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## Iran: Sepideh Gholian sentenced to two years in prison for chanting a slogan against the Supreme Leader

On 6 May 2023, the brother of woman human rights defender **Sepideh Gholian** announced on social media that she had been sentenced to two years in prison, on the charge of “insulting the supreme leader”, by branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court.

[Sepideh Gholian](#) is a woman human rights defender and freelance journalist, with her human rights work focusing primarily on labour rights. She has worked closely with the [Syndicate of Workers of Haft Tappeh Cane Sugar Company](#), a trade union established in 1974 for the workers of the Haft Tappeh Sugarcane Agro-industrial Complex. She has been reporting on the situation of women prisoners including by publishing illustrations and prison diaries.

On 6 May 2023, Sepideh Gholian was sentenced to two years in prison on the charge of “insulting the supreme leader” by branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, following her re-arrest on 15 March 2023. The woman human rights defender was violently re-arrested in Arak, Markazi province, a few hours after her release from Evin prison where she had been detained for three years. She was on her way to Dezful, Khozestan province together with her family, when she was re-arrested without being shown an arrest warrant. The mobile devices of her family members were also confiscated.

Sepideh Gholian was released from Evin prison in March 2023 after serving three years of her five-year sentence. Her release came after the ratification of a law on 11 May 2020 which reduced prison sentences for political prisoners who served one third of their terms. The woman human rights defender was made eligible for release under this law. Sepideh Gholian began serving this sentence in Qarchak prison on 21 June 2020, the charges for which date back to 2018. She was transferred several times to other prisons, including Bushehr Prison in the south of Iran on 10 March 2021, more than 600km from Dezfoul where Sepideh Gholian's parents live.

Sepideh Gholian previously appeared before a judge in the courthouse of Evin prison on 16 June 2020, where she was instructed to write a letter to the Supreme Leader requesting a pardon, and was told that they would “see what they could do for her”. She was told that if she did not request a pardon, she would begin serving her five-year sentence in Qarchak prison. Sepideh Gholian insisted on her innocence and dismissed the offer, surrendering herself to the authorities on 21 June 2020 to serve her sentence.

Front Line Defenders condemns the repeated prosecutions of Sepideh Gholian as part of a wider crackdown on human rights defenders in the context of the protests in Iran where, since September 2022, hundreds of human rights defenders have been arrested, charged and subjected to hefty prison sentences without adherence to due process or fair trial rights.

Front Line Defenders is particularly concerned by the breach of international human rights law related to Iran's treatment of human rights defenders in detention. It believes that the woman human rights defender Sepideh Gholian is being detained as a result of her legitimate and non-violent human rights work, especially with regard to her advocacy for labour rights and prisoners' rights in Iran.

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

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Sepideh Gholian and all human rights defenders detained in the context of the protests ongoing since September 2022;
2. Drop the conviction against Sepideh Gholian as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
3. Ensure that the treatment of Sepideh Gholian, 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;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Iran, especially in the context of the ongoing protests, and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.