

## Majid Kazemi executed after 'torture', his Sydney cousin urges Australia to cut ties with Iran

By [Nassim Khadem](#)

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Majid Kazemi was executed in connection with the anti-government protests in Iran.

*(Supplied)*

Ten days before the Islamic Republic of Iran killed 30-year-old Majid Kazemi for his role in the anti-government protests that have swept the country for almost nine months, the family had held hope he would be released.

"We were almost 100 per cent sure that they would change the sentence — honestly, I don't know what happened," says his cousin Mohammad Hashemi, who lives in Sydney and had been [campaigning for Mr Kazemi's release](#).

Family of executed activist calls on Australian governme...



YOUTUBE: The family of an executed activist calls on the Australian government to cut ties with Iran.

Mr Kazemi, who had a business making copper kitchenware, and two other men — 36-year-old Saleh Mirhashemi, a karate champion and bodybuilder instructor, and 37-year-old Saeed Yaghoubi, an athlete who worked at a real estate firm — were arrested in November 2022 following their participation in anti-government protests in Isfahan city.

The three men — who took part in the Women, Life, Freedom protest movement triggered by the [death in custody of Mahsa \(Jina\) Amini](#) — were put on trial in December 2022 and in January sentenced to death on the charge of "moharebeh", or "war against God".



Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaghoubi (left to right) were executed by the regime in Iran on May 19. (Supplied by Amnesty International.)

The authorities claimed they drew a gun during a demonstration in Isfahan and claimed that led to the deaths of two members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps's Basij militia force, and a police officer.

Initially there was a lack of evidence, and authorities told the men's families on several occasions before their deaths that they would be pardoned and released.

"A few days before they approved the initial sentence in (Iran's) Supreme Court, I got a call from Majid's family that they were really happy — they said the lawyers informed that they just going to give them jail and the execution won't happen," Mr Hashemi tells ABC News.

On May 10, authorities announced the three men's convictions and sentences had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

Despite crowds of protesters gathering outside Dastgerd prison where the three men were held, and a campaign by Mr Hashemi calling on the Australian government to halt the executions, on May 19 the three men were hanged, away from the public view.



Mohammad Hashemi holds a vigil for Majid Kazemi in Sydney. (Supplied.)

### **Family under 'surveillance and harassment'**

Even after Mr Kazemi's death, Iran's regime is still harassing the family and not allowing them to properly mourn his loss.

According to Mr Hashemi, his family in Iran wasn't allowed to have a funeral for Mr Kazemi and they are still under surveillance by Iranian authorities. He thinks his phone calls with his family in Iran are being monitored.

"In the 21st century they are even not allowing a family to mourn for the 30-year-old son that they just recently lost," he says.

"Since Majid was murdered by Iranian government, the police have been terrorising my family. The Iranian special forces stormed to her (Majid's mother's) house and beat up all the family members. They arrested Majid's two brothers, and sister, and smashed everything. They took all Majid's photos ... and Majid's brothers are still in prison."

Majid Kazemi would have turned 31 on June 8.



Majid Kazemi at an earlier birthday celebration. He would have turned 31 on June 8, 2023.

*(Supplied.)*

"He was born two days after me; I was born sixth of June, 1992. He was born eighth of June, 1992," Mr Hashemi says.

"And we were incredibly, incredibly close growing up together. I remember we were always playing together. We were playing soccer. We were just running ... in the street."

He says he visited his cousin last March and they went out in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, situated at the centre of Isfahan, and dancing at a family party later that night.

"He was trying his best to just make sure that I (was) enjoying (it)," Mr Hashemi says.

"He was really, really, really caring about everyone. I can't believe what happened to him."



Cousins Mohammad Hashemi (bottom left) and Majid Kazemi (bottom middle) have been close since childhood.

### 'No credible evidence'

Mr Hashemi says that Iran's government did not present credible evidence of a connection between the defendants and the bullets and guns allegedly used in the killings.

"There was no evidence — what was the gun that the people (Basij officers) were killed by? Or (did they have) any other evidence?" he says.

"They (Iran's regime) just needed three people to execute, so they can just show their power to their own forces ... to use the tactic to scare people so they can make sure that there won't be any other protests."

Mr Hashemi says his cousin was denied access to a lawyer of their choosing — as is the norm in Iran's Revolutionary Courts.



Majid Kazemi was subject to severe torture before being executed by Iran's regime.  
(Supplied.)

Immediately after their execution, Iran's state media re-ran video posts of what were presented as the defendants' confessions.

Human rights groups say the incriminating statements, which authorities often air ahead of executions, were taken under torture or duress.

Before his death, in an audio message from inside Dastgerd Prison, Mr Kazemi said:

"I swear to God I am innocent. I didn't have any weapons on me. They [security forces] kept beating me and ordering me to say this weapon is mine ... I told them I would say whatever they wanted, just please leave my family alone. I did whatever they wanted because of the torture."

Mr Hashemi says his cousin was subject to such severe torture he cannot even bring himself to speak about some of it.

"They were using (electric) shockers to attack him, and they were threatening (his) family, saying, 'just help your family, don't be stupid, just accept and (make a) confession otherwise we will hang all your brothers as well'," Mr Hashemi tells ABC News.

Amnesty International says interrogators suspended Mr Kazemi upside down and showed him a video of them torturing his brother, who they also detained.

According to Amnesty, they also subjected Mr Kazemi to mock executions at least 15 times by standing him on a chair and putting a rope around his neck, only to pull him down at the last moment.

They threatened to kill his brothers if he did not accept his charges and "confess" to whatever they said.

"The shocking speed at which these men were ushered to their deaths illustrates the Iranian authorities' flagrant disregard for the rights to life and a fair trial," Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, said after the execution.

