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Iran – Critical condition of human rights defender Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand

The 8 June 2016 marked one month since human rights defender Mr **Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand** began a hunger strike in protest against the recent fabricated charges brought against him, including “spreading propaganda against the state from prison”. The human rights defender has been imprisoned since 1 July 2007 in ward 350 of Evin prison and has suffered from several strokes, cardiovascular disease, prostate and kidney problems. He was sentenced to ten-and-a-half-years imprisonment on several charges including “disturbing public opinion.”

[Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand](#) is a prominent journalist and Iranian Kurdish human rights defender. He is former Editor of the now banned weekly newspaper *Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan* (Message of People of Kurdistan), a Kurdish-Persian publication. He is the founder of the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan in Iran, which monitor and document human rights violations in Kurdistan. Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand was awarded the International Journalist of the Year at the [The Press Gazette British Press Awards](#) in 2009, and was also awarded the prestigious [Hellman-Hammett Grant](#) by Human Rights Watch in the same year.

Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand's health has been reported to be severely deteriorating over the last number of days. The human rights defender was urgently transferred to Taleghani hospital on 22 May 2016 due to his condition following a hunger strike he started on 8 May 2016, but insisted that he be returned to prison. He was again admitted to hospital on 25 May 2016 where doctors monitored his acute condition and tried to force-feed him, as they feared he would suffer another heart attack. The following day Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand requested that he again be returned to the prison.

Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand started his hunger strike to protest the new fabricated charges brought against him by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The charge of “spreading propaganda against the state from prison”, was rejected by the human rights defender and he insists on the implementation of Article 134 of the 2013 New Islamic Penal code which provides that only the longest sentence needs to be served in cases involving convictions on multiple charges, and would reduce his current prison sentence by six months. He was informed that the reasons for the new charges included his ongoing academic dissertation about “the violation of rights of prisoners in Iran”, which he denied, affirming that his work was about “Turkey and minorities”.

The human rights defender was arrested on 1 July 2007 and tried before the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on charges of “acting against national security through founding and managing the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan”. He was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for founding the organisation, which was later confirmed by Branch 56 of the Appeal Court of Tehran province.

In addition to this, on 1 July 2007, Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand was sentenced to six months imprisonment, which was initially one year. The sentence was reduced to six months by the Supreme Court before being confirmed by the Appeal Court of Tehran province over charges of “disturbing public opinion by posting content on a newspaper and spreading falsehoods” due to his journalism work, for publishing a book on the rights of women in Iran and for documenting the human rights situation in Iran's prisons. The sentence includes a five-year ban on professional activity, and the cancellation of the publication license of *Payam e Mardom* newspaper, by the

Public and Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the deteriorating health of human rights defender Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand and the recent fabricated charges brought against him, as it believes that his sentencing is solely motivated by his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran to:

1. Drop the new charges brought against human rights defender Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand;
2. Ensure implementation of provisions of Article 134 of the 2013 Islamic Penal code which would reduce his current prison sentence by six months;
3. Ensure the adequate medical care of Mohammad Seddiq Kaboudvand;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Islamic Republic of Iran are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

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