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### Iran: Soma Pourmohammadi acquitted from "forming groups" charge

On 26 August 2024, woman human rights defender **Soma Pourmohammadi** was acquitted from the charge of "*forming groups and associations with the intention of disturbing national security*" by the Court of Appeal. The ten-year sentence previously issued by Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court in mid-April 2024 was also overturned.

[Soma Pourmohammadi](#) is a woman human rights defender with a sociology degree from Kurdistan University in Sanandaj. She began her socio-cultural activities in 2009 by teaching Kurdish language in various associations. She has been involved with the Nozhin socio-cultural association since 2013, serving as its director from 2013 to 2017 and as a board member from 2021 to 2023.

On 14 August 2024, the Court of Appeal convened to review Soma Pourmohammadi's appeal against the ten-year prison sentence issued by Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court on 16 April 2024, and communicated to her on 21 April 2024. Previously, other human rights defenders members of Nozhin had also received [long prison sentences](#).

On 13 May 2024, Soma Pourmohammadi appealed the ten-year sentence. On 21 April 2024, she was informed of her ten-year sentence to be served in Dizel Abad prison, based on the charge of forming groups and associations with the intention of disturbing national security, related to her peaceful human rights activities promoting socio-cultural rights through Nozhin association. The woman human rights defender has served multiple terms on the Nozhin board, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Separately, on 4 March 2024, Branch 106 of Sanandaj Criminal Court II sentenced Soma Pourmohammadi to one year in prison for disturbing public order due to her participation in the "*Woman, Life, Freedom*" protests, which began in September 2022 following the death of Mahsa [Jina] Amini in the custody of the Iranian morality police. The woman human rights defender was arrested on 18 January 2023, while she was at the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court following up her husband Edris Menbari's dossier, and was released on bail of 10 billion IRR on 13 February 2023.

Additionally, Soma Pourmohammadi's family members and Nozhin directors have been separately targeted. On 26 October 2023, Branch 1 of the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court sentenced human rights defenders **Serveh Pourmohammadi** and **Edris Menbari** (Soma Pourmohammadi's sister and husband) to ten years in prison on the charge of "*forming groups and associations with the intention of disturbing national security*," based on their peaceful human rights activities with Nozhin. The human rights defenders have appealed the sentence and are currently awaiting the verdict of the Revolutionary Court of Appeals.

Front Line Defenders welcomes the acquittal of Soma Pourmohammadi from the charge of forming groups and associations with the intention of disturbing national security. However, it remains concerned about the ongoing judicial harassment of Soma Pourmohammadi and other Nozhin members and her relatives Edris Menbari and Serveh Pourmohammadi. Front Line Defenders condemns the use of judicial harassment against the family members of human rights defenders as a means to punish legitimate human rights work and advocacy for the legal and cultural rights of ethnic groups, as guaranteed by Article 15 of the Iranian Constitution.

## **Front Line Defenders urges Iranian authorities to:**

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

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