Mr Hashemi prefers not to detail the other horrific torture his cousin faced: "He mentioned some details, how physically they tortured him, which is really unbelievable. I'm not able to think about it, how hard it was for him."



Majid Kazemi and Mohammad Hashemi in Isfahan. (Supplied.)

## Iran second to China in executions

So far this year, there have been more than 200 executions in Iran, some of which relate to the anti-government protests, and dozens more have been sentenced to death or convicted of capital offences.

That follows a spike in executions in Iran last year, according to Amnesty International's annual report on global executions.

Iran is known for executing more people each year than any other nation except China.

Executions in Iran soared from 314 in 2021 to 576 in 2022.

Amnesty says Iranian authorities have embarked on an "alarming execution spree of scores of people, intensifying their use the death penalty as a tool of repression in an attempt to instil fear into the population and crush ongoing acts of resistance".

The human rights organisation says at least another seven people in Iran are under sentence of death in connection with nationwide protests, while dozens of others are at risk of being sentenced to death.

The seven are Ebrahim Narouie, Kambiz Kharout, Manouchehr Mehman Navaz, Mansour Dahmardeh, Mohammad Ghobadlou, Mojahed (Abbas) Kourkour and Shoeib Mir Baluchzahi Rigi.

Amnesty says according to their sources, interrogators subjected Ebrahim Narouie, who was convicted of "corruption on earth" (efsad-e fel arz) in late 2022, to torture and other ill-treatment, including through sticking needles into his genitals, to compel him to make forced "confessions" in writing and in front of a video camera.

Another source also told Amnesty that the authorities repeatedly beat Mohammad Ghobadlou, whose conviction for "corruption on earth" and death sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in December 2022, and withheld his bipolar medication. A forensic report confirms that while in custody, he sustained bruising and injuries.



Mohammad Ghobadlou, 22, has been sentenced to death in Iran. (Twitter)

And aside from targeting protesters, the regime in Iran is also known to target children. Amnesty says Hossein Shahbazi, aged 22 – who was also subject to "grossly unfair and his torture-tainted confessions" — could be executed this week in relation to a crime that took place when he was just 17 years old.

It says Iran's government often violates the absolute prohibition on the use of the death penalty against people who were children at the time of the offence for which they have been convicted.

## 'Australia not doing enough'

Following Mr Kazemi's execution, Foreign Minister Penny Wong tweeted: "Iran's execution of Majid Kazemi, Saeed Yaqoubi and Saleh Mirhashemi exemplifies the regime's brutality against its people. We condemn these reprehensible killings in the strongest possible terms. Our thoughts are with their families. Australia stands with the people of Iran."

Mr Hashemi says that is too little too late.

He had written an open letter to Ms Wong asking for her support and had conversations with her office.

"Honestly in the months leading to the Majid's death, I begged Australian government and Minister Wong to just pick up the phone and speak to the Iranian foreign minister and ask them about their release, or even having a fair trial instead of the sham trial that they ran ... but they refused," he says.

He says hours before Mr Kazemi was hanged, he called Minister Wong's office again.

"I said, 'okay, this is the last moment that only like ministerial level thing might be useful and might work'."

Mr Hashemi says Minister Wong's tweet after the execution "was really sad moment for me".

"She waited until the Majid was murdered before condemning the Iranian government," he says.

"She claims stand with people of Iran, but honestly, she could have taken much more effective (action) for my cousin."

The Attorney-General's department has said it does not have the ability to designate the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity under Australia's Criminal Code.

In March, Australia [issued new sanctions against Iran](#), targeting the morality police involved in the death of Mahsa Amini, as well as those supplying drones to Russia amid its invasion of Ukraine. The move comes after Australia sanctioned senior Iranian military and government officials [in February](#) and [in December](#).

Minister Wong was contacted for comment. A spokeswoman for the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade (DFAT) responded on Monday afternoon, saying, "the Australian Government is deeply disturbed by Iran's use of the death penalty" and that "Iran's execution of protesters exemplifies the regime's brutality against its people".

The spokeswoman said Minister Wong condemned Iran's use of the death penalty and called on Iran to immediately cease its execution of protesters.

She said Minister Wong delivered the same message directly to the Iranian Foreign Minister when they spoke in March.

Hours before Majid Kazemi was hanged, his cousin called Penny Wong's office pleading for her to help him. *(Supplied)*

And on three occasions in May, including the day of Mr Kazemi's execution, she said DFAT called Iran's Chargé d'affaires "to directly express the government's condemnation of Iran's execution of protesters and to demand an end to its use of the death penalty".

Mr Hashemi says if the Australian government really cares about human rights and wants to stop the executions it will stop negotiating with Iran's government and will [list Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corp as a terrorist organisation, as was called for by a recent Senate inquiry](#).

Last week Senator Claire Chandler received confirmation at Senate estimates that the Australian government wasn't progressing any amendments to allow a listing of the IRGC.

Currently foreign governments are engaging in prisoner swaps instead of taking such action against Iran's government.

On Friday, Iran freed Belgian aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele after almost 15 months in custody, in a prisoner exchange for Iranian diplomat, Assadollah Assadi.



Iran freed Belgian aid worker Olivier Vandecasteele after almost 15 months in custody, after a prisoner exchange. *(Supplied.)*

Assadi was jailed in Belgium over a 2018 plot to bomb an Iranian Opposition rally outside Paris. And Belgium, which has been negotiating for his release, has always insisted that Mr Vandecasteele was innocent of "espionage" and his trial was rigged.

"In many ways it seems that the worse the behaviour of the regime, the more leverage they are allowed to have, whether that's through nuclear negotiations, by using executions as a political tool, or by increasing links with other dangerous regimes," Senator Chandler says.

Mr Hashemi says if the Australian government is serious about stopping the Islamic Republic human rights abuses, it needs to do more.

