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Iran: Atekeh Rajabi sentenced to six months in prison without access to indictment before and after court session

On 21 August 2023, woman human rights defender **Atekeh Rajabi** was sentenced to six months in prison on the charge of “propaganda activities against state” by Branch 7 of Mashhad Revolutionary Court. The woman human rights defender learned of a summons to a court session only the day before and was not given a chance to see or review the content of the indictment against her.

[Atekeh Rajabi](#) is a woman human rights defender, educator and former primary school teacher. She works on children’s rights, women’s rights and right to education in Iran. In the aftermath of the September 2022 protests in Iran, she has been vocal, including through her social media posts, about teachers’ rights, prisoners’ rights and violence against young protestors, especially the poisoning of school girls in Iran.

On 21 August 2023, Atekeh Rajabi was sentenced to six months in prison on the charge of “propaganda activities against state” by Branch 7 of Mashhad Revolutionary Court. The woman human rights defender and her lawyer were denied full access to the content of the indictment issued against her. On 20 August 2023, the woman human rights defender Atekeh Rajabi learned of a summons to a court session in Branch 7 of the Mashhad Revolutionary Court, scheduled to take place the following day, on 21 August 2023. She had not received any official summons via SMS or in writing, nor was given access to the content of the indictment.

It is not the first time the woman human rights defender faces criminalization. Atekeh Rajabi has had previous hearings on several charges, including of “propaganda against the state,” “gathering and colluding against internal and external security,” and “promotion of corruption and immorality.” It is not yet known if she has been acquitted of previous charges or not.

On 9 May 2023, Atekeh Rajabi was violently arrested during a teachers’ peaceful assembly organised by the [Coordinating Council of Iranian Teachers’ Trade Associations](#) (CCITTA) to protest against the series of deliberate [poisonings of school girls across Iran](#). The poisoning had been taken place in reprisal against women and young girls vindicating their rights not to conform to Iran’s discriminatory veiling rules. While in detention, the woman human rights defender began a hunger strike in protest for the violence against her and threats against her family. She was released on 14 May 2023 on a bail of IRR fifteen billion. As a result of the hunger strike, Atekeh Rajabi was charged with “engaging in activities with the intention of toppling the Islamic republic in Iran.” In addition, the woman human rights defender has become aware of another open case against her in Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court of Tayebad, Korasan Razavi Province, on the charge of “appearing without Sharia binding hijab in public spaces”. The charges relate to activities held in 13 May 2023 and are strongly refused by the woman human rights defenders, as she was under detention at the time and claims not being present in Tayebad anytime around that date.

The woman human rights defender had also been targeted at her work place. On 21 November 2022, Atekeh Rajabi was terminated from her job as a primary school teacher because of her engagement in the September 2022 protests. On 24 September 2022, the woman human rights

defender initiated a strike, refusing to go to school, to demand justice and the release of detained teachers' rights defenders. A verdict on her case was issued by "the oversight committee for offences committed by staff of the Ministry of Education", in the Razavi Khorasan province branch. According to this verdict, the woman human rights defender's termination was decided based on three grounds: ongoing absence from work from 24 September 2022 until the issuance of the verdict; not respecting the country's mandatory veiling rules; publishing videos of herself without a hijab on social media; and participating in school strikes to support detained teachers.

Front Line Defenders is seriously alarmed about the arrests, temporary detentions, physical assaults and legal actions against human rights defenders in Iran [in advance of the anniversary of the September 2022 protests](#). Front Line Defenders is particularly concerned by the breach of international human rights law in Iran's treatment to human rights defenders, where hundreds of human rights defenders have been arrested, charged and subjected to hefty prison sentences without adherence to due process or fair trials.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the judicial harassment against Atekeh Rajabi. Front Line Defenders believes that woman human rights defenders Atekeh Rajabi is being targeted as a reprisal for her human rights work towards the promotion of women's rights and children's rights, including the right to education in Iran, and her case is illustrative of a broader pattern and wide crackdown on human rights defenders in the country.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally drop all charges against Atekeh Rajabi, as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure Atekeh Rajabi is granted her legitimate right of access to court proceedings and ample time to access lawyer and prepare a defence before court sessions;
3. Adhere to the principles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), especially Articles 21 & 22, on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association;
4. 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 of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.