

URGENT ACTION

AILING TRADE UNIONIST STARTS HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian trade unionist Reza Shahabi, a prisoner of conscience serving a six-year jail sentence, has gone on hunger strike in protest at his transfer from Evin Prison in Tehran to Raja'i Shahr Prison in Karaj.

Reza Shahabi (also known as Reza Shahabi Zakaria) was transferred on 1 June from Section 350 of Evin Prison, in Tehran, to Raja'i Shahr Prison, in the city of Karaj, where political prisoners and convicted criminal offenders, including violent offenders, are frequently held together. In protest at his transfer, Reza Shahabi started a hunger strike the same day, demanding to be transferred back to Evin Prison.

Reza Shahabi's health has been causing concern for some time. He is in urgent need of medical treatment, including surgery on his spine, which he cannot obtain inside the prison. He was apparently promised that he would receive the surgical treatment on 19 March. However, hours before when his surgery was scheduled, he was returned to prison and has not been transferred back to hospital since. The same situation happened on 15 December 2012, when he was forcibly returned to prison before he could be adequately examined by doctors, leading him to start a hunger strike. He stopped it on 7 January 2013, only after he was granted medical leave, which ended on 15 April 2013.

Hospital doctors have written, at least once, to the prison administration and the office of the Prosecutor of Tehran of their diagnosis that Reza Shahabi requires specialized medical care outside prison. They have emphasized that without this treatment he faces a real risk of suffering paralysis on the left side of his body.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Reza Shahabi immediately and conditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful trade unionist activities;
- Urging them to ensure that Reza Shahabi is given access to the medical treatment required for his condition, outside prison, without further delay;
- Reminding them that the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners require that the different categories of prisoners be kept in separate institutions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JULY 2014 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
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: @khamenei_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)
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 306/13. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/043/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Reza Shahabi was arrested in June 2010. He was detained incommunicado for some weeks, during which he was reportedly tortured and otherwise ill-treated. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "gathering and colluding against state security" and one year for "spreading propaganda against the system" by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran in April 2012. He has also been fined 70 million Rial (US\$5,700) and banned from all trade unionist activities for five years. In July 2012, Branch 36 of Tehran's Appeal Court upheld his sentence. Reza Shahabi has been on several hunger strikes in protest at his continued detention and denial of access to specialized medical care, including one in November 2012 which lasted 30 days and resulted in him being hospitalized.

The Union (or Syndicate) of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (*Sherkat-e Vahed*) was banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Workers resumed the union's activities in 2004, although it is not legally recognized. Police arrested 12 of the union's leaders at their homes on 22 December 2005, but soon released four of them. Other members of the union were arrested three days later after they went on strike to call for the release of their colleagues. Hundreds more were arrested during a further strike in January 2006 (see Amnesty International, Iran: Arbitrary arrest/possible prisoner of conscience/medical concern: Mansour Ossanlu (MDE 13/002/2006), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/002/2006/en> and Amnesty International, Iran: Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ incommunicado detention/ possible prisoners of conscience (MDE 13/008/2006), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/008/2006/en>).

Other trade unionists have been arrested or harassed, including members of the Haft Tapeh Sugar Cane Company (HTSCC) Trade Union, which is also not recognized by the government. A former leader of this union, Ali Nejati, was arrested on 12 November 2011 and taken to Dezfoul Prison to begin serving a one-year sentence related to his peaceful trade union activities. He was released on 24 September 2012 after completing his sentence. On 20 October 2012, he was summoned to Branch One of the Office of the Prosecutor in Shoush in the western province of Khuzestan for questioning. It appears that this was because he had given a speech in Iran's Kordestan province and sung a "provocative" folksong. He was summoned once more on 31 December 2012 to Branch Four of the Office of the Prosecutor in Sanandaj regarding the same case. Ali Nejati's wife, Shahnaz Sogand (wrongly referred to as Shahnaz Nejati in previous Urgent Actions), who is also a member of the HTSCC Trade Union board, was arrested on 27 November 2011 by Ministry of Intelligence officers in Khuzestan province. She was released 24 hours later. On 28 October 2012, Branch 102 of the General Court of Shoush acquitted her of charges of "spreading propaganda against the system", "publishing lies" and "causing unease in the public mind". In November 2012, Shahnaz Sogand received a summons ordering her to go to Branch Two of Dezfoul Revolutionary Court on 15 December 2012. Amnesty International understands that she has been told that she has been charged with "propaganda against the system", though the outcome of this trial is not clear.

Name: Reza Shahabi
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 306/13 Index: MDE 13/029/2014 Issue Date: 2 June 2014