"All the people around the world, they are sending their sympathy and they are not happy with all of these human rights violations — but you are the people in power; you could do something more powerful and useful," he says.





# THEY TORTURED ME



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centerforhumanrights Listen to death row prisoner in Iran, arrested amid anti-state protests, describe the torture that made him falsely "confess" to a crime.

Saeed Yaghoubi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Majid Kazemi could be hanged at any moment after a sham trial.

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Full transcript: They used a taser on me... I was tortured. They said, 'We'll hang your brothers Hossein and Mehdi along with you.' They said, 'Help your family; we won't let go of your parents.' They tortured me and used a taser on me. They were killing me. In court I said I don't accept anything I said [under torture]. They flogged the soles of my feet. They took me to a place where there were no cameras and told me to drop my pants. They said they would shove a baton up my anus. I begged them not to, that I would accept all the charges. They were killing me. God knows I didn't do anything, I did nothing. They couldn't arrest those who did it. They told me, 'Is this your Colt?' I said no. They beat me and I said it's mine. They said, "You fired shots with it, right?" I said no. They beat and said they would hang my brothers Hossein and Mehdi and bother my mother in the hospital and I said charge me with anything you want but don't do anything to my family. I was under constant torture. I was at working until 8.30 at night... I'm not in any group. I have my own copper shop and I don't have any criminal record. What group? What political party? What kind of story is this? They can go and get statements from people in the neighborhood. My shop is still there and they can check the cameras that I was there until 8.30 at night... When they took me to court I was down to 50 kilos (110 pounds). Who can I talk to? Where can I complain about what they did?"

#Iran #StopExecutionsinIran #DeathPenalty #UN #FreeSpeech  
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## PRISONERS

# Three Iranian Protesters Executed despite Popular Opposition

MAY 19, 2023

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📷 Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were executed in Dastgerd prison in the central city of Isfahan on May 19



Iranian authorities have executed **three men** accused of deadly violence during last year's anti-government protests, despite public opposition and appeals by human rights groups.

Mizan, the judiciary's website, announced that **Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi** were executed on May 19 in Dastgerd prison in the central city of Isfahan.

Authorities claim they were implicated in the deaths of two members of the Basij paramilitary force and a law enforcement officer during nationwide protests in Isfahan in November.

Human rights groups say the three were deprived of access to their chosen lawyers, **subjected to torture and**

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The US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, had called the imminent execution of the three men “an affront to the human rights and basic dignity of all Iranians” that showed the government “has learned nothing from the protests.”

**Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley**  

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Iran's possible imminent execution of Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Saeed Yaghoubi is an affront to the human rights and basic dignity of all Iranians and shows the regime has learned nothing from the protests. [#DoNotLetThemKillUs](#) 1/2

6:07 PM · May 18, 2023 

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Campaigners have denounced the Islamic Republic's escalation of executions in recent weeks and accused the authorities of using the death penalty as a means to intimidate Iranians.

Iranian authorities have cracked down hard on months-long nationwide protests sparked by the September death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in police custody.

More than 520 people were killed during demonstrations and over 20,000 others were unlawfully detained, activists say. Following biased trials, the judiciary has handed down stiff sentences, **including the death penalty**, to protesters.

The demonstrations have subsided in recent weeks, but there are still sporadic acts of defiance, including the refusal of a growing number of women to wear the mandatory head covering in public places.

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PRISONERS

# The Dubious "Confessions" of Three Iranians at Imminent Risk of Execution

MAY 15, 2023

SOLMAZ EIKDAR

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📹 On May 12, Amnesty International warned that Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi could be executed at any time after the Supreme Court upheld their "unjust" convictions and death sentences earlier this month



The recent broadcast of a video showing the forced "confessions" of three Iranian men sentenced to death on Iranian state TV has raised concerns about their imminent execution in the central city of Isfahan.

On May 12, Amnesty International warned that Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi could be executed at any time after the Supreme Court upheld their "unjust" convictions and death sentences earlier this month. The London-based human rights watchdog urged Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to immediately halt any plans to execute the trio and quash their convictions and death sentences.

Mirhashemi was twice sentenced to death, while Kazemi and Yaghoubi were handed capital punishment and a 10-year prison sentence in relation to the death of three members of the paramilitary Basij force during protests in Tehran on November 15, 2022.



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He said that the broadcast of the forced "confessions" after the court upheld the verdicts terrified the trio's families.

After the case was referred to the Supreme Court, he also said, the families received information that Asadullah Jafari, the chief prosecutor of Isfahan province, sent two busloads of people to Tehran to gather in front of the court with the aim of exerting pressure to get the death sentences confirmed and quickly executed.

It is evident that Kazemi, Mirhashemi and Yaghoubi were coerced into making "confessions" for crimes they did not commit.

In the video broadcast on state TV, the defendants claimed to have had "access to weapons" and that they did "a lot of shooting." Although they mentioned the presence of other individuals who were also "shooting," they did not mention any violence directed toward security forces.

Besides, the Supreme Court acknowledged that Mirhashemi denied carrying any weapons, and the weapon allegedly belonging to him has not been recovered.

The video of the "confessions" is only 4 minutes and 16 seconds long, but it has been edited 53 times to include images from the night of the incident, the defendants' accusations against each other, the moment of their arrest and the reconstruction of the crime scene.

The clip contains several errors. For instance, it claims to show the moment when one of the defendants was arrested by agents of Isfahan's Sahib Al-Zaman Corps. However, the images clearly show that the defendant's hands are tied behind his back.

This calls into question the credibility of the entire video. If its creators are capable of making such a basic mistake, it is possible that they have also fabricated other parts of the video.

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## Iran condemned after executing three men over recent protests

By [Rob Picheta](#) and [Irene Nasser](#), CNN

Updated 7:07 AM EDT, Fri May 19, 2023



AFP/Getty Images

Protests rocked Iran last fall before being suppressed by the regime.

