

URGENT ACTION

IMPRISONED IRANIAN JOURNALIST ON HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian journalist Hengameh Shahidi is in a critical condition in Tehran's Evin prison. She has been on hunger strike for 29 days in protest at her arrest on 9 March. She has a heart condition and is refusing her medication. She is being held in solitary confinement and has been denied access to a lawyer.

The health of journalist and political activist **Hengameh Shahidi**, aged 41, has seriously deteriorated since she went on hunger strike on 9 March 2017 in protest at her arbitrary arrest the same day. She has a pre-existing heart condition, for which she was previously hospitalized, and needs ongoing medical care, including medication. Her heart condition is exacerbated when she is under stress. At the beginning of April, she stopped taking her medication and is also refusing intravenous fluids.

Security forces arrested Hengameh Shahidi without a warrant at around midnight after storming into the home of a relative in the city of Mashhad, north-east Iran, where she had been staying. The officials initially took her to a detention facility in Mashhad before transferring her to Evin prison where she currently remains in solitary confinement in Section 209, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence.

The authorities have not informed Hengameh Shahidi of the charges against her and have refused to allow her any contact with her lawyer. In an interview with semi-official news agency ILNA, her lawyer Mostafa Tork Hamedani said that Hengameh Shahidi has been accused of an unspecified "security" crime and that her arrest was ordered by the Special Prosecutor for offences related to media and culture, a post which sits under the authority of the Prosecutor General of Tehran.

Hengameh Shahidi is one of a number of journalists detained during a new wave of arrests ahead of Iran's presidential election in May 2017. She was previously imprisoned following the post-presidential election crackdown in 2009 for her activism and work as a journalist. She had been at liberty since her release in May 2011 for medical leave.

Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Hengameh Shahidi immediately and unconditionally, as she appears to be held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Calling on them to ensure, pending her release, that she has access to adequate specialized medical care and to a qualified health professional who can provide health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Calling on them to ensure, pending her release, that she is protected from any reprisals for her hunger strike, including prolonged solitary confinement, which constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and may amount to torture.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 May 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh 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
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Islamic Republic Street- End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Iran

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In an interview with Centre for Human Rights in Iran on 1 April 2017, Hengameh Shahidi's mother Nahid Kermanshahi said that her daughter's health was extremely poor; that Hengameh Shahidi is experiencing pain in her heart and is unable to walk. She said that Hengameh Shahidi had told her that she had given her will and testament to her interrogator. Hengameh Shahidi had also told the interrogator "if something happens to me, you will have to answer for it. The top-level decision-makers behind this will have to answer. The President, Ministry of Intelligence, the Office of the Prosecutor, and the judiciary are responsible for my death".

In a letter that Hengameh Shahidi wrote by hand prior to her arrest and that was posted by a contact of hers on her Instagram account on 11 March, she had predicted that she would be arrested as part of a "project to arrest political activists and journalists before the [May 2017] presidential election so that the designated candidate could be guaranteed victory, just like in the 2009 election."

Hengameh Shahidi was an advisor on women's issues to candidate Mehdi Karroubi during his 2009 presidential election campaign and is a member of his political party, the E'temad-e Melli (National Trust Party). She was first arrested by Ministry of Intelligence officials on 30 June 2009. She was held for four months in Section 209 of Evin prison, 50 days of which were in solitary confinement in a tiny cell which measured one metre by two metres. She has said that she was tortured through beatings and threats of execution during this time and was in constant fear that she would be executed. She has said that she was also left in a room with ropes and knives for hours, which she felt was intended to drive her to commit suicide. Her interrogators also threatened to arrest members of her family. She was repeatedly interrogated in detention without a lawyer present and was allowed only limited contact with her family. She was denied access to her lawyer, despite his repeated requests for access, until the start of her trial in November 2009.

Later that month, following an unfair trial before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, Hengameh Shahidi was convicted of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system" and sentenced to six years' imprisonment. The "evidence" used against her in court included her observance of the post-presidential election demonstrations in her capacity as a journalist, giving media interviews, signing statements addressed to United Nations human rights bodies about human rights violations in Iran, supporting a campaign to end executions by stoning in Iran, and collecting signatures for the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality) – a campaign that sought to change discriminatory laws affecting women in Iran. Her conviction and sentence were later upheld by Branch 54 of the Court of Appeal. She had also been sentenced to 91 days' imprisonment for "insulting the President" but this was overturned by the appeal court.

Hengameh Shahidi had been released on bail on 1 November 2009 after going on hunger strike to protest her detention but was rearrested on 25 February 2010 after being summoned for questioning by the Ministry of Intelligence and taken to Evin prison to serve her sentence. She was granted medical leave in May 2011 and had been at liberty until her most recent arrest.

The Iranian authorities have renewed their crackdown on media workers in recent months in the lead up to the presidential election in May 2017. A number of journalists have been arrested, including newspaper editor Ehsan Mazandarani who was arrested by Revolutionary Guards officials on 11 March, and editor-in-chief of *Goftegoo* (Conversation) magazine Morad Saghafi, who was arrested on 15 March. A number of administrators of channels on the mobile messaging app Telegram, which is a platform used by millions of people in Iran, have also been arrested.