

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST SENTENCED

Iranian human rights activist Mansoureh Behkish has been sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison. She intends to appeal: if she is sent to jail, Amnesty International will consider her to be a prisoner of conscience.

Mansoureh Behkish was told on 4 April 2012 that she had been sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "gathering and colluding with intent to harm national security by establishing the Mourning Mothers group," and six months' imprisonment for "propaganda against the system". She had been tried on 25 December 2011 by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran.

Mansoureh Behkish is a member of the Mothers of Laleh Park (formerly known as the "Mourning Mothers"), which campaigns against human rights violations such as unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearance. She had been arrested on a street in Tehran on 12 June 2011 and held in Section 209 of Evin Prison, which is believed to be under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, until she was released on bail on 9 July 2011. Mansoureh Behkish has been barred from travelling abroad since 17 March 2010, when she was barred from travelling to Italy and her passport was confiscated.

Another member of the Mothers of Laleh Park, **Zhila Karamzadeh-Makvandi**, was arrested at the Passport Department in Tehran on 27 December 2011 and taken to Evin Prison to serve a two-year sentence imposed after conviction of "founding an illegal organization" and "acting against state security" for her peaceful activities. **Leyla Seyfollahi** and a male supporter of the group, **Nader Ahsani**, are also facing a two-year sentence for their membership of the Mothers of Laleh Park and could be imprisoned at any time.

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

- Urge the Iranian authorities to quash the sentences against Mansoureh Behkish and to drop the charges against Leyla Seyfollahi, and Nader Ahsani as if imprisoned, they would be prisoners of conscience convicted solely for their peaceful human rights activities
- Call on them to release Zhila Karamzadeh-Makvandi immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for her peaceful activities as a member of the Mothers of Laleh Park
- Urge them to remove undue restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MAY 2012 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street,
Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
[Care of] Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (Subject
Line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Secretary General High Council for
Human Rights
Mohammed Jayad Larijani
c/o Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave
South of Serah-e Jomhour
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(Subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Mothers of Laleh Park group (formerly the Mourning Mothers) was mostly made up of women whose children have been killed or detained in post-election violence, or have disappeared, in Iran since June 2009, but quickly grew to include relatives of other victims of human rights violations, and their supporters. Mansoureh Behkish has lost several members of her family who were executed in the 1980s; since then she has been an activist and has been detained several times. The Mothers of Laleh Park meet in silence for an hour each Saturday near the place and time of the killing of protester Neda Agha-Soltan, who came to symbolize the brutal repression meted out by the security forces after the disputed presidential election of 2009. Her death was captured on footage circulated around the world.

Together with other women in the Mothers of Laleh Park group, Mansoureh Behkish was first arrested during the group's weekly meeting in Laleh Park, Tehran on 5 December 2009. Members of the group were arrested again on 9 January 2010; several of them were beaten and 10 were taken to hospital (see press release: *Iran's 'Mourning Mothers' must be released*, 11 January 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/irans-mourning-mothers-must-be-released-20100111>).

Between 1981 and 1988 Mansoureh Behkish lost six members of her family – a sister, four brothers and a brother-in-law. Starting in August 1988 and continuing until shortly before the 10th anniversary of the Islamic revolution in February 1989, the Iranian authorities carried out thousands of summary and mass executions of political prisoners, known as the “prison massacres” – the largest numbers of summary executions since those carried out in the first and second year after the Iranian revolution in 1979. In all, between 4,500 and 5,000 prisoners are believed to have been killed, including women and children.

For the past few years, Mansoureh Behkish has taken part in the commemoration of the victims of the 1988 mass executions, some of whom were buried in the Khavaran Cemetery in south Tehran. This event is held yearly by relatives of the dead on or around 29 August to mark the anniversary and demand justice for their loved ones. Hundreds of those summarily executed are buried in the cemetery, many of them in unmarked mass graves. Families of the victims have been under pressure from the Iranian authorities not to hold commemorations at the cemetery or in their homes. On 29 August 2008 Mansoureh Behkish was arrested and held in Evin Prison for three days and summonsed several times that year.

Mansoureh Behkish is her 91-year-old mother's main carer.

Name: Mansoureh Behkish, Zhila Karamzadeh-Makvandi, Leyla Seyfollahi and Nader Ahsani.

Gender m/f: Mansoureh Behkish, Zhila Karamzadeh-Makvandi and Leyla Seyfollahi are female. Nader Ahsani is male.