**(CNN)** — Iran has been condemned by international watchdogs after it executed three more men over recent protests that rocked the country.

Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaqoubi were executed in Isfahan, judiciary news outlet Mizan News said on Friday. The three were accused of carrying out an attack that killed three security officers in Isfahan in November 2022 during anti-government protests.

The US State Department on Thursday urged Iran to refrain from carrying out the executions, calling the proceedings “sham trials.”

And Amnesty International said the men were “fast-tracked through Iran’s judicial system” without due process being observed



Iran executes two people convicted of blasphemy



AudioLive TV

It was the highest number of executions in the Islamic republic since 2015, according to a report released last month by the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) and the France-based Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) groups.

More than half of the executions last year took place after the protests erupted in September.

The US State Department condemned the latest planned executions of Kazemi, Mirhashemi and Yaqoubi on Thursday.

“The execution of these men, after what have been widely regarded as sham trials, would be an affront to human rights and basic dignity in Iran and everywhere,” said State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel at a press briefing.

“It is clear from this episode that the Iranian regime has learned nothing from the protests that began with another death, the death of Mahsa Amini in September of last year,” Patel added.

The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, another NGO that monitors human rights violations in Iran, said on [Twitter](#) that the three men “had the minimal defense rights of an accused.” The group decried what it called an “unfathomable wave of executions in Iran.”

Nationwide protests rocked Iran last fall, as decades of bitterness over the regime’s treatment of women and other issues boiled over after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the country’s so-called morality police.

Authorities violently repressed the months-long movement, which had posed one of the biggest domestic threats to Iran’s ruling clerical regime in more than a decade.

CNN’s Kareem El Damanhoury and Joseph Ataman contributed reporting.

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## More Executions of Protesters in Iran Imminent after Sham Trials

(https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/05/more-executions-of-protesters-in-iran-imminent-after-sham-trials/)



**Prosecution of Three Young Men Relied on Torture, Forced “Confessions”**

### Defendant: “They kept beating me to make me tell their version of their crime on camera”

May 17, 2023 – Three young men—Saeed Yaghoubi, 37, Saleh Mirhashemi, 36, and Majid Kazemi, 30— who were arrested amid the nationwide protests in November 2022 in Iran, tortured into making “confessions,” and sentenced to death in January 2023 after a four-day trial without a jury in Iran’s Revolutionary Court system, are now at imminent risk of being executed.

“Three tortured protesters could be hanged at any moment—after a trial in which they were denied the ability to prepare a proper defense, the prosecution relied on forced ‘confessions,’ and the indictment was riddled with irregularities that reveal this was a politically motivated case,” said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

“The international community—governments worldwide, UN leaders, human rights organizations, and international legal associations—must come together to demand a halt to the executions of these three young men before it is too late,” Ghaemi said.

Ghaemi noted that countless other prisoners in Iran, many of whom are ethnic minorities, are also at risk of execution for drug crimes, which do not meet international standards that prohibit the death penalty for all but the “most serious crimes,” which do not include drug offenses.

“These individuals are unknown outside their communities and in urgent need of international recognition,” Ghaemi said. “Countries that have abolished the death penalty, in the EU, South America and elsewhere, should urgently call on the Islamic Republic to halt its state-sanctioned killing rampage, which has surged since state protests began in September 2022.”

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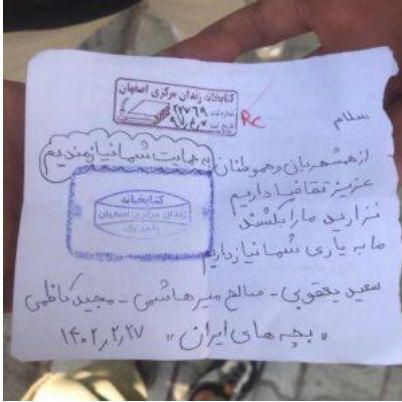


### Torture, No Evidence, No Independent Defense Counsel

Protesters who had gathered outside Iran's central Isfahan prison (also known as Dastgerd prison) where the three men have been imprisoned were met with gunfire from state security forces during the evening of May 14 as they shouted "No more executions!"

The three men were charged with killing a police officer and two Basij militiamen, but the prosecution's only "evidence" was taped, forced "confessions" obtained under torture in which the men make self-incriminating statements as well as against each other.

Torture, forced self-incriminating statements, and confessions used as evidence against other defendants in court are all illegal under both Iranian and international law.



(<https://twitter.com/1500tasvir/status/1658779769805103104>)

"...We ask our fellow citizens and compatriots not to allow us to be killed. We need your help. We need your support," said the men in a hand-written note smuggled out of Isfahan's central prison on May 17, 2023.

### Defendant Described Horrific Torture

In a phone call with a relative, Kazemi described his torture:

*In court, I said that I don't accept any of these charges, I don't accept anything that I said [under torture]. They tortured me and used a Taser on me. They were killing me.*

*They flogged the soles of my feet. They took me to a place where there were no cameras and told me to drop my pants. They said they would shove a baton up my anus. I begged them not to, that I would accept all the charges.*

Kazemi also noted that camera footage at his workplace proves he wasn't there at the time of the crime, and that his interrogators tried to pin the weapon on him even though he doesn't own a gun.

He added:

*They couldn't arrest those who did it. They told me, 'Is this your Colt?' I said no. They beat me and I said it's mine. They said, "You fired shots with it, right?" I said no. They beat me and said they would hang my brothers Hossein and Mehdi and bother my mother in the hospital and I said charge me with anything you want but don't do anything to my family. I was under constant torture. I was at work until 8.30 at night... I'm not in any group. I have my own copper shop and I don't have any criminal record. What group? What political party? What kind of story is this? They can go and get statements from people in the neighborhood. My shop is still there and they can check the cameras that I was there until 8.30 at night...*

In another recorded phone call (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXnsSWkuh9I>) from January 2023, co-defendant Saleh Mirhashemi, a karate champion, told his mother, "I asked the mullah where the gun was, I did not even have a firecracker with me."

