



Iran becomes the world's top jailer of women journalists.

Some of them await trial for years.

 The
Coalition
For
Women In
Journalism



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IRAN BECOMES THE WORLD'S TOP JAILER OF WOMEN JOURNALISTS.

This report was developed with the support of Craig Newmark Philanthropies.

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ABOUT US

The Coalition For Women In Journalism is a global organization of support for women journalists. The CFWIJ pioneered mentorship for mid-career women journalists across several countries around the world, and is the first organization to focus on the status of free press for women journalists. Our system of individuals and organizations brings together the experience and mentorship necessary to help female career journalists navigate the industry. Our goal is to help develop a strong mechanism where women journalists can work safely and thrive.

THE REPORT

As of August, 2019, Iran has become the largest jailer of women journalists in the world. This report takes a look at the most recent arrests along with some of the journalists that have been in prison for several years because of their work.

If you would like to request more insight into our findings, or would like to suggest an addition to our work reach out to us at data@womeninjournalism.org. For media inquiries reach out to us at press@womeninjournalism.org.



HUMAN RIGHTS & FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The strict rules and laws against freedom of speech and expression in Iran have made it difficult for proponents of human rights, activists and journalists to speak against the atrocities of the state.

Most of the arrests have been conducted as a result of citizens assembling to protest against human rights violations and state policies, while journalists have been taken down for covering and reporting the same.

A country where crackdowns on Instagram celebrities are gaining momentum, the state of free press seems far-fetched. The appalling situation of human rights and state of press freedom in Iran can be traced back to its history of treatment of journalists. According to approximately 1.7 million leaked Iranian Justice department documents, the country arrested a total of 860 journalists between 1979 to 2009.

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The number of women journalists arrested was 218. The leak exposed Iran's decades-long record of brutal torture and crackdown of journalists. The present scenario is not different either, as several women journalists are placed inside the notorious prisons of the Islamic Republic.

Scores of journalists and human rights activists have been detained and prosecuted in Iran over the years on obscure charges. Our colleagues being captured and interrogated by the authorities is worrisome and reflects the brutal policies of Iran against freedom of speech.

CFWIJ calls on the government of Iran to release the journalists and address the lack of press freedom in the country on an urgent basis.



WHAT IS HAPPENING IN IRAN?

Iran has recently caught attention for being the world's biggest jailer of women journalists beating Turkey, which was also in the news for placing numerous women journalists behind bars in March this year.

Cases recorded by The Coalition For Women in Journalism show that at least 12 women journalists have been jailed in the Islamic Republic's prisons.

Throughout 2019, particularly in August, an upsurge of arrests and probes against women journalists was observed in the Islamic Republic. The country already stood at number five in the list of imprisoning the most number of women journalists.

Following their coverage and criticism of state-led oppression in the country, journalists often come under fire. Those who share their opinions on social media and foreign media are labelled agents who are looking to disturb the country's prosperity and peace.

Meanwhile, activists and people fighting for their rights also receive tremendous retaliation.

According to the World Press Freedom Index 2019, Iran ranks 170 out of a total of 180 countries.

Among many reasons that Iran comes under criticism, the lack of freedom of speech and expression results in atrocious violations of human rights in the country. Consequently, journalists, whose job is to convey facts and information with the people, become the easiest target of state oppression. But if the journalist is a woman, she faces the worst of all the consequences.

The recent attacks on freedom of speech in Iran are linked with a sugar cane factory scandal that has led employees and labour class fighting for their basic human rights

THE HAFT TAPEH SUGARCANE FACTORY

Majority of the arrests and detentions of journalists observed in Iran, especially in August, are in connection with protests and strikes by the Haft Tapeh Sugarcane factory workers in November 2018. Journalists who covered, reported and followed the issue have been incarcerated.

Workers of the factory, based in Ahvaz - southwest Iran, held demonstrations against non-payment of salaries since August 2018 and questioned the future of the once state-owned entity. The factory has been financially struggling since its privatization in 2015, after which the workers complained of receiving cuts in wages and benefits.

The company accrued immense debt, which they largely owed to tax authorities and public utilities. Ultimately, they decided to withhold wages, salaries and pensions of employees. As a result, sugar production suffered and Iran's government decided to import sugar.

The owners of the factory complained about the government's decision to import the product, effectively pushing the factory further into crisis. Instead of taking concrete steps to address the problems of workers, the government of Iran was tasked with difficult decisions, worsening the country's economic condition as a result. The government was criticized for withholding inflation and poverty statistics and for being unable to address the issues of the working class.

The supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, called the workers' protests a "foreign agenda" to oust the regime.

The country's chief justice also criticized protestors and stated that "some have hidden agendas under the cover of labor protests."

Majority of the arrests and detentions of journalists observed in Iran, especially in August, are connected to coverage of the protests and strikes by the Haft Tapeh Sugarcane factory workers.

All of these protests, strikes and economic crises were covered by journalists in the country, who eventually paid the price for reporting the facts in the form of their interrogations and arrests.

IMPRISONED FOR COVERING HAFT TAPEH

Asal Mohammadi

Asal Mohammadi, was arrested on August 4. She has been arrested once before on December 4, 2018, where she had been released on a bail of 400 million tomans.

She was arrested for covering the strikes and protests by workers. She has been charged with "forming groups with the intention to disturb national security, membership in groups or collectives with the intention to disturb national security, propaganda against the state, and assembly and collusion against national security". Asal is a member of the editorial board for student newspaper Gam - an independent Telegram app news channel, at the Islamic Azad University.

