

# Amnesty International Nowruz Action

کارزار نوروز عفو بین الملل



All photos ©Bahare Khodabande

## What is Nowruz?

Nowruz [pronounced NO-ROOZ- in Persian means "New-day"] is the Iranian New Year and marks the first day of Spring. Nowruz begins on the 1st day of Farvardin of the Iranian solar calendar which is usually March 20th or 21st. It is the biggest holiday celebrated by Iranians; a time of joy, celebration with family and friends, shared by people of all faiths that trace their history back through the centuries to the ancient Mesopotamian civilization and the Persian Empire. It has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years and is rooted in the rituals and traditions of the Zoroastrian religion.

## What Can I Do?



- ✚ Raise awareness about human rights in Iran
- ✚ Celebrate the joy and hope of Springtime
- ✚ Write messages and letters for prisoners in Iran
- ✚ Bring hope and show solidarity
- ✚ Let human rights defenders and their families know they are not forgotten
- ✚ Have fun!

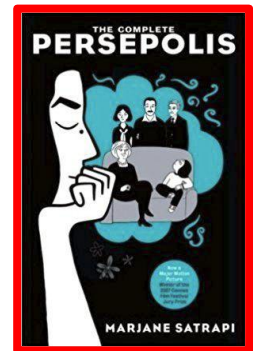
## Hold a Nowruz Event!

- ✚ Invite friends for an Iranian dinner, organize a pot luck or call in an Iranian caterer! Food is almost essential to a successful event! Need recipes? visit: <http://www.mypersiankitchen.com>



- ✚ Poetry night: Poetry has been part of Iranian culture since ancient times. There are many Iranian poets (classic and contemporary) whose work can be found online or ask us for suggestions!

- ✚ Book club discussion: There are many informative books on Iran with underlying social and human rights themes.



- ✚ Include a “Haft-sin (aka Haft-sinn and Haft-seen)” table in your celebration. Haft-sin or **the seven S's** is a traditional table setting of Nowruz. The Haft-sin table includes seven items starting with the letter *seen* (س) in the Persian alphabet. Each "س" is a symbol which represents spring time. Check the following link for more information: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haft-Seen>

## Take Action!

Most importantly, **take action** on behalf of seven prisoners in Iran for whom Amnesty has been campaigning. Many have been sentenced to long prison terms for their peaceful activism and some are in poor health. Send Nowruz greetings, solidarity messages and write letters on their behalf.

## Letter Writing Tips

- ✚ Keep the cards simple, with pictures of landscapes or spring flowers, in keeping with the spirit of the holiday and the message of hope and renewal.
- ✚ Include simple Nowruz greetings such as “Nowruz mobarak” م بارک نوروز, “thinking of you at Nowruz time” or “hoping you are well.”
- ✚ The cards should be non-religious.
- ✚ Send the greetings in either English or Persian.
- ✚ Do not mention Amnesty International or specifics of the recipient’s case.
- ✚ Do not mention the political situation or human rights.
- ✚ Do not choose cards that have pictures of people.
- ✚ Do not use cards which show bottles of wine or other alcoholic beverages.

## Previous Nowruz actions have been very successful!

Hundreds of letters and solidarity messages have been sent from Amnesty members across Canada. Hossein Rafiee, part of the 2016 Nowruz action was granted a much needed medical furlough. In 2017 filmmaker Keywan Karimi was granted a conditional release after serving nearly 5 months of his six year sentence.



**Mostafa Azizi** (pictured to the left) was featured in our 2016 Nowruz campaign. He was released from prison and joined us in Toronto to take action for other detainees in 2017.

**Letters have a real impact on real lives.** Whether it is an advocacy or solidarity action, your efforts matter! Please see next pages for this year’s Nowruz cases. Thank you for joining us!

*Share the news and photos from your event with us! You can email us at [IranCoordinator@amnesty.ca](mailto:IranCoordinator@amnesty.ca)*



## Atena Daemi

**Atena Daemi** has been imprisoned since November 2016. She is an anti-death penalty campaigner and human rights defender. In March 2015 she was sentenced to 14 years in prison after a grossly unfair trial that lasted no more than 15 minutes. An appeal court later reduced her sentence to 7 years.

**Atena Daemi** was sentenced for her peaceful activities in defence of human rights. The charges included distributing anti-death penalty leaflets; posts on Facebook and Twitter criticizing Iran's execution record; participating in a peaceful protest against the 2014 execution of a young Iranian woman called Reyhaneh Jabbari; visiting the gravesite of those killed during the protests following the 2009 presidential election; and sending information about abuses against political prisoners to human rights groups based outside Iran.