Despite all this, the men were sentenced to death with no chance of an appeal.

### Executions Soaring in Iran

Recorded executions in Iran soared from 314 in 2021 to 576 in 2022, according to Amnesty International (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/death-penalty-2022-executions-skyrocket/>).

At least 231 people have been executed in Iran since January 2023, according to research by CHRI, including two street protesters: Mohammad Mehdi Karami (<https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/01/two-more-men-executed-in-iran-in-connection-with-protests-others-at-imminent-risk/>), 22, and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini (<https://iranhumanrights.org/2023/01/two-more-men-executed-in-iran-in-connection-with-protests-others-at-imminent-risk/>), 39, in January 2023.


Two other street protesters, Moshen Shekari (<https://iranhumanrights.org/2022/12/executions-in-iran-world-must-respond-with-strong-action-against-state-killings-of-protesters/>) and Majidreza Rahnavard (<https://iranhumanrights.org/2022/12/lynching-in-iran-majidreza-rahnavard-23-publicly-hanged-in-state-sponsored-murder/>), both 23-years-old, were hanged in December 2022.


All the trials of the street protesters have been marked with egregious denials of due process, including the ability to choose one's lawyer, as well as the chance to prepare and present a proper defense.

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UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk called on (https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/iran-frightening-number-executions-turk-calls-end-death-penalty) the authorities in Iran to "halt all executions" and "abolish the death penalty," in a statement (https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/iran-frightening-number-executions-turk-calls-end-death-penalty) on May 9, 2023, stating that over 10 people are being put to death each week in Iran, making it "one the world's highest executors."

 **centerforhumanrights** View profile  
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# Iran

UPDATED May 18, 2023

By [RFE/RL's Radio Farda](#)

## Three Jailed Iranian Protesters Send Plea For Help Fearing Their Executions Are Imminent



Names from left to right: Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Saeid Yaqoubi were implicated in an incident on November 16, 2022, during which two Basij paramilitary force members and a law enforcement officer were fatally shot in Isfahan.

Three jailed Iranian protesters who fear their execution is imminent have appealed to the public for support in a handwritten note saying, "Don't let them kill us."

The opposition activist collective 1500tasvir, known for its coverage of Iranian protest developments, released the note on May 17 after receiving it through intermediaries for the condemned men: Majid Kazemi, Saeid Yaqoubi, and Saleh Mirhashemi.

"Don't let them kill us. We need your help," read the [note](#), which was released amid reports the men were given a final meeting with their families and has heightened fears that their executions could occur at any moment.

Adding to the apprehension, state-run TV aired a video of the three defendants' "confessions" -- which the families and human rights organizations say were likely made under duress -- a night earlier, a move many saw as an attempt to justify carrying out the death penalty for the three, who were implicated in an incident on November 16, 2022, during which two Basij paramilitary force members and a law enforcement officer were fatally shot in Isfahan.

Amnesty International has said the three protesters have been deprived access to their chosen lawyers and were pushed into forced confessions. Some groups have said the three were tortured while in detention.



SEE ALSO:

[Amnesty Says Executions, Led By Iran, Skyrocketed Last Year](#)

The United States on May 18 urged Iran not to carry out the executions.

"We join the people of Iran and the international community in calling on Iran to not carry out these executions," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said.

"The execution of these men after what have widely been regarded as sham trials would be an affront to human rights and basic dignity in Iran and everywhere," Patel told reporters.

Kazemi's case has caused concern in Australia, where some of his family live, with his cousin saying that he had only been involved in "peaceful protests" for change.

Other family members and and supporters of the three have held nightly vigils around a prison in the central Iranian city of Isfahan where they are being held. The **message** of their note has gone viral on Iranian social media platforms, with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us" becoming a rallying cry for their cause.

Ali Karimi, a former star of Iranian soccer, joined the campaign, posting on Instagram with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us":

"No soil has buried life within itself like the soil of Iran," he wrote.

Other family members and and supporters of the three have held nightly vigils around a prison in the central Iranian city of Isfahan where they are being held. The message of their note has gone viral on Iranian social media platforms, with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us" becoming a **rallying cry** for their cause.

Ali Karimi, a former star of Iranian football, joined the campaign, posting on Instagram at the hashtag:

"No soil has buried life within itself like the soil of Iran," he **wrote**.

Iran has seen a surge in executions in recent months, a trend that has drawn widespread domestic and international condemnation.

Human rights organizations have strongly objected to the wave of death sentences, saying they are being issued against protesters in Iran after "sham trials" that are often rushed through the courts.

Amnesty said in an annual report on May 16 that Iran saw executions soar to 576 in 2022 from 314 the previous year. The Norway-based Iran Human Rights group says that so far this year, at least 243 people have been executed in Iran.

