

14 October 2021

Iran: Attack against a group of detained human rights defenders

On 8 October 2021, a group of detained human rights defenders including **Shapour Ehsanirad** and **Esmail Gerami** received death threats and were physically assaulted by four other prisoners from section 3, type 2 in the Great Tehran Penitentiary. Following the attack, the human rights defenders were transferred to a different section of the same prison ward, where they are being subjected to inadequate and unsanitary conditions.

[Esmail Gerami](#), is human rights defender and retired worker from Iran Carton Company, who has been advocating for the rights of retired people through organising assemblies and associations since 2017. In 2020, he started a Telegram channel called “Independent Association of Social Security Workers” in 2020 where he posted news on the peaceful assemblies of retired people and tried to raise awareness about their rights.

[Shapour Ehsanirad](#) is a former representative of the Profil Factory of Saveh, a founding member of the Social Security’s Retired Workers Council, and a member of the board of directors of the Free Trade Union of Workers of Iran. The human rights defender is active in defending labour rights and the improvement of working conditions

On 8 October 2021, a group of detained human rights defenders including Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami were physical assaulted and received death threats in Great Tehran Penitentiary. Four other prisoners from section 3, type 2 in the Great Tehran Penitentiary attacked the human rights defenders with various objects including knives and other kitchen utensils causing them to sustain slight injuries. The human rights defenders held in the ward had complained about the conditions and asked the prison officials to relocate them to different wards. On 12 October 2021, Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami were forced by the official authorities of Great Tehran Penitentiary to relocate to a ward in section 1, type 2 of the prison, with locked doors and inadequate conditions, including very poor lighting and sanitation. The human rights defenders were told that if they refused to relocate, Special Prison Guards would take action to relocate them by force.

On 21 September 2019, the Revolutionary Court of Tehran [sentenced](#) Shapour Ehsanirad to six years’ imprisonment, including five years for “assembly and collusion against national security” and one year for “propaganda against the state” The labour rights defender is currently serving his sentence in the Great Tehran Penitentiary. Despite his poor health condition and backache, he has been denied furlough for medical treatment.

On 6 June 2021, the Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced Esmail Gerami to five years imprisonment, 74 lashes and a 20-million IRR fine on charges of “gathering and colluding with intent to commit a crime against national security” which was later upheld by the court of appeal on 19 September 2021. He was arrested on 7 March 2021 during a peaceful assembly outside the Ministry of Labour in Tehran in conjunction with nationwide pensioners’ protests and was released the next day. On 3 April 2021, the labour rights defender was arrested in his house and has been detained in Great Tehran Penitentiary since then. Esmail Gerami is reliant on medication for preventing epileptic seizures and has been denied medical leave.

Front Line Defenders is concerned that the physical attacks against human rights defenders Shapour Ehsanirad, Esmail Gerami in Great Tehran Penitentiary occur in the context of a worrying increase in deaths of inmates in custody in Iranian prisons. Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami as

they are currently at risk, and believes they are being detained as a result of their legitimate and peaceful human rights work in Iran. Front Line Defenders also reiterates its concern regarding the conditions of prisons in Iran in the context of COVID-19, such as overcrowding, the denial of access to medical care and disregard for the well-being of prisoners, as well as unhygienic conditions.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami and quash their convictions as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been targeted solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attacks against Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami in Great Tehran Penitentiary on 8 October 2021, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Shapour Ehsanirad and Esmail Gerami, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
4. Ensure protection and hygienic provisions for all detained human rights defenders in Iran, and grant non-discriminatory access to temporary release and furlough for prisoners during the pandemic;
5. 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.

Front Line Defenders Board of Directors

Denis O'Brien, Jim Conway, Maria Mulcahy, Kieran Mulvey, Mary Jane Real (Philippines), David Sykes, Arnold Tsunga (Zimbabwe), Verónica Vidal (Uruguay)

Front Line Defenders International Advisory Council

James L. Cavallaro, Maryam Elahi, Michel Forst, Hina Jilani, Mary Lawlor

Front Line, The International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders trading as Front Line Defenders, is registered in Ireland as a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. Registered Office: Second Floor, Grattan House, Temple Road, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94 FA39, Ireland.

Company No. 593190; Registered Charity No. 20204494; CHY 22404