These peaceful activities were cited by the court as evidence of “*gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security*,” “*spreading propaganda against the system*” and “*insulting the Supreme Leader*”.

After her first arrest in 2014, **Atena Daemi** was held in a cell that she said was infested with insects and had no toilet facilities. With the exception of the weekends, she was interrogated every day for a period of a month and a half, often for hours at a time. During most of her interrogations, she had to sit blindfolded, facing a wall.

On 24 January 2018 **Atena Daemi** and human rights defender and writer **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee**, were unlawfully transferred from Tehran's Evin prison to miserable conditions at Shahr-e Rey prison. They said that male prison guards physically and verbally assaulted them after they protested that their transfer was illegal. The women, and prisoner of conscience **Arash Sadeghi**, husband of Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, went on hunger strikes to protest their unlawful transfer. Atena Daemi and Arash Sadeghi have ended their hunger strike while Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee remains on hunger strike.

Sign a petition for human rights defenders like **Atena Daemi**: <http://amn.st/60008N3NQ>

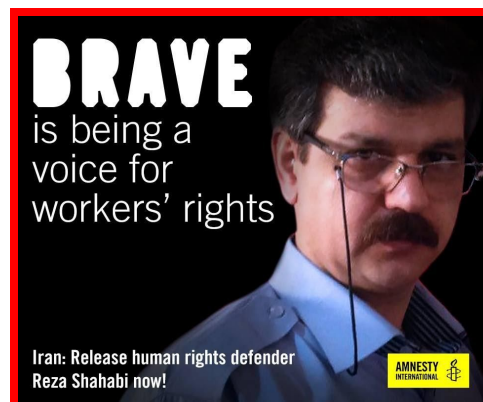
Send Nowruz greetings to **Atena Daemi** and/or her family via:

Iran Coordinator  
Amnesty International  
1992 Yonge St. 3rd floor  
Toronto ON  
M4S 1Z7



## Reza Shahabi

Iranian trade unionist **Reza Shahabi** has been sentenced to 6 years in prison on charges of “*gathering and colluding against state security*” and “*spreading propaganda against the system*” for his activists related to peaceful trade union activities. He is the treasurer and board member of the *Syndicate of the Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (SWTSBC)*, an independent trade union for workers employed by the United Bus Company of Tehran.



**Reza Shahabi** spent four years in prison between 2010 and 2014, during which time he said he was tortured, ill-treated and deliberately denied adequate medical care, which resulted in a chronic back condition. He went on several hunger strikes during this time in protest of his imprisonment and the denial of specialized medical care. He was released on medical leave in October 2014, but was forced back to prison in August 2017 to complete the remainder of his sentence. The need to complete the sentence contradicted the authorities own written statement which was shown to **Reza Shahabi** by an official at Raja’i Shahr prison. This statement confirmed his six-year sentence had been completed, considering time spent on medical leave. Once in prison, the authorities told him that he also had to serve a one-year sentence from a separate 2015 case. He went on a 50 day hunger strike and his health has further deteriorated.

Other members of *SWTSBC* are also imprisoned, including **Davoud Razavi** and **Ebrahim Madadi**.

During a peaceful protest in front of the Iranian Parliament in September 2017 Reza Shahabi’s wife, Robabeh Rezaie stated: “*We should ask the judicial authorities how he [Reza] has endangered the security of the country? Is it against national security to support the drivers who want to have bread and housing and practice the right to freely support their own established organization? Reza Shahabi has committed no crime other than acting in support of workers’ rights. His place is not in the prison!*”

Send Nowruz greetings for the **Reza Shahabi** and/or his family via:

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## Narges Mohammadi

**Narges Mohammadi** is a prominent human rights advocate in Iran. She campaigns for justice and gender equality, supports the anti-death penalty campaign *Legam* (Step by Step to Abolish the Death Penalty) and was Vice President of the *Centre for Human Rights Defenders in Iran* before the authorities shut it down in December 2008.

**Narges Mohammadi** has been in and out of prison for more than a decade as a result of her support for human rights in Iran. She was last arrested at her home in May 2015, and taken to Evin Prison to continue serving a 6-year sentence.

**Narges Mohammadi** was then sentenced to an additional 16-year prison sentence in May 2016, following an unfair trial. She was convicted of “*forming a group composed of more than two people with the purpose of disrupting national security*”, “*gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security*”, and “*spreading propaganda against the system*”. The first charge, which accounts for 10 years of her sentence, was in connection with her involvement with *Legam*. The “evidence” behind the other two charges included her media interviews about human rights violations, her participation in peaceful gatherings outside prisons to support families of death row prisoners, her contact with other human rights defenders, her participation in peaceful protests to condemn acid attacks against women, and her 2014 meeting with the chief of EU foreign policy, Catherine Ashton. In April 2017, Iran’s Supreme Court rejected her request for judicial review.

