

URGENT ACTION

HUNGER STRIKER DEMANDS MEDICAL TREATMENT

Iranian trade unionist Reza Shahabi, a prisoner of conscience, started a hunger strike on 17 December 2012 in protest at the authorities' denial of his repeated requests for medical leave. He is refusing medication as well as food. He is in poor health and requires specialized medical care outside the prison.

Reza Shahabi (also known as Reza Shahabi Zakaria), treasurer of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (Sherkat-e Vahed), who is serving a six-year prison sentence in Section 350 of Tehran's Evin Prison on charges related to his peaceful trade union activities, has been on hunger strike since 17 December 2012. He had been transferred to a hospital outside prison on 15 December for medical examinations including an MRI scan. However, he has said the guard who went with him took him back to the prison before the examinations were carried out, threatening to beat him if he resisted. In protest at the authorities' treatment, Reza Shahabi stopped taking his medication that day and started a hunger strike two days later. He has told his family that he will continue his hunger strike until he is granted medical leave.

Reza Shahabi underwent an operation on his spine on 23 May 2012 at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Hospital. Despite his doctor's recommendation that he needed to rest afterwards for at least three months, he was returned to Evin Prison shortly after the operation and has not been granted any medical leave since then. According to one of his family, Reza Shahabi is suffering from fluctuating blood pressure, frequent nosebleeds, and numbness in his right fingers and toes. His family have expressed concern that he might be at risk of paralysis if he is not provided with the specialized medical care he requires.

Reza Shahabi was previously the subject of UA 137/10 and follow-ups. See:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/027/2012/en>

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Reza Shahabi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful trade union activities;
- Urging them to ensure that Reza Shahabi is given full access to the specialized medical treatment required for his condition outside prison.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 FEBRUARY 2013 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: "Call on #Iran leader
@khamenei_ir to release Reza Shahabi"
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:

Secretary General High Council for
Human Rights
Mohammed Javad Larijani
c/o Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave
South of Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(Subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Reza Shahabi 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 rials (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.

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. On 22 December 2005, police arrested 12 of the union's leaders at their homes, but soon released four of them. Other members 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 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/002/2006/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/008/2006/en>).

Reza Shahabi was arrested in June 2010. Detained incommunicado for some weeks, he later contacted his family and told them he was being held in Tehran's Evin Prison. In September 2010, after the authorities announced Reza Shahabi could be released on bail, his family paid the required 600 million rials (US\$50,000) only to have the authorities demand a further sum equivalent to US\$100,000. He began a hunger strike on 4 December 2010 in protest at his continued detention. Seven days later, Reza Shahabi was hospitalized as his health deteriorated. Due to his continuing poor health, Reza Shahabi ended his hunger strike on 19 December 2010. On 22 November 2011 Reza Shahabi began another hunger strike which lasted 30 days. Following hospitalization and requests from supporters and fellow trade unionists, Reza Shahabi ended his hunger strike.

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. Ali Nejati, a former leader of the HTSCC Trade Union, 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 Nejati, who is also a member of the HTSCC Trade Union board, was arrested on 27 November 2011 by members of the Ministry of Intelligence 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 Nejati 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 informed that she is charged with "propaganda against the system".

Rasoul Bodaghi, a member of the Tehran Teachers' Trade Association, was arrested in September 2009. He was sentenced to six years in prison for "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding against national security". In January 2011, an Appeal Court confirmed Rasoul Bodaghi's sentence and banned him from taking part in any civil society activities for five years. According to reports, he was severely beaten by two prison officers in May 2010.

Name: Reza Shahabi (Zakaria)
Gender m/f: m

UA: 2/13 Index: MDE 13/001/2013 Issue Date: 4 January 2013