

URGENT ACTION

WOMEN'S RIGHTS DEFENDER AT RISK OF TORTURE

On 5 October 2019, women's rights defender **Yasaman Aryani**, jailed for campaigning against Iran's forced veiling laws, was moved suddenly from the women's section of Tehran's Evin prison to section 2A, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. She is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Head of the Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi
C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

On 5 October 2019, 24-year-old women's rights defender **Yasaman Aryani** was transferred from the women's section of Evin prison to section 2A, which is under the control of the Revolutionary Guards. On 6 October 2019, when her family went to the prison for a scheduled visit, they were informed she had been moved the previous night and were not permitted to see her. Since then, despite their repeated requests for information, her family has been denied knowledge about the reason for the transfer. Individuals held in section 2A are typically held in solitary confinement, interrogated by the Revolutionary Guards, denied access to lawyers and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. **Yasaman Aryani** is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Yasaman Aryani was arrested in April 2019 alongside her mother, **Monireh Arabshahi**, and **Mojgan Keshavarz**. The three women's rights defenders were arrested in relation to a video that went viral on social media on International Women's Day, 8 March 2019, in which they were seen peacefully campaigning against Iran's forced veiling laws by handing out flowers to women on a train in Tehran while unveiled. Following their arrests, they were held in prolonged solitary confinement and pressured to appear before a camera "confessing" that foreign elements were behind their activism against forced veiling, and "repenting" their actions.

In July 2019, Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced **Yasaman Aryani** and **Monireh Arabshahi** each to 16 years in prison and **Mojgan Keshavarz** to 23 years and six months in prison. All three sentences consist of a one-year term for "spreading propaganda against the system", a five-year term for "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and a 10-year term for "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling". **Mojgan Keshavarz's** sentence includes an additional seven years and six months for "insulting Islamic sanctities". Their trial was grossly unfair; they were refused access to their lawyers in pre-trial detention and, during the trial, the judge rejected their requests to access their lawyers and said their lawyers would not be allowed to access their court files or represent them until the appeal stage. If their convictions and sentences are upheld on appeal, each of the three women will be required to serve 10 years of their prison sentences.

I urge you to release Monireh Arabshahi, Yasaman Aryani and Mojgan Keshavarz immediately and unconditionally as they are all prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for their peaceful activities defending women's rights in Iran. Pending their release, I urge you to ensure that Yasaman Aryani is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that her family and lawyer are informed of the reason for her transfer, and to guarantee all three women regular contact with their families and lawyers of their choosing.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the video that went viral on International Women's Day on 8 March 2019, Yasaman Aryani is seen handing a flower to a woman wearing a hijab and saying that she hopes that one day they can walk side by side in the street, "me without the hijab and you with the hijab". Following the posting of the video, Yasaman Aryani was arrested on 10 April 2019 at her family home in Tehran. The next day, her mother, Monireh Arabshahi, was arrested after going to Vozara detention centre in Tehran to inquire about her daughter and was herself arrested and taken to Shahr-e Rey prison in Varamin, near Tehran. Mojgan Keshavarz was arrested about two weeks later, on 25 April 2019, and similarly taken to Shahr-e Rey prison.

Following her arrest, Yasaman Aryani was held in solitary confinement in Vozara detention centre for nine days without access to her family and lawyer. During this period, the authorities concealed her fate and whereabouts from her family, subjecting her to enforced disappearance. After persistent inquiries by her family, she was allowed to call them briefly six days after her arrest. While held in solitary confinement, she was regularly threatened with, among other things, the arrest of her father and younger sibling unless she appeared before a camera retracting her opposition to forced veiling, denouncing the White Wednesdays campaign – a popular campaign which encourages women to share pictures and videos of themselves walking in public without a headscarf and expressing opposition to forced veiling laws and discussing their hopes for women's rights – and expressing "regret" for allowing herself to be "incited" by "anti-revolutionary opposition agents" outside the country. She was also taunted with claims that her case had been forgotten by the outside world.

On 18 April 2019, Monireh Arabshahi was transferred to Vozara detention centre. Without explanation, she and Yasaman Aryani were then put into a van and driven to an unidentified location in Tehran. As soon as they were taken out of the van, they were confronted with camera crews from the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) corporation, who filmed them without their consent. They were then taken to a room to be "interviewed" by the IRIB and, when they objected, were told that they had no choice but to answer the questions. Both subsequently spent a night at Vozara detention centre and were taken to Shahr-e Rey prison the next day. On 13 August 2019, Monireh Arabshahi, Yasaman Aryani and Mojgan Keshavarz were transferred to Evin prison.

Under Iran's forced veiling laws, the punishment for women seen in public without a headscarf includes arrest, a prison sentence, flogging or a fine. Forced veiling laws violate a whole host of rights, including the rights to equality, privacy and freedom of expression and belief. These laws also degrade women and girls, stripping them of their dignity and self-worth.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 21 November 2019.

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Yasaman Aryani (she/her); Monireh Arabshahi (she/her); Mojgan Keshavarz (she/her).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/0856/2019/en/>