**Narges Mohammadi** is critically ill and needs specialized treatment. She suffers from pulmonary embolism (a blood clot in her lungs) and a neurological disorder that can result in seizures and temporary partial paralysis.

Several other members of the *Human Rights Defenders Centre*, including lawyer **Abdolfattah Soltani**, have also been persecuted, and are currently serving prison sentences.

Sign a petition for **Narges Mohammadi**: <http://amn.st/60138JEHT>

Send Nowruz greetings to **Narges Mohammadi** and/or her family via:  
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## Saeed Malekpour



Web programmer **Saeed Malekpour**, an Iranian national with Permanent Resident status in Canada, has been imprisoned in Iran since his arrest on 4 October 2008. He is serving a life sentence in Evin Prison.

In late 2010, he was initially sentenced to death for “spreading corruption on earth” in relation to a web program he created for uploading photos which the Iranian authorities said was used on pornographic websites. This was an open source program and **Saeed Malekpour** has maintained that the use of this web program on other websites was without his knowledge.

His death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2012. **Saeed Malekpour** was also sentenced at the same time to seven and a half years’ imprisonment on vaguely worded charges, including “insulting the Leader”, “insulting the President”, “insulting Islamic sanctities”, and “spreading propaganda against the system”. These charges were also in relation to the web program as well as the public letter **Saeed Malekpour** wrote in 2010 detailing the torture he was subjected to while in pre-trial detention.

**Saeed Malekpour** has said that he was tortured and otherwise ill treated following his arrest, including during an extended period of solitary confinement that lasted over one year. He has also said that he was denied medical care for the injuries he sustained as a result of torture and other ill treatment. His televised “confessions”, which he says were made under torture, were subsequently used as “evidence” to secure his conviction in court. His sister has told Amnesty International her brother’s forced televised “confessions” are the only “evidence” that was presented against him in court.

**Saeed Malekpour**’s arrest and sentencing was part of a larger operation called Gerdab (Whirlpool), which was conducted by the Cyber Crimes Unit of the Revolutionary Guards in 2008 and sought to crack down on on-line activities deemed “immoral” or “un-Islamic”.

Sign a petition for **Saeed Malekpour**: [http://amnesty.ca/saeed\\_malekpour](http://amnesty.ca/saeed_malekpour)

You can send Nowruz greetings for **Saeed Malekpour** and/or his family via:

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## Maryam Akbari Monfared

Prisoner of conscience **Maryam Akbari Monfared** has been serving a 15-year sentence in Tehran's Evin prison since December 2009. She was convicted of "*enmity against God*" (*moharebeh*). Her conviction is based solely on the fact that she made phone calls to her relatives, who are members of a banned group, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), and visited them once in Iraq. During her trial, the judge told her she was paying for the activities of her relatives. The PMOI advocates for the overthrow of the Iranian government.

In October 2016, **Maryam Akbari Monfared** filed, from inside prison, a formal complaint with the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran, seeking an official investigation into mass executions which took place in 1988, including two of her siblings. She requested information about the location of the mass graves where their bodies were buried, and the identity of the perpetrators involved. To date, the authorities have not responded the complaint; instead, they have resorted to various punitive tactics. Since she made the complaint the authorities have refused to take her to medical appointments outside prison in order to receive treatment for her rheumatoid arthritis and thyroid problems. They have also repeatedly threatened to stop her family visits. In May 2017, she was threatened with an additional three-year prison term and exile to a remote prison.

In an open letter from inside Evin Prison in November 2016, she wrote: "*How do you think you can scare someone in my position into silence? What have you even left for me that you are threatening to deprive me of? Don't you feel ashamed that you are threatening to cut the family visits of a mother?*"

Human rights defenders seeking truth, justice and reparation for thousands of prisoners who were summarily executed or forcibly disappeared in the 1980s have faced new levels of retribution by the authorities.

