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Iran: Woman human rights defender Atena Daemi denied access to phone calls

On 26 October 2021, the family of **Atena Daemi** announced that the Lakan prison authorities continue to withhold the woman human rights defender's telephone card. Atena Daemi has not had access to her card and thus has not had any phone calls with her family for the past two months.

[Atena Daemi](#) is a woman human rights defender, anti-death penalty advocate and women and children's rights defender. As a direct result of her peaceful human rights activities, which included, holding peaceful demonstrations in support of the children of Kobane in Syria, and opposition to the death penalty in Iran, she was first arrested in Iran on 21 October 2014. While in prison, Atena Daemi continues to defend human rights, in particular the rights of prisoners within the Iranian prison system.

On 26 October 2021, Atena Daemi's family announced that the woman human rights defender continues to be denied access to her telephone card and thus has not been able to have phone calls with her family in over two months. It has also been reported that her inmates have been threatened and banned from contacting her or her family in any form. Earlier on 12 August 2021, Atena Daemi went on a hunger strike in protest of repeated telephone cuts and prison mismanagement. She ended her strike on 17 August 2021 following the resumption of telephone calls. However her telephone card was confiscated and as a result the woman human rights defender has been denied access to phone calls to her family since. Atena Daemi has also reported episodes of humiliation and has been deprived of her right to work in the prison's workshop because she does not wear the "chador", an additional veiling code as required by regulations in women's ward of Lakan prison.

On 21 May 2015, the branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court had sentenced the woman human rights defender to 14 years in prison after an unfair trial lasting only 15 minutes. In January 2016, Atena Daemi's case was appealed to Branch 36 of the Appeals Court, and on 15 February 2016 she was released following a bail payment of 6.5 billion Iranian rials. Based on Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, Atena Daemi had to serve the maximum length of the most serious charge, which is seven years imprisonment in her case. She was arrested on 26 November 2016 after security forces raided her family home where she had been living since being released on bail in February, took her into custody and transferred her to Evin Prison.

The judicial harassment and prosecution of the woman human rights defender based on and trumped-up charges continued in Evin prison. Although the woman human rights defender has almost finished serving her sentence, new charges have been brought against her while in detention. On 2 July 2020, Atena Daemi was sentenced by Branch 24 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court to two additional years in prison and 74 lashes. The woman human rights defender's lawyer attended the hearing for the charges of "propaganda against the state", for which she was sentenced to one year, and another year and 74 lashes for "disrupting the prison order".

On evening of 16 March 2021, Atena Daemi was transferred from Evin Prison to Lakan Prison in Rasht, northern Iran. She had been serving her sentence in the women's ward of Evin Prison since December 2016, during which time she was not granted any leave of absence. No explanation for the transfer was given. Following the transfer to Lakan prison, during which Atena Daemi was handcuffed, she was denied telephone calls and access to her personal belongings. The family of the woman human rights defender described her transfer to Lakan prison, a four and a half hour journey each way from her parents home, as an exile and an act intended to limit the family's visitation rights.

21 October 2021 marked the 7th anniversary of detention of the woman human rights defender. Front Line Defenders expresses its concern over the denial of Atena Daemi's access to telephone calls with her family, friends and lawyers and believes this is in reprisal for her peaceful and legitimate efforts to promote and protect human rights inside prison in Iran. Front Line Defenders also reiterates its concern regarding the conditions of prisons in Iran in during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as overcrowding, the denial of access to phone calls and disregard for the well-being of prisoners, as well as unhygienic conditions.

Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Atena Daemi and quash her convictions as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Atena Daemi while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Iran and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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