



Amnesty International

Group 524

March 2024



Gaza/Israel Iran/Nowruz Card Action

Welcome

I hope everyone is anticipating the coming of spring with our roller-coaster weather patterns. Our focus this month is again a Gaza ceasefire and the Nowruz card action. We hope to see you at the meeting March 19 at 6pm.

Gaza/Israel News

We continue to advocate for a cease-fire in the Gaza/Israel war. This time to our Congressional representatives. Recent Amnesty reports are detailed on page 2 including additional concerns in the West Bank. A letter action is on page 3.

Iran/ Nowruz Card Action

The Iranian holiday Nowruz نوروز (“new day”) is an ancient holiday celebrated on the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere to welcome in the new year. On this Nowruz we want to remember several courageous prisoners of conscience and prisoners held for politically motivated reasons in Iran with Nowruz greetings. At the this month’s meeting we will sign cards of support for 7 cases. Those cases are highlighted on pages 4-6.

Individual At Risk Case

As we discussed last month, I have completed and submitted a request for an individual case assigned to our Group. I have not heard back as of yet.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Location: The Commons Residence Providence Heights
9000 Babcock Blvd.



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39’s Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).



The ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel is beyond horrifying. As human rights activists, we must urgently call on all to protect civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories **and** Israel – and on our leaders to urgently and swiftly take action to prevent further civilian bloodshed and trauma.



A letter action to our Congressional representatives is on page 3.

As of March 11th, and since October 7:

- 31,112 people have been killed, with 70% being children and women, and 72,760 have been injured in the occupied Gaza Strip by Israeli forces.
- Over 1.7 million or 75% of Palestinians have been internally displaced in the occupied Gaza Strip.
- 1,139 Israelis were killed by Hamas on October 7.
- 134 persons remain captive by Hamas
- 4665 Palestinians have been injured in the West Bank.
- 417 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank.

Source: UN Office For The Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and AP News



Representative and Senators,

I write to you as a member of Amnesty International USA with deep concern over the ongoing violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. The U.S. government is uniquely positioned to have tremendous impact in this conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and prevent further suffering.

Since October 7, we have witnessed horror unfolding on an unimaginable scale in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel. More than 2 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are struggling to survive amidst a human-made humanitarian catastrophe, and the level of civilian casualties has been unprecedented.

The ongoing air and ground offensive by Israeli forces in Gaza is having cataclysmic consequences for Gaza's civilians, who also remain without access to drinking water, food, medical supplies and fuel as a result of the Israeli government's siege. At least 1.5 million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to the attacks and as a result of orders from the Israeli army to move to other areas in Gaza. Civilians in Israel also continue to come under attack from indiscriminate rocket fire from Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza.

I am urging you to:

1. Publicly call for an immediate ceasefire and appeal to the Israeli government to allow life-saving fuel, water, and food into Gaza.
2. Immediately suspend the direct and indirect supply, sale, or transfer to the Israeli government of all weapons, munitions, and other military and security equipment that would more likely than not be used in the violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

However you show your public support, the need for a suspension of weapons and an immediate ceasefire is more urgent than ever to protect civilians, prevent a mounting civilian death toll in Gaza, prevent further displacement, and provide an opportunity to secure the safe release of the remaining hostages.

Sincerely,



Nowruz Action

The Iranian holiday Nowruz نوروز (“new day”) is an ancient holiday celebrated on the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere to welcome in the new year. On this Nowruz we want to remember several courageous prisoners of conscience and prisoners held for politically motivated reasons in Iran with Nowruz greetings.

Zeynab Jalalian



Zeynab Jalalian, a 42-year-old

Iranian Kurd who worked to empower women and girls from the oppressed Kurdish minority, has been in imprisoned for 16 years and is serving a life sentence in Yazd Prison, very far from her family. She is being deliberately prevented from receiving specialized medical care despite her deteriorating health, including a lung condition and respiratory problems as a result of having suffering at least two bouts of Covid-19.

Toomaj Salehi

Popular dissident rapper and Hip Hop artist Toomaj Salehi has been convicted of “corruption on earth” and sentenced to more than six years in prison and a ban on his artistic activities, solely because of his peaceful exercise of the internationally guaranteed right to freedom of artistic expression and for his advocacy for freedom and human rights and support of protests that took place in Iran following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini in September 2022. Toomaj Salehi was reportedly beaten and tortured in custody, resulting in broken bones and possible damage to his vision.





Narges Mohammadi

Narges Mohammadi is a distinguished and passionate defender of human rights, who has been repeatedly arrested, mis-treated and imprisoned for lengthy periods of time, solely for her peaceful activism. She was recognized with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2023.



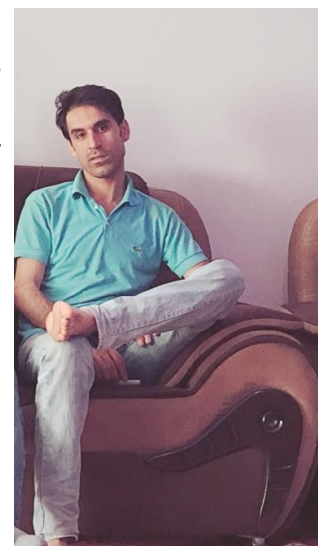
Niloufar Bayani



Wildlife conservationist Niloufar Bayani is a prisoner of conscience, sentenced to ten years in prison solely for her peaceful scientific and conservation activities, such as research on Iran’s endangered wildlife. She is one of eight scientists who were convicted and sentenced to prison terms, ranging between four to ten years, on baseless charges of “cooperating with hostile states against the Islamic Republic.”

Vahid Afkari

Vahid Afkari has been sentenced to 33 years, 9 months in prison and 74 lashes after being convicted in an unfair of baseless charges in connection to his peaceful involvement in protests in his hometown of Shiraz in 2017 and 2018. He has been held in solitary confinement since September 2020.





Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali

Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, an Iranian-born Swedish citizen and specialist in emergency medicine, was sentenced to death in October 2017 after a grossly unfair trial. The court relied primarily on “confessions” that Ahmadreza Djalali says were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment while he was held in prolonged solitary confinement without access to a lawyer.



Fariba Kamalabadi and Mahvash Sabet

Mahvash Sabet and Fariba Kamalabadi are prominent members of Iran’s minority Baha’i religious community who were among dozens of Baha’is arrested in the summer of 2022. They were each convicted and sentenced to ten years in prison, after a trial that lasted reportedly for one hour, on charges of “organizing a group under a deviant sect with the aim of disrupting the security of the country.” They are prisoners of conscience, targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to religious freedom.