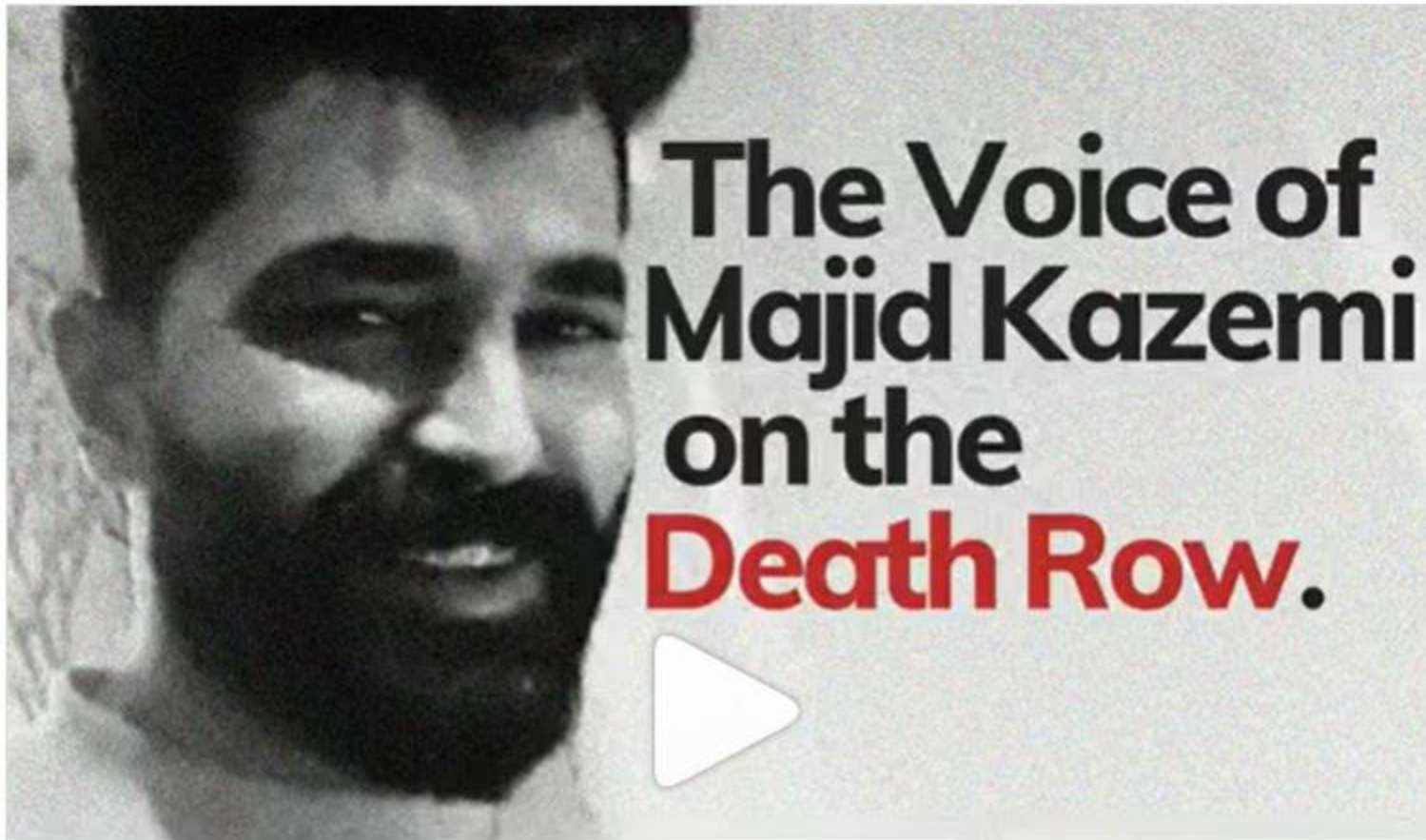
Lawmakers have pushed the judiciary to render the death penalty in trials for those arrested during unrest sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September while she was in police custody for allegedly wearing a head scarf improperly.

The protests have involved tens of thousands of Iranians and are seen as one of the biggest threats to the Islamic leadership since it took power in 1979.

So far at least four protesters have been executed.

Human rights activists say authorities in Iran are using the executions to try to instill fear in society rather than to combat crime.

Written by Ardeshir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda



They kept **beating me**  
and saying these weapons are yours



1500tasvir\_en • Following

Original audio



1500tasvir\_en .

Majid Kazemi along with two other people in the Khane Isfahan case are sentenced to death on the baseless charge of killing two Basij and one police force members. In this audio file, Majid Kazemi says all of his confessions have been obtained under torture and none of them are true. The Islamic Republic wants to take these three people's lives with baseless charges and false fabrications without any evidence.

Edited · 17 w



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Names from left to right: Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, Saeed Yaghoubi © Private

May 17, 2023

## Iran: International community must take bold action to prevent the execution of three tortured protesters

Responding to fears over the imminent execution in Iran of three protesters – Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi – from Esfahan after state media broadcast their forced “confessions” and the Supreme Court upheld their unjust conviction and death sentence despite torture and fair trial concerns, Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said:

“The shocking manner in which the trial and sentencing of these protesters was fast-tracked through Iran’s judicial system amid the use of torture-tainted ‘confessions’, serious procedural flaws and a lack of evidence is another example of the Iranian authorities’ brazen disregard for the rights to life and fair trial. Majid Kazemi said in an audio recording from prison that he was forced to make false self-incriminating statements after interrogators beat him, gave him electric shocks, subjected him to mock executions, and threatened to rape him, execute his brothers and harass his parents.

“The use of the death penalty against these men is a blatant act of vengeance against a courageous generation of protesters for steadfastly demanding the rights of Iranian people during the past seven months. It is further evidence that the authorities are taking increasingly violent and extreme measures to torment and terrorize people in Iran to end the protests at any cost and impose silence and subservience through brute force.

“Amid the authorities’ horrific execution spree of scores of people since the end of April 2023, the international community must take urgent and bold action to stop the execution of these protesters before it is too late. Prison authorities told their families that today was their final visit. The international community must also press the Iranian authorities to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions. We urge all states to exercise universal jurisdiction over all Iranian officials reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law.”

## BACKGROUND

Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were arrested in November 2022 following their participation in protests in Esfahan city amid the nationwide protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini.

