



An art piece resembling a postal stamp in support of detained Journalists Niloufar Hamed and Elaheh Mohammadi

Journalists' Hard-Hitting Sentencing Angers Iranians

Tuesday, 10/24/2023



Maryam Sinaee

A British Iranian journalist and political analyst and a regular contributor to Iran International

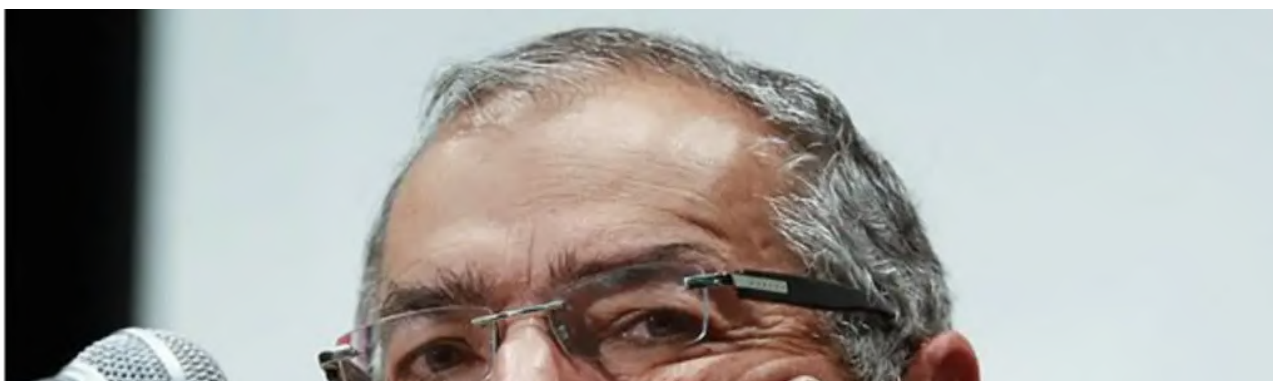
Human Rights - Women's Rights Iran Protests Iran

The sentencing of two journalists for reporting Mahsa Amini's death in custody has sparked outrage among many Iranians, who deem the charges groundless and unjust.

"I wish the judiciary would explain, in simple terms, how Elaheh Mohammadi and Niloofar Hamed 'collaborated with the hostile government of the United States' so that others would learn a lesson and not commit the same crimes. Ditto, what was the crime for which they 'assembled and colluded'?" [reformist politician Sadegh Zibakalam asked in a tweet.](#)

On Sunday, the judiciary declared the sentences of 12 and 13 years for Mohammadi and Hamed, respectively, handed down by a Revolutionary Court under the jurisdiction of Judge Abolghasem Salavati, who has become notorious for imposing death penalties on individuals accused of opposing the regime.

The two journalists who were "provisionally" detained for over a year before their sentencing have denied all the charges brought against them.





Reformist politician Sadegh Zibakalam

Mohammadi, a reporter with the reformist Ham-Mihan, and Hamedi who reported for the reformist Shargh daily, were found guilty of “collaboration with the hostile government of the United States”, “assembly and collusion to act against the country's national security”, and “propaganda against the regime” by the notorious judge Abolghasem Salavati.

They have also been banned from membership in political parties and groups as well as any media or social media activity for two years as an additional punishment.

Many, including veteran journalist Mashallah Shamsolvaezin and attorney-at-law Babak Paknia say the seven-year sentence for “collaboration” with the United States is not justifiable on various grounds including lack of evidence.

The court alleged that the two journalists participated in training courses overseas that were organized by the US State Department through “intermediary organizations” to prepare them for “hybrid wars and soft overthrow” of the regime.

The Judiciary listed several foreign-based organizations, including **United 4 Iran**, the **Small Media Foundation**, and **Iran Academia**, without providing any evidence of their connection to the US government

Speaking to BBC's Persian Service, Shamsolvaezin who is the chairman of Iranians journalists Association, also argued that the Islamic Republic has not officially designated the United States as a “hostile government” because in 2018 it **used the Iran-US Friendship Treaty of 1956** as proof in a case brought against Washington at the International Court of Justice, accusing the US of violating the treaty by freezing Iranian assets abroad.

The reason for the unfair and unjustifiable sentences in “staged trials” against Niloofar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi is “instilling fear among journalists”, **one of the tweets in support of the two journalists** said. “Because fear is one of the biggest weapons of totalitarian governments against opposition.”

The judiciary's official news agency, Mizan Online, released a “documentary” on Sunday. It featured numerous excerpts of conversations of Mohammadi and Hamedi with different people, along with recorded interviews with Mahsa Amini's family members, in an attempt to establish a conspiracy to overthrow the regime. The content of the film appears to have been primarily obtained through the surveillance of the journalists' mobile phones.





Political commentator Ahmad Zeydabadi

Regarding the "documentary," journalist and political commentator **Ahmad Zeydabadi remarked** that the evidence used to incriminate the two journalists implied that, in the authorities' view, journalists' efforts to investigate and shed light on events like Amini's death could only be seen as "collaboration with the US to overthrow the system."

"Therefore, all Iranians, who are unhappy and want the circumstances to improve or change, are considered as criminals and must be prosecuted and sentenced to prison," he added. "Do [those who produce such films] expect all media and journalists to be completely at the service of the government and its policies?"

Others have pointed out that Mohsen Shekari, a protester, was sentenced to death for burning a trash bin, a man who beheaded his wife was sentenced to seven and half years in prison, and the top defendant in the case of the downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in 2020, which killed all 176 onboard was only sentenced to a three-year term.

"Two journalists who reported Mahsa Amini's death have been sentenced for reporting the incident. Saleh Nikbakht, the attorney of Mahsa Amini's family, was sentenced to prison, too. Do you know of anyone who was put on trial for their role in Mahsa Amini's death?" Saman Movahedirad, journalist, **tweeted after the announcement of the sentencing.**

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) on Sunday said it was "appalled and alarmed by the outrageous 12 and 13-year prison sentences" dealt to Mohammadi and Hamedi. The sentencing "makes a mockery of the concept of justice," said Jonathan Dagher, the head of RSF's Middle East desk.

More News

[Amnesty Urges Iran End Brutal Crackdown On Baluch](#)

[Iranian Artist Reveals Brutal Torture, Forced Confession](#)