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Iran: Leila Hossein Zadeh charged with acting against national security for the fifth time

On 27 October 2023, the woman human rights defender **Leila Hossein Zadeh** will be summoned by Branch 4 of the Evin Court to plead her innocence against the charge of “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national and external security of the country”. The woman human rights defender received notice of this on 15 October 2023.

[Leila Hossein Zadeh](#) is a woman human rights defender and student activist, who has been advocating for women's rights, and the rights of disadvantaged people, to employment, freedom of speech, association and assembly. She has been prosecuted many times in Iran, and has been sentenced and imprisoned for her human rights work.

On 27 October 2023, the woman human rights defender Leila Hossein Zadeh will appear before Branch 4 of the Evin Court to be trialled on the charge of “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national and external security of the country.”

On 26 September 2023, a case was opened against the woman human rights defender on charges of “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national and external security of the country” in the Iranian judicial platform, of which the woman human rights defender was notified on 15 October 2023.

On 17 September 2023, Leila Hossein Zadeh attended a viva session for her post-graduate studies in Anthropology at the Faculty of Social Science, in the University of Tehran. She was defending her thesis which was titled “National Identity versus Ethnic Identity in an Iranian modern city; the case study of the city of Naqadeh”. On the day in question, the woman human rights defender published several pictures of herself on social media, together with snippets of her dissertation. In reaction to this, the woman human rights defender was targeted by a social media smear campaign, attacking her for the focus of her research, and for appearing without veil and in what appeared to be a Kurdish outfit.

This is not the first time that Leila Houssein Zadeh has been targeted for her human rights work and advocacy for the rights of students and women in Iran. Since January 2018, she has faced charges related to “acting against national security” five times. The woman human rights defender was arrested in January 2018 for the first time, in the context of a protest against the rising fuel prices which was broken up, and was sentenced to five years in prison on the charge of “gathering and colluding against the national security” and one year in prison on the charge of “propaganda activity against the state” by Tehran Revolutionary Court. These sentences were reduced to two and a half years in the court of appeal and the woman human rights defender was released in May 2020, after her status as an immuno-compromised person was confirmed amid the COVID pandemic, when she was already on medical furlough.

Additionally, the woman human rights defender still has five years of her prison sentence, awarded by Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court, pending. This concerned the charge of “gathering and colluding against the national security” in reprisal for organising a number of student activists to come together to commemorate a fellow activist and friend, who was then being detained. Furthermore, she has two cases open at Shiraz Revolutionary courts on the same charge. The most recent incident occurred on 20 August 2022 when she was arrested violently in front of her

house in Tehran. The woman human rights defender was detained arbitrarily for five months in Ward 209 of Evin Prison, in two detention facilities in Shiraz, known as Soroush and House No. 100, in Adelabad Prison in Shiraz. She was eventually transferred back to Evin prison where she was released after she went on hunger strike.

In March 2021, the women human rights defender was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, which causes eye inflammation and severe pains, as well as another immuno-compromising disease which has been confirmed by doctors certified by the Iranian Organization of Prisons. It is on these medical grounds that the woman human rights defender has been granted release.

Front Line Defenders is concerned about the multiple court cases and national security charges which have been brought against woman human rights defender Leila Hossein Zadeh as a means to silence her human rights work. Front Line Defenders is particularly concerned by the health condition of the woman human rights defender as a result of her previous detentions and psycho-social well-being, owing to the continuous judicial harassments and social media smear campaigns against her which target her for her legitimate and peaceful human rights work in Iran.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally quash the convictions against Leila Hossein Zadeh as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work, especially in regard to her advocacy for students rights and labour rights;
2. 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 reprisal and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.