

URGENT ACTION

YOUNG ACTIVIST GIVEN 24-YEAR JAIL SENTENCE

Iranian women's rights defender Saba Kordafshari, 22, learned in May 2020 that judicial authorities had unlawfully and secretly increased her prison sentence from nine to 24 years by altering an appeal verdict from November 2019, which had quashed her conviction for a charge that carried 15 years in prison. She must be immediately and unconditionally released as she is held solely for her human rights work including campaigning against Iran's discriminatory forced veiling laws.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi

c/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN

Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Ebrahim Raisi,

Women's rights defender **Saba Kordafshari**, 22, is unjustly jailed in Tehran's Evin prison for her peaceful human rights work, including campaigning against Iran's discriminatory and degrading forced veiling laws. In November 2019, an appeal court quashed her conviction for "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling", reducing her prison sentence from 24 years to nine years. In late May 2020, while serving her sentence, she found out that judicial authorities had unlawfully and secretly altered the appeal verdict and other related judicial records to make it appear that the 15-year prison sentence had been upheld in November 2019 and her total sentence was 24 years. The authorities have refused to account for the causes and circumstances surrounding this alteration, of which her lawyer only became aware when Saba Kordafshari called him from inside prison. If this falsification of the verdict is not corrected, she would have to spend a total of 15 years in prison, as per Iran's sentencing guidelines.

Since her arbitrary arrest on 1 June 2019, Saba Kordafshari's due process rights have been repeatedly violated. During pre-trial detention, she was denied access to a lawyer while interrogated and held in prolonged solitary confinement and, at one point, forcibly disappeared for 12 days. She later said that during this period, she was ill-treated in order to "confess" before a camera, including by having a sack placed over her head for hours, and threatened with the arrest of her mother, women's rights defender Raheleh Ahmadi, which happened on 10 July 2019. Her subsequent trial in August 2019 was grossly unfair - she was barred from an adequate defence as her lawyer was not permitted to review the court file until the day of the trial.

Saba Kordafshari's access to the medical care has been denied, which she requires for pre-existing gastrointestinal problems that have been exacerbated in prison and from which she is in pain. She was finally taken to an outside hospital on 29 June 2020 after waiting one year. She said that the doctor failed to conduct a comprehensive examination, but referred her for colonoscopy, endoscopy and ultrasound to take place at a later unknown date.

I urge you to release Saba Kordafshari immediately and unconditionally as she is jailed solely for her human rights work. Pending her release, she must urgently receive any medical care she needs and have regular contact with a lawyer of her choosing. I further ask you to order an independent and impartial investigation into her enforced disappearance, placement in prolonged solitary confinement and lack of access to legal counsel and medical care and ensure that those responsible are held to account.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Saba Kordafshari was sentenced to 24 years in prison by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran in August 2019 for her peaceful human rights work in a grossly unfair trial. The 24-year sentence consisted of 15 years for “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling”, seven and a half years for “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and one and a half years for “spreading propaganda against the system”.

In November 2019, Saba Kordafshari’s lawyer was formally notified that Branch 36 of Court of Appeals in Tehran had acquitted her of “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling” and, therefore, reduced her prison sentence from 24 years to nine years, of which she needed to serve seven and-a-half years in prison under Iran’s sentencing guidelines. At that time, her lawyer was permitted to review the appeal court’s written judgement but was not provided with a copy. It was then that the lawyer read that her conviction for “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling” had been overturned and her prison sentenced reduced. In March 2020, Saba Kordafshari was also allowed to read the November 2019 appeal court verdict, but was denied her request for a copy. The authorities’ refusal to provide her and her lawyer with a copy of the verdict follows from Note 2 to Article 380 of Iran’s Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows the authorities to refrain from providing defendants and their lawyers with a written copy of the judgement in cases involving offences against “decency” or “national security”. This practice violates Iran’s obligation to ensure that judgements rendered in criminal cases are made public (with certain exceptions not relevant to this case), as provided in Article 14(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

On 26 May 2020, Saba Kordafshari received a letter from the Office for the Implementation of Sentences listing her convictions and the number of prison years imposed for each charge, and she found, to her shock, that the document included the charge of “inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution” through promoting “unveiling”. She subsequently learned that the judicial authorities had unlawfully and secretly altered the November 2019 verdict of the Branch 36 of Court of Appeals and made it appear that the appeals court had upheld her original conviction and sentence in full. After her lawyer learned through Saba Kordafshari of what had happened, he filed a complaint and was told by prosecution authorities that since not all the appeals court judges had signed the November 2019 verdict, the alteration of the verdict holding was “not a violation”. Saba Kordafshari understands that it has happened with the complicity of the judges in Branch 36 of Court of Appeals in Tehran, who were reportedly aware of the alteration to the verdict.

After her arrest, Saba Kordafshari was held in solitary confinement for 11 days in Vozara detention centre in Tehran, where she was interrogated about her human rights work before transferred on 11 June 2019 to Shahr-e Rey prison, in Varamin, outside of Tehran. On 2 July 2019, the Revolutionary Guards transferred her to another location and concealed her fate and whereabouts from her family until 13 July 2019, thus subjecting her to enforced disappearance for those 12 days. On 13 August 2019, she was transferred to the women’s ward of Evin prison. Women’s rights defender Raheleh Ahmadi, Saba Kordafshari’s mother, is also unjustly jailed in Evin prison, where she began serving a 31-month prison term on 20 February 2020 following her conviction of “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the system”. Amnesty International believes she is a solely detained for her peaceful campaigning against compulsory veiling and for her public campaigning on behalf of her unjustly imprisoned daughter.

Following the period of solitary confinement and interrogations, Saba Kordafshari began to pass bloody stools and experiencing pain. She asked to be referred to the hospital for further examination and tests. The prison medical clinic eventually tested her blood and her stool and said she was anaemic due to blood loss. Saba Kordafshari waited for one year before being transferred to hospital, and with the cost covered by her family. Amnesty International has documented a pattern of prisoners held for politically motivated offenses being denied timely specialized medical care outside prison. Moreover, requiring prisoners to pay for medical care violates Iranian law and is inconsistent with international standards See Healthcare taken hostage: cruel denial of medical care in Iran’s prisons for further information.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Persian

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 August 2020.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Saba Kordafshari (*she/her*)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1416/2019/en/>

And copies to:

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