



Iranian
political prisoner

Leila Tavassoli

Born Dec. 12, 1982 in Tehran, Iran

Leila Tavassoli, a 28-year old engineer and newlywed, is serving a two-year sentence after her arrest on December 28, 2009 for participating in the Ashura protests of December 27, 2009.

Officials of Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security arrested Leila at her father's home at 1am on the morning of December 28, 2009. She was released on bail on February 23, 2010, after spending two months in the women's section of ward 209 in Evin Prison.

In July 2010, after a trial that lasted just 20 minutes, Judge Moghiseh of the 28th branch of the Revolutionary Court sentenced Leila to two years in prison for being interviewed by the foreign media and for participating in protests on June 15, 2009 and on Ashura on December 27, 2009.

During the crackdown by the regime on the Ashura protestors, Leila witnessed a man being killed after the security forces intentionally ran over him with their police car. She gave interviews as a witness of the man's death to U.S. government-funded Radio Farda and BBC Persian. Her two year prison sentence is based solely on her participation in peaceful protests and for her interviews—she has no previous history of political activity. Leila's appeal was denied by the Appeals Court.

Sara Tavassoli, Leila's older sister, was also arrested on January 3, 2010. Sara was also released on bail after two months' imprisonment. She has now been sentenced to six years in prison and 74 lashes. Sara is currently appealing her charges. In addition to her sister, Leila's other family members have been arrested and imprisoned for their activities. Her uncle, Ebrahim Yazdi, the Secretary General of the banned Freedom Movement Party is said to be the oldest political prisoner in Iran at 81 years old. He was also arrested on December 28, 2009, and remains in ward 209 of Evin prison. Farid Taheri, Leila's brother-in-law (Sara's husband) is in Evin as well, serving a three-year sentence for his membership in the political party in ward 350. The Tavassoli sisters' father, Dr. Mohammad Tavassoli, is also a senior member of the Freedom Movement Party.

In December 2010, less than a month after her wedding, Leila was summoned to begin serving her prison sentence. She remains in Evin prison in a quarantined ward reserved for female political prisoners.