

URGENT ACTION

TEHRAN PRISONERS AT RISK AFTER ISRAELI STRIKES

Hundreds of prisoners, including those arbitrarily detained, from Tehran's Evin prison are being subjected to cruel and inhuman conditions. They were moved to overcrowded prisons after Israeli air strikes destroyed parts of Evin prison on 23 June. The Iranian authorities are concealing the fate or whereabouts of dozens of other prisoners, which may amount to enforced disappearance, a crime under international law. These prisoners are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

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

*Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei c/o Embassy of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland*

Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

Hundreds of prisoners from Tehran's Evin prison have been displaced to other prisons with cruel and inhuman conditions in Tehran province after the Israeli military's deliberate air strikes destroyed large parts of Evin prison through on 23 June. Direct attacks on civilian objects, such as prisons, are serious violations of international humanitarian law. At the time of the air strikes, Evin prison housed hundreds of prisoners, including two mothers with toddlers. The authorities released one mother and child but moved the second pair with the other 70 or so women prisoners to Shahr-e Ray prison (also known as Gharchark prison). The women prisoners were put into two small rooms and a corridor with only two toilets and two showers. Around 180 male prisoners were moved to the Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary (also known as Fashafouyeh prison) and crammed into four rooms with a maximum capacity of 80. According to informed sources, many prisoners were not allowed to gather their belongings and were transferred in handcuffs and shackles while being subjected to beatings. These prisons have dire conditions: severe overcrowding, worsened by the new influx of prisoners; filthy, insufficient bathroom facilities; poor ventilation; insect infestations; lack of food and potable water; and a severe bed shortage forcing prisoners sleep on the floor. Prisoners, including older ones with health conditions, are being denied adequate medical care.

The authorities are also refusing to disclose the fate or whereabouts of dozens of other prisoners who were held in sections 2A, 209, 240 and 241 of Evin prison at the time of the air strikes, which may amount to enforced disappearance, a crime under international law. These sections were used for holding those accused or convicted of "national security" charges. This has raised fears among families that the prisoners may have been killed or injured by the Israeli air strikes or are at heightened risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Hundreds of the prisoners affected by the events since 23 June had been arbitrarily detained. They include human rights defenders; protesters; dissidents; members of the persecuted Baha'i minority; and others detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and/or freedom of religion; dual and foreign nationals; and those detained for debt.

I urge you to immediately release all prisoners arbitrarily detained and consider releasing other prisoners, especially pre-trial detainees and those eligible for conditional release. I further urge you to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of all prisoners who were held in sections 2A, 209, 240 and 241 of Evin prison at the time of the Israeli air strikes on 23 June. I call on you to grant all prisoners access to their families and lawyers, protect them from torture and other ill-treatment and to take all measures to protect the right to life and health of all prisoners, ensuring that different categories of prisoners are held separately, all are given adequate medical care and are treated humanely in line with international standards. Finally, I urge you to allow international monitors to conduct prison inspection visits.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Shahr-e Rey prison in Varamin, Tehran province, has long been characterized by cruel and inhuman conditions. It is a disused chicken farm that holds women prisoners in extremely overcrowded and unhygienic conditions, without access to potable water, decent food, medicine or fresh air. For years, Amnesty International has documented prisoners reporting urine-stained floors, filthy showers and bathroom facilities, a severe shortage of beds and the prevalence of contagious diseases, as well as poor quality food containing rock particles and salty, undrinkable water. On 25 June 2025, the Instagram account of Sayeh Seydal, a woman prisoner who was transferred from Evin prison to Shahr-e Rey prison, published an audio recording of her from inside the prison following her transfer. In the recording, she said: “[After] the American and Israeli bombs didn’t kill us, they [Iranian authorities] have brought us to a place to practically kill us. A place where no human should live. It [will be] a gradual death [for us]. They left all of us in quarantine... The smell of filth is everywhere... It’s as if [the Iranian authorities] want to take their revenge from Israel and the US on us political prisoners.” In a media interview on 30 June, Elhan Taifi, daughter of Fariba Kamalabadi, from the persecuted Baha’i religious minority, reported that women prisoners were unable to contact their families for two days following their transfer from Evin prison. She stated that, due to overcrowding, prison officials informed the women they would be held indefinitely in the quarantine section, an area typically used for just one or two days before detainees are moved to other wards. She also highlighted serious sanitary issues, including sewage overflow in one room, noting that the rooms are small and unhygienic. These inhuman conditions in Shahr-e Rey Prison have intensified the distress of the former Evin prisoners. Referring to the unbearable pressure on detainees, Elhan quoted her mother as saying: “**I wish we had died from the missile strike, rather than live in this situation.**”

The Greater Tehran Penitentiary has also long had cruel and inhuman conditions. For years, prisoners have reported severe overcrowding and the denial of medical care. A shocking video showing footage from inside the Greater Tehran Penitentiary, published by the BBC’s Persian language service on 1 July 2025, shows former Evin prisoners sleeping on the floor in a cramped space. In a sign of the families’ desperation to obtain information about their loved ones, prisoners’ families who have still not been in contact with their loved ones in prison posted on social media that they could not find them in the released footage. The prison does not separate prisoners convicted of non-violent offences from those convicted of violent offences in violation of international law, which requires that different categories of prisoners be kept in separate institutions or parts of institutions. On 30 June 2025, a moving letter from human rights defender Reza Khandan, a former Evin prisoner now in Greater Tehran Penitentiary, was published online. In the letter, he describes the violent transfer of prisoners and the dire conditions in their new prison: “...**none of the injured prisoners... were taken to hospital. Instead of bringing calm, safety, and healing, they [armed guards] chained us in pairs... They were incapable of meeting prisoners’ most basic needs, but in just a few hours, they had assembled thousands of handcuffs, leg irons, and tools of repression... Prisoners who had just rescued the wounded hours earlier were now being targeted by security forces, guns pointed at their heads. We [didn’t sleep for] over 24 hours, and for nine hours, we didn’t even have drinking water. It has now been several days since our arrival. Still reeling from the trauma of the bombing and our horrific transfer, we were confronted with the harsh, chaotic conditions of this new prison. The overcrowding, disorganization, lack of hygiene, and insects swarming the packed rooms have made any moment of peace impossible...**”

Prior to the Israeli air strikes, prisoners and their families raised concerns about the lack of protection for prisoners during the conflict and called for their release. In an open letter dated 18 June 2025, eight arbitrarily detained prisoners in Evin prison urged the Head of the Judiciary to protect the lives of prisoners, including by implementing a Supreme Judicial Council resolution allowing conditional release of prisoners during wartime emergencies. They also cited Iran’s Prisons Regulations, which state that when a prison population “exceeds an unacceptable level” (more than double capacity) or in times of “crisis such as natural disasters, unforeseeable incidents, or outbreaks of dangerous infectious diseases,” appropriate measures must be taken until the emergency situation is resolved. On 17 June 2025, Deutsche Welle Persian, a media outlet based outside Iran, reported that journalist Abdolreza (Reza) Valizadeh, who was arbitrarily imprisoned in section 8 of Evin prison, raised similar concerns in a message to the outlet. His message warned that an air strike on section 8 would endanger lives, as it lacks an emergency staircase and fire extinguishers. Informed sources told Amnesty International that section 8 was damaged during the air strikes. The Iranian authorities have announced that the Israeli air strikes on Evin prison killed at least 79 people, including prisoners, families of prisoners and administrative staff. One five-year-old child was also killed with his mother who worked in the prison.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian and English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 4 October 2025.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: All.

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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