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## **IRAN: Unbelievable injustice: two Baha'i women sentenced to 10 more years in prison**

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*Two Baha'i women, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, regarded as symbols of resilience in Iran after spending 10 years in prison, have been sentenced to a second cruel 10-year imprisonment.*

Persian translation here

BIC (11.01.2013) – In the midst of increasingly violent and repressive actions by the Iranian authorities against their own citizens, two Baha’i women, Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi, regarded as symbols of resilience in Iran after spending 10 years in prison, have been sentenced to a second cruel 10-year imprisonment.

The two Iranian Baha’i women were arrested on 31 July – for the second time – at the start of a fresh crackdown against Iran’s Baha’is.

More than 320 Baha’is have been affected by individual acts of persecution since the arrest of Mahvash and Fariba. Dozens were arrested at various points in Shiraz, across Mazandaran province, and elsewhere throughout the country. Homes owned by Baha’is in the village of Roshankouh were demolished. Government plans to tar the Baha’is through hate speech and propaganda were also exposed. And at least 90 Baha’is are currently in prison or subject to degrading ankle-band monitoring.

The latest jail sentence was handed down after a one-hour trial on 21 November – an hour which was mostly spent with the judge insulting and humiliating the defendants. This trial came almost four months after their arrest. Judge Iman Afshari, presiding over the Revolutionary Court’s Branch 26 in Tehran, rebuked the two women for “not having learned their lesson” from their previous imprisonment.

Dr. Shirin Ebadi, the Nobel laureate and defence lawyer for Mahvash and Fariba during their first trial, said in 2008 that “not a shred of evidence” was offered to prove the national security charges or other allegations. Nor was any new evidence forthcoming at this latest trial.

“It is profoundly distressing to learn that these two Baha’i women who have both already and unjustly lost a decade of their lives to prison for their beliefs, are once again being

incarcerated for another 10 years on the same ludicrous charges,” said Simin Fahandej, Representative of the Baha’i International Community to the United Nations. “Mahvash and Fariba are wives, mothers and grandmothers to families who have already been forced to endure their absence for 10 brutal years. Instead of expressing regret to these families for the unjust imprisonment they have already suffered, the Iranian government is unbelievably and inexplicably repeating the same cruelty for a second time. This ridiculous sentence, handed down without any basis in evidence, makes an absolute mockery of the Iranian judicial system where judges preside as prosecutor, judge and jury all in one. Words fail to describe this absurd and cruel injustice.”

Supporters of the two women have called them symbols of resilience, confidants of other oppressed and jailed individuals, and mothers to all Iranian women.

Mahvash Sabet rose to international prominence after a volume of poems she had written in prison was published in English under the title *Prison Poems*. Mahvash was recognized by PEN International as its 2017 International Writer of Courage([link is external](#)).

Several other prominent Iranian women were jailed at the same time as Mahvash and Fariba during their first imprisonment. Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who herself is back in prison for supporting the demands of women in Iran, made headlines when she visited Fariba during furloughs and after her release. And Iranian-American journalist Roxana Saberi, who shared a cell with Mahvash and Fariba, said that the two Baha’is became sources of comfort and hope to their fellow inmates.

“As Time Magazine names Iranian women as “Heroes of the Year”, the international community has rightly recognized the bravery and heroism of all Iranians, especially women as they sacrificially stand firm in demanding justice and equality in

the face of the violent and brutal repression of their rights,” Ms. Fahandej added. “Mahvash and Fariba are two such women, who for many years have upheld and promoted the equality of women and men, called for justice and truth, and who, as a result, have already paid a heavy price for upholding these principles. Let all stand with them now, and with all Iranian women, to tell Iran’s government that it must revoke this sentence, free Mahvash and Fariba and all other prisoners of conscience, and to dismantle every part of its machinery of repression that systematically violates the human rights of its peoples.”

### Background

Mahvash, aged 69, and Fariba, aged 60, were first arrested in 2008 as members of an informal group that tended to the basic pastoral needs of the Baha’i community with the full knowledge of the Iranian government. All members of this group, including five men and two women, were sentenced to 10 years in prison for their beliefs. Mahvash, Fariba and the others were finally released in 2018.

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