

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE NEEDS MEDICAL CARE

On 4 November Iranian prisoner of conscience and blogger, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki, was taken to a hospital outside prison but transferred back to Tehran's Evin Prison after three hours. He remains in critical condition and in urgent need of specialized medical care which he cannot receive in prison.

On 4 November **Hossein Ronaghi Maleki** was transferred to Tehran's Hasheminejad Hospital but was taken back to Evin Prison after only three hours and without receiving the treatments he requires. Reports indicate that doctors have diagnosed him with a kidney infection in his one remaining kidney, as well as a condition called Hydronephrosis, where the kidney becomes stretched and swollen as a result of a build-up of urine inside the kidney. In an open letter, his father expressed serious concerns about his son's health stating that doctors have said that he should not be in prison, and have warned that prison conditions will lead to a worsening of his health.

Hossein Ronaghi Maleki has had one kidney removed and needs ongoing specialized treatment on his remaining kidney, which he cannot get in prison. Since his arrest, he has launched a number of hunger strikes in protest at the authorities' refusal to grant him medical leave, their harsh treatment of political prisoners, and disregard for prisoners' welfare, have resulted in further deterioration of his health.

He was arrested on 13 December 2009 after the unrest that followed the disputed June 2009 presidential election and is serving a 15-year prison sentence on charges including "membership of the [illegal] internet group 'Iran Proxy'", "spreading propaganda against the system", and "insulting the Supreme Leader", apparently in connection with articles he posted on his blog. After his arrest, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was held in solitary confinement for over a year and says that he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated.

Please write immediately in Persian, Arabic, English 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 right to freedom of expression and association;
- Calling on them to ensure that he is treated humanely at all times and urgently receives the medical care he requires, including by granting him medical leave;
- Calling on them to investigate allegations of torture immediately and impartially and bring to justice anyone found responsible in accordance with international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 DECEMBER 2013 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
Twitter: @khamenei_ir
#FreeHosseinRonaghiMaleki
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@dadiran.ir
(Subject line: FAO)
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: media@rouhani.ir
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

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 second update of UA 236/13. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/036/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 5 September, Hossein Ronaghi Maleki ended a 28-day hunger strike which he had started on 9 August in protest at the authorities' treatment of political prisoners including their refusal to grant him medical leave. He cited one of his reasons for ending his hunger strike as the deteriorating health of his mother, Zoleikha Mousavi, who had launched her own hunger strike on 20 August in protest at the authorities' refusal to release her son. His hunger strike prompted letters from dozens of political prisoners and hundreds of journalists, academics and civil, political and human rights activists to the Iranian authorities, urging them to release him. Former president, Mohammad Khatami, also wrote a letter asking Hossein Ronaghi Maleki to end his hunger strike and expressing concern that the constraints and restrictions on Iranian people still continue today.

During an unfair trial in 2010 Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was denied access to his defence lawyer and has said he told the judge he had been tortured but the judge answered that he "deserved it". He was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment after the Revolutionary Court convicted him on charges that included "membership of the [illegal] internet group 'Iran Proxy'", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "insulting the Leader and the President", apparently in connection with his peaceful activities including writing his blog. He went on hunger strike on May 2012 because the authorities refused to allow him leave from prison to receive medical treatment for a kidney ailment. On 26 May 2012 he wrote an open letter to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, outlining the reasons for his hunger strike. He wrote, "I hope that you at least pay attention to my dire situation, the status of political prisoners, our families, the illegal detention centres, and their conduct."

He was released on bail on 2 July 2012 and resumed his blog three days later, writing, "After 32 months of not writing on my blog, I have come today . . . pen in hand and write to say that I am feeling well because my mother's face is fresh [with happiness] and she does not cry". Hossein Ronaghi Maleki was rearrested on 22 August 2012 while still on leave from prison, together with human rights activists who were assisting people at a relief camp for earthquake victims in East Azerbaijan province. He was taken first to Section 1 of Tabriz Prison, then to Evin Prison in Tehran and charged with "distributing unclean and non-hygienic goods" but again allowed medical leave on 6 November 2012 after payment of bail. He has had several kidney operations and needs to take regular medication. After his return to Evin Prison on 21 May 2013, he was not allowed to take his prescribed medicine.

Hossein Ronaghi Maleki continues to write in prison, often open letters to the Iranian authorities or to other political prisoners. In October 2012, he wrote a letter to prominent lawyer and prisoner of conscience Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was on hunger strike protesting against the authorities' illegal travel ban on her 12-year-old daughter. In August 2013, he was among 55 Iranian political prisoners who wrote to US President Barack Obama about the crippling effect of the economic sanctions on Iranian people and called on him and the Iranian government to build trust and diplomacy, which prompted a similar letter by 127 Iranian political and human rights activists, academics and students inside and outside the country.

Torture and other ill-treatment are common in Iran, particularly during interrogation when detainees are routinely denied access to a lawyer. In his report to the 67th session of the General Assembly in February 2013 the Special Rapporteur on the situation on human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, expressed concern about reports of the widespread use of torture in the country's prisons. He reported that 78% of people who reported violations of their due process rights also reported that they were beaten during interrogation, that their reports of torture and ill-treatment were ignored by the judicial authorities, and that their "confessions" were used against them despite these complaints.

Name: Hossein Ronaghi Maleki
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 236/13 Index: MDE 13/045/2013 Issue Date: 15 November 2013