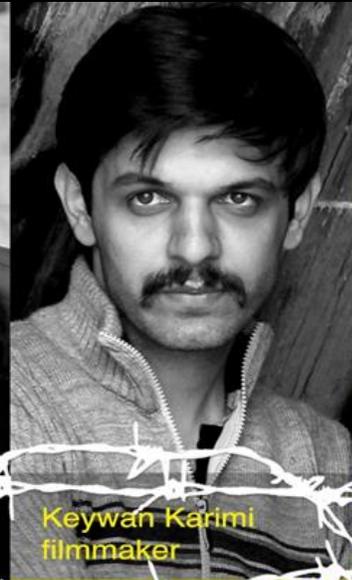


AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL & MUSIC BAND KIOSK LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO FREE ARTISTS JAILED IN IRAN



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AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



INTRODUCTION

Amnesty International has joined forces with pioneers of Iran's underground music movement [Kiosk The Band](#) to mobilize people around the world to raise awareness about the crackdown on Iranian artists, including musicians and filmmakers and to inundate the Iranian authorities with messages in support of jailed artists in Iran.

The crackdown, which has led to harsh prison terms and flogging sentences against artists, lays bare the absurdity of Iran's criminal justice system: artists are being branded as criminals merely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression through art, including music and film.

THE CAMPAIGN AIMS TO:

- Secure the release of jailed musician Mehdi Rajabian and jailed and filmmaker Hossein Rajabian;
- Have the conviction and sentence of filmmaker Keywan Karimi quashed;
- More broadly, draw international attention to the crackdown on artists inside Iran.

During their recent North America shows, Kiosk spoke to their fans about the plight of artists in Iran, including musicians and filmmakers, and told them about the joint campaign with Amnesty International to **#FreeArtists** in Iran.

Likewise, when Kiosk travel to Europe in December for the next leg of their tour, the band will be speaking about the **#FreeArtists** campaign, and asking their fans to post messages on social media and send letters, faxes and emails to the Iranian authorities.

CONFIRMED DATES AND LOCATIONS OF KIOSK SHOWS:

- 17 December: Stockholm, Sweden
- 18 December: Gothenburg, Sweden
- 20 December: Famagusta, Cyprus



CASE DETAILS

Iranian brothers **Mehdi Rajabian**, a musician, and **Hossein Rajabian**, a filmmaker, are serving three-year prison sentences in Tehran's Evin Prison after being convicted after a grossly unfair trial of "insulting Islamic sanctities", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "illegal audio-visual activities". Their charges are based on their artistic work, including a feature film by Hossein Rajabian dealing with women's rights to divorce in Iran, and Mehdi Rajabian's distribution of unlicensed music by Iranian singers and bands from outside the country, some of whose lyrics are political or cover taboo subjects or which the Iranian authorities deem them to be "un-Islamic", "perverse" or "anti-revolutionary".

Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian had been arrested together with another musician, Yousef Emadi, in October 2013. During their arrest by Revolutionary Guards officials on 5 October 2013, which took place at their office in the northern city of Sari, Mazandaran Province, all three men were incapacitated with a stun gun and blindfolded. For the next 18 days, they were held in an unknown location where they say they were tortured, including by electric shocks. They were then held for two months in solitary confinement in Section 2-A of Evin Prison. Their interrogators apparently pressured them into making video "confessions", threatening them with life in jail if they failed to do so. They were released on bail in December 2013. For most of the time they were detained, they were held incommunicado.



Brothers Hossein Rajabian (left) and Mehdi Rajabian (right) just before entering Evin Prison on 4 June 2016 © Private

Ten days after their trial on 26 April 2015, they were told the verdict had been issued and they should go to the courthouse to read it. They were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "insulting Islamic sanctities", one year for "spreading propaganda against the system", and a fine of 200 million rials (about US\$ 6,625) each for "illegal audio-visual activities". They represented themselves during their appeal hearing, as they were told by the judge that they were not entitled to have access to a lawyer. At both trial and appeal, the men told the presiding judges that their "confessions" had been taken under torture while they were held incommunicado. Despite this, their "confessions" were used as evidence against them to secure their convictions in court. The presiding judge at their appeal hearing warned them against talking about their alleged torture and threatened to give them harsher sentences if they did so. They had no access to a lawyer at any stage of their arrest, detention, trial or appeal.

