

# **IRAN: Dr Noorali Tabandeh, the head spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Sufi order, under house arrest since 20th February**

## ***Human Rights Without Frontiers urges the President of Iran to restore the full freedom of Dr Tabandeh***

HRWF (16.04.2018) – Since 20th February 2018, Dr Noorali Tabandeh, the head spiritual leader of the Gonabadi Sufi order in Iran with approximately 10 million followers, has been under house arrest. This was revealed by himself during a short video clip. In this short video recording dated 6th March he sends his greeting to the Dervishes and Muslims and the people of Iran. Several police officers have been stationed outside as well as inside the privacy of his house.

At the age of 91, Dr. Tabandeh is suffering from severe leg pains and is in need of full-time assistance and medical care. Despite this, as of 18th March, the Security Forces have forced out his personal Doctor and medical care assistance, and all his trusted companions, leaving Dr. Tabandeh unaccompanied. He is being denied critical care within the confines of his own house, where he is under complete house arrest.

Dr. Tabandeh has always been a champion of peace and

tolerance, bringing together diverse groups in harmony, and tirelessly serving the community all his life. He is now being denied his basic fundamental rights and the necessary medical care and support and is falsely imprisoned in his own home.

Human Rights Without Frontiers calls on Hassan Rohani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sardar Rahimi, to immediately put an end to the house arrest of Dr Noorali Tabandeh and to give him access to medical assistance.

### ***Appeal of 24 Members of the European Parliament***

On 7th of March 2018, 24 Members of the European Parliament published a Public Appeal condemning the massive repression of the Gonabadi Dervishes and their spiritual leader Mr Noorali Tabandeh in Iran:

On February 19, the Iranian authorities attacked the Gonabadi Sufi protesters in Tehran during their peaceful protest against the detention of one of their members, Nematollah Riahi, 72. Mr Riahi had come to Tehran to help protect the leader of the Gonabadi Sufi Order, Dr. Noor Ali Tabandeh and his home that had been besieged by the Iranian authorities on February 5, 2018. So far, at least 300 arrests have been made, and many more Dervishes are currently imprisoned that have not been officially recorded with no information on the well-being

or whereabouts of the detainees for more than a week. There are reports of torture at Evin, Fashafouyeh, and Gharchak prisons, and persecutions and intimidation, invasion of residential houses in the 7th Area of Golestan in Pasdaran Avenue and occasions of public torture of the Sufis on the streets of Tehran.

There are numerous alarming reports that Iranian authorities are systematically persecuting the Dervishes in Iran. In March 2017, the UN special rapporteur for Iran expressed concern over the state targeting of members of Sufi groups, saying they “continue to face arbitrary arrest, harassment, and detention and are often accused of national security crimes.” The leader of the Gonabadi Dervishes Dr. Noor Ali Tabandeh, 90, and his followers have received death threats and live in fear of violence. It is ironic that several million Dervishes, of which the Gonabadi order is the most numerous, representing the centuries-long tradition of peaceful meditation and mystical practices, are now considered as potential threat to the existing regime.

Sardar Rahimi, Tehran’s Chief of police has explicitly stated, February 22, 2018, on national TV, the voice of the ruling system in Iran, that he had clearly considered the idea of using heavy-handed tactics such as the use RPG’s (Rocket-Propelled Grenades) against the Sufi’s during the recent protests.

We call on Hassan Rohani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Sardar Rahimi, Chief of police in Tehran to immediately halt this systematic violence, imprisonments and intimidation against all Sufis in Iran, and more specifically the Gonabadi Sufi Order followers and

sympathisers. We call for immediate release of detainees who have been imprisoned because of their beliefs.

We call on the EU's HR/VP Mogherini to immediately address this issue with the Iranian authorities and call for full respect of human rights and prisoners' rights, for the right of freedom of religion and belief, the right for freedom of assembly, the right for freedom of thought as set out in international conventions.

Tunne Kelam, MEP, EPP Group

Lars Adaktusson, MEP, EPP Group

Petras Auštrevičius, MEP, ALDE Group

Heinz K. Becker, MEP, EPP Group

Franc Bogovič, MEP, EPP Group

Michal Boni, MEP, EPP Group

Mark Demesmaeker, MEP, ECR Group

Gérard Deprez, MEP, ALDE Group

José Inácio Faria, MEP, EPP Group

Luke Ming Flanagan, MEP, GUE-NGL Group

Ana Maria Gomes, MEP, S&D Group

Maria Grapini, MEP, S&D Group

Gunnar Hökmark, MEP, EPP Group

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Marijana Petir, MEP, EPP Group

Jozo Radoš, MEP, ALDE Group

Petri Sarvamaa, MEP, EPP Group

Branislav Škripek, MEP, ECR Group

Jaromir Štětina, MEP, EPP Group

Bodil Valero, MEP, The Greens/EFA

Jan Zahradil, MEP, ECR Group

Milan Zver, MEP, EPP Group

To read the entire letter on European Parliaments website please go to the following link:  
<http://www.eppgroup.eu/news/Public-Appeal->

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