

URGENT ACTION

GERMAN-IRANIAN WOMAN ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Nahid Taghavi, a 66-year-old German-Iranian national, has been arbitrarily detained in Tehran's Evin prison since 16 October 2020. She has serious medical conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure, placing her at heightened risk of severe illness or death if she contracts COVID-19. She is a prisoner of conscience and must be immediately and unconditionally released.

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

*Head of Judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15,
1050 Bruxelles, Belgium*

Dear Mr Raisi,

*I am writing to express concern at the continued arbitrary detention of **Nahid Taghavi**, a 66-year-old German-Iranian national, in Section 2A of Tehran's Evin prison. Revolutionary Guards arrested her on 16 October 2020 from her home in Tehran and confiscated her laptop, mobile phone, memory sticks, money, books, photographs and German passport. The authorities did not inform her family of her arrest or whereabouts. When her relatives visited Evin prison searching for her on 18 October 2020, they discovered that she was being held there in solitary confinement. Following her arrest, she was denied contact with the outside world until 28 October 2020, when she was permitted a brief telephone call with her family. She was then denied contact with them for a further 35 days until December 2020, after which she has been allowed a call with them every 7-10 days. The prosecution authorities have denied her access to a lawyer; they have also said that she is not permitted a lawyer of her own choosing and is only allowed one from a list vetted and approved by the head of the judiciary. They have also refused to give any precise information to her family about the charges on which she has been detained, only citing "security" (amniyati) reasons. Amnesty International believes that Nahid Taghavi is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and association.*

Nahid Taghavi is a habitual resident of Germany but spends several months a year visiting family in Iran and had never previously been detained. During interrogations in detention, she has been asked about her personal history, including her activism when she was a student, and the reasons she travels to Iran.

She has high blood pressure for which she needs daily medication and suffers from back problems. Evin prison authorities initially refused to accept her blood pressure medication when her family tried to deliver it. In detention, she has begun to suffer from and take medication for diabetes, a condition she had previously been able to reverse through healthy eating and exercise. She was also scheduled to have dental surgery when she was arrested for a condition which causes her pain. Despite this, the authorities have refused to transfer her to a specialist dental facility. The spread of COVID-19 in Iran's prisons puts her at heightened risk of severe illness or death due her age and medical conditions.

I ask you to immediately and unconditionally release Nahid Taghavi as she is a prisoner of conscience detained solely in connection with her peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression and association. Pending her release, give her regular access to a lawyer of her choosing and family, as well as to any health care she needs, including medication and transfer to outside facilities for treatment unavailable in prison, and ensure that she is granted access to consular assistance from the German authorities.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In recent years, the Iranian authorities have arrested and detained dozens of dual nationals, including prisoners of conscience such as journalists, academics and human rights defenders. In his July 2019 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran expressed deep concern about the continued “arbitrary arrest, detention, ill-treatment and denial of appropriate medical treatment of dual and foreign nationals.” He stated that the Iranian authorities have “subjected these individuals to sham trials, which have failed to meet basic fair trial standards, and convicted them of offences on the basis of fabricated evidence or, in some cases, no evidence at all, and [have] attempted to use them as diplomatic leverage.” He also noted that the families of several dual nationals detained in Iran consider the detention of their loved ones to be “hostage-taking”.

Amnesty International has documented a pattern of systematic fair trial rights violations in Iran, beginning from the time of arrest right up until when defendants stand trial. Detainees are often arrested without warrants and held in prolonged solitary confinement in undisclosed locations without access to their families. Individuals detained, investigated and prosecuted, especially those who are dual nationals or who are arrested on politically motivated charges, including human rights defenders, are subjected to grossly unfair judicial proceedings. Prosecution authorities and interrogators belonging to security and intelligence bodies, including the Revolutionary Guards, systematically deny detainees their right to access a lawyer from the time of arrest, even lawyers vetted and approved by the judiciary, during the investigation phase of their case. Torture and other ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement, against individuals arrested in politically-motivated cases is widespread and systematic, especially during interrogations, and prison and prosecution authorities also deliberately deny prisoners of conscience and other prisoners held for politically motivated reasons access to adequate health care, including medication. Forced “confessions” obtained under torture and other ill-treatment and without a lawyer present are consistently used as evidence by courts to issue convictions.

International human rights law prohibits the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, including arrest, detention or imprisonment. Detainees have a right to communicate with the outside world and to receive visits. Torture is an international crime and its use is prohibited under all circumstances. Statements elicited as a result of torture, ill-treatment or other forms of coercion must be excluded as evidence in criminal proceedings, except those brought against suspected perpetrators of such abuse.

The right to a fair trial is legally binding on all states as part of customary international law. Those facing criminal proceedings must have the right to access legal counsel from the time of arrest and throughout the pre-trial and trial proceedings; not to be compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt; not to be detained on vague charges; to receive a fair, public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal; and to be provided with a public, reasoned judgement.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 24 March 2021

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Nahid Taghavi (she/her)