

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO 24 YEARS IN PRISON

Iranian women's rights defender Saba Kordafshari, 21, has been sentenced to 24 years in prison for her peaceful human rights work, including campaigning against Iran's discriminatory forced veiling laws. If her verdict is upheld on appeal, she would be required to serve 15 years of her prison sentence. She is a prisoner of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

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

Head of Judiciary Ebrahimi Raisi
c/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

Women's rights defender Saba Kordafshari was unjustly sentenced to 24 years in prison by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran on 27 August 2019 for her peaceful human rights work, including campaigning against Iran's discriminatory and abusive forced veiling laws and communicating about human rights violations. The 24-year sentence consists of 15 years for "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling", seven and a half years for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and one and a half years for "spreading propaganda against the system". She is currently awaiting the outcome of her appeal. If her conviction and sentence are upheld, Saba Kordafshari would be required to serve 15 years of her prison sentence, as per Iran's sentencing guidelines.

Saba Kordafshari's trial was grossly unfair. She was not allowed to meet with her lawyer for over two months after her arrest on 1 June 2019. She was also barred from adequately preparing her defence as her lawyer was not permitted to review the court file against her until the day of the trial, 19 August 2019, and was informed of the trial date with just one day's notice. Her lawyer objected that her court file was incomplete and asked for the rest of the documents but was told by the authorities that it was "none of [his] business". On the day of the trial, Saba Kordafshari was taken handcuffed and blindfolded to court. She later told her family that there were cameras in the courtroom during the trial and that her interrogator and members of the Revolutionary Guards were present. She said that the judge denied her request to be released on bail.

I urge you to release Saba Kordafshari immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for her human rights work. Pending her release, please ensure that she has regular contact with a lawyer of her choosing. I also urge you to stop criminalizing the work of women's rights defenders and abolish discriminatory forced veiling laws.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 1 June 2019, women's rights defender Saba Kordafshari was arrested by 11 plain-clothes agents from the ministry of intelligence at her home. Agents handcuffed Raheleh Ahmadi, Saba Kordafshari's mother, and confiscated Saba Kordafshari's mobile and laptop. Saba Kordafshari was then held in prolonged solitary confinement for 11 days in Vozara detention centre in Tehran, where she was questioned about her communications with the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), an Iranian human rights group, including information she had sent to them about prison conditions, which prisoner of conscience Alireza Shirmohammadali had provided her. Alireza Shirmohammadali was murdered in the Penitentiary Complex in Tehran (also known as Fashafouyeh prison) on 10 June 2019. Saba Kordafshari was also put under repeated pressure to denounce on camera the White Wednesdays campaign against compulsory veiling laws and its founder, Masih Alinejad, a US-based Iranian journalist. On 11 June 2019, Saba Kordafshari was transferred to Shahr-e Rey prison, where women convicted of serious violent crimes are held in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

On 2 July 2019, the intelligence unit of the Revolutionary Guards transferred Saba Kordafshari to another location. They concealed her fate and whereabouts from her family until they returned her to Shahr-e Rey prison on 13 July 2019, thus subjecting her to enforced disappearance for those 12 days. She subsequently informed her family that she had been held in section 2-A of Evin prison, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, and put under renewed pressure to give forced "confessions". The interrogators conditioned her release on giving forced "confessions" and threatened to arrest her mother, Raheleh Ahmadi, if she did not "co-operate". On 10 July 2019, the authorities carried out their threat and arrested Raheleh Ahmadi. Saba Kordafshari subsequently told her family that she had been held in an interrogation room with a sack over her head blocking her sight for much of the day when suddenly she heard her mother being interrogated nearby. That is when she realized the Revolutionary Guards had carried out their threat to arrest her mother. She was then forced to give a "confession" before a camera. Saba Kordafshari was reunited with her mother in Shahr-e Rey prison a few days later. Her mother was released on bail on 14 July 2019. On 13 August 2019, Saba Kordafshari was transferred to the women's ward of Tehran's Evin prison.

The prosecution of Saba Kordafshari is part of a wider crackdown on women's rights defenders campaigning against discriminatory forced veiling laws. Yasaman Aryani and her mother, Monireh Arabshahi, were sentenced on 31 July 2019 to 16 years in prison each, while Mojgan Keshavarz was sentenced to 23 years and six months in prison. If these convictions and sentences are upheld on appeal, each woman would be required to serve 10 years of her prison sentence, as per Iran's sentencing guidelines. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/0856/2019/en/> for further information.

A growing movement against discriminatory and abusive forced veiling laws has emerged in Iran, with women and girls standing in public places, silently waving their headscarves on the ends of sticks or sharing videos of themselves walking down the street with their hair showing. This movement includes, in addition to White Wednesdays, My Stealthy Freedom, which encourages women from Iran to post online pictures of themselves without headscarves by way of opposing forced veiling, and My Camera My Weapon, which aims to raise awareness of the constant harassment and assault that women and girls face on Iran's streets as a result of forced veiling laws. The Iranian authorities have felt threatened by the strength of this movement and waged a crackdown in response. In an official statement on 23 February 2018, the police warned that women peacefully protesting the discriminatory and abusive practice of forced veiling would now be charged with "inciting and facilitation corruption and prostitution", which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/05/iran-abusive-forced-veiling-laws-police-womens-lives/> for more information. Forced veiling laws violate a whole host of rights, including the rights to equality, privacy and freedom of expression and belief. These laws also degrade women and girls, stripping them of their dignity and self-worth.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian and English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 December 2019.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Saba Kordafshari (she/her)