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## **Iran must immediately release prisoner of conscience Arzhang Davoodi**

Writer Arzhang Davoodi, who is facing fresh charges after being imprisoned in Iran for nearly nine years, must be released immediately and unconditionally, Amnesty International said.

Arzhang Davoodi, 60, who has been imprisoned since October 2003, faces a court hearing before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran on 28 August on a new charge of “enmity against God” (moharebeh), which carries a possible death sentence.

The new charge is believed to be linked to his peaceful political activism and writings, including the release of an audio recording in which he called for “freedom and democracy”.

[The recorded message](#) was widely distributed on the internet after the Confederation for Iranian Students (CIS), a 7,000-membership independent, pro-western student movement, released the recording in a conference in the United States of America.

Arzhang Davoodi is feared to have been tortured and ill-treated since being transferred on 27 June to Section 209 of Tehran’s Evin Prison which is believed to be under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence.

“Not only is Arzhang Davoodi held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and association in his writings and political activism, but he now faces fresh charges after being in jail for nearly nine years,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director.

“He is a prisoner of conscience and the Iranian authorities must release him immediately and unconditionally.

“The intolerance of dissent of the Iranian authorities is such that they continue to harass Arzhang Davoodi and his family although he is already in jail.

“The Iranian authorities must also protect him from torture or other ill-treatment and provide him with all necessary medical care and allow him immediate access to his family and his lawyer.”

Davoodi has served his sentence in a number of different prisons in Iran since his detention began, including at Bandar Abbas Prison, Hormozgan Prison, 1,500 km south of his home in Tehran; Reja’i Shahr Prison and Evin Prison - including Section 209.

He has also spent lengthy periods of time in solitary confinement in Evin Prison since his arrest and has had no contact with his family since his transfer to Section 209.

Davoodi was arrested in October 2003 for participating in a documentary, Forbidden Iran, in which he spoke out about human rights violations in Iran.

Following a trial in 2005, he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and 75 lashes by the Revolutionary Court on charges related to "spreading propaganda against the system", "establishing and directing an organization opposed to the government", being the director of the Parto-e Hekmat Cultural Education Centre in Tehran, participating in the making of the documentary and for his writings on a secular system of governance in Iran.