

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

14 February 2021

Index number: MDE 13/3694/2021

IRAN: DECADE-LONG ARBITRARY HOUSE ARREST OF DISSIDENTS MUST END

The Iranian authorities must immediately end the unlawful and arbitrary detention of former presidential candidates Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, and Mir Hossein Mousavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, and provide them with adequate reparation for the violation of their right to liberty and other harm suffered, Amnesty International said on the tenth anniversary of the dissidents' house arrest.

On 14 February 2011, the Iranian authorities placed Mehdi Karroubi, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnavard under house arrest in reprisal for their peaceful protest against the disputed result of the 2009 presidential elections and after they called for demonstrations in solidarity with the popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia in 2011.

In November 2011, Mohammad Javad Larijani, the then head of Iran's High Council for Human Rights, which falls under the supervision of the judiciary, said that the detained dissidents had engaged in "illegal activities" and "incited violence" during the nationwide protests of 2009. He added that no one could be placed under house arrest in Iran "without trial and without a court order," and that the public would soon be informed of the charges against the detainees.

A decade later, the political dissidents remain deprived of their right to liberty without charge or trial, with no possibility to challenge the lawfulness of their detention or seek effective remedy. Official statements made over the years confirm that they are held with the approval of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.¹

In response to demands repeatedly made by the dissidents and their supporters for a public trial, top judicial, political and law enforcement officials have claimed, on multiple occasions, that by putting the dissidents under house arrest, they have, in fact, given them "care and protection", and that the dissidents would have been subjected to a trial certainly leading to the death penalty for "sedition" if it was not for the "compassion" of Iran's Supreme Leader.²

The dissidents' decade-long wrongful deprivation of liberty has been accompanied, at times, by the harassment of their family members, violations of their right to privacy due to the constant surveillance of their places of residence by intelligence and security agents, and the denial of access to sunlight, fresh air and adequate health care, despite their medical needs given their age; Mehdi Karroubi is in his eighties, while Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnavard are in their seventies.

In August 2012, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention issued an opinion that the detentions are "arbitrary (and thus prohibited)," and recommended that the Iranian government release the detainees immediately and compensate them for their wrongful detention.³

Other UN officials and bodies, including the Secretary General, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, the Human Rights Council, and the General Assembly, have also repeatedly called on the Iranian authorities to release the three dissidents, declaring their detention arbitrary and unlawful. Amnesty International most

¹ Radio Farda, *Indication of Ahmadi Moghaddam of the direct role of Khamenei in the house arrest of Mousavi and Karroubi*, 25 December 2012, www.radiofarda.com/af9-ahmadimoghaddam-mousavi-karroubi-khamenei/24808132.html; Mehr News, *The house arrest of sedition leaders is due to the grace given to them by Islamic rule*, 29 December 2016, <https://bit.ly/3dfjPAu>

² Mizan Online, *The verdict for the sedition leaders is not less than the death penalty*, 30 December 2016, <https://bit.ly/3qhHGmT>; Quds Online, *The minimum verdict for the sedition leaders is the death penalty*, 24 December 2016, <https://bit.ly/3jMrYho>; Mehr News, *Esfahan Friday prayer imam: The verdict of the leaders of sedition after trial is undoubtedly the death penalty*, 29 December 2016, <https://bit.ly/3aeVgSE>; Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, *The leaders of the sedition were spared execution by the order of the Supreme Leader*, <https://bit.ly/2N3HutQ>; Khabar Online, *Ejei: There has been no change in the house arrest of Mousavi and Karroubi*, 11 November 2013, <https://bit.ly/3aTFc0o>; Khabar Online, *Why are Karroubi and Mousavi under house arrest?* 30 December 2017, <https://bit.ly/3tNIYUJ>

³ United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, *Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its sixty-fourth session*, 26 November 2012, A/HRC/WGAD/2012/30.

recently renewed its call on the Iranian authorities to end their arbitrary house arrest in its 2020 submission to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Background

Mir Hossein Mousavi, Iran's prime minister from October 1981 to August 1989, and Mehdi Karroubi, former speaker of parliament from May 2000 to May 2004, were presidential candidates in the 2009 election in which the then president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was declared the winner in disputed circumstances. The announcement of his victory set off mass protests in Tehran and other cities. In their efforts to suppress dissent, the authorities committed, both during and in the aftermath of the protests, widespread human rights violations and crimes under international law, including unlawful killings, mass arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and flagrant breaches of the right to a fair trial.⁴ Victims included protesters, human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, government critics, and political activists linked to the campaigns of Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi.

⁴ Amnesty International, *From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election*, 9 June 2010 (Index: [MDE 13/062/2010](#))