They began serving their prison terms on 4 June 2016.

Both brothers are in poor health. Following a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan prior to his imprisonment, a neurology specialist told Mehdi Rajabian that he is suspected of having multiple sclerosis (MS) and needs ongoing care, including diagnostic tests. For months after his imprisonment, he was denied medication that his doctor outside prison had told him is essential to delay the onset of MS symptoms. He also suffers from seizures, which began following beatings by security officials after his arrest in October 2013. He suffered another seizure on 10 September 2016 and was taken to the prison clinic. Hossein Rajabian was suffering with kidney problems prior to going into prison and has been experiencing severe fever-like symptoms. He was taken to the prison clinic in early September 2016 for a blood test that revealed a high white blood cell count and was then taken, with hands and feet shackled, to a hospital outside prison but was not given adequate medical treatment before being returned.



Hossein Rajabian (left) and Mehdi Rajabian (right) © Private

“We call on all artists from around the world to condemn these abuses with a response worthy of an artist. Do not forget us in these suffocating times... for there is no greater suffering for humans than to be forgotten.”

Excerpt from an open letter written by Mehi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian from inside prison, dated 26 October 2016

Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian began a hunger strike on 8 September 2016 in protest at the authorities’ refusal to allow them medical leave, as well as their decision to separate the brothers into different sections of Evin Prison. In an open letter written on 26 October 2016, the brothers said they ended their hunger strike the same month after receiving promises from the authorities that that they would be placed in the same section again and given the medical care they need. Despite these promises, however, the brothers said their conditions had become worse and that Mehdi Rajabian was now being denied access to his lawyer.

Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian launched a second hunger strike on 28 October 2016, this time in protest at their continued detention. Since the start of his hunger strike, Mehdi Rajabian has twice coughed up blood. On the first occasion on 2 November 2016, his cellmate carried him to the Evin Prison clinic where Mehdi Rajabian has said the prison doctor became increasingly aggressive, especially after Mehdi Rajabian was too weak to answer his questions and refused intravenous fluids. This resulted in an altercation, during which Mehdi Rajabian says the doctor punched him in the stomach. Both brothers have pre-existing medical conditions and need adequate medical care, which they have been denied in prison. The brothers have said they will continue their hunger strike, also refusing to be administered intravenous drips, until they are released from prison. The authorities are now refusing to allow the brothers any contact with each other in prison, including through telephone calls which they had previously been allowed.

Amnesty International considers Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian prisoners of conscience, held solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression through their artistic activities.

Musician Yousef Emadi, who had faced arrest and trial with Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian, remains at liberty outside prison.

Mehdi Rajabian is the founder of the Iranian website Barg Music, which was launched in 2009 and distributed unlicensed music. In Iran, only music that passes official censors receives licences, and musicians without licences operate underground. Barg Music distributed Persian-language music by Iranian singers and bands from outside the country, some of whose lyrics and messages are political or cover taboo subjects. The Barg Music website apparently attracted 300,000 visitors a day. Mehdi Rajabian had been recording the history of an Iranian musical instrument called the *setar* when he was arrested. The arresting officers searched his studio, confiscating his recordings and other materials related to this project. Mehdi Rajabian was also rebuked for broadcasting the voices of female singers. The Iranian authorities place severe restrictions on female singers, with a ban on women singing solo in front of men. The authorities “justify” this repression in the name of preventing “immoral sexual feelings”, which they say are aroused by women’s voices.

Hossein Rajabian was arrested after making his first feature film, called *The Upside Down Triangle*, about women’s right to divorce in Iran. The arresting officials confiscated all the materials related to the film. The film has not been allowed to be broadcast inside Iran.