According to informed sources, the three men were subjected to torture while forcibly disappeared and forced to make incriminating statements, which formed the basis of the criminal case against them. Sources said that interrogators suspended Majid Kazemi upside down and showed him a video of them torturing his brother, whom they also detained. They also subjected Majid Kazemi to mock executions at least 15 times by standing him on a chair and putting a rope around his neck, only to pull him down at the last moment. In the days leading up to the trial, they threatened to kill his brothers if he did not accept his charges and “confess” to whatever they said.

In an [audio message](#) from inside Dastgerd Prison, where the men are held, Majid Kazemi said: “I swear to God I am innocent. I didn’t have any weapons on me. They [security forces] kept beating me and ordering me to say this weapon is mine. ... I told them I would say whatever they wanted, just please leave my family alone. I did whatever they wanted because of the torture.”

The men were put on trial in December 2022 and January 2023 and sentenced to death on the charge of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) for the alleged possession of a firearm. On 10 May, the authorities announced that the men’s sentences had been upheld by the Supreme Court despite due process violations, significant procedural flaws, lack of evidence, and torture allegations that were never investigated. According to informed sources, the authorities had told the men’s families on several occasions before the Supreme Court’s decision that they would be pardoned and released due to lack of evidence.

The families were called for a visit with the men today, during which prison authorities told them that this was their final visitation, leading to serious concerns that they may be executed as early as tomorrow morning. The families have called for a protest outside Dastgerd prison at 10pm Tehran time tonight.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution; because the death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

## Topics

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## Sydney man campaigning to save cousin, Majid Kazemi, from death row after Iran protests

7:30 / By [Mahmood Fazal](#) and [Rachael Brown](#) for [Background Briefing](#) and 7:30

Posted Tue 17 Jan 2023 at 7:00pm



Majid Kazemi maintains he has been tortured into giving false confessions by the Iranian regime. *(Supplied)*

Sydney man Mohammed Hashemi is part of a desperate campaign to save his cousin, Majid Kazemi, from execution in Iran.

Mr Kazemi is among four men accused of being involved in the deaths of three Basij militia members during anti-government protests in the Iranian city of Isfahan.

He was in prison for a month before his cousin, northern Sydney's Mohammed Hashemi, learnt of the arrest.

"After they arrested Majid [Kazemi], they arrested his brother just because he was with him [at the time of the arrest]," Mr Hashemi says.

"They tortured his brother so Majid would confess, otherwise they threatened to execute his brother as well."

In a phone call made from inside Dastgerd prison to his fiancée last week after he was sentenced, Mr Kazemi maintained his innocence and claimed he was tortured into giving a false confession.

A recording of the conversation was published on social media.

In it, Mr Kazemi can be heard saying: "They beat [us] again, and we were told to say these [things] in court, all of it under torture. I had no gun and committed nothing."

"Under torture, I said 'yes' to everything."

Human rights advocates claim the trials of Iranian protesters like Mr Kazemi are unlawful, citing a lack of legal representation and the prevalence of "coerced confessions".

Mr Hashemi says it was heartbreaking to hear Mr Kazemi's plea to his fiancée.

"He was asking his fiancée, please do as much as you can, please help me, if you could do anything I'll bring flowers for you, and if not, maybe you'll need to bring flowers for me [to his grave]."





Majid Kazemi has been sentenced to death in connection with protests in Iran. *(Supplied)*

Mr Kazemi has told family members he's in a bad way.

"He has some stomach issues and he can't see the doctor. He asked for treatment. He needs treatment. His nose is broken. His arm is broken. His family visited him and he wasn't able to walk," Mr Hashemi says.

Mr Kazemi's brother, who didn't attend the protest but was kept in jail for 40 days, has shown Mr Hashemi photos of his own bruising and a broken tooth, and told him he has broken ribs and some head injuries.

## The clock is ticking

On January 9, about two months after his cousin's arrest, Mr Hashemi was scrolling Instagram after work when suddenly the news dropped — his cousin had been sentenced to death.

"I was shocked, just crying. It was the hardest moment in my life."



Mohammed Hashemi is desperately trying to advocate for a fair trial for his cousin who is on death row. *(ABC News)*

Mr Hashemi shares a close bond with Mr Kazemi.

"Majid [Kazemi] was born two days after me, we were incredibly close growing up. He's really cheeky, funny and full of energy."

He last saw his cousin when he visited their hometown of Estefahn last March.

"He was really kind. He brought me some sweets. He asked me about Australia, and that he wants to come here, and how he could do that."

Mr Kazemi had a successful business in the town making kitchenware from copper.

"He gave me a cup that he had made. I still have it. It's my closest memory of him."

Now, Mr Hashemi can barely sleep.

"Every day we go 'OK, are there any updates on the execution? It's around 2-3pm, the time here that we know there will be something ... Have they done anything today or not?' That's really sad, really hard, imagining if they have another day to live."

"I need to be on my phone every second but any time I receive a text or call, it really scares me."

This week Mr Kazemi was moved to solitary confinement, which his family and experts fear is an indication he will be executed soon.

"The reason he was moved was because his voice was published and he said he confessed under torture. The situation is becoming really urgent," says Mr Hashemi.

Mr Hashemi says the family has also been threatened since the phone conversation was published on social media.

"His family are in a really bad situation. They are under pressure not to speak. The government are trying to keep him quiet."



Majid Kazemi's family in Iran are being pressured to stay silent, according to Mr Hashemi.

*(Supplied)*

Mr Hashemi met with advisers to Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Labor MP, Josh Burns last Friday.

He says he hasn't been updated since the meeting, and is pleading for Minister Wong to pressure the Iranian government for the release of Mr Kazemi and the other political prisoners or, at a minimum, to call for free and fair trials.

"Australia is a country that believes in human rights, so this is an opportunity for them to be international leaders."

