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Iran: Woman human rights defender Vida Rabbani denied appropriate medical care and targeted by defamatory statements

On 4 June 2023, the husband of **Vida Rabbani** announced that the results of brain scans carried out on the woman human rights defender have concerned medical experts. However, the authorities at Evin prison, where she is currently being detained, continue to deny her access to thorough medical check-ups.

[Vida \(Vahideh\) Rabbani](#) is a woman human rights defender, social activist, journalist and a member of the Tehran Journalists Association. She graduated with a degree in political science from the University of Tehran. As a journalist, she has worked for the promotion of socio-political rights, especially freedom of peaceful assembly, free elections, and opposition to the death penalty and compulsory hijab in Iran.

On 19 May 2023, Mizan, the official website of the Iranian judicial system, published a [news article](#) which initiated a series of defamatory social media statements against Vida Rabbani. Stating that the woman human rights defender was taking medication for her mental health prior to her detention, Mizan dismissed the urgency of her health situation, which is in fact beyond the prison's capacity to address. On 24 May 2023, the woman human rights defender reacted to these declarations via a public [letter](#) where she expressed discontent at the Iranian judicial authorities' breach of her right to confidentiality of medical records and their stigmatisation of mental health issues. She stated that when she was transferred to Qarchak prison in September 2022, she was shocked to see how tranquillizers were accessible without a prescription and were distributed by the prison authorities in what was reportedly is known as a "chariot of happiness" by the women prisoners.

On 21 May 2023, Vida Rabbani was transferred from Evin prison to Tehran's Taleghani hospital for much-needed medical treatment. The woman human rights defender had been suffering from severe headaches for two months, prompting the need for more thorough medical tests. The prison authorities have refrained from transferring her to a more specialised medical facility.

On 31 December 2022, Vida Rabbani was sentenced to seven years and three months in prison by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court. The woman human rights defender was sentenced to six years in prison on the charge of "gathering and colluding against national security" and fifteen months in prison on the charge of "propaganda against the state." In accordance with the application of Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, the woman human rights defender would serve six years in prison for her social media and journalistic activities. She was arrested following a house raid on 24 September 2022, in the context of the ongoing protests in Iran.

Previously, on 29 June 2022, the woman human rights defender was informed that Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court had sentenced her to five years imprisonment on the charge of "insulting the sacred," four years imprisonment on the charge of "gathering and colluding to act against national security," and one year imprisonment on the charge of "propaganda activities against the state." The instances mentioned for incurring these charges included reporting on

human rights violations, mainly via social media channels. On 16 August 2022, Vida Rabbani announced on her Twitter account that this sentence had been upheld by the court of appeals.

The sentence issued by Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court was reduced to three years, on the condition that the woman human rights defender got permission from the country's Implementation of Verdicts Department before travelling outside Iran or practising any professional activities related to the above charges. Vida Rabbani was also obliged to announce any change of address or profession to the judiciary body overseeing the verdict.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the deteriorating health of woman human rights defender Vida Rabbani in Evin prison and the denial of access to essential medical care by the authorities of Evin prison. Front Line Defenders believes that Vida Rabbani's imprisonment is in reprisal against her peaceful and legitimate efforts as a journalist and a human rights advocate against the death penalty and obligatory hijab in Iran. Front Line Defenders also condemns the defamatory news article about Vida Rabbani published by the official website of the Iranian judicial system as part of a wider social media campaign targeting human rights defenders in Iran.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Vida Rabbani and all human rights defenders detained in the context of the protests ongoing since September 2022;
2. Drop the conviction against Vida Rabbani as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Vida Rabbani, while in detention, including access to essential appropriate medical care 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;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Iran, especially in the context of the ongoing protests, and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.