

**TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**  
**FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

# APPEAL FOR ACTION

## RE: IRANIAN PRISONERS IN NEED OF MEDICAL CARE

At least nine Iranian prisoners with serious health problems are being held in prison in Iran. Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to ensure adequate healthcare is provided to Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand (m), Isa Saharkhiz (m), Ayatollah Boroujerdi (m), Zahra Jabbari (f), Kourosh Kohkan (m), Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki (m), Ahmad Zeidabadi (m), Sa'id Metinpour (m) and Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (m). Those prisoners held solely on account of their peaceful exercise of their rights to the freedom of expression, association, assembly or belief should be immediately and unconditionally released.

**Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand (m)**, a 49 year old Kurdish human rights defender, is serving sentences totalling 10 and a half years imposed since May 2008 for "acting against state security by establishing an illegal group [the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK)]". He is also facing other charges brought against him while in prison for his writings on women's rights and other human rights issues. Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand suffers from kidney and prostate conditions which have been exacerbated by poor prison conditions and lack of adequate medical care. In early December 2008, he was seen by a prison doctor who noted that he was suffering from dizziness and unstable blood pressure, and that his existing kidney and prostate problems were worsening. It is believed that on 17 December 2008 he suffered a heart attack but no doctor was available in the prison clinic as it was a national holiday. He has also had one episode of unconsciousness, lasting approximately 30 minutes. Doctors at Evin prison reportedly requested that the prisoner be granted specialist assessment and treatment outside of the prison, but the request was ignored by the authorities.

It is also reported that Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand suffered two strokes in 2010 -- one on 15 July and the other on 19 November. His sister said he told her that he had been seen by a neurologist after the first stroke but was not examined thoroughly and no tests were administered. Instead the physician prescribed a series of pills to take daily but did not give any details on the name, recommended use or possible side-effects of the pills.

In June 2011 Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand was seen by an independent doctor who reportedly stated that he needed to undergo two operations for hardening of the heart arteries and an enlarged prostate. Since his imprisonment Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand has lost about 20 kgs.

**Isa Saharkhiz (m)**, a 57 year old prominent reformist journalist and commentator, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in September 2010 on charges of "insulting the leadership" and "propaganda against the system". He has said that his ribs were broken as a result of beatings sustained during his arrest on 7 July 2009. He also has lost mobility of his right leg for unknown reasons but has been denied medical leave to seek treatment. In late November/early December 2010 he was reported to have been suffering from severe pain. It was discovered that he was bleeding internally and a medical team was brought to perform surgery on him in the prison clinic. In May 2010, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found Isa Saharkhiz's detention to be arbitrary and requested that the Iranian Government release Isa Saharkhiz immediately and unconditionally.

In June 2011 Isa Saharkhiz was among several prisoners who went on a hunger strike to protest against the deaths of Haleh Sahabi and Hoda Saber. He was transferred to the Raja'i Shahr Prison clinic on 27 June 2011 due to his deteriorating health.

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**Ayatollah Boroujerdi (m)**, a 53 year old religious figure in Iran who advocates the separation of religion from government, was sentenced in August 2007 to one year's imprisonment in Tehran followed by 10 years' imprisonment in exile in the city of Yazd. Furthermore, he was defrocked and his house and all of his belongings were confiscated. Ayatollah Boroujerdi suffers from many illnesses including Parkinson's disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney and heart problems. He has reportedly lost significant weight while in detention. In September 2008, his doctors wrote several times to the judiciary informing them of the patient's urgent medical problems and the need for immediate care outside of prison, but the advice was ignored. He was transferred back to Evin Prison in August 2009 where he remains in detention. According to reports, on 27 of February 2011, Ayatollah Boroujerdi was attacked and beaten by prison officials at Evin Prison. His beard was also forcibly shaved by prison officials. Recent reports suggest that Ayatollah Boroujerdi may have lost his vision in one eye and has still not been allowed to leave prison to receive medical treatment.

