

# URGENT ACTION

## STUDENT LEADER HELD IN HARSH CONDITIONS

**Iranian student leader and prisoner of conscience Majid Tavakkoli, who is serving an eight and a half year prison sentence, has been moved to a section of Tehran's Evin prison where conditions are particularly harsh and unsanitary. He is still suffering from a serious respiratory condition, and his health is likely to deteriorate further if he does not receive specialist medical care.**

**Majid Tavakkoli**, aged 24, ended a seven-day total hunger strike on 29 May 2010. He had begun the hunger strike in protest at being placed in solitary confinement, but called it off following his transfer to a general section of Evin prison where he was held with other prisoners. On 22 June, he was moved to Section 350 of the prison, where conditions are said to be very poor. Cells are extremely overcrowded, with inadequate food and sanitary facilities for the prisoners held there. Majid Tavakkoli is suffering from a respiratory condition that has worsened since his arrest. He needs urgent medical care and Amnesty International fears that it might be withheld in order to place additional pressure on him.

Majid Tavakkoli was arrested on 7 December 2009 after making a speech at a student demonstration. His lawyer was not permitted to attend his trial, which took place in January 2010. Majid Tavakkoli has been sentenced to five years in prison for "participating in an illegal gathering", one year for "propaganda against the system"; two years for "insulting the Supreme Leader" and six months for "insulting the President". The verdict also included a five-year ban on participating in political activities, as well as a ban on his leaving the country. Amnesty International considers Majid Tavakkoli to be a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Majid Tavakkoli, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- In the meantime, calling for him to be given access to adequate medical care, including assessment and treatment by an independent specialist outside Evin prison if necessary;
- Reminding the authorities that the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners require the provision of adequate space, bedding, ventilation, lighting, food and hygiene facilities.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 AUGUST 2010 TO:

Head of the Provincial Judiciary in Tehran  
 Ali Reza Avaei  
 Karimkhan Zand Avenue  
 Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No. 152  
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email:** [avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir)  
**Salutation:** Dear Mr Avaei

Head of the Judiciary  
 Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
 Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh  
 (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)  
 Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri  
 Tehran 1316814737  
 Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email:** Via website:  
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/75/Default.aspx> (First starred box: your given name; second starred box: your family name; third: your email address)  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**And copies to:**  
Director, Human Rights Headquarters  
 Mohammad Javad Larijani  
 Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh  
 Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri  
 Tehran 1316814737  
 Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Fax:** +98 21 3390 4986  
**Email:** [bia.judi@yahoo.com](mailto:bia.judi@yahoo.com) (In subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)  
**Salutation:** Dear Mr Larijan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update to UA 341/09 (MDE 13/131/2009). Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/131/2009/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/131/2009/en); <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/015/2010/en>; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/059/2010/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Majid Tavakkoli is a member of the Islamic Students' Association at Amir Kabir University in Tehran, where he studied ship-building. He was previously imprisoned in 2007, and detained again in February 2009, when he was the subject of UA 113/07 and updates, and UA 70/09.

Majid Tavakkoli was beaten during his last arrest, on 7 December 2009. He had been leaving Amir Kabir University of Technology in Tehran after having delivered a speech at a student demonstration marking Student Day in Iran, held on the Persian date of 16 Azar, the anniversary of the killing of three students by security forces in 1953. Dozens of students and others were arrested around the time of the 7 December protests, which took place in cities across the country.

The day after his arrest, Fars News Agency, which is close to the Revolutionary Guards and the Judiciary, published pictures of Majid Tavakkoli wearing women's clothing, and said he had been wearing them at the time of his arrest in order to escape detection. Student websites and others, which have claimed that Majid Tavakkoli was beaten at the time of his arrest, have denied that he was wearing the clothes at the time, but suggested he was forced to wear them afterwards to humiliate him.

After Majid Tavakkoli was pictured wearing women's clothes, many Iranian men took pictures of themselves with head coverings, many of them holding signs saying "We are Majid", and posted them on the internet as part of a solidarity campaign calling for his release. See for example

[http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=198929939029#/photo\\_search.php?oid=198929939029&view=all](http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=198929939029#/photo_search.php?oid=198929939029&view=all)

On 19 January 2010, his mother told Voice of America's Persian service, a US government-funded radio and television station in the USA which broadcasts worldwide: "I am worn out after five years. His place is not in prison. His problems should be solved in the university, not in prison. He is entitled to the freedom of speech. For three years, they have had us on a leash. We are constantly worried for our son. He has done nothing, but studied hard. He had only made a critical comment. He doesn't deserve prison. They said we are entitled to freedom of speech. I am looking forward to seeing Majid. I want to hear my son's voice when I see him. For a mother, it is important to see her children. It is hard to wait for children with tearful eyes and an aching heart." In May, Majid Tavakkoli's parents wrote to the Head of the Judiciary expressing dismay at the treatment of their son. They wrote: "It is amazing that participation in such a civil gathering should have such a high price." They emphasized that Iran's Constitution provides for freedom of assembly as long as "the foundations of Islam" are not violated.

In May 2010, following a visit to the prison by a representative of Tehran's Prosecutor, Majid Tavakkoli was transferred to solitary confinement. This followed an open letter he wrote from prison concerning three Kurdish political prisoners, who were among five people executed on 9 May 2010.

Prison conditions in Section 350 of Evin Prison are very poor. Cells are extremely overcrowded, leaving some prisoners to sleep on the floor with filthy bedding, and causing long queues for the sanitary facilities. The standard of food is also said to be of poor quality, and the prison store from which prisoners may purchase additional food has insufficient supplies for the number of prisoners held there.

Students have been at the forefront of continuing protests at the disputed outcome of the presidential election in June 2009 as well as at the widespread human rights violations committed as the authorities banned demonstrations and cracked down violently on protestors. Dozens of people were killed by security forces using excessive force, thousands were arrested, mostly arbitrarily and many were tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Hundreds have faced unfair trial, including some in mass show trials, with many sentenced to often lengthy prison terms. At least 16 have been sentenced to death, although at least eight of these have had their death sentences commuted to prison terms. Two have so far been executed.

Further information on UA: 341/09 Index: MDE 13/069/2010 Issue Date: 29 June 2010.

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