



Nowruz Action

کارزار نوروز

The Iranian holiday Nowruz نوروز (“new day”) is an ancient holiday celebrated on the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere to welcome in the new year. On this Nowruz we want to remember several courageous prisoners of conscience and prisoners held for politically motivated reasons in Iran with Nowruz greetings. We ask you to send cards with simple Nowruz greetings such as “Nowruz mobarak” نوروز مبارک You can say “thinking of you at Nowruz time” or “hoping you are well.” You may send a greeting in either English or Farsi (Persian) but please do not mention Amnesty International or specifics of the recipient’s case. Please also refrain from mentioning the political situation, human rights or U.S.-Iran relations. We suggest sending 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. Please do not choose cards that have pictures of people, and please do not use cards that depict bottles of wine or other alcoholic beverages or gambling.

Traditional Nowruz celebrations include the preparation of a Haft Sin table which literally means the seven s’s. Seven items beginning with the Persian letter Sin (equivalent to the English s) and which represent spring time are set out. To honor 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” and are therefore targeted for intensified campaigning. Several of them have been sentenced to long prison terms or sentenced to death and several are in poor health.

We are requesting that people take pictures of their Nowruz cards, or of themselves holding up their cards before putting them in the mail and sending the pictures to us (aiis@uchicago.edu or cgabriel@aiusa.org). Please post them on your social media, tagging Amnesty International’s Iran Twitter and Instagram accounts @AmnestyIran and <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyiran/> so that we can retweet and share your messages.

Our previous Nowruz actions have been very successful! Atena Daemi, featured in the 2019 Nowruz action, was released from prison in January 2022. Arash Sadeghi, featured in several recent Nowruz actions, including the one last year, was released in May 2021. 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, Bahareh Hedayat, 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. This action really matters! Please see next pages.

Zeynab Jalalian



Zeynab Jalalian, a 41-year-old Iranian Kurd who worked to empower women and girls from the oppressed Kurdish minority, has been imprisoned for 15 years and is serving a life sentence in Yazd Prison, very far from her family. She 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.

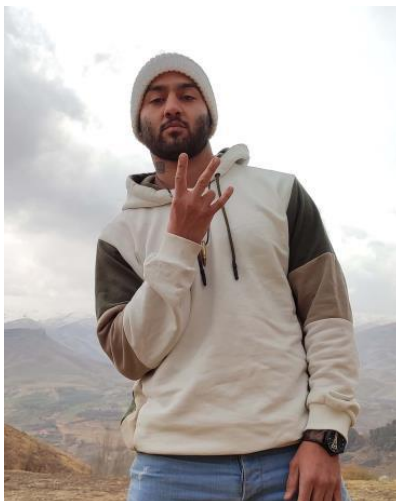
In addition to the after effects of Covid-19, Zeynab Jalalian suffers from the severe eye condition pterygium and urgently needs specialist surgery. She also suffers from blood pressure dips and spikes, heart, intestinal and kidney problems as well as an oral thrush condition.

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

Toomaj Salehi



Dissident rapper and Hip Hop artist Toomaj Salehi was arrested on 31 October 2022. Authorities have charged him with “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*), offenses that could carry the death penalty, in connection with critical music and social media posts denouncing the unjust practices of the Iranian government and calling for freedom and human rights. He was a very vocal supporter of the protests that broke out in Iran after the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September 2022, and through his music he has called for freedom and an end to repression. His videos can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/toomajsalehi>

His case has been sent to the Revolutionary Court in Esfahan. He has reportedly been beaten and tortured in custody and may have suffered damage to his vision.

In one video called “Fal” (fortune-telling) he sings “Someone has lost their young children and someone has lost their youth. Someone’s crime was having hair that flows free in the wind....someone’s crime was having a brave heart and a sharp tongue.”

He was previously targeted for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression when in September 2021, he was arrested in Esfahan and accused of “propaganda against the system” and “insulting the leadership” but was subsequently released on bail.

The Iranian authorities have arbitrarily executed at least four people in connection with the recent nationwide protests, after grossly unfair trials and despite the lack of proof that they engaged in any crimes. Meanwhile at least 14 people have been sentenced to death and nine others, including Toomaj Salehi have been charged with offenses that could carry the death penalty.

Nowruz greetings for Toomaj Salehi can be sent to

c/o Andrew Fandino
Amnesty International USA
1150 18th Street NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Narges Mohammadi



Narges Mohammadi is a distinguished and passionate defender of human rights. 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 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.” On 19 January 2022 she was transferred to Qarchak Prison which is notorious for its poor conditions.

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; her connections with other human rights defenders including Shirin Ebadi; and her meeting with Catherine Ashton, the former European Union’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. For many years, Narges Mohammadi has not been able to see her fifteen-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.

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

Niloufar Bayani



Wildlife conservationist Niloufar Bayani is a prisoner of conscience, sentenced to prison solely for her peaceful scientific and conservation activities, such as research on Iran's endangered wildlife. She is one of eight scientists who were convicted and sentenced to prison terms, ranging between four to ten years, on baseless charges of "cooperating with hostile states against the Islamic Republic."

Ms Bayani, aged 35, earned a Masters Degree in Conservation Biology from Columbia University and then worked as a consultant for the UN Environment Program in Geneva before returning to Iran in 2017 to work for the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation (PWHF), a non-profit organization that was operating in Tehran with the permission of the Iranian government.