"Even if Majid [Kazemi] is not an Australian citizen, Minister Wong please, do something for basic human rights for the people of Iran. I think we have 80,000 Iranian Australians, and over 30,000 in NSW, and 10,000 attended protests on the 10th of December, so listen to them and what they are saying.

"I know there's been some communication with the Iranian embassy but that's not honestly enough ... The only thing that could stop the Iranian government is international pressure."

During the trial, Mr Hashemi says Mr Kazemi wasn't allowed to choose his own lawyer and the appeal period was halved without notice.

Mr Kazemi has since appealed his death sentence, but Mr Hashemi says everyone is in the dark.

"If they [can] change 20 days to 10 days we can't trust anything.

"Honestly, I'm scared anything could happen right now, or in the next few days, I really don't know ... I'm always just checking my phone, checking the news. I think it's more than 20 people they are sentenced to execute now."



Mohammed Hashemi feels unable to do anything other than advocate for his cousin. (ABC News)

## 'We haven't sanctioned nearly enough'

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, an academic who spent more than two years imprisoned in Iran on espionage charges, has been working with Mr Hashemi's family, backing the campaign for Mr Kazemi to be spared.

"Particularly during the current unrest, the use of torture to extract confessions seems to have really increased ... Once you make a false confession, it's almost impossible to retract, even if you try to retract it in court."

Dr Moore-Gilbert concedes Australia is limited in what it can do, because Mr Kazemi is not an Australian citizen.

But she says the federal government could play its part in saving this man's life, by naming him specifically.

"If we stand up, the Australian government and all of us in the community stand up, and say that Majid Kazemi matters to us ... and that we're taking a particular concern in his welfare, I do think it might make them think twice about carrying out the execution."

In December, Penny Wong announced sanctions against Iran, including asset freezes and travel bans for some Iranian individuals involved in protest crackdowns.

But Dr Moore-Gilbert says Australia needs to introduce more robust sanctions.

"We haven't sanctioned nearly enough people. If you look at what some other countries are doing, countries like Canada have sanctioned thousands of human rights abusers in Iran.

"I personally would like them to take far greater action, mirroring that of some of our international allies, like the US, Canada, UK, European Union ... And I think they should also consider proscribing the Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terror organisation, a trend that we're seeing emerge throughout Europe as well as in Canada and the US."

The ABC has contacted the Iranian ambassador's office and Penny Wong for comment.

- Contact [backgroundbriefing@abc.net.au](mailto:backgroundbriefing@abc.net.au)
- Or, send an encrypted email from a Protonmail account to [backgroundbriefing@protonmail.com](mailto:backgroundbriefing@protonmail.com)
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## Iran

UPDATED January 10, 2023

By RFE/RL's Radio Farda

### Iran Sentences Three More To Death Over Protests, Drawing Condemnation From Western Governments



Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Yaghob Kordsofla were sentenced for "waging war against God" in their alleged role in the deaths of three Basij militia members during protests in the central Iranian city of Isfahan.

Three more Iranian protesters have been sentenced to death, bringing to 17 the number of people condemned to such a penalty in connection with protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini following her arrest by Tehran's morality police for allegedly violating the hijab law.

Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Yaghob Kordsofla were sentenced for "waging war against God" in their alleged role in the deaths of three Basij militia members during protests in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, the judiciary's Mizan Online website said on January 9.

Iranian professional soccer player Amir Nasr-Azadani, another of the accused in the case, has been sentenced to 16 years in prison on the charge of "assisting in waging war against God."

Nasr-Azadani had faced the possibility of a death sentence. His case has provoked a strong reaction from the international soccer community, including an announcement from the global professional soccer players union FIFPRO that it was "shocked and sickened" by the the player facing such a punishment for campaigning for women's rights and basic freedoms in his own country.

In the face of mass protests around the country since Amini's death in mid-September, Iranian authorities have warned of harsher penalties to participants in the unrest.

Four of those convicted have been executed -- including two over the weekend -- while two others, Mohammad Ghobadlou and Mohamad Broghani, had their sentences upheld by the country's Supreme Court.

In the early hours of January 9, following a report of the imminent execution of Ghobadlou and Broghani, hundreds gathered in front of the Rajaei-Shahr prison in Karaj chanting anti-government slogans.

The protests, highlighted by women and schoolgirls making unprecedented shows of support, are seen as the biggest threat to the Islamic government since the 1979 revolution.

The German, French, Norwegian, and Danish governments lodged protests with Iran after the executions over the weekend.

The executions of Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini and Mohammad Mahdi Karam by hanging was a use of the death penalty as a tool of oppression, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

"This is appalling. We call on Iran to cease carrying out death sentences and release those who have been unlawfully detained immediately," Scholz said [on Twitter](#).

After the executions on January 7, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock summoned the Iranian ambassador to the Foreign Ministry. The French, Danish, and Norwegian foreign ministries also summoned Tehran's ambassadors, as did the European Union. The EU's External Action Service (EEAS) said the EU and its member states were united in their reaction against Tehran's actions.

White House national-security adviser Jake Sullivan condemned the latest executions and death sentences and said the United States stands with other countries demanding an "immediate cessation" of the death sentences.

Sullivan said the U.S. condemned the executions of Karami and Hosseini and the additional executions announced on January 9.

"We join with partners around the world calling for an immediate cessation of these abuses. Iran will be held accountable," Sullivan [said on Twitter](#).

The regime has blamed Western governments for the unrest and has responded to the protests with a bloody crackdown that human rights groups say has left almost 500 dead and hundreds more injured. Thousands more have been arrested, including many protesters, as well as journalists, lawyers, activists, and others, amid concerns about the charges against them.

Written by Ardeshir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda

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## More News

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May 09, 2023

By [RFE/RL's Radio Farda](#)

### Iranian Students, Teachers, Activists Team Up In Rallies Decrying State Of Education