Keywan Karimi © Private

In October 2015, filmmaker **Keywan Karimi** was sentenced to six years' imprisonment and 223 lashes on charges including "insulting Islamic sanctities" and "illicit relations falling short of adultery". The former charge was imposed in connection with a music video clip the authorities had found on his hard drive. The latter charge was brought against him for "shaking hands" and spending time under one roof with a woman "who had not covered her head and neck". He was told in February 2016 that an appeal court had ruled that he must serve one year of his six-year prison sentence. The court suspended the rest of the sentence for a period of five years, conditional on his "good behaviour". The court upheld his flogging sentence. Although he was initially also charged with "spreading propaganda against the system" in connection with his 2012 film *Neveshtan Rooye Shahr* (Writing on the City) about graffiti written on the walls of Tehran's streets, this charge was not mentioned in the final court ruling.

Keywan Karimi had been arrested on 14 December 2013 by Revolutionary Guards intelligence officials and held in solitary confinement for 12 days in Section 2-A of Evin Prison without access to a lawyer. He was not allowed to call his family until a week after his arrest. He was subsequently allowed to make a brief telephone call but was not allowed to tell them he had been arrested or where he was being held. He was released on bail after 12 days.

Keywan Karimi remains at risk of imprisonment, as he could be summoned by the authorities at any moment to begin serving his prison sentence. He has obtained a letter from doctors which certifies that his mother is undergoing cancer treatment, including chemotherapy, hoping that the authorities will not summon him to serve his prison sentence before her course of treatment ends. He has also expressed a wish to remain free in order to finish making his latest film. If imprisoned, Amnesty International will consider Keywan Karimi a prisoner of conscience.



Keywan Karimi © Private

Keywan Karimi has directed 12 films, including documentaries and fictional works. His documentary *The Broken Border* was awarded the best short documentary prize at the 2013 Beirut International Film Festival. The film focuses on the issue of smuggling state-subsidized gasoline from Iran to Iraq by an impoverished section of the Kurdish community in the western province of Kurdistan. Another film directed by him, *The Adventure of a Married Couple*, was screened at Freiburg, San Sebastián and Zurich Film Festivals.

CALLS ON THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

Amnesty International and Kiosk call on the Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian, as they have been imprisoned solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression through music and film;
- Quash Keywan Karimi's conviction and sentence for charges that arise from the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association;
- Order a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation into Mehdi Rajabian and Hossein Rajabian's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, bringing to justice anyone suspected of responsibility in a fair trial without recourse to the death penalty;
- Put an end to their crackdown on artistic expression and protect the rights to privacy, and freedom of expression and association, which are protected under Articles 17, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please help us to promote the #FreeArtists campaign on social media, including via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. On Twitter, please use the suggested messages below with link to the video, blog, and the latest Urgent Actions. Please use the **#FreeArtists** and **#ArtIsNotACrime** hashtags for this campaign.

Joint campaign from @AmnestyIran & music band #Kiosk @arash_sobhani calls on Iran to #FreeArtists #ArtIsNotACrime

Music band #Kiosk @arash_sobhani & @AmnestyOnline tell #Iran that making music & film is NOT a crime #FreeArtists

Pioneers of Iran's underground music movement #Kiosk join forces w/@AmnestyIran to urge @khamenei_ir to #FreeArtists

#Iran: STOP treating artists as criminals, say music band #Kiosk & @AmnestyOnline in new campaign to #FreeArtists

Music band #Kiosk & @AmnestyIran join forces to tell #Iran to STOP treating artists as criminals #ArtIsNotACrime

#ArtIsNotACrime! Making music & film is NOT a crime! Join @AmnestyIran & urge @HassanRouhani to #FreeArtists in Iran

Making films is NOT a crime. @AmnestyIran & music band #Kiosk urge the Iranian authorities NOT to jail filmmaker @KeywanKarimi #FreeArtists