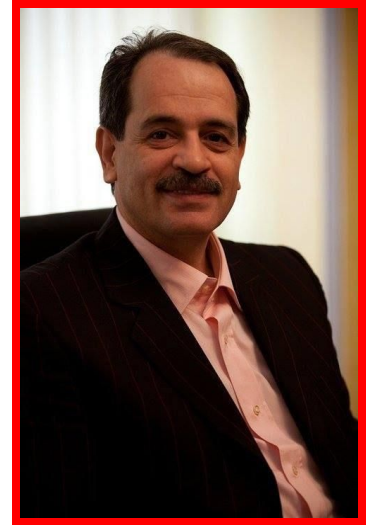
Send Nowruz greetings for the **Maryam Akbari Monfared** and/or her family via:

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## Mohammad Ali Taheri

Spiritual teacher **Mohammad Ali Taheri** has been languishing in solitary confinement in Section 2A of Tehran's Evin Prison for close to 7 years.



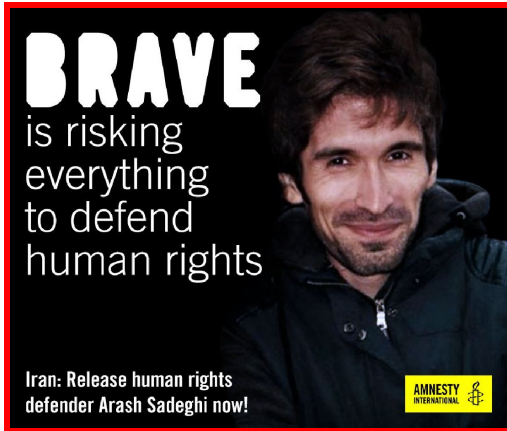
**Mohammad Ali Taheri** is the founder of the spiritual doctrine “*Erfan-e Keyhani* AKA *Erfan-e Halgheh*.” In 2006 he lawfully opened a cultural and educational institute in Tehran to develop, spread and practice his newly found spiritual beliefs with his students. His practices included “healing sessions,” apparently focused on alternative non-medicinal treatments. Things changed in 2010 when three offices of the institute in Tehran were shut down. He was arrested in May 2011 and has been suffering in prolonged solitary confinement since then.

Authorities have sought the death penalty against **Mohammad Ali Taheri** three times for the same activities. The first was in 2011 when a Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced him to five years’ imprisonment for “*insulting Islamic sanctities*”, but said further investigations were necessary before it could rule on the charge of “*spreading corruption on earth*”. In 2015 he was convicted of “*spreading corruption on earth*” and sentenced to death, then acquitted on appeal in 2016. Despite the acquittal and even though **Mohammad Ali Taheri** had completed his five-year sentence from the 2011 case, in February 2016 the authorities refused to release him. Instead, they started a new round of interrogations and, in late 2016, charged him again with “*spreading corruption on earth*”, leading to an August 2017 conviction and death sentence. The conviction is related to the same activities that formed the basis of his 2011 conviction. The latest death sentence was reportedly overturned in October 2017 pending further review.

Sign a petition for **Mohammad Ali Taheri**: <http://amn.st/61868FghK>

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## Arash Sadeghi

Human rights activist **Arash Sadeghi** has been imprisoned in Tehran's Evin Prison since June 2016, serving two separate prison terms totaling 19 years.

**Arash Sadeghi** is being punished for his peaceful human rights activities. He was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in August 2015 after being convicted of spurious charges including "*spreading propaganda against the system*", "*gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security*", "*insulting the founder of the Islamic Republic*" and "*spreading lies*". The court also activated a four-year suspended prison sentence from 2011, which related to his peaceful activism.

The court verdict cited over 50 peaceful human rights activities as "evidence" of his involvement in "*actions against [national] security*" including: giving interviews to medias outside of Iran; expressing solidarity with prisoners of conscience on Facebook; denouncing physical assaults against political prisoners during a raid on Section 350 of Evin prison in April 2014; writing critical posts on Facebook about the mass executions of political prisoners during the 1980s; joining the Campaign for *Step by Step Abolition of the Death Penalty* (known by its Persian acronym, *Legam*); communicating with Amnesty International and other human rights groups outside Iran; and sending information regarding human rights violations to the UN Special Rapporteur and members of the European Parliament.

**Arash Sadeghi's** wife, **Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee**, also a human rights activist and a writer, is serving a six-year prison sentence. **Arash Sadeghi** staged a 71-day hunger strike from 24 October 2016 to 3 January 2017 to protest against the imprisonment of his wife for writing a fictional story against the cruel punishment of stoning. As a result, he has developed severe health problems which require hospitalization. However, the Revolutionary Guards have consistently blocked his transfer to hospital in reprisal for his hunger strike.

Sign a petition for **Arash Sadeghi** and other human rights defenders: <http://amn.st/60008N3NQ>

You can send Nowruz greetings to **Arash Sadeghi** and/or his family via:

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