



IRAN

NAHID TAGHAVI

**GERMAN-IRANIAN WOMAN SENTENCED
TO OVER 10 YEARS IN PRISON**

Nahid Taghavi, born on 28 August 1954, is a retired architect and women's rights activist with German and Iranian citizenship. She was arrested on 16 October 2020 during a visit to Iran. At the beginning of August 2021, the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced her to 10 years in prison for "membership of an illegal group" and an additional 8 months for "propaganda against the regime". Amnesty International considers her imprisonment to be a case of hostage-taking.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND SENTENCE

Nahid Taghavi has lived in Cologne for over 40 years, but spends long periods of time in Iran every year, where she also has family members. This was possible for years without any problems. On 16 October 2020, however, members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards arrested the German-Iranian woman at her home in Tehran. They ransacked her flat and confiscated her laptop, mobile phone, USB memory sticks, money, books, photos and German passport. Her relatives went in search of her. When they visited Evin Prison on 18 October 2020, they discovered that Nahid Taghavi was being held there in solitary confinement.

The prosecuting authorities said that she was not allowed to appoint a lawyer of her own choice, but only to select lawyers from a list approved by the Supreme Judicial Authority. Her relatives were not given any information about the charges against her. They were only told that she was being held for "security reasons".

The first court hearing took place on 28 April 2021. Nahid Taghavi's lawyer was only given access to the files four days beforehand and was not allowed to see his client. The second court date was set for 13 June 2021. Both hearings took place behind closed doors and lasted barely 2 hours each. She was charged with "participation in leading an illegal group" and "propaganda activities against the holy Islamic Republic of Iran". The "illegal group" is a left-wing opposition party. As Nahid Taghavi belonged to a left-wing student movement in the 1970s and her views have not changed to this day, she still poses a threat.

APPALLING PRISON CONDITIONS

Nahid Taghavi was held in solitary confinement for 7 months, from 16 October 2020 to 16 May 2021 - with only one three-week break. She had no contact with the outside world until 28 October 2020. Only then did the prison authorities allow her to make a brief phone call to her family. After that, the authorities again denied her contact with her relatives, this time for 35 days. During this time, she had to sleep on the floor without a bed or pillow, was monitored around the clock and was only allowed out into the fresh air for 30 minutes a day with a blindfold.

The prison conditions are particularly dangerous for Nahid Taghavi. She suffers from high blood pressure and requires daily medication. She also has back problems. At the beginning of her detention, the prison authorities refused to accept the medication that her family members wanted to bring to the prison. Since she has been detained in Evin prison, she has developed diabetes, for which she now also needs medication. The authorities also refused to take her to a specialized dental facility outside the prison. The 66-year-old now suffers from hair loss, skin rashes, weight loss, knee and back pain, high blood pressure and insomnia. In July 2021, she also fell ill with coronavirus and showed symptoms such as chills, fever and aching limbs.

She shares the cell with Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi. In the summer of 2023, she appealed to the public because Nahid was doing so badly. In prison, she is now at least allowed to speak to her daughter Mariam Claren, who also lives in Cologne, on the phone almost every day.

Mariam Claren is fighting tirelessly for her mother's release. She said: "My mother spent a total of 194 days in solitary confinement and was subjected to so-called white torture methods designed to attack her psyche. She was interrogated for 1,000 hours without legal representation. It is appalling how political prisoners are subjected to arbitrary justice and, above all, she should never have been arrested."

TEMPORARY RELEASES

On 19 July 2022, Nahid Taghavi was allowed to leave prison on medical grounds. However, this leave ended on 13 November 2022.

On 9 January 2024, she was temporarily released from prison again by the Iranian authorities. However, the furlough resembled a kind of house arrest. Nahid Taghavi had to wear an electronic ankle tag and was not allowed to go more than 1000 meters away from her home. After 50 days, on 28 February 2024, she had to return to prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: SUSPECTED HOSTAGE-TAKING

The Iranian authorities do not release their nationals from Iranian citizenship and do not recognize newly acquired foreign citizenship. They therefore also refuse them to be provided with consular assistance by the respective embassies.

In recent years, the Iranian authorities have imprisoned dozens of foreigners and citizens with dual nationality. These include non-violent political prisoners such as journalists, academics and human rights defenders. The impression is that they are being used as hostages to achieve political goals. This concern was also expressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran in his report of July 2019. In the past, some of the prisoners were only released through an exchange for representatives of Iranian services imprisoned abroad or through the release of "frozen Iranian funds".