

## News

[Awards](#) [Business](#) [Congress](#) [Covid-19](#) [Digital Media](#) [Editorial](#) [Español](#) [Media Innovation](#)  
[Media Policy](#) [Membership](#) [Press Corner](#) [Press Freedom](#) [Print-production](#) [Women in News](#)  
[SUBSCRIBE](#)

# Iranian journalists Niloofar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi have been awarded WAN-IFRA's 2023 Golden Pen of Freedom

**2023-06-28.** The two Iranian journalists were instrumental in publicising news about Mahsa Amini's death while in police custody, as well as the nationwide protests that followed. Now, they're being held in Tehran's Evin Prison.



Tehran, Iran. 17th Aug, 2022. Journalists Niloofar Hamedi (l) and Elaheh Mohammadi (r). Credit: Mehrdad Aladin/dpa/Alamy Live News

### RELATED

by WAN-IFRA External Contributor [info@wan-ifra.org](mailto:info@wan-ifra.org) | June 28, 2023

#### MEDIA FREEDOM INITIATIVES

['We, the Media' Fund](#)

[Golden Pen of Freedom](#)

[Media Development](#)

[Journalist Safety](#)

[Afghan Journalist Appeal](#)

[Protest Campaigns](#)

[Backstory Podcast](#)

[Women in News](#)

[Strengthening African  
Media](#)

[African Media Grants](#)

#### By *Colette Davidson*

On 13 September 2022, 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian Mahsa Amini was arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly wearing her veil improperly. She was taken into police custody and fell into a coma under suspicious circumstances. Three days later, Amini died in a Tehran hospital.

Amini's death set off some of the largest demonstrations to hit Iran in years, with thousands taking to the streets in honour of women's rights and in protest against Iran's repressive regime. Through it all, two journalists – Niloofar Hamedi and Elahe Mohammadi – shared Amini's story with the world, showing their commitment to freedom of the press, equality, and justice.

Hamedi was one of the first journalists to break the story about Amini, after she visited her in Tehran's Kasra hospital while Amini was still alive and in a coma. Hamedi published a photo of Amini's parents hugging in the hospital, which rapidly spread online. But on 22 September, authorities raided Hamedi's home and arrested her based on her reporting.

[Forum](#)[GENERAL  
INFORMATION](#)[About us](#)[Press Corner](#)[contact us](#)

Mohammadi was arrested on her way to the police station on 29 September.

Now, both women remain in a high-security cellblock in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. The Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and the intelligence agency of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard have accused Hamed and Mohammadi of planning to orchestrate nationwide protests with their reporting, and have charged them with national security crimes – charges that carry the possibility of the death sentence.

After eight months in custody, the trials of Hamed and Mohammadi began on 29 and 30 May. But according to their families, neither of the two journalists had been given access to their case files ahead of the trial, and Hamed's husband said in a tweet that they had not been allowed to speak to their lawyer less than a week before the trial was set to begin.

"We're calling for their immediate acquittal and release," says Hadi Ghaemi, Executive Director of the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran. "Because they covered mass events in real time, [the Iranian authorities] are making it sound like they coordinated to incite protests, but they didn't instigate anything. They were just doing their jobs as journalists."

Hamed and Mohammadi have become symbols of Iran's protest movement, which has continued since Amini's death. The Iranian government has detained more than 20,000 protesters in recent riots, according to the non-profit Human Rights Activists in Iran, as people continue to stand up for women's rights in the face of Iran's conservative government.

Iran is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a journalist, especially for women journalists, with a ranking of 177 out of 180 in Reporters Without Borders's World Press Freedom Index.

Prior to her arrest, Mohammadi – a reporter for the daily newspaper Hammihan – was sued by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in April 2020 for "spreading lies to disturb the public mind." The charge came as a result of her reporting on the conditions of women in Qarchak Prison during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as protests following the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 in January 2020 by the IRGC. She was banned from writing in the media for one year.

Hamed was working for the reformist daily newspaper Shargh before she was arrested, and is known for her coverage of women in Iran. Hamed is one of the first journalists to have interviewed the family and lawyer of imprisoned writer Sepideh Rashnu, and subsequently published an investigative report on the case.

In addition to their Golden Pen award, the two journalists have been recognised elsewhere for their courage and bravery in reporting. On 2 May, they were awarded the 2023 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize and were included in Time magazine's list of the 100 most influential people in 2023.

"Elahe and Niloufar are indeed deserving of this recognition," says Ghaemi, of the Center for Human Rights in Iran. "It gives them international recognition and helps to signify their unjust detention."

---

WAN-IFRA External Contributor

[info@wan-ifra.org](mailto:info@wan-ifra.org)



## World Editors Forum

The World Editors Forum is the leading global community of editors and is an integral part of WAN-IFRA. We stand up for a free press, quality journalism and newsroom transformation, and have been doing so for over 25 years. We work with editors to shape their newsrooms for the future. We do so by identifying innovation and trends, tools and best practices. We share this intelligence through our blog, newsletter, meetings, networking events, conferences, and research.

RELATED POSTS

---