasrin Sotoudeh who was persecuted by the Iranian authorities for many years because of her courageous human rights advocacy. He has been arbitrarily detained since December 2024 and has been unjustly imprisoned in relation to a six-year prison sentence imposed by a Revolutionary Court in Jan 2019 for campaigning against Iran's compulsory veiling laws. Reza Khandan is a prisoner of conscience and Amnesty International calls for his immediate and unconditional release. In 2018 Reza Khandan and fellow activist Dr. Farhad Meysami bought a small, hand-cranked button-making machine, and together made thousands of buttons that said in Farsi, "I Oppose the Mandatory Hijab."

Before they could finish, their homes and offices were raided, the buttons were confiscated, and they were sent to prison. In January 2019, Mr. Khandan's lawyer was notified that Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court in Tehran sentenced his client to six years of imprisonment: five years for "gathering and collusion with intent to commit crimes against national security" (Article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code) and one year for "spreading propaganda against the system" (Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code). He was also banned from "membership in social and political groups and parties, undertaking activities in cyberspace, the media and the press" and from travelling abroad for two years.

Reza Khandan has gone on several hunger strikes in prison to protest the inhumane detention conditions in Tehran's Evin prison and the denial of contact with his family. In late January 2025 Reza and Nasrin's teenage son Nima was severely beaten by guards in the Evin Prison waiting room when he was trying to visit his father.

Nowruz greetings for Reza Khandan and Nasrin Sotoudeh can be sent c/o their good friend

Jeff Kaufman

11684 Ventura Blvd, Suite 250

Studio City, CA 91604



Narges Mohammadi is a distinguished and passionate defender of human rights, who has been repeatedly arrested, mis-treated and imprisoned for lengthy periods of time, solely for her peaceful activism. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2023. She was vice-president of the Center for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) which reported on violations of human rights in Iran provided pro-bono legal representation to political prisoners and support to their families before it was forcibly closed by the Iranian authorities in December 2008. The Center was co-founded with prominent human rights attorneys, including Iran's other Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi. Narges Mohammadi also founded the campaign Step by Step to Stop Death Penalty, a group advocating for abolition of the death penalty in Iran.

In November 2021 she was arrested while attending a memorial service for people killed by Iranian security forces during nationwide protests in November 2019. In January 2022, following a grossly unfair trial that lasted just five minutes, a Revolutionary court convicted her on charges including “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and “disrupting public order” and sentenced her to eight years and two months in prison, 74 lashes and bans on her activities. This sentence is in addition to a sentence imposed in May 2021--of 30 months in prison, 80 lashes, and a fine-- for “spreading propaganda against the system.” She was notified that she would be required to serve a sentence imposed on her in May 2021 of 30 months in prison and 80 lashes on charges of “spreading propaganda against the system.” She was out of prison on medical furlough when she and other activists were violently arrested in December 2025 while attending a memorial service for human rights attorney Khosro Alikordi, who had died under suspicious circumstances. In a phone call to her family, Narges Mohammadi reported that she had been severely beaten during the arrest and accused of cooperation with Israel. In February 2026 she was handed an additional sentence of more than seven years for “gathering and collusion” and propaganda against the system.

Narges Mohammadi had been imprisoned previously, including a stretch from May 2015 to October 2020; “evidence” that had been used to convict her included her media interviews about human rights; her participation in gatherings outside prisons before executions to support the families of death row prisoners; and her connections with other human rights defenders. For many years, Narges Mohammadi has not been able to see her nineteen-year-old twins or her husband Taghi Rahmani who live in Paris. She suffers from a number of serious health problems, including a condition that can cause seizures, for which she requires specialized treatment that she cannot receive in prison. In February 2022 she suffered a series of heart attacks. She and other fellow inmates were beaten by prison guards in August 2024 for protesting the death penalty. Narges Mohammadi underwent a complicated surgery on her leg in November 2024 but was not permitted enough time in the hospital

to recover but was eventually granted a three-week suspension of her sentence in December 2024. During that time, she met remotely with Amnesty International's Secretary-General, conveyed her concern about the situation of other women in prison with her, and said, "Your efforts give me the strength to endure my days behind bars, to keep fighting, knowing that you are raising your voice to the world while I remain silenced and trapped in prison. I ask you to continue your important work to end gender apartheid."

