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Iran's authorities must stop toying with life of activist on hunger strike

The Iranian authorities are putting the life of imprisoned human rights defender Arash Sadeghi at grave risk and should release him and his wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee without further delay, Amnesty International said today. Over two months into his ongoing hunger strike, Arash Sadeghi remains jailed in Tehran's Evin Prison, with reports indicating that he is vomiting blood and experiencing severe respiratory, heart, kidney and gastrointestinal problems.

Pending Arash Sadeghi's release, the authorities must ensure that he receives access to specialized health care in a hospital outside prison, in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent.

After weeks of inaction and following global public pressure, the Iranian authorities promised on Saturday 31 December 2016 that they would grant the couple temporary leave from prison if property bonds worth 10 billion rials (US\$300,000) and 5 billion rials (US\$150,000) were secured for Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee respectively. The couple's lawyer announced on Sunday 1 January 2017 that the property bond for Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee had been provided. However, the authorities have said that her release is likely to be delayed until Tuesday due to bureaucratic processes involving assessments of the property in question. Arash Sadeghi has said that he will not end his hunger strike until his wife is let out.

Unjustly detained himself for his peaceful human rights work, Arash Sadeghi has been on hunger strike since 24 October 2016 to protest against the imprisonment of his wife, Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee. She is a human rights defender and writer jailed for writing a story against stoning. Amnesty International considers both Arash Sadeghi and Golrokh Ebrahimi Iraee to be prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Amnesty International is disturbed that instead of ordering the immediate and unconditional release of this activist couple, Iran's judicial authorities have chosen to treat them like serious criminals, imposing extortionate bail conditions.

The authorities are well aware that even a delay of a few hours can mean the difference between life and death for Arash Sadeghi.

Hunger strike crisis highlights plight of political prisoners

In recent weeks, a hunger strike crisis in the country's prisons has brought into sharp focus the callous nature of Iran's criminal justice system. Multiple political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, have felt compelled to resort to hunger strike because they see little hope of legally challenging their unjust imprisonment.

In solidarity, hundreds of people in Iran and around the world have taken to social media to express outrage at the refusal by Iranian authorities to address the legitimate grievances of prisoners who are in poor health due to prolonged hunger strikes. Among the prisoners other than Arash Sadeghi whose health hangs in the balance is **Ali Shariati**. He has been on hunger strike since 31 October 2016 to demand his freedom. He is serving a five-year prison sentence imposed on him for his peaceful activism, including his participation in a peaceful protest to condemn acid attacks against women in

Iran. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience.

Other political prisoners currently on hunger strike include prisoner of conscience and children's rights activist **Saeed Shirzad**, dissident cleric **Mohammad Reza Nekounam**, Turkish-Iranian national **Hassan Rastegari Majd**. As of 31 December, online activist **Mehdi Koukhian** and Lebanese IT expert **Nizar Zakka** were also believed to be on hunger strike but information about their latest situation is not available.

Public Document

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