

URGENT ACTION

IMPRISONED IRANIAN ACTIVIST MUST BE RELEASED

Iranian human rights defender Omid Alishenas has been detained in Tehran's Evin prison in poor conditions for more than six months. He is serving a seven-year prison sentence for his peaceful human rights work, which includes campaigning against the death penalty. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Omid Alishenas, 33, has been held in Section 7 of Evin prison since mid-December 2016. He was forced to sleep on the floor for over a month during the winter, when temperatures in Tehran can fall to as low as -5°C, before receiving a bed, and he now shares an overcrowded room with 20 other prisoners. Omid Alishenas is also compelled to purchase food at his own expense in order to seek to have a more balanced diet since the meals provided by the prison lack sufficient fruit or vegetables. These conditions correspond with other reports Amnesty International has received in the last year about Section 7, some of which indicate that it is infested with cockroaches and mice. Omid Alishenas was arrested by the Revolutionary Guards on 11 December 2016 from his home and taken to Evin prison to begin serving a seven-year prison sentence. Prior to his arrest, he had never received a formal summons to begin serving his prison sentence.

Omid Alishenas was initially sentenced by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran to 10 years' imprisonment in May 2015 after the court convicted him of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and "insulting the Supreme Leader". The verdict listed the following peaceful activities as "evidence" of criminal activity: participation in a gathering in front of the United Nations office in Tehran in solidarity with the people of Kobani in Syria; distributing pamphlets against the death penalty; writing posts on Facebook describing the mass execution of political prisoners in the 1980s as inhumane; associating with "troublesome agents" (a reference to human rights activists); and visiting memorials of those killed during the 2009 unrest, referred to in the court verdict as "seditionists". The verdict also refers to him distributing a film called *To Light a Candle*, which highlights the denial of the right to higher education to Baha'i students. In September 2016, Branch 36 of the Appeals Court of Tehran reduced his sentence to seven years in prison.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Omid Alishenas immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Calling on them to take immediate steps to address the poor conditions of Evin prison in line with UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and allow national and international monitors to conduct inspection visits to Evin prison;
- Reminding them of their obligation to explicitly recognize the legitimacy of human rights defenders and ensure a safe and enabling environment in which it is possible to defend and promote human rights without fear of punishment, reprisal or intimidation.

Contact these two officials by 3 August, 2017:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeghi Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, Deadend of 1 Azizi
Above Pasteur Intersection
Vali Asr Street, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

Office of the Supreme Leader

Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Fax: (212) 867-7086 | Phone: (212) 687-2020
Email: iran@un.int
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 222.15*

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Omid Alishenas' trial in March 2015 was grossly unfair: he was permitted to meet his lawyer only about 30 minutes prior to his trial, in violation of his right to be given adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence. His trial session, which only lasted about 45 minutes, was joint with that of three other activists, but the activists were not permitted to be present in court simultaneously to hear collective allegations.

Omid Alishenas' mother, Simin Eyvazzadeh, who peacefully protested weekly in front of Evin prison after his arrest, was herself arrested during one of these protests in November 2015. She was taken to Gharchak prison in Varamin, known for its inhumane conditions, and held there for 10 days. In response, Omid Alishenas staged a hunger strike. Simin Eyvazzadeh was eventually sentenced to 91 days' imprisonment and 74 lashes for "attending a protest supporting the misguided cult of Erfan-e Halgheh [Interuniversalism]". She maintains that the authorities knew of her weekly protests calling for her son's release on bail and that she has no affiliation with Erfan-e Halgheh.

Omid Alishenas was first arrested at his home in Tehran on 4 September 2014 by men believed to belong to the Revolutionary Guards. The men searched his house and seized his personal belongings, including his computer, mobile phone and CDs before taking him to Section 2A of Evin prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. Amnesty International understands that the authorities gave his family no information about his whereabouts for about 10 days. Omid Alishenas was held in Section 2A of Evin prison for several months and then transferred to Section 8 before being released on a bail payment of 7 billion rials (US\$215,000) on 18 January 2016. Omid Alishenas' mother has said that the authorities approved his release on bail about two weeks after his arrest but refused to release him until four months later. In March, for the occasion of the Iranian New Year's holiday, he was granted temporary prison leave for six days.

International human rights law and standards establish and protect the right to defend human rights. The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders), adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 1998, recognizes this right and develops provisions contained in international instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party. Amnesty International considers a human rights defender to be someone who, individually or in association with others, acts to defend and/or promote human rights at the local, national, regional or international levels, without resorting to or advocating hatred, discrimination or violence.

Other human rights defenders imprisoned in Iran for peacefully seeking to advance human rights in the country include Atena Daemi, sentenced to seven years' imprisonment (for more information see Urgent Action: *Jailed Human rights defender in poor health*, 9 May 2017: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6189/2017/en/); Arash Sadeghi, sentenced to a combined total of 19 years' imprisonment in two different cases, and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, sentenced to six years' imprisonment (for more information see Urgent Action: *Iranian activist couple jailed in Evin prison*, 30 November 2016: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5231/2016/en/).

Name: Omid Alishenas

Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 222/15 Index: MDE 13/6560/2017 Issue Date: 23 June 2017