

8 August 2018

## Iran: Judicial harassment of student rights defenders

As of 8 August 2018, multiple student human rights defenders from different universities in the cities of Tehran and Tabriz have received harsh sentences based on charges stemming from their participation in protests. A number of protests organised by Student Unions were held in January 2018, resulting in some 150 university students being arbitrarily detained by the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. While most were later released, many have been charged.

Student Unions are a vital medium of expression for students and student societies as they amplify their voices by organising peaceful protests and raising student complaints with university officials. The protests in question were organised in relation to the privatisation of education and economic corruption affecting students.

By 31 July 2018, some 20 students had received unfair sentences for their participation in peaceful protests, while five student activists remain in arbitrary detention awaiting trial, most others were released without charge. On 29 July 2018, **Pedram Pazireh**, Vice Chairman of the University of Tehran's Student Union, was sentenced to seven years imprisonment and 74 lashes for "collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the state" by Judge Moghiseh of Branch no. 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran.

On 10 July 2018, **Roya Saghiri**, a student activist at the University of Tabriz, was sentenced to 23 months imprisonment for "propaganda against the state and insulting its pillars". **Ali Kamrani** and **Ali Ghadiri**, from the same university, were also sentenced to six months imprisonment. On 3 July 2018, **Fereshteh Tousi**, from Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran, was sentenced to 18 months in prison for "propaganda against the state."

On 12 June 2018, **Sina Darwish Omran** and **Ali Mozafari**, student activists from the University of Tehran, were each sentenced to eight years imprisonment by the lower court of Branch 15 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court headed by Judge Salavati. They both received a two year ban from travel outside of Iran, along with a ban from participating in any political or union activity for the same amount of time.

Student rights defenders **Leila Hassandzadeh** and **Sina Rabiee**, also from the University of Tehran, received sentences of six years and one year imprisonment respectively for "collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the state". In addition, they both received a two year travel ban. **Mohsen Haghshenas**, from the same university, was sentenced to two years imprisonment under the same charges.

Front Line Defenders expresses its serious concern over the Iranian authorities' recent crackdown on student rights defenders. Since the public protests began in December 2017 and January 2018, the Ministry of Intelligence and the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have targeted students with long term prison sentences and restrictions on their rights to travel and political participation for no other reason than the exercise of their legitimate rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression. Front Line Defenders believes that the unfair sentences given to student rights activists is directly related to their work in the defence of human rights and sees this as part of a continued pattern of harassment against student rights defenders in Iran.

**Front Line urges the authorities in Iran to:**

1. Immediately immediately release, drop all charges and quash the convictions against all student rights defenders as it is believed that this is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
2. Lift the travel and political bans on student rights defenders as it is believed that these measures have been taken against them solely on account of their legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights;
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.