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Iran: Human rights defender Edris Menbari sentenced to two years in prison

On 9 December 2024, Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court sentenced human rights defender **Edris Menbari** to two years in prison on the charge of “forming groups and association with the intention of disturbing the national security” based on his peaceful human rights activities promoting socio-cultural rights as a member of the Nozhin association.

[Edris Menbari](#) is a human rights defender and was a board member of the Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association from 2021-2023. He has been advocating for the socio-cultural rights of the Kurdish community by teaching Kurdish and organising cultural events. The Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association raises awareness of the legal and cultural rights that ethnic groups are entitled to exercise in Iran, and has been active in promoting cultural education through the organisation and holding of Kurdish language classes in various cities in the region. The members and directors of the Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association, including Edris Menbari, have chosen to communicate only in Kurdish in protest against denial of their rights to teach in their mother tongue.

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Previously, on 26 October 2023, Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court had sentenced Edris Menbari and [Serveh Pourmohammadi](#) (Edris Menbari’s sister in-law) to ten years in prison on the charge of “forming groups and association with the intention of disturbing the national security.” The human rights defenders had appealed the sentences and the Court of Appeals had overturned the initial ruling and sent the cases back to Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court.

Additionally, on 12 October 2023, Branch 106 of the Sanandaj Criminal Court II sentenced Edris Menbari to one year in Dizel Abad Prison and forty lashes on the charge of “disturbing the public order” due to his participation in the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests. On 1 October 2023, the only court session was convened in absentia of the human rights defender and his lawyer. On 18 December 2022, Edris Menbari was arrested when his house was raided and his electronic devices were confiscated. Subsequently, on 29 January 2023, he was released on a bail of 10 billion IRR.

[Four other members of the association](#) have been targeted with prosecution and subjected to humiliation during the different stages of their arbitrary trials. In February 2021, woman human

rights defender, and then director and founding member of the Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association, [Zahra Mohammadi](#), was sentenced by Branch 4 of the Court of Appeals to five years in prison on the charge of “forming a group with the intention of acting against national security”. On 28 November 2024, the same charge was issued against Serveh Pourmohammadi who was sentenced to five years in prison by Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court of Appeals. [Soma Pourmohammadi](#) and [Seivan Ebrahimi](#), two other members and former directors of Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association were acquitted of the same charge by Branch 4 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court of Appeals and the ten year sentences handed down to each of them by Branch 1 of Sanandaj Revolutionary Court were overturned. Zahra Mohammadi has now served her sentence and the case has been concluded.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arbitrary sentencing of human rights defender Edris Menbari, which appears to be in violation of domestic law. Further, the organisation believes this sentence is in retaliation of his peaceful and legitimate work defending and promoting human rights in Iran, and raising awareness about the legal and cultural rights of ethnic minorities in Iran according to article 15 of the Iranian Constitution.

Front Line Defenders urges Iranian authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally overturn the convictions against human rights defender Edris Menbari;
2. Stop the ongoing judicial harassment of the members and directors of the Nozhin Socio-Cultural Association, including Edris Menbari and Serveh Pourmohammadi;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Iran can carry out their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions, including judicial harassment.