

URGENT ACTION

PROTESTER AGAINST ACID ATTACKS JAILED

Women's rights defender Mahdieh Golrou has been detained without charge for over two months in Tehran's Evin Prison for peacefully protesting a series of acid attacks against young women in Esfahan, Iran. She has not been permitted access to her lawyer, despite undergoing dozens of hours of interrogations. She is a prisoner of conscience who must be released immediately and unconditionally.

Mahdieh Golrou (also known as Mehdieh Golru), 29, has been detained since her arrest at her home in Tehran on 26 October 2014, at which point her mobile and computer were confiscated. She spent two months in solitary confinement in Section 2A of the prison, under the control of Revolutionary Guards, before being moved to a cell shared with another person in the same section. On 12 January, Mahdieh Golrou's case was transferred to the docket of Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran. Mahdieh Golrou has not been allowed to meet with the lawyer hired by her family to represent her. She is permitted two phone calls per week and her family has been allowed to visit her occasionally.

Mahdieh Golrou participated in a peaceful protest outside of Parliament in Tehran on 22 October 2014, to condemn violence against women and a series of acid attacks against women taking place in Esfahan, central Iran in early October. It is feared that her arrest was an attempt to quash peaceful protest and stifle the voices of women who speak out about women's rights issues. The Iranian authorities have denounced the acid attacks but have yet to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

After the acid attacks began in Esfahan and before her arrest, Mahdieh Golrou wrote on her Facebook page, "I am a woman. I am an Iranian woman who is afraid and is always worried...I am a woman, and these days, my womanhood scares me."

Please write immediately in English, Persian, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Mahdieh Golrou immediately and unconditionally, as she has been held solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urging them to allow her regular visits from her family and her lawyer;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that she receives any medical care she may require;
- Calling on them to ensure that perpetrators of violence against women are brought to justice in a fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 MARCH 2015 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
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: @khamenei_ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In October 2014 there were a string of acid attacks on women in Esfahan. Official sources confirmed four attacks while unofficial sources cited figures as high as 15, including one case that led to a death. On 21 October, Justice Minister Hojjat ol-Eslam Mostafa Purmohammadi said to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA): "We are very concerned and hope that the perpetrators of these attacks are arrested and brought to justice". The same day the spokesman of Iran's Judiciary, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ezhe'i said: "The information gathered so far does not support at this point that the perpetrators were trying to counter those with improper veiling". However, many Iranians have expressed concern that the victims of the acid attacks were targeted for failing to comply with a strict Islamic dress code.

Iran's Penal Code penalizes women who fail to cover their head and adhere to a strict Islamic dress code with imprisonment or a cash fine. This law has been used by the police, paramilitary *Basij* forces and vigilante groups to justify patrolling public spaces in the name of promoting and protecting a "culture of modesty and chastity", and to target women for intimidation, harassment, physical violence and imprisonment.

In the days following reports of the acid attacks, thousands of people in Tehran and Isfahan staged protests outside of government buildings calling on the authorities to investigate the attacks and repeal the Bill on Protection of Promoters of Virtue and Preventers of Vice, a controversial Bill before Parliament that many protesters blamed for inspiring the assaults on women. The Bill authorizes any individual to engage in the written and verbal promotion of virtue and prevention of vice. "Virtue" is defined as any deeds, sayings or omissions ordered by Shari'a or existing legislation, and "vice" as prohibited deeds, sayings or omissions.

The authorities reportedly resorted to force, including tear gas and batons, in order to disperse the protesters. They arrested at least four journalists in connection with their coverage of the acid attacks. Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh was also briefly arrested on 25 October 2014 and released the same day.

Mahdieh Golrou was previously arrested in December 2009 for her student and women's rights activism. She served over two years in prison for her peaceful activities on the charges of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding against national security". Mahdieh Golrou is a "starred" student who was banned from continuing her higher education at Allameh Tabatabaee University as a result of her peaceful activism.

Name: Mahdieh Golrou

Gender m/f: f

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