

25 June 2021

## Iran: Group of human rights defenders physically assaulted and temporarily detained

On 17 June 2021, **Narges Mohammadi**, **Mustafa Nili** and two other human rights defenders were stopped, physically assaulted, detained for a few hours and had their devices confiscated temporarily by intelligence agents in Shazand, Markazi province in central Iran. The group of human rights defenders were denied entrance to Arak city, in order to visit the family of a human rights defender who is detained in Arak prison.

[Narges Mohammadi](#) is Deputy Director and Spokesperson of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC) in Iran. She has campaigned for the abolition of the death penalty in Iran, and was awarded the Per Anger Prize by the Swedish government for her human rights work in 2011. The woman human rights defender continued her human rights activities while in detention and most recently has been campaigning against “White Torture” the cruel use of solitary confinement and other abusive treatment and conditions for prisoners in Iran.

[Mustafa Nili](#) is a human rights defender and lawyer, who has represented many political prisoners, including student union activists. He was arrested in December 2009 as a result of taking part in peaceful protests against the results of the 2009 presidential elections in Iran. In November 2010, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court convicted the human rights defender to three years on the charge of “gathering and collusion to act against the national security” and an additional six months in prison on the charge of “propaganda against state”, due to him taking part in the protests and publishing critical content against violent crackdowns on the peaceful protests in 2009. Branch 54 of the Court of Appeals confirmed the prison sentences in April 2011 and consequently the defender served his sentence from 18 July 2011 to 18 November 2014.

On 17 June 2021, Narges Mohammadi, Mustafa Nili and two other human rights defenders were stopped, physically assaulted, detained for a few hours and had their devices confiscated temporarily by intelligence agents. The group of the human rights defenders were on the way to Arak to visit the family of a human rights defender who is detained in Arak prison. The group of human rights defenders were asked to stop their car in the middle of Shazand highway, trying very hard not lose control of the vehicle. After physically assaulting Mustafa Nili and Narges Mohammadi and confiscating their personal device upon stopping their car, the human rights defenders were shown a letter from the Shazand prosecutor, ordering the security forces to forcibly stop and escort the group of human rights defenders. As a result, the human rights defenders’ car was escorted by the intelligence agents from Shazand to Arak and back to Tehran.

This is not the first time that a group of human rights defenders are targeted and banned from travelling around the country to carry out their human rights work. On 12 June 2021, Narges Mohammadi was singled out from a group of human rights defenders, who were going to visit the family of an executed prisoner in Shiraz. She was asked to leave the car and consequently was physically attacked resulting in three big bruises on her body. The authorities, who arrested Narges Mohammadi, did not show any ID or court orders, and kept her in detention for a few hours in an unmarked car, driving to unknown places, and threatening her by physically assaulting her.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the two attacks against two groups of human rights defenders, including Narges Mohammadi and Mustafa Nili, but also more broadly the holding of the human rights defenders in short detentions and putting their lives at risk while driving.

Front Line Defenders further expresses deep concern regarding the increased harassment of human rights defenders through the use of new temporary detentions, travel bans and judicial harassment. Front Line Defenders believes that the targeting of these human rights defenders is in

reprisal for their peaceful and legitimate work advocating for other human rights defenders in prison, and is an attempt to silence them.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the two attacks against Narges Mohammadi, Mustafa Nili and other human rights defenders on both 12 and 17 June 2021, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the human rights defenders, as well as of the members of their families;
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.

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