**Zahra Jabbari (f)**, 37 years old, was arrested on 18 September 2009, when mass anti-government protests were held. She was detained in Evin Prison and held in solitary confinement for seven months, apparently because she has relatives living in Camp Ashraf, Iraq -- where members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an Iranian opposition group, reside. In May 2010 she was sentenced to four years' imprisonment on charges of "acting against state security." Zahra suffers from severe rheumatic heart disease. In June 2011 her physical and psychological conditions deteriorated and she was transferred to the Amin Abad mental hospital in Tehran.

**Kourosh Kohkan (m)**, a 36-year-old political activist, was arrested in January 2010 and held in Section 350 of Evin Prison, where prominent political prisoners are also held but to which the Judiciary has access. He was later sentenced to three and half years' imprisonment and 74 lashes by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. He suffers from a meniscus tear in his knee which happened during his interrogation by members of the Intelligence. In April 2011, Kourosh Kohkan went on hunger strike to demand medical care and surgery on his knee. The prison authorities subsequently transferred him to the Taleghani Hospital in Tehran where he was operated on. However, due to lack of medical follow-up, his operated knee became infected and his leg now might have to be amputated. The authorities are still denying him further medical care.

**Blogger Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki (m)** was arrested on 13 December 2009 and is now serving a 15-year prison sentence, including 10 years imposed for "membership of an internet group called Iran Proxy", and lesser terms for "propaganda against the system", "insulting the [Supreme] Leader" [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei], and for "insulting the President". He did not receive a fair trial and was denied access to his defence lawyer. He told the judge that he was tortured in pre-trial detention but the judge is said to have answered he "deserved it".

Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki suffers from gallstones and severe kidney problems he developed since his arrest. Both his kidneys are infected and he has lost 80% functionality in one and 20% in the other. He underwent a first surgical intervention at the beginning of May 2011 in Hasheminejad Kidney Center in Tehran, but his kidney became infected after he was returned to prison. On 8 June 2011 he underwent a second kidney operation and was sent back to prison 14 days later. His physicians have stated that it would take three months for his kidneys to heal and that during this time it was imperative that Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki received adequate medical care in a suitable environment.

**Ahmad Zeidabadi (m)** a 45 year old journalist and spokesperson for the Graduates' Association, which has promoted reform and greater respect for human rights, was arrested on 21 June 2009, shortly after Iran's disputed presidential election. He was held incommunicado in Evin Prison until his appearance on 8 August 2009 in a mass "show trial". He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in December 2009, five years of internal exile, and was banned for life from all social and political activities. His sentence was upheld in January 2010. At the end of January 2010, he was transferred to Reja'i Shahr prison, where most of the other prisoners are not political prisoners. When she visited him on 23 June 2011, his wife, Mahdieh Mohammadi, noticed that he seemed very weak, and had very noticeably lost a lot of weight since her last visit at the beginning of June. She is very worried about this unexplained weight loss.

**Sa'id Metinpour (m)**, a member of the Azerbaijani minority in Iran, is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence in Evin Prison for his peaceful advocacy of the rights of the Azerbaijani minority in Iran. He suffers from severe back pain and at the end of January 2011 was diagnosed with a lung infection. Calls for him to be granted temporary leave to seek medical care have been denied for the past two years. During his detention in 2007, his health had also suffered.



**Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (m)**, 53, leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran, an opposition party, was arrested on 27 December 2009 and held in Evin Prison, before being transferred to Katchoui Prison in Karaj in May 2010. He was later sent to Reja'i Shahr prison, notorious for its poor conditions. In his trial he said that he had been beaten and threatened with rape in detention and was placed under great pressure to "confess" to receiving money from abroad. Heshmatollah Tabarzadi's son, Mohammad, has also spoken about the conditions in the prison: "There [was] no glass in the windows...so they spent days and nights in the cold winter air. They don't take care of the inmates' ailments... The prison food is not healthy...All of these affect their physical conditions. No matter how well they maintain their morale; such difficult conditions will weaken them over time."

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi was initially sentenced in September 2010 to nine years in prison and 74 lashes, after conviction on five charges. On appeal, this was reduced to eight years in prison, and the flogging sentence was overturned. He has also been banned from participating in any social activities for 10 years. His health deteriorated at the beginning of July 2011 and he was transferred to the prison medical facility where he was diagnosed with a heart condition. His family is very concerned for his health.

**PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:**

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand (m), Isa Saharkhiz (m), Ayatollah Boroujerdi (m), Zahra Jabbari (f), Kourosh Kohkan (m), Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki (m), Ahmad Zeidabadi (m), Sa'id Metinpour (m) and Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (m), as their imprisonment appears to be politically motivated and related to their peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging the Iranian authorities to ensure that pending their release, they receive full and immediate access to medical care, in accordance with the provisions set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- Urging the Iranian authorities to ensure that all these prisoners are protected from any form of torture or other ill-treatment from prison guards or other detainees.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 09 September 2011 TO:**

**Leader of the Islamic Republic**

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei  
The Office of the Supreme Leader  
Islamic Republic Street – End of  
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran,  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**Email:** info\_leader@leader.ir

**Twitter:** "Call on #Iran leader  
@khamenei\_ir to give prisoners  
immediate access to adequate medical  
care"

**Head of the Judiciary**

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
[care of] Public relations Office  
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street  
Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street  
intersection  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email:** bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject  
line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani) or  
larijani@dadgostary-tehran.ir  
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

**Minister of Health and Medical  
Education**

Her Excellency Marzieh Vahid-Dastjerdi.  
Ministry of Health, Jomhouriyeh Eslami  
Avenue  
Hafez Crossing  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email:** ad@mohme.gov.ir or  
pr@behdasht.gov.ir (in subject line:  
FAO Marzieh Vahid\_Dastjerdi, Minister  
of Health and Medical Education)

**Fax** +98 21 8836 4100 (unreliable;  
please try three times and if it fails  
please send email)  
Salutation Your Excellency

ALSO SEND COPIES TO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES ACCREDITED TO YOUR COUNTRY. PLEASE TRY AND SEND HARD COPIES OF LETTERS AS WELL AS EMAILS. IF YOU RECEIVE NO REPLY WITHIN SIX WEEKS OF SENDING YOUR LETTER, PLEASE SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER SEEKING A RESPONSE. PLEASE SEND COPIES OF ANY LETTERS YOU RECEIVE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH TEAM, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 0DW OR E-MAIL: [health@amnesty.org](mailto:health@amnesty.org)

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Article 229 of the Iranian Prison Regulations stipulates that a prisoner suffering from a serious medical condition that cannot be treated inside prison, or whose condition will worsen if they stay in prison, should be released by the prison authorities for one month's medical leave, renewable, on the recommendation of a doctor and with the agreement of the Prison Director. However for most of these detainees, repeated requests for medical leave have been denied. In many cases, the Iranian authorities request an exorbitant amount of bail which the families cannot afford. For example, it is reported that the Iranian government is seeking approximately 11.5 million Iranian Rials (equivalent to \$US1.1 million) in bail from the family of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand to be temporarily released.

Additionally, prison conditions in Iran are notoriously poor, and sometimes amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

According to a 20 July 2011 report by the Iranian Students' News Agency, ISNA, Javad Zamani, the spokesperson of the Social Affairs Committee of Iran's parliament, said that the head of Iran's Prison Organization, the body that manages Iran's official prisons, told the Committee that Iran's prisons have a capacity of 85,000 people, though that the current prison population was 235,000, noting that this has created problems, including a lack of doctors.

Similarly, according to a 27 June 2011 report in *Shargh* newspaper, Younes Mousavi, a member of the parliamentary Judicial Committee, recently stated openly in parliament that overcrowding in some prisons was so bad that prisoners were sleeping on stairs; and that the budget of the Prisons' Organisation was not sufficient for clothing or food for the prisoners. He added that some prison buildings were too old and no longer fit for purpose; and that the health system of some prisons was so inadequate that it was possible that some prisoners lived in unsuitable medical conditions while in prison.

For the nine detainees listed above, the poor conditions and the denial of adequate medical care have exacerbated their medical problems. Recently at least two prisoners have died as a result of irresponsible behaviour and negligence of prison officials.

