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## Iran: Woman human rights defender Alieh Motallebzadeh denied access to phone calls

On 5 September 2021, woman human rights defender **Alieh Motallebzadeh**, who is currently detained in Evin prison, was informed that her telephone calls have been suspended for two months without any explanation. Alieh Motallebzadeh has been imprisoned in Evin prison since 13 October 2020.

[Alieh Motallebzadeh](#) is a woman human rights defender, a journalist, and deputy head of the Iranian Association to Defend Freedom of Press. She has worked for a range of publications on women's rights, including the now-banned Zanan (Women) magazine and has taken part in the One Million Signatures campaign, which called for greater gender equality. Additionally, she is a member of the campaign to protect female victims of acid attack in Iran.

On 5 September 2021, Alieh Motallebzadeh was told that her telephone calls have been suspended for two months and was not given an explanation for these restrictions. The decision was announced verbally by the prison's council, which is run by the prosecutor's representative in prison and the prisons authorities. The woman human rights defender has been outspoken against the spread of COVID-19 in women's ward of Evin prison and has criticised the prison authorities inadequate response to the pandemic in July 2021.

This is not the first time Alieh Motallebzadeh has been targeted for exercising her fundamental rights to freedom of speech in prison. She was denied access to phone calls by the Evin prison authorities on 26 April 2021 after filing a complaint from Evin prison against the use of solitary confinement in the Iranian prisons as a means of torture.

In July 2017, the woman human rights defender was sentenced to three years of imprisonment on charges of "gathering and collusion against the national security" and "propaganda activities against the state" by Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court. This verdict was confirmed by Branch 36 of Tehran court of appeals in October 2017. One of the charges brought against her was "organising and taking part in women's empowerment workshops abroad (in Georgia)". Alieh Motallebzadeh started serving this sentence on 13 October 2020.

On 19 July 2021, Alieh Motallebzadeh was granted a medical furlough after she contracted COVID-19 in the women's ward of Evin prison. She was returned to Evin prison on 30 August 2021, despite the fact she was still suffering from after effects of COVID-19 according to doctors. On 17 July 2021, she published an [audio](#) file from Evin prison in which she criticised the negligence of the Evin prison authorities in response to COVID-19 and their failure to implement sufficient prevention and protection measures. She also criticised the discriminatory access to medical furloughs, which have exposed human rights defenders to higher risk of contraction of COVID-19 in the prison.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern over the denial of access of Alieh Motallebzadeh to telephone calls with her family, friends and lawyers and believes this is in reprisal for her peaceful and legitimate efforts to promote and protect human rights in Iran. Front Line Defenders also reiterates its concern regarding the conditions of prisons in Iran in during the COVID-19 pandemic, 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 calls on the authorities in Iran to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Alieh Motallebzadeh and quash her convictions as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Alieh Motallebzadeh, 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;
3. 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.

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director