

URGENT ACTION

HUNGER-STRIKING ACTIVIST IN POOR HEALTH IN EVIN
Iranian prisoner of conscience Ali Shariati is in poor health in Evin Prison, 67 days into an ongoing hunger strike against his imprisonment. He has been sentenced to five years in prison for his peaceful activism, including his participation in peaceful protests condemning a series of acid attacks against women in 2014.

Prisoner of conscience **Ali Shariati**, a 30-year-old civil society activist, started a hunger strike on 31 October 2016 when he was arrested and taken to Tehran's Evin Prison to begin serving a five-year prison sentence. He has since lost over 20kg in weight and suffered from severe headaches, muscle weakness, low levels of blood pressure, kidney pain, repeated loss of conscience and since yesterday gastrointestinal bleeding. He stopped drinking water on 5 November, leading to an accelerated deterioration in his health marked by a rapid heartbeat, breathing difficulties and slurred speech. He was transferred to a hospital outside prison on 15 November after he lost consciousness. There, he was placed under pressure to drink water and accept intravenous (IV) fluids, which he initially rejected but later accepted when the authorities allowed him to meet with his family. On 19 November, he developed sudden bouts of severe pain and swelling in reaction to a type of nutrients that his family realized nurses had added to his IV fluids without his knowledge. His family said that this led to a verbal altercation with hospital staff, and ultimately, his return to prison on 21 November. He has since been held in conditions akin to solitary confinement in a room in the prison medical clinic. Apart from three meetings with his family (one in person and two behind glass), his contact with the outside world consists of three five-to-10-minute long telephone calls with his family each day.

Since 21 November, Ali Shariati has been twice transferred to hospital on an emergency basis. The first time was on 5 December when he agreed to receive IV fluids and was then returned to prison. The second time was on 25 December when he rejected IV fluids. On this occasion, the authorities ordered hospital guards to prevent his family from entering the hospital. His sister Hoda and his wife, Motahare Parsi, however, found a way to sneak in and locate the room where he was held. Upon hearing the voices of his relatives outside, Ali Shariati rushed out toward them. As he came to embrace his wife, his family say the guards pushed his frail body down to the ground. Women security guards were subsequently called in to remove the family and Ali Shariati was returned to prison.

Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Ali Shariati immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Calling on them to ensure he has access to a qualified health professional who can provide health care in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent;
- Calling on them to ensure, pending his release, that he is protected from any punishment for his hunger strike, including prolonged solitary confinement, which constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and may amount to torture.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 FEBRUARY 2017 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani

Prosecutor General of Tehran
Abbas Ja'fari Dolat Abadi

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals to the care of diplomatic representatives accredited to your country, listed below. If there is no Iranian embassy in your country, please mail the letter to the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, 622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor, New York, NY 10017, United States. Please insert local diplomatic addresses.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 257/16. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5135/2016/en/>

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Ali Shariati was first arrested in June 2014 when he was distributing on the streets of Tehran, during the religious festival of Mid Sha'ban (which commemorates the birthday of the final Imam of Twelver Shi'a Muslims), packages that contained a chocolate and a green sheet of paper appealing for the release of opposition leaders Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, and the latter's wife, Zahra Rahnavard. The three have been held under house arrest without charge since 2011. He was detained for a week in Evin Prison. After his release, Ali Shariati was repeatedly harassed and intimidated by Ministry of Intelligence officials and summoned for interrogations via telephone, which is illegal. In December 2014, when he received another intimidating call from a Ministry of Intelligence official, he protested and said that he would no longer attend any interrogations unless he was served with a formal, written summons. The calls subsequently stopped for two months, but, on 18 February 2015, eight Ministry of Intelligence officials raided his mother's house, searched the place for about four hours, confiscated his electronic devices, and arrested Ali Shariati. The officials mockingly told him: "You asked for a written summons and here it is."

For the next five months after his arrest in February 2015, Ali Shariati was held in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Evin Prison, where he underwent intense interrogations and was denied access to a lawyer throughout. During this period, the authorities found out from the pictures and videos saved on his confiscated phone that he had participated in the protests staged outside of government buildings calling on the authorities to investigate a string of acid attacks on women in the city of Esfahan, central Iran, in October 2014. On 10 July 2015, he was transferred to Section 8 of Evin Prison and was held there until May 2016, when he was granted leave pending his appeal.

In September 2015, Ali Shariati was sentenced to 12 years and nine months in prison after Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran convicted him of several charges including "gathering and colluding against national security", "spreading propaganda against the system", "insulting the revered Supreme Leader" and "insulting the President". Apart from his participation in the peaceful protests condemning acid attacks on women, the court verdict issued against him mentions the following peaceful activities as "evidence" of involvement in activities deemed "threatening to national security": attending peaceful gatherings held outside Evin Prison in solidarity with political prisoners; distributing on the streets of Tehran packages that contained a chocolate and a green sheet of paper appealing for the release of opposition leaders Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, and the latter's wife, Zahra Rahnavard; posting information about the suppression of peaceful protests and other human rights violations in Iran on his Facebook and Telegram accounts; and corresponding with the Persian service of the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and human rights activists abroad. In June 2016, Ali Shariati was informed that his prison sentence had been reduced to five years after Branch 54 of the Court of Appeal in Tehran acquitted him of all charges except "gathering and colluding against national security". On 31 October 2016, He was arrested and taken to Tehran's Evin Prison to begin serving his sentence.

In October 2014, there were a string of acid attacks on women in Esfahan. Official sources confirmed four attacks while unofficial sources cited figures as high as 15, including one case that led to a death. On 21 October, Justice Minister Hojjat ol-Eslam Mostafa Purmohammadi said to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA): "We are very concerned and hope that the perpetrators of these attacks are arrested and brought to justice". The same day the spokesman of Iran's Judiciary, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ezhe'i, said: "The information gathered so far does not support at this point that the perpetrators were trying to counter those with improper veiling". However, many Iranians have expressed concern that the victims of the acid attacks were targeted for failing to comply with a strict Islamic dress code. To date, no perpetrator has been identified and brought to court.

Name: Ali Shariati
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 257/16 Index: MDE 13/5429/2017 Issue Date: 6 January 2017