You can send Nowruz greetings for Narges Mohammadi to her husband and children:

Mr Taghi Rahmani

c/o Iran Team/Amnesty International/ International Secretariat

1 Easton Street

London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom



Human rights defender, industrial design engineer, and mother of a 14-year-old son, **Sharifeh Mohammadi** is serving a 30-year prison sentence. She supported women's and workers' rights as well as the abolition of the death penalty, and until 2011 was a member of a workers' committee in Iran, where independent trade unions are banned. She had been sentenced to death but that was commuted to a prison sentence in October 2025. Sharifeh Mohammadi was arrested in December 2023 by Ministry of Intelligence agents and taken to a detention center in Rasht where she was subjected to torture and ill-treatment. She was later transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence facility in Sanandaj.

Agents there subjected her to torture and ill-treatment, including being repeatedly hit in the face and head while blindfolded, in order to force her to confess that she had ties to the banned Komala Party of Kurdistan, a charge she had repeatedly denied. In late February 2024, she was transferred to Lakan prison. She was convicted after a grossly unfair 30-minute trial in a Revolutionary Court in Rasht, Gilan Province of "armed rebellion against the state" (baghi) solely in relation to her peaceful human rights activism and sentenced to death in June 2024. She was connected via video conference from prison and was denied the right to speak. Amnesty International is calling for the conviction to be voided and for her to be immediately and unconditionally released

Nowruz greetings to Sharifeh Mohammadi can be sent to:

Sharifeh Mohammadi

Lakan Prison Women's Ward

5HF9+8XG, Salkisar

Gilan Province

Islamic Republic of Iran



Vahid Afkari has been sentenced to 33 years, 9 months in prison and 74 lashes after being convicted in an unfair trial of baseless charges in connection to his peaceful involvement in protests in his hometown of Shiraz in 2017 and 2018. He has been held in solitary confinement since September 2020.

He and his brothers Navid and Habib were all arrested in 2018 for peacefully participating in protests. All three were tortured to make confessions. Navid was sentenced to death and executed in secret in September 2020.

Vahid was held in solitary confinement in Adelabad Prison in Shiraz and tortured, including having his arm broken. He has also been denied adequate healthcare. He was charged with national security related crimes and “accessory to murder” despite a complete lack of evidence that he was involved in any crimes.

Vahid’s brother Habib was eventually released in March 2022 after over 550 days spent in solitary confinement, but other members of the family have been harassed by authorities because of their efforts to obtain justice and accountability for the execution of Navid and the continued torture and ill-treatment of Vahid. Elham Afkari, their sister, was detained by authorities in November 2022 and sentenced to five years imprisonment in relation to her familial ties and posting on social media about justice and accountability.

In June 2022, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that “the deprivation of liberty of Vahid [Afkari] and Habib Afkari lacks legal basis and is thus arbitrary...[and] the breaches of the fair trial and due process rights... are of such gravity as to give their deprivation of liberty an arbitrary character” and called for their immediate unconditional release and for them to be accorded reparations in accordance with international law.

Nowruz greetings to Vahid Afkari can be sent to:

Vahid Afkari

Adelabad Prison

HGG4+JVH Shahrak-e-Shahid Motahhari

Shiraz, Fars Province

Islamic Republic of Iran

Ahmadreza Djalali



Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born Swedish citizen and specialist in emergency medicine, was sentenced to death in October 2017 after a grossly unfair trial. The court relied primarily on “confessions” that Ahmadreza Djalali says were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment while he was held in prolonged solitary confinement without access to a lawyer. Iranian state television aired the forced “confession” in December 2017. He was convicted of “spreading corruption on earth” (efsad-e fel arz) for spying. He barely escaped an execution scheduled to take place on December 1, 2020 after an international outcry, including a letter signed by 153 Nobel science prize laureates.

