

31 July 2020

Iran: Bahareh Hedayat, student and woman human rights defender sentenced for her role in peaceful January protests

On 25 July 2020, Bahareh Hedayat, a student and woman human rights defender was sentenced to four years and eight months in prison for peacefully protesting after Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) admitted to shooting down Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, killing all 176 civilians on board in January 2020.

Bahareh Hedayat is a students' rights defender and campaigner for women's rights. In awarding her its prize in 2012, the [Edelstam Prize](#) noted: "Mrs. Bahareh Hedayat has through her outstanding courage and commitment to justice actively worked against the violation of the Human Rights in Iran." She is currently a graduate student of political studies at the University of Tehran and a member of "United Students Associations", which consists of 35 Iranian students associations. This Association announced its formation in October 2019 as "an independent, pluralistic, and democratic student association" defending students' union rights and social and political rights. It has yet to be recognized by Iranian authorities

On 25 July, Bahareh Hedayat was informed by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran that she had been sentenced to four years and eight months in prison on the charges of "gathering and collusion with the intent to commit crimes against national security" for four years because of her involvement in the protests condemning the killing of civilians onboard Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 and "propaganda against state" for eight months for her tweets about the incident. If the sentence is upheld, Bahareh Hedayat will serve the longer sentence, which is four years' imprisonment according to article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code, which allows defendants to serve only the longest sentence in cases involving multiple convictions. The defender will appeal the ruling which also entails a two-year ban on participating in any social and political activities as well as three months' community service.

Responding to the sentence, Bahareh Hedayat tweeted, "this ruling is only for a few years behind bars and some other restrictions. But those 176 people [who died in the plane crash] are gone and won't come back, just like those who were killed in November [2019]," referring to the hundreds killed by state security forces during the mass protests that swept the country in November 2019.

On 9 February 2020, the human rights defender was arrested and detained for nine days following what was explained to her as "incitement of protest against the airplane crash through different tweets" she had posted on 11 January 2020. She was subsequently released on bail.

Bahareh Hedayat has been detained and imprisoned multiple times and subjected to judicial harassment by the authorities in relation to her work defending human rights in Iran. She has spent over six years (2010-2016) in prison for her peaceful human rights activities, including campaigning for women's rights through the "One Million Signature Campaign for the Change of Discriminatory Law Against Women In Iran." She was released from prison in September 2016 following a call from the [Unites Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) for her immediate release in May 2016.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the sentencing of human rights defender Bahareh Hedayat, which seems to be in retaliation for her peaceful and legitimate work defending human rights in Iran.

Front Line Defenders urges the Iranian authorities to:

1. Immediately quash the conviction against Bahareh Hedayat as Front Line Defenders believes that she has been targeted solely as a result of her 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.