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Iran: Woman human rights defender Farzaneh Zilabi sentenced to additional one year and six months in prison

On 1 June 2023, the lawyer of woman human rights defender **Farzaneh Zilabi** announced their intention to appeal the unjust sentence issued by Branch 4 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court. On 21 May 2023, the woman human rights defender was sentenced to one year and six months in prison on the charge of “propaganda against the state” and “insulting the supreme leader.” This charge comes in addition to a prior one-year sentence on similar charges.

[Farzaneh Zilabi](#) is a human rights lawyer who has represented the [Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tappeh Cane Sugar Company](#) (SWHTCSC), the prosecuted members of the [Iranian Teachers’ Trade Associations](#) (ITTA), and the pensioner’s fund victims in Shush, Khuzestan, in southern Iran. She has also represented many individual labour rights defenders and members of workers’ unions, and has been outspoken about instances of torture reported by her clients.

On 21 May 2023, Farzaneh Zilabi’s lawyer announced that the woman human rights defender had been sentenced to one year and six months in prison on the charge of “propaganda against the state” and “insulting the supreme leader.” While the authorities did not state the exact basis of these charges, they are believed to be reprisals against Farzaneh Zilabi’s advocacy and legal representation of union actors in the Khuzestan province.

This is not the first time Farzaneh Zilabi has been targeted for her legitimate human rights work. In September 2021, the woman human rights defender was [sentenced](#) by Branch 2 of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court to one year in prison and a two-year travel ban on the charge of “propaganda activities against the state.” On 16 May 2021, she was summoned by Ahvaz Central and the Revolutionary courts on charges of “propaganda activities against the state” and “gathering and collusion to act against national security,” of which she was subsequently acquitted.

The judicial harassment and prosecution of the woman human rights defender have occurred in a context of pressure and trumped-up charges against the Haft Tappeh workers. On 8 May 2021, the Supreme Audit Court of Iran ruled to deprivatize the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-Industry Company following six years of legal struggles. In accordance with the verdict of this supervisory body, the company has been nationalised and its ownership transformed into a public asset, which is considered as an achievement for the SWHTCSC trade union and the defence team.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the sentencing of woman human rights defender Farzaneh Zilabi as it believes this is in reprisal against her peaceful and legitimate efforts representing labour rights defenders and promoting human rights in Iran.

Front Line Defenders condemns the repeated prosecutions of Farzaneh Zilabi as part of a wider crackdown on human rights defenders in the context of the protests in Iran where, since September 2022, hundreds of human rights defenders have been arrested, charged and subjected to hefty prison sentences without adherence to due process or fair trial rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Drop the conviction against Farzaneh Zilabi as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure Farzaneh Zilabi and her lawyer are allowed sufficient access to the court's deliberations in advance of her appeal hearing;
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.