

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!

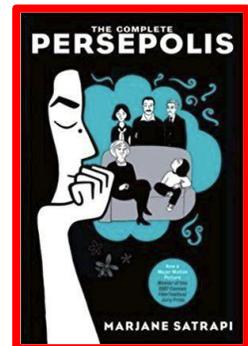
Hold a Nowruz Event!

- ✚ 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

Nasrin Sotoudeh



Prominent detained Iranian human rights lawyer, **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, faces up to 34 years in prison and 148 lashes, after two grossly unfair trials. The charges against her stem solely from her peaceful human rights work, including her defence of women protesting Iran's abusive forced hijab (veiling) laws, and her outspoken opposition to the death penalty.

Nasrin Sotoudeh was arrested at her home in Tehran on 13 June 2018, and taken to Evin prison, where she is being detained. She was denied access to a lawyer of her choosing for months after her detention.

The most recent charges against **Nasrin Sotoudeh** stem from her peaceful human rights work, including through her defence of women who were prosecuted in 2018 for peacefully protesting the abusive, discriminatory and degrading forced hijab laws in Iran. In her indictment, the prosecution authorities listed seven charges against her, four of which were based on her opposition to forced hijab: “inciting corruption and prostitution”; “openly committing a sinful act by... appearing in public without a hijab”; “disrupting public order”; and “disturbing public opinion”. **Nasrin Sotoudeh**'s peaceful human rights activities against forced hijab, including those undertaken in her role as a lawyer, such as meeting with her clients, have been used to build a criminal case against her. The other three charges against her were also based on peaceful activities that the authorities have deemed as “criminal”. These activities include belonging to human rights groups and publishing news about **Shaparak Shajarizadeh**, who was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment, 18 of which were suspended, for her peaceful protest against forced hijab. **Nasrin Sotoudeh**'s trial, which took place on 30 December 2018, did so in her absence. She had refused to attend her trial, citing the unjust nature of the proceedings.

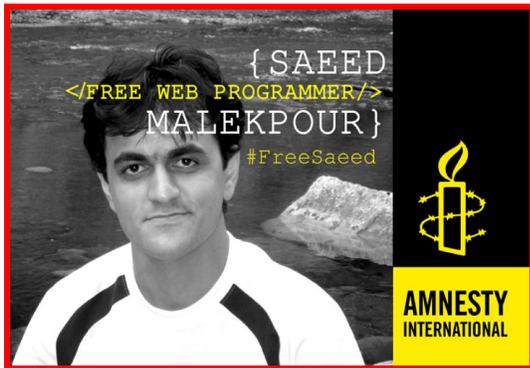
Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband, **Reza Khandan** was also arrested in September 2018 for his support of the campaign against forced hijab and for peacefully campaigning on behalf of his wife **Nasrin Sotoudeh** after her arrest. He was freed on bail in December 2018. He along with **Farhad Meysami** (fellow human rights defender also campaigning against forced hijab) have been sentenced to six years in prison in relation to their support of the campaign against forced hijab.

Throughout 2018 the Iranian authorities waged a particularly sinister crackdown against women's rights defenders. Also in 2018, in the context of protests or as a result of their work, 11 lawyers were detained arbitrarily – some still behind bars.

Send Nowruz greetings to **Nasrin Sotoudeh** and/or her family via:

Iran Coordinator
Amnesty International
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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.

The death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2012. **Saeed Malekpour** wrote a public letter in 2010 detailing the torture he was subjected to while in pre-trial detention. **Saeed Malekpour** has written that he was tortured and otherwise ill treated following his arrest, including during an extended period of solitary confinement that lasted over one year. 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.

In October 2018, **Saeed Malekpour** suffered from a heart attack and was sent to hospital for four days during which he had been chained to his bed by his wrist and ankle and couldn’t sleep well – his sister, Maryam told Center for Human Rights in Iran. Maryam also added that her brother has suffered kidney stones, prostate issues and arthritis during the decade he has spent in Evin Prison.

