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Statement – Iran should unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders

Front Line Defenders welcomes the release of hundreds of prisoners, including human rights defenders, which has been ongoing since 4 February 2023, when the Iranian [judicial system announced](#) that the Iranian Supreme Leader had pardoned 10,000 prisoners in Iran. Among those pardoned are 29 human rights defenders including [Saba Kord Afshari](#), [Mohammad Habibi](#), [Shapour Ehsanirad](#), [Zahra Mohammadi](#), [Alieh Motalleb Zadeh](#), [Esrin Derakale](#), [Maryam Mohammadi](#), [Esmail Gerami](#), [Yasaman Aryani](#) and [Monireh Arabshahi](#). [Farhad Meysami](#), who was released four months before the end of his five year sentence.

Since 18 September 2022, following the death of Masha (Jina) Amini while in police custody, Front Line Defenders has monitored the cases of over two hundred human rights defenders, journalists and student activists, who were and continue to be arrested and arbitrarily detained, charged with security-related actions and sentenced for their human rights work. The arrests and attacks clearly targeted and aim to punish and silence those standing up for human rights, especially those fighting for women's rights, and the rights of ethnic minority groups.

Many family members of human rights defenders were also threatened. Those who voiced criticism on social media faced arrest and detention and reported being tortured to make confessions. The protesters, including human rights defenders, were denied access to lawyers and due process rights. Front Line Defenders received reports that a number of human rights defenders were killed either amidst the protests or while in detention, and many women human rights defenders reported sexual violence.

Amid this rapid crackdown on human rights defenders, Iranian authorities continued to shut down mobile and internet services and disrupt telecommunications. This had a stifling impact on human rights defenders' right to protest and prevented human rights defenders from documenting and disseminating information about the ongoing human rights abuses.

“Amid the protests, when protesters' lives were at stake, it was crucial for us human rights defenders to stay in touch with people on the ground. While those of us who were not yet arrested were hiding to be able to continue our human rights work, especially when the death sentences and execution toll started, digital security protection and having secure means to communicate the messages to the outside world appeared as a live-saving means.” an Iranian Woman Human Rights Defender told Front Line Defenders.

While Front Line Defenders welcomes the release of a number of human rights defenders, it calls on the Iranian authorities to release the hundreds of remaining human rights defenders who remain in detention. This includes [Narges Mohammadi](#), [Mustafa Nili](#), [Golrokh Iraee](#), Bahareh Hedayat, [Esmail Abdi](#), [Reza Shahabi](#), [Hassan Saidi](#), [Vida Rabbani](#), [Amirsalar Davoudi](#), [Arash Keykhosravi](#), [Rasoul Bodaghi](#), [Jafar Ebrahimi](#), [Nasrin Javadi](#), [Soheil Arabi](#), [Sepideh Gholian](#), [Soha Mortezaie](#),

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Additionally, Front Line Defenders calls on the Iranian government to clarify the legal status of all released human rights defenders, and clear them of all charges.

Front Line Defenders calls on the European Union, the United Nations, and other international actors to fully support the UN fact finding mission's work, ensuring engagement with human rights defenders and documentation of the specific threats and violations experienced by human rights defenders and their families.