Mehdi Rajabian & Hossein Rajabian are musicians & filmmakers NOT criminals. @khamenei_ir Free them NOW! #FreeArtists

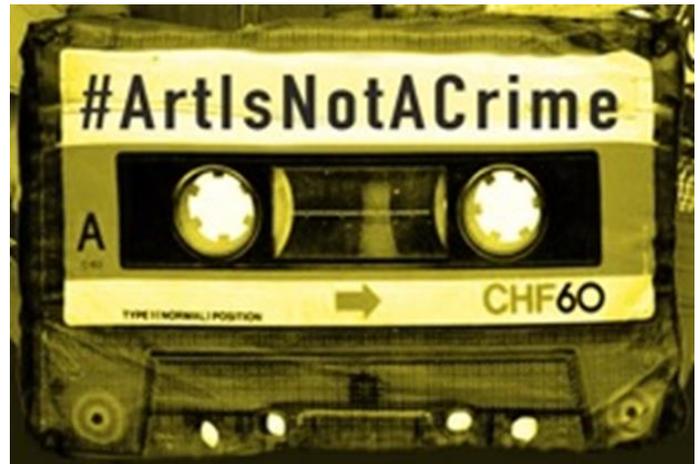
WRITING TO THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES

Please write, fax, or email the Iranian ambassador in your country with the calls from page 5 of this document. In order to ensure that all letters and actions are received by the target, the Head of Judiciary, we are advising individuals to address letters to the Head of Judiciary but to send them for the care of the Iranian embassies in your country.

If there is no Iranian embassy in your country, please send letters to Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. Please do not send these letters in bulk as they may be turned away. Please address the letter as follows:

His Excellency Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Head of the Judiciary

For the care of: Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue
34th Floor, New York
NY 10017, USA
Fax: +1 212 867-7086
Email: iran@un.int



BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Video: Iran: Free Artists! Amnesty International and Kiosk Unite Voices, 4 November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qkFWsR4v1c>

Appeal Sheet: Amnesty International & Music Band Kiosk Launch Campaign To Free Artists Jailed In Iran (Index MDE 13/5105/2016), 8 November 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5105/2016/en/>

Blog: Iran: Free Artists! Amnesty International and Kiosk Unite Voices, 2 November 2016, <https://www.amnesty.ca/blog/iran-free-artists-amnesty-international-and-kiosk-unite-voices>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Further Information: Jailed Iranian Artist Brothers On Hunger Strike (Index MDE 13/5106/2016), 8 November 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5106/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Further Information: Filmmaker's Flogging And Jail Sentence Upheld: Keywan Karimi” (Index: MDE 13/3528/2016), 26 February 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3528/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Six Years In Jail For Iranian Filmmaker: Keywan Karimi” (Index: MDE 13/3300/2016), 22 January 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3300/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Further Information: Jailed Musician And Filmmaker On Hunger Strike” (Index: MDE 13/4874/2016), 23 September 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4874/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Further Information: Two Jailed Artists Serving 3-Year Prison Terms” (Index: MDE 13/4666/2016), 16 August 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4666/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iran: Further Information: Iranian Musicians And Filmmaker Summoned To Jail” (Index: MDE 13/4133/2016), 27 May 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/4133/2016/en/>

Urgent Action: “Iranian Musicians, Filmmaker At Risk Of Arrest” (Index: MDE 13/3563/2016), 4 March 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3563/2016/en/>

Press Release: “Iran: Tortured Filmmaker And Musicians Face Imminent Arrest Amid Crackdown On Artists”, 1 March 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/03/iran-tortured-filmmaker-and-musicians-face-imminent-arrest-amid-crackdown-on-artists/>

QUERIES & FEEDBACK

For queries and feedback please contact the Amnesty International's Iran team at iran_team@amnesty.org



Hossein Rajabian
filmmaker

Mehdi Rajabian
musician

Keywan Karimi
filmmaker

یه شعر تازه، یه روز نو
متهم ردیف اول، متهم ردیف دو

کیوسک



Tell #Iran: #FreeArtists

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