

URGENT ACTION

HOSSEIN RONAGHI MALEKI ON HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian blogger Hossein Ronaghi Maleki, a prisoner of conscience, has been on hunger strike since 26 March in protest at the prison authorities withholding his medication. His health is failing and doctors have advised against stopping his specialized medical care, which he cannot receive in prison.

Iranian blogger **Hossein Ronaghi Maleki** has been on hunger strike since 26 March in protest at the Evin Prison authorities withholding his medication, and his continued imprisonment. He has several illnesses, including kidney disease, gastro-intestinal, bladder, heart, and chest problems. He has only one functioning kidney and needs constant monitoring and regular specialized medical care outside prison. He has also been complaining of back pain. He was taken to a Tehran hospital on 5 and 9 March for tests, including an examination by an orthopaedic doctor, but was returned to prison without receiving adequate treatment on either occasion. He was not allowed to attend a hospital appointment for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan. His health has deteriorated from being kept in prison, in poor conditions, without adequate medical facilities to treat him, and being denied the specialized care he needs continually. His health is so poor that even the prison doctors have advised that he needs to be treated outside prison. Hossein Ronaghi Maleki's parents have travelled from their home in the city of Malekan, near Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province, to follow up on his case with the authorities, including a meeting on 27 March with the Office of the Prosecutor in Tehran. Their repeated requests for help have so far been ignored.

Hossein Ronaghi Maleki had been arrested on 13 December 2009 and sentenced to 15 years in prison after an unfair trial, in which he was convicted of "membership of the internet group 'Iran Proxy'", "insulting the Supreme Leader" and "spreading propaganda against the system" in connection with articles on his blog. After his arrest, he was held for 13 months in solitary confinement in Section 2A of Evin Prison, under the control of the Revolutionary Guards, where he has said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated: this included severe beatings by his interrogators, which apparently have contributed to him developing several medical conditions. He was pressured to make televised "confessions". He was told in June 2015 that his sentence had been reduced to 13 years.

Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Hossein Ronaghi Maleki immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Urging them to ensure that he is immediately granted access to specialized medical care outside the prison;
- Calling on them to order an independent and impartial investigation into his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, including during solitary confinement, and that he is protected from further torture and other ill-treatment, including any punishment for his hunger strike, denying him adequate medical care, and withholding his medication.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 MAY 2016 TO:

Office of the Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Prosecutor General of Tehran
Abbas Ja'fari Dolat Abadi

Please send your appeals to the care of Iranian embassies accredited to your country, listed below. If there is no Iranian embassy in your country, please mail the letter to the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, 622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017, United States.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the sixth update of UA 236/13. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3261/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hossein Ronaghi Maleki has been granted medical leave from prison several times. Before he began his most recent medical leave, on 17 June 2015, he had been held in Section 7 of Evin Prison, which holds those convicted of ordinary offences and financial crimes, where he had been taken shortly after he was ordered to return from his previous medical leave. While he was on that medical leave, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was told to submit his medical records to the Prosecutor's office for inspection. When he went to do so on 28 February 2015, he was arrested to resume serving his sentence. From then until June 2015, his health deteriorated rapidly. Though the prison authorities transferred him to the hospital at least four times, he was never given any medical attention and was never given the specialized care for his kidney disease that he requires continually to maintain his health.

After his arrest at his father's home in the city of Malekan, East Azerbaijan on 13 December 2009, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was held in solitary confinement in Section 2A of Evin Prison for 13 months, after which he was transferred to Section 350 of the prison, which holds political prisoners. He has said that, during the 13 months he was in solitary confinement, his interrogators had subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including repeated beatings, and pressured him to make televised "confessions" that Iran Proxy, the internet group he co-founded, was a counter-revolutionary organization that had committed internet crimes, and to make statements in support of the 2009 presidential election results. He was allowed only one visit from his mother and one from his lawyer during his time. He was put back in solitary confinement on 24 January 2012, and interrogated by officials from the Cyber Intelligence Unit of the Revolutionary Guards and again pressured to make a televised "confession", which he refused to do. He has been told that the reason for his lengthy prison sentence is his refusal to "cooperate" with the authorities.

On 6 September 2010, after an unfair trial before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran, during which he was denied access to his lawyer, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for his peaceful activities including articles he had posted on his blog, *14 Tir*, in which he used the pen-name Babak Khorramdin (the name of a legendary 19th Century Persian revolutionary leader). At trial, he told the judge that he had been tortured in detention, but the judge answered that he had "deserved it". In November 2010, his conviction was upheld by Branch 54 of the Court of Appeal in Tehran, though he was told in June 2015 that his sentence had been reduced to 13 years.

The Iranian authorities frequently return prisoners they have transferred to hospital to prison without ensuring that they receive the medical care they need. (See this public statement <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2508/2015/en/> for more information) Failing to provide adequate medical care to prisoners is a violation of Iran's international human rights obligations. The denial of medical treatment may amount to a violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party. Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Iran is also a state party, specifically recognizes the right of every person to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules) also state that prisons must provide adequate medical care to prisoners without discrimination (Rules 24-35). Rule 27(1) of the Mandela Rules provides that "Prisoners who require specialized treatment or surgery shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals."

Name: Hossein Ronaghi Maleki

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 236/13 Index: MDE 13/3759/2016 Issue Date: 1 April 2016