He is being held in Evin Prison and remains at risk of execution. Mounting evidence has strongly indicated that the Iranian authorities are committing the crime of hostage-taking against Ahmadreza Djalali and threatening to execute him in order to compel third parties to swap him for former Iranian officials convicted and/or on trial abroad as well as to refrain from future prosecutions of Iranian officials. In May 2022, several Iranian state media outlets explicitly linked his fate to the trial in Sweden of former Iranian prison official Hamid Nouri, who was released in June 2024 in a prisoner exchange deal between Iran and Sweden. Dr. Djalali, was involved in improving hospitals’ emergency responses to armed terrorism and to radiological, chemical and biological threats and was a researcher at the Karolinska Institute of Medicine in Stockholm. He was on a trip to Iran at the invitation of Tehran University to speak about disaster medicine when he was arrested in April 2016 and subsequently held in Evin prison by Ministry of Intelligence officials for seven months, three of them in solitary confinement. He was accused of providing information to Israel that was allegedly used in the assassination of several Iranian scientists.

Dr. Djalali has suffered a number of severe health problems in prison. Amnesty International calls for Dr. Djalali’s conviction and sentence to be quashed, and for him to be immediately released and afforded an enforceable right to compensation, per the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. In a November 2017 letter, 175 Nobel Prize laureates called on Iranian authorities to release Dr. Djalali and in December 2018 Amnesty International distributed an open letter signed by 124 Nobel laureates to Iran’s supreme leader calling for his release at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm. Ahmadreza Djalali was honored with the Scholars at Risk 2021 Courage to Think Award in December 2021.

Nowruz greetings for Ahmadreza Djalali can be sent to his wife Vida Mehrannia:

Stockholm University, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics

Svante Arrhenius väg 16C

SE-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden



Mahvash Sabet and **Fariba Kamalabadi** are prominent members of Iran's minority Baha'i religious community who were among dozens of Baha'is arrested in the summer of 2022. They were each convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison, after a trial that lasted reportedly for one hour, on charges of "organizing a group under a deviant sect with the aim of disrupting the security of the country." They are prisoners of conscience, targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to religious freedom and prior involvement as leaders in their community. Their sentences were upheld on appeal in August 2023.

Mahvash Sabet, who is 72 years old, reportedly suffered broken knees during an interrogation. She was also kept in prolonged solitary confinement while sick with COVID-19. She was an educator and a director of the officially banned Baha'i Institute for Higher Education. She is also a writer and poet and recognized as an "International Writer of Courage" by PEN International.

Mahvash Sabet, Fariba Kamalabadi, and five other Baha'is who made up the Yaran-- members of an informal group responsible for the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs— had been arrested in 2008 and served prison sentences until they were both released in 2017. They had been convicted of baseless charges including "espionage for Israel," "insulting religious sanctities" and "spreading propaganda against the system."

Although some religious minorities--- Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians—are officially recognized by the Iranian government, the Baha'i faith is not recognized in Iran's constitution and members of the Baha'i community, estimated at about 300,000, are not accorded any legal rights. They are not allowed to meet or hold religious ceremonies, Baha'i marriages are not legally recognized, Baha'is are systematically excluded from higher education, and their economic rights are also severely curtailed; Baha'is are prohibited from entering many professions. Moreover, Iranian authorities have bulldozed Baha'i homes, businesses, and cemeteries.

Nowruz greetings for Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi can be sent to:

Fariba Kamalabadi/Mahvash Sabet

Evin Prison Women's Ward

Chamran Highway, Shahid Katchuyi Street, Darakeh

Tehran Islamic Republic of Iran