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Iran: Fears for jailed Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi

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Iranian officials have apparently allowed Narges Mohammadi, the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize winner, to see a doctor despite her refusal to wear a headscarf. Her husband still fears for her life.

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Narges Mohammadi, a jailed Iranian women's rights advocate and 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Image: Reihane Taravati/Middle East Images/AFP via Getty Images

Narges Mohammadi, one of the best-known human rights activists in Iran, is incarcerated in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. Earlier this year, she was awarded the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) for her ongoing fight against the oppression of women in Iran, as well as for her advocacy for human rights and freedom for all.

"On November 6, she went on hunger strike, for health reasons, because the prison authorities refused to take her to hospital without a headscarf," her husband, Taghi Rahmani, told DW. "Narges refused to wear the mandatory headscarf." Seven other political prisoners in the women's section of Evin prison joined the hunger strike in solidarity.

On Thursday, the 51-year-old human rights activist informed her family: "I was admitted to hospital after all on Wednesday, under strict security measures, without a headscarf. I have therefore ended my hunger strike." Following a brief examination, she was taken back to prison.

Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi wins Nobel Peace Prize

The official statement from the prison authorities said that Mohammadi was examined in hospital on Wednesday and no lung problems were detected. The results of further examinations are still pending, it said.

"She has heart disease," her husband explained. "Three years ago, she had a major heart operation. Back then, she collapsed and was taken from prison to the operating room. Two of her coronary arteries are narrowed. It's noted in her medical records," he added. "Narges requires ongoing medical care."

Rahmani, a writer and political journalist, lives in exile in Paris. He doesn't trust the Iranian authorities. He also spent 14 years in prison in Iran, before leaving the country in 2012. Back then, his wife didn't want to go into exile with him.

Mohammadi wants to [continue her fight in Iran](#): against arbitrary prosecution, for freedom of expression, and for an independent judiciary.



Mohammadi's husband, Taghi Rahmani, is a journalist who spent years in Iranian prisons before going into exile in 2012. *Image: Z.O/Middle East Images/AFP via Getty Images*

Mohammadi has repeatedly been arrested and sentenced to jail terms for her peaceful advocacy for human rights. However, she could not be silenced. She began to document the suffering of her fellow prisoners in her book "[White Torture](#)." The expression refers to a method of psychological torture in which prisoners are isolated in a totally white cell for an extended, indefinite period.

Since November 2021, Mohammadi has been back in prison. During the nationwide protests that followed the death of [Jina Mahsa Amini](#), she wrote a letter that was smuggled out of prison and published on social networks. In it, she described the sexual and physical abuse of incarcerated women.

"As a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Narges is a figure who is known all over the world. I believe that's why they allowed her a brief hospital visit and the medical examination," said the 28-year-old photographer and activist Ghazall Abdollahi. She is the daughter of Alieh Motalebzadeh, a photojournalist and women's rights activist who was, until recently, imprisoned alongside Mohammadi.

Ghazall left Iran last year when the protests were in full swing. She took part in a demonstration at which her friends were arrested. She was able to escape the authorities, and initially hid at the house of some acquaintances. As she already had a visa for Germany, she decided to leave the country. In Germany, she strives to give women and political prisoners a voice.

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"We know that sick political prisoners are deliberately neglected," she said. "They are given their medication late, or are not taken to hospital. In Narges's case, the authorities are more careful now, because they don't want to attract global public attention."

"Iran is not the focus of global public attention right now. The authorities are exploiting this in order to continue intimidating the population, and, for example, to carry out many death sentences."

According to a UN report, Iran [executed](#) at least 419 people in the first seven months of this year — 30% more than in the same period in 2022. At the beginning of November, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres accused Tehran of disregarding principles of the rule of law. The UN described it as alarming.

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