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Iran: Women human rights rights defenders Najmeh Vahedi and Hoda Amid convicted

On 13 February 2021, two women human rights defenders **Najmeh Vahedi** and **Hoda Amid** were informed of the verdict issued by the Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeals on 2 February 2021. The appeals court ruled to uphold the primary ruling of Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, issued in late October 2020, sentencing Hoda Amid to eight years in prison whilst Najmeh Vahedi was sentenced to seven years.

[Najmeh Vahedi](#) is a woman human rights defender and sociologist, currently studying for her postgraduate degree in women's studies. She has been active in raising awareness on social issues in the field of women's rights, especially the value of women's work in the home. [Hoda Amid](#) is a lawyer and woman human rights defender, who had also played a prominent role in educating Iranian women of their rights. The two women human rights defenders ran educational workshops together on "terms of marriage" to educate women on their marital and familial legal rights in Iran.

On 2 February, Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeals upheld the verdict issued in October 2020. On 31 October 2020, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran sentenced Hoda Amid to eight years in prison, a two year travel ban, a two year membership ban on participating in political parties and groups and activities in cyberspace, media and press, and a two year ban on practicing law. The court sentenced Najmeh Vahedi to seven years imprisonment, a two year travel ban, and a two year membership ban on participating in political parties and groups and activities in cyberspace, media and press. The sentences were only communicated to the women human rights defenders on 12 December 2020. During the appeal process, the lawyers of the women human rights defenders were denied access to study the case by the Branch 36 of the Court of Appeals under the pretext of insufficient time to represent the defendants.

In October 2020, Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi were charged with "collaborating with the hostile American government against the Islamic Republic of Iran on women and family issues" in relation to their involvement in holding educational marriage workshops on the "terms of marriage" and "dowry and housework." The two women human rights defenders were found guilty of working "in line with the project of infiltration by weakening the foundation of the family with the aim of overthrowing [the government]" and "collaborating with the hostile American government against the Islamic Republic on women and family issues."

On 1 September 2018, Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi were arrested at their houses by security forces and spent more than two months in the 2A Evin ward, which is run by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. The women human rights defenders were arrested as part of the same case relating to the educational workshops they organised from 2015 until their arrest in September 2018. They were eventually released on bail while awaiting a court hearing.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the manner in which the court of appeals processed the case of women human rights defenders Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi. Given the lengthy sentences of this case, it was unsatisfactory that the defendants lawyers were not given access to study the case, and that the women human rights defenders themselves were not given the chance to defend themselves during the appeal process.

Front Line Defenders condemns the sentencing of Hoda Amid and Najmeh Vahedi as it believes it is solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work in raising awareness about legal and social rights that Iranian women are entitled to exercise according to Iranian national law.

Front Line Defenders urges the Iranian authorities to:

1. Immediately quash the conviction against Najmeh Vahedi and Hoda Amid as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been targeted solely as a result of their legitimate human rights work;
2. Immediately cease the judicial harassment of all human rights defenders in Iran and ensure their indiscriminate access to justice;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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