

Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi sentenced to six years in prison, avoiding death penalty

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Protesters called for Salehi's release during a demonstration on the 44th anniversary of the Iranian revolution, in Paris, France, February 12, 2023.

(CNN) — Dissident Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi, arrested last October for supporting the protest movement in Iran last year, has been sentenced to six years and three months in prison, his official Twitter page said Monday.

"Toomaj Salehi was sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in prison, and after 252 days of solitary confinement, transferred to the general section of the prison," the tweet said.

The rapper, 32, was previously charged with crimes that are punishable by death, including "propagandistic activity against the government, cooperation with hostile governments and forming illegal groups with the intention of creating insecurity in the country," Iranian state media IRNA had previously reported.

Salehi's lawyer, Reza Etemad Ansari, told Iranian daily newspaper Shargh on Monday that the rapper was "acquitted of insulting the Supreme Leader and cooperation with hostile governments."

Ansari told Shargh the rapper will be "banned from leaving the country for two years, and his passport will be revoked" adding that the rapper will be "banned from any activity, preparation and production of music and singing work for two years."

Salehi's uncle, Iqbal Iqbali, said in a statement Monday that his nephew has been "unjustly imprisoned for six and a half years" and thanked supporters who have taken steps for the rapper's release.





Toomaj/YouTube

Salehi was arrested in October last year during protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini.

“Your Toomaj, Iran’s Toomaj, the world’s Toomaj, and our Toomaj was unjustly imprisoned for six and a half years. May he and all of our political prisoners be released,” Iqbali said. “Thank you to all dear ones who have taken steps for the release of Toomaj and for the release of our political prisoners.”

Salehi had expressed support online and in his songs for a wave of nationwide protests that were triggered by the [death of Mahsa Amini](#), a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman who died on September 16 after being detained by “morality police” and taken to a “re-education center,” allegedly for not wearing her hijab properly.

When [nationwide protests](#) started in mid-September last year, Salehi called for Iranians to protest against the government.



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“None of us have different color blood,” Salehi posted on Instagram. “Don’t forget our amazing union and do not allow them to create division between us, in this bloody and sad heaven.”

Salehi, who himself is of Bakhtiari ethnic background, has long rapped about Iran’s multi-ethnic makeup, encouraging unity among Iranians of different ethnic backgrounds.

“Stand with us, we stood by you for years,” Salehi raps in his song “Meydoone jang” which translates as “The Battlefield.”

“It’s not enough to be rebellious, we have revolutionary roots. Arab, Assyrian, Armenian, Turkmen, Mazandari, Sistani, Baluch, Talysh, Tatar, Azeri, Kurd, Gilaki, Lor, Farsi and Qashqai, we are the unity of rivers: we are the sea.”

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