



Menu

World | Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | Latin America | Middle East | US & Canada

ADVERTISEMENT

# Iranian rapper Toomaj Salehi jailed over anti-government protests

🕒 2 days ago

**2022 Iran protests**



TWITTER/@OFFICIALTOOMAJ

**By Graeme Baker**

BBC News

**An Iranian rapper who backed anti-government protesters last year has been jailed for six years and three months, his lawyer and supporters say.**

Toomaj Salehi, 32, was found guilty of "corruption on Earth" but spared execution, his lawyer Roza Etemad-Ansari told the Sharq newspaper.

He was arrested after protests erupted over the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a woman who was arrested for allegedly wearing an "improper" hijab.

Iranian authorities have not commented.

Ms Etemad-Ansari said her client had been cleared of "insulting the Supreme Leader", Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and "communicating with hostile governments".

The charge of "corruption on Earth", however, is one of the country's most serious offences and carries a possible death sentence. It is one of the main charges that the Islamic Republic has historically used against dissidents.

Saleh's sentencing comes after months spent in solitary confinement in Dastgerd prison, in central Iran. He was subjected to a series of closed court sessions that were criticised by rights groups.

His lawyer said her client was transferred to the general section of the prison following his sentencing - news that was confirmed by supporters running Salehi's Instagram page.

The rapper was among the **tens of thousands thousands of mostly young Iranians who protested against the clerical establishment after the death of Mahsa Amini in September**. He also shared clips of his songs supporting the movement.

Human rights activists say hundreds of demonstrators have been killed and thousands arrested in a violent crackdown by security forces, which have portrayed the unrest as "riots" fomented by foreign agents.

Seven protesters have also been executed following what a UN expert has called "arbitrary, summary and sham trials marred by torture allegations". Dozens more have reportedly been sentenced to death or charged with capital offences.

In an interview with CBC News days before his arrest, Salehi said posting videos critical of the regime was "hard, because you are making yourself a target for the regime forces".

He said that those in power were a "mafia that is ready to kill the entire nation... in order to keep its power, money and weapons".

The rapper was first arrested in September 2021, after his songs about corruption, poverty, executions and violence against protesters went viral. He was released on bail after a week, amid widespread condemnation of his arrest.

## Related Topics

[Middle East](#)   [Iran](#)   [2022 Iran protests](#)

## More on this story