

21 September 2017

Iran – Human rights defender beaten while on hunger strike

On 18 September 2017, **Saeed Shirzad** was physically attacked and taken into solitary confinement. The human rights defender has been on hunger strike since 30 July 2017 in protest of inhumane prison conditions.

[Saeed Shirzad](#) is a children's rights defender in Iran. He has worked with children's rights NGOs including the **Association in Support of Children's Rights, Children's Home of Shoosh** and **Society in Defence of Street Children**. He has traveled internationally and throughout Iran to provide humanitarian assistance to children and advocate for their rights. Saeed is known in particular for his work in defence of street children, which includes organisational training, education, and health services for homeless, disadvantaged, and refugee children in collaboration with UNICEF. He has helped recruit lawyers to support refugee and asylum seeking families to obtain legal documentation, and identified and provided direct support to more than 100 families working in sweatshops.

On 18 September 2017, Saeed Shirzad was physically attacked and transferred into solitary confinement. The human rights defender has been on hunger strike for over 53 days in protest of cruel, inhuman and degrading prison conditions. On 30 July 2017, prison authorities of Rajai-Shahr prison raided Ward 12 where Saeed Shirzad was being held and transferred the human rights defender as well as 52 other prisoners to Ward 10. Twenty-four prisoners, including Saeed Shirzad embarked on hunger strike in protest of the transfer to the high-security section, as well as their treatment in detention. Saeed Shirzad was arrested on 2 June 2014 and sentenced to five years in prison in Gohar Dasht Prison (Rajai Shahr) after being charged with '*gathering and colluding with intent to act against national security*'.

The prisoners were transferred without prior notice, and none of them were allowed to take their personal belongings, including medicines with them. Furthermore, Ward 10 has limited air circulation, lack of access to clean drinking water and is surveilled continuously by over 40 CCTV cameras, including in the bathroom facilities. The prisoners have also reportedly been deprived of hygiene products, adequate clothing, adequate medical care and food they purchased with their own money. The prisoners have not been informed of the reasons for their transfer.

In August 2017, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran [expressed](#) her concern for the prisoners, noting that "*depriving prisoners of having family contact, lawyers and adequate medical care is contrary to international law.*"

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the health of Saeed Shirzad in light of his prolonged hunger strike and ill treatment in detention. Front Line Defenders calls on prison authorities to immediately transfer the human rights defender from solitary confinement and ensure that he receives adequate medical treatment.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Iran to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release, and quash the conviction of Saeed Shirzad, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Saeed Shirzad, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the '*Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment*', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Saeed Shirzad;
4. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the physical attack against Saeed Shirzad, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
5. Provide the necessary medical treatment for Saeed Shirzad;
6. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Iran are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.