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

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Iran Coordinator

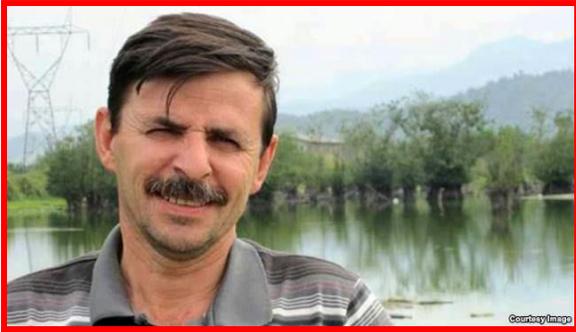
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Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi



Mahmoud Beheshti Langroudi, the spokesperson and former president for the Iran Teachers' Trade Association, has been behind bars since September 2017 serving multiple sentences. He has been sentenced to a total of 14 years in prison following three separate convictions related to his peaceful trade union activities.

Iran Teachers' Trade Associations (ITTA) is a nationwide union with local branches in almost all of Iran's 31 provinces. Of these, at least 17 are officially registered. ITTA is an official member of Education International, an international body that represents educational workers.

This is not the first time that **Mahmoud Beheshti** has been arrested or imprisoned for his peaceful trade union activities. He was arrested in March 2007 during a rally with thousands of teachers in front of Iran's Parliament, protesting new state employment regulations. In April 2010 he was arrested again for protesting the mistreatment of his imprisoned colleagues, including **Rasoul Bodaghi**. **Mahmoud Beheshti** has been handed three separate sentences of four-year, 5-year and another 4-year of imprisonment during the past twelve years, all on charges of "gathering and colluding against the national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system". The latest sentence was upheld by the appeal court in September 2017. **Mahmoud Beheshti** continues his peaceful human rights activities while behind bars by defending the rights of political prisoners through writing open letters and articles.

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 **Mahmoud Beheshti**, other imprisoned teachers in Iran include **Esmail Abdi** and **Mohammad Habibi**, serving prison sentences for peacefully exercising their rights as trade unionists. On May 10, 2018, the Iranian authorities violently dispersed a peaceful protest by teachers in Tehran, who were calling for higher wages and better funding of the country's public education system. By the end of the year, the authorities had arrested at least 23 teachers following nationwide strikes in October and November. Eight were sentenced to between nine months and 10 and a half years in prison, 74 lashes each, and other penalties.

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Maryam Mombeini

Canadian-Iranian **Maryam Mombeini** is the wife of academic **Kavous Seyed-Emami** who died in Iranian prison under suspicious circumstances in February 2018. She has been prevented from leaving Iran since March 7, 2018 when she and her two sons attempted to leave Iran.



Canadian-Iranian **Kavous Seyed-Emami** was arrested on January 24, 2018 and was under interrogations for national-security related charges stemming from his peaceful environmental activism, making him a prisoner of conscience. **Maryam Mombeini** was kept in the dark about the fate and whereabouts of her husband for two weeks. On February 9, the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran called her to visit him in Evin prison. Once there, she was taken to an interrogation room and interrogated for about three hours, during which an official from the prosecutor’s office and three agents from the Intelligence Unit of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) bombarded her with questions about her husband’s environmental work and his various personal and professional associations. She was put under pressure to sign a statement “confessing” that her husband was a “spy”, which she refused to do. According to the family, once the interrogation finished, the authorities told her, “You can now see your husband, but there is just one thing – he is dead, having committed suicide in his cell.” IRGC officials have raided the family’s home several times since then and seized many of their belongings, including their title deeds, electronic devices and photo albums.

Iran’s judicial and security authorities have threatened the bereaved family in a bid to silence their pleas for truth and justice. They have also engaged in what seems to be an orchestrated campaign to cover up any evidence of torture, other ill-treatment, and unlawful deaths while defaming the deceased publicly.

At least 63 environmental activists and researchers were arrested in 2018, according to media reports. The Iranian authorities accused a number of them, without providing any evidence, of collecting classified information about Iran’s strategic areas under the pretext of carrying out environmental and scientific projects. At least five were charged with “corruption on earth”, which carries the death penalty.

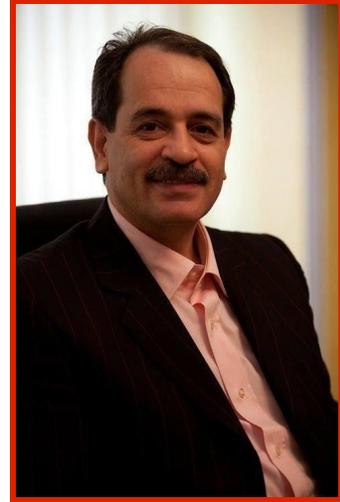
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Mohammad Ali Taheri

Spiritual teacher **Mohammad Ali Taheri** has been languishing in Tehran's Evin Prison for close to eight years, most of which in solitary confinement.

