

Iran: Judicial Harassment Vs. Toomaj Salehi Continues

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ALTHOUGH THIS JUNE the Iranian Supreme Court overturned the death sentence for dissident rapper Toomaj Salehi (33), rather than freeing him they sent his case back to a lower court.

Sentenced to death on April 24 for his participation in the “Woman Life Freedom” demonstrations, he has been severely tortured. Suffering from fractures in his hands and legs as well as an eye injury, Salehi is in solitary confinement in Esfahan central prison.

A month before the Supreme Court’s ruling, more than [100 artists, musicians and writers](#) — Sting, Margaret Atwood, Elif Shafak and Coldplay – called for his immediate and unconditional release. But after three years of judicial harassment, authorities are still determined to break his spirit.

According to [Amnesty International](#), Salehi was first detained without access to a lawyer and subject to torture. Permitted only 30 minutes to meet with his lawyers before his July 2023 trial, he was convicted and sentenced to 18 years and 9 months in prison.

Subsequently he has been charged with spreading propaganda against the system, disturbing public order, inciting people to war with the intention to disrupt national security and inciting people to commit acts of violence. These charges have resulted in trials and convictions that lengthened his prison sentence, slapped him with a travel ban, and barred him from music-related activities for two years. In March 2024, even while imprisoned, he was able to release a [new song](#). The following month he was sentenced to death.

Even before the 2022 protests following the death of Mahsa Amini while in police custody for allegedly wearing an “improper” hijab. Salehi was famous for his criticism of the regime and its corruption. Although an established artist, Salehi was banned from performing in concerts and therefore posted [his songs](#) on social media.

The Supreme Court decision in June is not the first time courts have ruled in his favor. On 18 November 2023, Salehi was released on bail. Within a week he released a YouTube video detailing his torture and the formal charges he made about his detention. He was then rearrested and charged with “spreading lies with the intention of disturbing the public mind.”

Despite the authority’s arbitrary arrests, brutal torture and continuing trials, Salehi has remained defiant. However his health has deteriorated. He has fractures in his hands and legs and an eye injury. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Amnesty International and other human rights and cultural workers call for his immediate and unconditional release. **Free Toomaj Salehi!**

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