

URGENT ACTION

JAILED JOURNALISTS ON HUNGER STRIKE

Iranian journalists Sanaz Alahyari and Amirhossein Mohammadifar have been on hunger strike since 4 July. They are protesting their continued detention and the authorities' ongoing crackdown on labour rights activists and journalists covering the protests at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company in Khuzestan province. Prison doctors have said that Sanaz Alahyari is in poor health and she could become at risk of respiratory arrest.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Prosecutor General of Tehran Ali Alghasi Mehr
Office of the Prosecutor
Corner (Nabsh-e) of 15 Khordad Square
Tehran, Iran*

Dear Mr Alghasi Mehr,

*Iranian journalists **Sanaz Alahyari** and **Amirhossein Mohammadifar** have been on hunger strike since 4 July 2019 in protest at their continued detention. They have been detained in Tehran's Evin prison since January 2019, along with journalist Amir Amirgholi, solely in connection with their reporting on the protests of workers at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company in Khuzestan province over grievances concerning unpaid wages. On 14 July, prison doctors said that, given her already poor health in prison, Sanaz Alahyari could become at risk of respiratory arrest, which can lead to brain injury and even death.*

Sanaz Alahyari has been suffering from recurrent stomach pains, weight loss and severe shaking in her hands and legs for the past two months. Her family has repeatedly urged the prosecution and prison authorities to transfer her to a medical centre outside of prison for diagnostic tests and wrote two letters in this regard, one to you and the other to the prosecutor general of Iran, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri. However, their pleas went unanswered. On 8 July, she was transferred to the prison clinic after her health deteriorated. There, doctors wanted to provide her with intravenous fluids, but she refused. On 15 July, she lost consciousness for several minutes.

Amirhossein Mohammadifar was beaten by several prisoners convicted of violent crimes on 14 July. This reinforces long-standing concerns about the risks posed to the safety of prisoners of conscience when they are held next to those convicted of violent crimes. There are frequent reports from Evin and other prisons that sections housing prisoners convicted of violent crimes are characterized by rampant violence against inmates, both by other inmates and by prison staff. Under the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, authorities are obliged to keep prisoners who are violent or threatening, away from other prisoners and divide prisoners into different classes based on their criminal record and the legal reason for their detention. The Iranian authorities are clearly failing to abide by these rules and are thereby accountable for Amirhossein Mohammadifar's ill-treatment.

I urge you to release Sanaz Alahyari, Amirhossein Mohammadifar and Amir Amirgholi immediately and unconditionally as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression through reporting on the protests at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company in Khuzestan province. Pending their release, please ensure that Sanaz Alahyari and Amirhossein Mohammadifar receive the health care they require, in compliance with medical ethics, including the principles of confidentiality, autonomy and informed consent.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sanaz Alahyari and her husband, Amirhossein Mohammadifar, are staff members of *Gam*, an online magazine that reports on social justice issues, including labour rights. On 9 January 2019, they were arrested in Tehran and transferred to section 209 of Evin prison, which is run by the ministry of intelligence. After spending a period in solitary confinement, Sanaz Alahyari was transferred to the women's ward of Evin prison and Amirhossein Mohammadifar to section 4 of Evin prison. During this period, they were subjected to interrogations without a lawyer present. Their families were told that they had to select a lawyer from a list of lawyers approved by the head of the judiciary, but they refused to accept this restriction.

According to information obtained by Amnesty International, Sanaz Alahyari was kept in a dark cell in section 209 of Evin prison, deprived of access to natural light, and forced to sleep on the floor. The authorities also refused to provide her with new glasses after her old ones broke in circumstances unknown to Amnesty International. Sanaz Alahyari's first family visit was 20 days after her arrest and took place behind a glass screen. When her family next visited her in March 2019, they saw that her eyes had severely swollen. Sanaz Alahyari has since developed other health problems, including recurrent stomach pains and severe shaking movements in her hands and legs. She has also lost about 10kg. Her family has repeatedly urged the prosecution and prison authorities to transfer her to a medical centre outside of prison for diagnostic tests and have written two letters in this regard to the prosecutor general of Tehran, Ali Alghasi Mehr, and the prosecutor general of the country, Mohammad Jafar Montazeri. Their pleas have gone unanswered.

On 14 January 2019, another staff member of *Gam* magazine Amir Amirgholi was similarly arrested by ministry of intelligence officials in the city of Babolsar in Mazandaran province, northern Iran, and transferred to section 209 of Evin prison. He was held in solitary confinement for 40 days and subsequently transferred to Sheyban prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province. The transfer apparently took place at the request of ministry of intelligence officials and prosecution officials in Shush, Khuzestan province, who have arrested, since November 2018, several labour rights activists in connection with the peaceful protests of workers at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company. He was returned to Evin prison in 28 April.

On 29 April, Sanaz Alahyari, Amirhossein Mohammadifar and Amir Amirgholi were separately brought before the office of prosecution in Evin prison and informed of their charges, which include "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", "spreading propaganda against the system", "spreading lies" and "membership of a group formed with the purpose of disrupting national security". The charges brought against these journalists stem directly from the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedoms of expression, association and assembly through reporting on the protests of workers at Haft Tappeh sugar cane company in Khuzestan province over unpaid wages and poor conditions. They are currently awaiting trial before branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran.

At least three other labour rights activists, Esmail Bakhshi, Sepideh Gholian and Ali Nejati, and one journalist, Asal Mohammadi, are facing criminal proceedings in connection with their involvement with the peaceful protests at Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company. Esmail Bakhshi and Sepideh Gholian have been in detention since 20 January 2019. They were arrested after they spoke out about the torture they said they suffered in custody during their first period of detention in November and December 2018 (see "Labour rights activists at risk of further torture", 29 January 2019, [MDE 13/9745/2019](#)). Ali Nejati, the former chair and a current member of Haft Tappeh labour syndicate, was arrested on 29 November 2018 and released on bail on 28 January 2019, pending his trial. Asal Mohammadi, another staff member of *Gam* magazine, was arrested on 8 December 2018 and released on bail on 5 January 2019, pending her trial. Amnesty International understands that the prosecution authorities have joined the cases of these individuals with those of Sanaz Alahyari, Amirhossein Mohammadifar and Amir Amirgholi and that they will likely face trial together.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 28 August 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Sanaz Alahyari (she/her); Amirhossein Mohammadifar (he/his); and Amir Amirgholi (he/his).