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 and disseminate his newly found spiritual beliefs, and practice them with his students, in "healing sessions" apparently focused on alternative non-medicinal treatments. But things changed in 2010 when three offices of the institute in Tehran were shut down. He was arrested in May 2011 and has been behind bars since then.



Authorities have sought the death penalty against **Mohammad Ali Taheri** three times for the same activities. In 2011 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". He was ultimately convicted of "spreading corruption on earth" in 2015 and sentenced to death, but acquitted on appeal in 2016. Despite the acquittal and even though **Mohammad Ali Taheri** had completed his five-year sentence in February 2016, the authorities refused to release him. Instead, they started a new round of interrogations and in late 2016, they charged him again with "spreading corruption on earth", leading to another trial, conviction and death sentence issued in August 2017. This conviction was 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. In March 2018, **Mohammad Ali Taheri** was sentenced to another five-year prison sentence on the same conviction of "spreading corruption on earth". Reportedly acquitted on January 26, 2019, he remains in prison.

Mohammad Ali Taheri, wrote a letter to Iranian President on January 22, 2019 and as a protest to ongoing violation of his rights, he demanded "renouncing his citizenship from the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran".

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Maryam Akbari Monfared



Prisoner of conscience **Maryam Akbari Monfared** has been held in Tehran's Evin prison since December 2009 serving a 15-year sentence. She was convicted of enmity against God" (moharebeh) based on an arbitrary interference with her privacy, family and correspondence. Her conviction is solely based on the fact that she had made phone calls to her relatives, who are members of a banned group, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), and had visited them once in Iraq.

Maryam Akbari Monfared submitted a complaint to the prosecutor's office in Tehran from inside prison in October 2016. The complaint concerns the extrajudicial execution and enforced disappearance in 1988 of her sister Roghayeh and her brother Abdolreza, who was 17 years old at the time of his arrest in 1980. In her complaint, **Maryam Akbari Monfared** requested "an official investigation into the extrajudicial execution of her siblings" and sought "detailed information about the executions including the location of the mass graves, and the identity of the perpetrators. To date, the authorities have not processed her complaint. Instead, they have subjected her to reprisals. They have refused to take her to medical appointments outside prison to receive adequate treatment for her rheumatoid arthritis and thyroid problems. They have also repeatedly threatened to stop her family visits. On May 13, 2017, **Maryam Akbari Monfared**'s husband Hassan Jafari Hatam was summoned to the ministry of intelligence office in Tehran and told that his wife would face an additional three-year prison term and exile to a remote prison in Sistan-Baluchestan province, if she did not stop writing open letters about her complaint and pursuing the whereabouts of her siblings.

Between July and September 1988, the Iranian authorities forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed thousands of imprisoned political dissidents in secret and dumped their bodies, mostly in unmarked mass graves. Since then, the authorities have treated the killings as state secrets, tormenting the relatives by refusing to tell them how and why their loved ones were killed and where they are buried. No official has been brought to justice and, in some cases, those involved hold or have held positions of power in Iran. Families and 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.

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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 was similarly 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 communicating with Amnesty International and other human rights groups outside Iran.

Arash Sadeghi was diagnosed with a cancerous bone tumour in June 2018. He underwent surgery on September 12, 2018, only to be transferred back to Raja'i Shahr prison on September 15, against strict explicit medical advice that required him to spend at least 25 days hospitalized following the operation so that he could be monitored by specialist doctors. Doctors said that they needed this post-operative recovery period to assess whether **Arash Sadeghi** required chemotherapy, radiation therapy or additional surgery. Authorities at Raja'i Shahr prison have since repeatedly impeded his access to potentially life-saving medical care. In February 2019, Center for Human Rights in Iran reported that he had lost the ability to move his right arm due to an infection on his shoulder that had been left untreated in prison. **Arash Sadeghi's** last visit to a hospital outside the prison with specialized medical practitioners was in September 2018. The Iranian authorities' treatment of **Arash Sadeghi** is not only unspeakably cruel, in legal terms it is an act of torture.

Arash Sadeghi's wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee, also a human rights activist and a writer, is serving a three-and-half-year prison sentence in relation to an unpublished story she wrote about the cruel practice of stoning.

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