Marzieh Amiri

Marzieh Amiri was arrested on May 1, while reporting outside an intelligence police station in the capital city of Tehran. On August 13, the 28th chamber of the revolutionary court rejected to release the journalist on bail. The judge, who rejected her bail plea, is known to possess a notorious reputation. Marzieh has been charged for conspiring and assembling against national security, disturbing public order and disseminating anti-government propaganda. Marzieh has been sentenced to 10 years in jail and 148 lashes.

Marzieh was among the journalists and labour activists who were arrested during Labour Day protests in the capital city.

Sanaz Allahyar

Journalist Sanaz Allahyari and her husband Amir Amirgholi, the editor-in-chief at Gam, were also arrested for covering the same strikes and protests, as well as the mistreatment of workers held in jail. Asal Mohammadi, who was arrested for covering the same protests and strikes, is their colleague.

In a bid to get permission by the authorities to post bail, the couple was on a wet hunger strike in Tehran's Evin Prison since July 4, 2019.

The two journalists were charged with "contacts with anti-state groups", "assembly and collusion against national security" and forming a group with the intention to disturb national security."

Sanaz was previously arrested in February 2009 and detained for 17 days. Being a member of a student organization was the reason behind her detention. On a charge of "assembly and collusion against national security",

Sanaz was also once issued a five-year suspended sentence. Here she was said to be monitored during the term quite closely.

On September 10, 2019, Sanaz was also sentenced to 18 years in prison along with her husband and other colleagues including Asal Mohammadi.

Sepideh Qolijan

Sepideh Qolijan is a journalist who covered labour issues in Ahvaz, Iran. She was arrested in connection with the protests held for Haft Tapeh sugar cane factory workers in November 2018. The journalist, along with her other colleagues, was transferred from two different prisons in Ahvaz to Tehran's Evin prison, while her case has been forwarded to the Seventh Branch of Evin Prison.

The motive behind their transfer was to keep their lawyers from participating in the hearing held in Branch 7 of the court, which eventually is a violation of human rights.

On September 10, 2019, Sepideh was sentenced to 18 years and six months in jail, along with her other journalists.

PREVIOUSLY JAILED

Nooshin Jafari

Photojournalist Nooshin Jafari, who covers theatre and cinema, is among those who are held in Iran's jails. As told by the judicial system's spokesman, Gholam Hossein Esmaili, she was detained at her home in Tehran on August 3, by the Revolutionary Guard Intelligence. Noshin was earlier arrested in February 2010, after being held for 28 days when she was working for a daily newspaper Etemad's arts and literature section.

Her friends and colleagues say that Nooshin is not guilty and are concerned about some state-affiliated social media users maligning her name by publishing material against the country.

Moloud Hajizadeh

On July 15, 2019, an Iranian journalist and women's rights activist, Moloud Hajizadeh, was arrested and imprisoned by Iranian security police. In recent weeks, she was summoned multiple times to the IRGC Intelligence Organization. One of the Iranian journalists tweeting about her arrest stated that she was arrested after being reported for investigation to a court at Tehran's Evin Prison.

In 2018, Moloud was jailed during a protest at the occasion of International Women's Day with several other women; but she was later released on bail.

PREVIOUSLY JAILED

Hengameh Shahidi

On December 2, 2018, Reporter and editor of the Painveste blog, reformist journalist Hengameh Shahidi was sentenced for up to 12 years and nine months over security charges, in addition to exposing Iran's judicial system and for criticizing its chief, Sadeq Amoli Larijani.

The journalist was also arrested while leaving a hospital on Kish Island, on June 26, 2018. She was under treatment for a heart attack. She was detained for criticizing state policies on social media and during interviews with foreign media.

The 43-year-old journalist was also captured for several months in 2017. Previously in June 2009, Hengameh was sentenced to six years in prison based on charges of "propagating against the regime", "acting against national security" and "insulting the president". In June 2012, she was given conditional release on the basis of health issues.

Hengameh has always been very vocal against political and state oppression, as well as spoke against human rights violations in the Islamic Republic.

Avisha Jalaledin, Shima Entesari and Sepideh Moradi

Three journalists named Avisha Jalaledin, Shima Entesari and Sepideh Moradi, were arrested in February 2018. They are since serving a five-year jail sentence in the capital's Evin Prison, known for its notorious treatment of prisoners

. All the three women journalists worked for Majzooban Noor, a news website focused on the Sufi community.

Farangis Mazloom

Farangis Mazloom, mother of an imprisoned citizen-journalist, Soheil Arabi, was arrested on July 22, by the intelligence ministry agents. She was charged on the basis of informing the public about her son's imprisonment and the inhumane conditions to which he was subjected.

Farangis was arrested at her sister's home by agents in plain clothes, who took her to an unknown location. There is no statement by the authorities about her arrest or detention.

Narges Mohammadi

Facing imprisonment since May 2015, Narges Mohammadi is one of the many journalists and activists, who were arrested for standing up for human rights.

In August 2018, Narges Mohammadi was transferred from her cell in Tehran's Evin prison to the Imam Khomeini Hospital due to her deteriorating health. Narges was earlier transferred to the hospital for gallbladder removal surgery on July 1, 2018, but she was immediately returned to jail, instead of being granted an emergency medical parole. According to the doctors, the journalist had a growth in her stomach but was not offered tests for required treatment.

PREVIOUSLY JAILED

Narges also suffers with a neurological disorder. She was earlier sentenced for up to 16 years in jail on May 20, 2016 by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The Tehran's Court of Appeals later upheld her sentence on September 28, 2016. On June 27, 2016, Narges also went on a hunger strike to record her protest against the authorities's refusal to let her contact her children on phone. Her husband, Taghi Rahmani, son and daughter live in Paris. As a result of this protest, the authorities threatened to make her end the hunger strike. On May 5, 2015, Narges was arrested by the Iranian intelligence ministry officials at her home.



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