

URGENT ACTION

TEACHER TRADE UNIONIST IN NEED OF MEDICAL CARE

Imprisoned Iranian teacher and trade unionist Mohammad Habibi is in poor health and is being denied the urgent specialized medical care he needs. He is a prisoner of conscience, serving 10 and a half years in prison solely for exercising his human rights. He must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Trade unionist and welding teacher **Mohammad Habibi**, a member of the board of directors of the Iran Teachers Trade Association – Tehran, is being denied the specialized medical care he needs. In August 2018, this human rights defender, who is now jailed in Tehran's Evin prison, was briefly transferred to a hospital in Tehran, where he was seen by a general practising doctor who said that he needed to have his kidneys examined urgently by a specialist physician. Despite this, he was taken back to prison without receiving the specialized medical care he needed. Mohammad Habibi says that he has also been experiencing severe pain in his chest and lungs since his violent arrest in May 2018. However, the prison medical clinic has simply administered an inhaler to him.

Mohammad Habibi was first arrested on 3 March 2018 outside the school in Tehran where he taught, in front of his students. He says Revolutionary Guards pepper sprayed and beat him during his arrest and transferred him to an undisclosed location where he remained in solitary confinement until around 19 March. During this period, he says he was repeatedly interrogated while blindfolded and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment including through being slapped in the face, having his head forcibly shaved, and receiving insults and threats against him and his family. He was then transferred to Evin prison and released on bail on 15 April. He was violently arrested again on 10 May at a peaceful gathering of teachers in Tehran against the poor economic circumstances of teachers and the lack of sufficient funding for public education. On 23 July, he underwent a grossly unfair trial before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran which lasted only two hours and ignored marks of beatings on his body. He was not allowed to meet with his lawyer until 10 minutes before his trial. In August, he was convicted of several spurious national security-related charges stemming entirely from his human rights activities as a teacher trade unionist, and sentenced to 10 and a half years in prison, 74 lashes, a two-year travel ban and a two-year ban on "membership in political and social parties, groups or collectives". He is currently appealing his conviction and sentence.

Please write immediately in Persian, English or your own language, calling on the Iranian authorities to:

- Release Mohammad Habibi immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his human rights, including through his trade union activism;
- Ensure that he is given immediate access to the specialized medical care doctors say he needs in a medical facility outside prison, in compliance with international standards and medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Investigate Mohammad Habibi's allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, both in detention and during his arrests in March and May 2018, and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice in fair trials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 NOVEMBER 2018 TO:

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

Prosecutor General of Iran
Abbas Ja'fari Dolat Abadi
Office of the Prosecutor
Corner (Nabsh-e) of 15 Khordad Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Mr.

And copies to:
Deputy for Human Rights and
International Affairs, Ministry of Justice
Mahmoud Abbasi
Number 1638, Below Vali Asr Square
Vali Asr Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: dr.abbasi@sbmu.ac.ir

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohammad Habibi's 10-and-a-half-year prison sentence consists of seven and a half years in prison for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", 18 months for "spreading propaganda against the system", and a further 18 months for "disturbing public order". Mohammad Habibi was first arrested on 3 March 2018 outside the school in Tehran where he taught, in front of his students. He has said he was pepper sprayed and beaten by Revolutionary Guard officials who did not identify themselves and who forced him into an unmarked car. Fearing that he was being abducted, he shouted for help as he was being arrested. Mohammad Habibi was then driven to his home where the individuals identified themselves as members of the security forces but did not specify more. When Mohammad Habibi's wife arrived, the agents momentarily showed her what they said was an "arrest warrant", but did not permit her to read it. The document is believed to have borne the symbol of the Intelligence Unit of the Revolutionary Guards. Mohammad Habibi was then taken to a detention centre in an undisclosed location that was run by the Revolutionary Guards and remained there in solitary confinement until 19 March. During this period, he was denied access to his lawyer and only allowed to call his family twice. He was subsequently transferred to Evin prison and released on 15 April 2018 after posting bail of 2.5 billion rials (US\$60,000).

On 10 May 2018, while out on bail, Mohammad Habibi participated in a peaceful gathering of teachers in Tehran against the poor economic circumstances of teachers – both retired and active – and the lack of sufficient funding for public education. This and other similar gatherings took place in multiple cities in Iran during Teachers' Week, a week of activities following Teachers' Day, which is observed on 12 Ordibehesht in the Iranian calendar, equivalent to 2 May in 2018. An eyewitness told Amnesty International that, at the gathering in Tehran, plain-clothes security agents beat the teachers, both men and women. The eyewitness said that Mohammad Habibi appeared to be targeted by a plain-clothes security agent who repeatedly kicked him in his chest area and subsequently grabbed him by the arms and violently pulled him away, dragging him over concrete and causing abrasions on his body and damage to his ribs. He was arrested and taken to the same secret detention centre in which he had been held in March and early April. He was held there in solitary confinement for several days, while his family remained unaware of his fate and whereabouts, and then moved to Fashafouyeh prison, south of Tehran. While in detention, he was briefly taken to the office of the prosecutor in Evin prison where he was formally informed of his charges. His lawyer has reported that he appeared barefoot before the prosecution authorities with ripped clothes and with visible cuts, bruises and other marks of beatings on his body. The prosecution authorities did not raise any questions and concerns about the worrying state of his appearance and failed to order an investigation into it. Mohammad Habibi was denied access to medical care for the injuries he sustained during his violent arrest until his brief transfer to Imam Khomeini hospital in August. On 3 September he was transferred to Evin prison.

The Iranian authorities have subjected numerous teacher trade unionists to years of harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy prison sentences following unfair trials. In addition to Mohammad Habibi, other imprisoned teachers in Iran include Esmail Abdi and Mahmoud Beheshti Langroodi, both of them human rights defenders serving prison sentences for peacefully exercising their rights as trade unionists. At least six other teachers were given a nine-month suspended prison sentence and a flogging sentence of 74 lashes in September 2018 for their peaceful participation in gatherings on 10 May 2018.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which Iran has ratified, impose an obligation on the Iranian authorities to respect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as well as the right to form and join trade unions of one's choice. Trade unionists are also protected under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which highlights the obligation on states to respect the right to defend human rights, including trade union rights, and protect human rights defenders from persecution.

Name: Mohammad Habibi

Gender m/f: m

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