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13 August 2024

Iran: Esmail Gerami arrested and charged In connection with pensioners' protest

On 11 August 2024, human rights defender **Esmail Gerami** was arrested at the Branch 3 of the Investigation Unit at Evin Court, where he appeared with his lawyer following a summons issued on 30 June. The specific charges against him remain unclear; however, he was informed that the investigation pertains to allegations of “gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against national security” and “spreading disinformation,” in connection with recent pensioners’ protesting their pension situation and the death sentence against a labour rights defender across different cities in Iran.

[Esmail Gerami](#) is human rights defender and retired worker from the Iran Cardboard Company, who has been advocating for the rights of retired people through organising assemblies and associations since 2017. In 2020, he started a Telegram channel called “Independent Association of Social Security Workers”, where he posted news on the peaceful assemblies of retired people and tried to raise awareness about their rights.

On 7 August 2024, Esmail Gerami’s home was raided, and his phone, tablet, and ID card were confiscated. Following this, he was summoned to appear at the Branch 3 of the Investigation Unit at Evin Court on 11 August. When confronted by an interrogator regarding an old case from 2021-2022, Esmail Gerami refused to be questioned on matters that had already been concluded. As a result, he was arrested after the prosecutor refused to issue a bail order, insisting that the investigation must be completed despite no evidence being presented to Esmail Gerami or his lawyer.

The arrest of the human rights defender appears to be linked to the gatherings of social security pensioners peacefully protesting their pension situation and the death sentence against labour rights defender [Sharifeh Mohammadi](#). On 6 July 2024, Esmail Gerami was tried in another case and charged with “disturbing public order” due to his involvement in pensioners’ rights protests. He was sentenced by Shahid Qodusi Branch II of the Criminal Court to a fine of 200 million IRR. Esmail Gerami and his lawyer have appealed this sentence.

This is not the first time Esmail Gerami has been targeted by authorities for his peaceful human rights activities promoting labour rights in Iran. Previously, on 6 June 2021, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced the human rights defender to five years in prison, 74 lashes, and a 20-million IRR fine on charges of “gathering and colluding with intent to commit a crime against national security.” This sentence was upheld by the Court of Appeal on 19 September 2021. The human rights defender had been arrested on 7 March 2021 during a peaceful assembly outside the Ministry of Labour in Tehran in connection with nationwide pensioners’ protests and was released the following day.

On 14 February 2023, Esmail Gerami was released from Rajaie Shahr prison, where he had been detained since 3 April 2021. His release came as part of a general amnesty announced by the Iranian judiciary on the occasion of 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, during which hundreds of prisoners, including human rights defenders, were released.

Front Line Defenders expresses concern about the continued judicial harassment of Esmail Gerami, as it believes the human rights defender is being targeted for his peaceful human rights activities promoting labour rights and particularly the rights of retired workers.

Front Line Defenders urges the Iranian authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Esmail Gerami and quash the convictions against him;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Esmail Gerami 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. Cease the targeting of human rights defenders in Iran and ensure in all circumstances that they can carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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