Nine scientists who had worked with the PWHF and had been conducting research on Iran's endangered animals, including the Asiatic cheetah and Persian leopard were arbitrarily arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in January 2018. One of them, Kavous Seyed-Emami, a Canadian-Iranian scientist and academic, died in custody under suspicious circumstances in Evin prison two weeks after his arrest. The eight scientists' closed trial in a Revolutionary Court in Tehran began on 30 January 2019 and was grossly unfair; the evidence against them was almost entirely "confessions they reported were made under torture and later retracted. Their prison terms were confirmed by an appeals court in February 2020.

Following their arrests, the conservationists were held incommunicado in Section 2-A of Evin prison, under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, without access to a lawyer and with very limited family contact. Niloufar Bayani told the court that she only made a "confession" after she was "broken" through physical and psychological torture and that she later retracted her "confession". She said interrogators threatened to beat her, inject her with hallucinogenic drugs, pull out her fingernails and arrest her parents.

The PWHF began using wildlife camera traps, deployed by researchers around the world, to track the intensely shy Asiatic cheetah amid concerns about its eroding natural habitat, which is threatened by Iran's expanding mining sector and growing road network. The cheetahs now number fewer than 50. The authorities accused the eight scientists of using scientific and environmental projects, such as tracking the Asiatic cheetah with cameras, as a cover to collect classified military information, even though the use of cameras is a standard tool used by conservationists to monitor rare and endangered species.

In May 2018, a governmental committee consisting of the ministers of intelligence, interior and justice and the president's legal deputy looked into detention of the conservationists and concluded that there was no evidence to suggest they were spies. A number of senior officials in

the Iranian government, including from the department of the environment, have called for the scientists' release citing a lack of evidence against them. The conservationists' imprisonment has been widely condemned by international environmentalist and human rights organizations including the UN and renowned primatologist Jane Goodall among 131 other conservationists.

Nowruz greetings to Niloufar Bayani can be sent to:

Niloufar Bayani
c/o Andrew Fandino
Amnesty International USA
1150 18th Street NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Vahid Afkari



Vahid Afkari has been sentenced to 33 years, 9 months in prison and 74 lashes after being convicted in an unfair 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 held that “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. On 4 May 2022, several Iranian state media outlets warned of Ahmadreza Djalali’s looming execution and explicitly linked his fate to the trial in Sweden of former Iranian prison official Hamid Nouri.

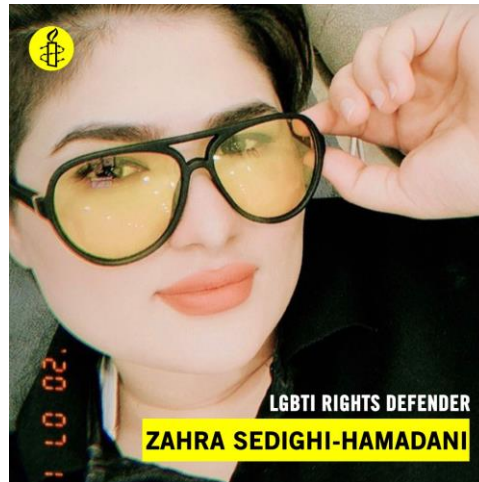
Dr. Djalali, was involved in improving hospitals’ emergency responses to armed terrorism and to radiological, chemical and biological threats and was a researcher at the Karolinska Institute of Medicine in Stockholm. He was on a trip to Iran at the invitation of Tehran University to speak about disaster 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:

Brunnsgränd 6
Täby 18773
Sweden

Zahra Sedeghi-Hamadani



On 4 September 2022 Iran’s judiciary announced that LGBTI rights defender Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani (known as Sareh) and another woman Elham Choubdar were sentenced to death for “corruption on earth.” Information obtained by Amnesty International indicates that the convictions and sentences are based on discriminatory reasons related to the women’s real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and, in the case of Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani, her peaceful LGBTI rights activism. In late December 2022, the Supreme Court overturned their convictions and death sentences and sent their cases to a lower court for retrial.

Zahra Sedeghi-Hamadani has been arbitrarily detained in Urumieh, West Azerbaijan province, since her arrest on 27 October 2021 due to her real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity as well as her social media posts, statements in defense of LGBTQI rights, and her appearance in a BBC documentary that aired in May 2021 about the abuses that LGBTI people suffer in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In January 2022 she was brought before the lead investigator of Branch 6 of the Office of the Revolutionary and Public Prosecutor in Urumieh who informed her that she was accused of “spreading corruption on earth” including through “promoting homosexuality,” “communication with anti-Islamic Republic media channels” and “promoting Christianity.”

After her arrest she was held in solitary confinement where a Revolutionary Guard agent subjected her to intense interrogations accompanied by insults directed at her identity and appearance, and threatened to execute or otherwise harm her and take away the custody of her two young children. In July 2022, state media aired a homophobic video portraying Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani as a “criminal” for publishing online content which “promoted homosexuality” and “challenged the stigma around religiously forbidden sexual relations.” The video linked Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani’s peaceful online LGBTI rights activism to unfounded accusations of “gambling” and “smuggling women and girls from Iran to Erbil [Iraq]” in a bid to vilify her. Amnesty calls on Iran’s authorities to immediately release Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani

Nowruz greetings to Zahra Sedeghi-Hamadani can be sent to:

c/o Andrew Fandino
Amnesty International USA
1150 18th Street NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20036