



Iranian journalist Nazila Maroufian says she was sexually assaulted in notorious Evin Prison, begins hunger strike

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TEHRAN — Nazila Maroufian, a 23-year-old Kurdish journalist in Iran, has stated in an audio message that she was sexually abused during her recent detention in Iran. Maroufian, known for her interviews with Amjad Amini, the father of Zhina “Mahsa” Amini, who died while in state custody in 2022, released the audio message through various Persian media sites and human rights organizations on Wednesday.

Maroufian, who has been repeatedly targeted by Iranian authorities since her interview with Amjad Amini, has faced multiple arrests in recent months, with her most recent detention occurring in Tehran on 30 August. In the audio message from Tehran’s notorious Evin Prison, she stated, “I was sexually assaulted in a situation where I was in the worst possible state.” This distressing revelation has sparked outrage among human rights activists.

She further disclosed that she has embarked on a hunger strike as a form of protest, not only for herself but also for all women subjected to violence in police stations and prisons in Iran. In her message, she emphasized the dire conditions faced by women in the country.

Maroufian expressed her determination to raise awareness about the ongoing violations of women’s rights. The audio message also included pictures of bruises she allegedly sustained during the assault.

In addition to the sexual assault, Maroufian has reportedly been sentenced to one year in prison on charges of “spreading propaganda” against Iran’s Islamic system. Her previous acts of defiance, such as posting pictures of herself without a headscarf, have challenged the strict dress code for women enforced by the Islamic Republic.

Mahsa Amini’s case has garnered international attention and scrutiny. Iranian authorities have claimed that she died due to a health problem, but her father, Amjad Amini, accused them of lying about the circumstances surrounding his daughter’s death in Maroufian’s interview.

The Iranian government has responded harshly to domestic reporting on the Amini case. Two other women journalists, Niloufar Hamedei and Elahe Mohammadi, who played a crucial role in bringing the story to the world, have been detained in Evin prison for nearly a year since their arrest in September. Hamedei reported for Iran’s Shargh newspaper from the hospital where Mahsa Amini remained in a coma for three days before her tragic passing, while Mohammadi covered Amini’s funeral in Saqez.

Both journalists are currently on trial, facing charges of violating national security, which they deny.

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