

Ebrahim Raisi
C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

Three women's rights defenders Monireh Arabshahi, Yasaman Aryani and Mojgan Keshavarz have been detained since April 2019 with no access to a lawyer. They were arrested in relation to a video that was widely disseminated on social media. The video, shot on International Women's Day 2019, showed them without their headscarves, distributing flowers to female passengers on a metro train in Tehran and discussing their hopes for women's rights in Iran. They have been charged with serious offences simply for peacefully protesting against Iran's degrading and discriminatory forced veiling laws. Their prosecution is part of a wider crackdown since January 2018 on women's rights defenders campaigning against forced veiling laws.

Following her arrest on 10 April 2019, Yasaman Aryani spent the next nine days in solitary confinement in Vozara detention centre in Tehran. During this time, she was subjected to intense interrogation sessions without a lawyer. She was pressured to make a forced "confession" that "opposition elements" from abroad "incited" her human rights activism and to proclaim she is "repentant" and "regrets" her activities.

On 26 June 2019, these women's rights defenders were transferred from Shahr-e Ray prison, outside Tehran, to branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran for an indictment hearing. They were denied access to a lawyer and told by the judge that they could have a lawyer when appealing the verdict. They have said that the judge was abusive to them and said, "You all appear to be [drug] addicts" and "I will make you all suffer". Charges against them include "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security", "spreading propaganda against the system" and "inciting and facilitating corruption and prostitution" through promoting "unveiling", in connection to their campaigning against abusive forced veiling laws. Yasaman Aryani is facing an additional charge of "insulting Islamic sanctities". Monireh Arabshahi's support of workers' rights was also cited as "criminal" activity.

I urge you to release Monireh Arabshahi, Yasaman Aryani and Mojgan Keshavarz immediately and unconditionally as they are all prisoners of conscience, jailed solely for their human rights work. Pending their release, ensure that they have regular contact with their families and a lawyer of their choosing. I also urge you to stop criminalizing the work of women's rights defenders, including those who peacefully protest against forced veiling, and abolish forced veiling laws.

Yours sincerely,

