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Iran: Arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and members of ITTA Marivan Branch

On 11 May 2022, human rights defenders and members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (ITTA) Marivan Branch, **Masoud Nikkhah** and **Shaban Mohammadi** were re-arrested in Marivan, Kurdistan province in Iran. The arrest of Masoud Nikkhah occurred in his house shortly after he was released after eleven days of detention. Shaban Mohammadi was arrested on his way to Masoud Nikkhah's house. Previously, on 1 May 2022 Masoud Nikkhah was arrested together with human rights defender and the spokesperson of the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA), **Eskandar Lotfi**.

[Eskandar Lotfi](#) is the spokesperson of the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA) and an active member of the of ITTA, Marivan-Kurdistan Branch. [Shaban Mohammadi](#) and [Masoud Nikkhah](#) are human rights defenders and active members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations, Marivan- Kurdistan Branch who have advocated for the rights of children to free education, a proper classification of teachers and harmonization of retirees' pensions.

On 30 March 2022, Eskandar Lotfi, Masoud Nikkhah and Shaban Mohammadi were arrested in advance of the teachers' peaceful gathering on Iranian Teachers' Day. The human rights defenders had been threatened not to take part in the teachers' gathering of 1 May 2022. Eskandar Lotfi and Masoud Nikkhah were first transferred to Marivan prison and then to the security ward of Sanandaj prison, run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) intelligence services. While Shaban Mohammadi was released the following day, the other two human rights remained detained. During the teachers' peaceful gathering of 1 May 2022, Shaban Mohammadi was forcefully taken into a shop, physically assaulted by security forces and detained again from noon until 7pm the same day.

The arrests of the human rights defenders occurred in the context of nationwide calls for peaceful protests by the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Associations (CCITTA) on the occasion of the Iranian Teacher's day on 1 May 2022. This is not the first time that these human rights defenders have been targeted by the security forces. Since Eskandar Lotfi's arrest, the human rights defender has been denied access to his lawyer and therefore, the charges against him are yet to be known. On 28 February 2022, Shaban Mohammadi was released on bail after being arbitrarily detained since 30 January 2022, after taking part in a teachers' sit-in peaceful protest in Marivan.

Previously, on 8 February 2020, Eskandar Lotfi had been sentenced to two years in prison on the charges of "propaganda activities against state" and "spreading misinformation" based on his trade union activities by Branch 104 of Sanandaj Criminal Court II. However, Branch 4 of Sanandaj Court acquitted the human rights defender of the two aforementioned charges in July 2020.

Front Line Defenders has previously expressed serious [concerns](#) about the arrests, judicial harassment and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and the other members of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association since the beginning on May 2022. Front Line Defenders reiterates its grave concerns about the arbitrary detention of especially Eskandar Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi and Masoud Nikkhah and believes that they are being detained as a result of their

legitimate and peaceful human rights work in defence of teachers' rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association in Iran.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release human rights defender Eskandar Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi and Masoud Nikkhah;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Eskandar Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi and Masoud Nikkhah, 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. Ensure Eskandar Lotfi, Shaban Mohammadi and Masoud Nikkhah are granted their legitimate right to access to their lawyers;
4. Adhere to the principles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), where as a party to the ICCPR, Iran is "obliged to respect, protect and fulfil the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health," especially Articles 21 and 22 of the ICCPR, which provide for the obligations to respect the rights to peaceful assembly and association;
5. 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.