

# URGENT ACTION

## KURDISH ACTIVIST ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Kurdish civil society activist Zahra Mohammadi, aged 29, has been arbitrarily detained since her arrest in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, Iran, on 23 May 2019. She is charged with national security offences in relation to her civil society work empowering marginalized members of Iran's Kurdish minority.

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

*Prosecutor General of Sanandaj Mohammad Jabbari  
c/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN  
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28  
1209 Geneva, Switzerland*

*Dear Mr Mohammad Jabbari,*

*Zahra Mohammadi, a Kurdish civil society activist, has been accused of co-operating with Kurdish opposition groups and charged with national security offences for her peaceful activities empowering members of Iran's marginalized Kurdish community, including through teaching the Kurdish language. On 18 September 2019, without prior notice to her lawyers or family, Zahra Mohammadi was transferred to Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj for a hearing which was subsequently postponed.*

*On 23 May 2019, Zahra Mohammadi was arrested in her home by plain-clothes agents from the Ministry of Intelligence and then held in solitary confinement at an undisclosed location until 31 May, when she was transferred to Sanandaj prison and her family were informed of her whereabouts. During a subsequent family visit, Zahra Mohammadi said that she had been pressured to provide a forced "confession" during those eight days in secret detention. From early June until early July 2019, she had ongoing contact with her family. From 6 July to 16 September 2019, Zahra Mohammadi was held in incommunicado detention and her family was denied all information about her despite multiple attempts to learn what had happened to her. After this period of incommunicado detention ended, Zahra Mohammadi was able to tell her family that during that time, she was taken to a Ministry of Intelligence facility each day for hours-long interrogation sessions and again put under intense pressure to "confess" that she had been co-operating with Kurdish opposition groups, which she denied. She said that her interrogators threatened to arrest her family members if she did not agree to work for the Ministry of Intelligence and sign a pre-written "confession". She has met with her lawyers just once, nearly four months after her arrest, and after the second round of interrogations during incommunicado detention ended.*

*Zahra Mohammadi is in poor health. She currently has a stomach-related illness. She also has a pre-existing digestive condition that requires medication, which she has been unable to take in prison.*

***I urge you to release Zahra Mohammadi immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience detailed solely for her peaceful civil society activism. Pending her release, please ensure that she is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and can receive regular visits from her lawyer and family, as well as adequate medical care, including any specialized treatment she may need.***

*Yours sincerely,*

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 18 September 2019, without any prior notice to her lawyers, Zahra Mohammadi was transferred to Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of Sanandaj. Her lawyer and family were alerted that she was in court, and promptly arrived to protest the hearing taking place without prior notice. Her court session was subsequently postponed to a later date, though no further hearings have taken place since and the court has sent the case back to the office of the prosecutor for further investigations. She has met with her lawyers just once, nearly four months after her arrest, and after the second round of interrogations during incommunicado detention ended on 16 September.

During the period she was held in incommunicado detention and subjected to interrogations for over two months without access to a lawyer, Zahra Mohammadi's family made numerous attempts with different government offices in Sanandaj to learn what had happened to her. During one visit to the Ministry of Intelligence office, her family was permitted to speak over the phone with Zahra Mohammadi's interrogator. According to information received by Amnesty International, the interrogator told her family that Zahra Mohammadi was being denied contact with her family to put her under greater pressure to sign documents and agree to work for the ministry of intelligence and that, once she had done so, she would again be able to see her family.

Since being held in incommunicado detention, Zahra Mohammadi has experienced a stomach-related illness for which the prison doctor prescribed medication, but she has said that the medication makes her nauseous and that her illness continues. She also has a pre-existing digestive condition which requires a special diet and medication. Since detention, she has neither been able to follow the special diet nor take her medication. Her family has requested she be transferred to hospital for examinations, but no response has been given to them.

Zahra Mohammadi is the director of the Nojin Cultural Association, whose activities include teaching the Kurdish language and literature and other civil society activities. Prior to her 23 May 2019 arrest, Zahra Mohammadi had been subjected to several lengthy interrogations by the ministry of intelligence. The last took place on 8 March 2019, when she was interrogated for eight hours without the presence of a lawyer.

Ethnic minorities in Iran, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen, face entrenched discrimination, curtailing their access to education, employment and adequate housing. Continued economic neglect of regions with large minority populations has exacerbated poverty and marginalization. The Persian language is the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education in Iran.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 25 December 2019.

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Zahra Mohammadi (she/her)