

# Human Rights Watch

## Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/20/iran-account-horrific-abuse-prominent-lawyer>

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(Beirut) Horrific reported details of [Iranian](#) authorities mistreatment in detention of Payam Derafshan, a respected human rights lawyer, show the Iranian intelligence agencies central role in repressing human rights activism, Human Rights Watch said today. Iranian authorities should immediately and transparently investigate this serious abuse and hold those responsible accountable.

On October 17, 2021, an Iranian lawyer, Saeed Dehghan, [tweeted](#) a detailed account of abuses his colleague Payam Derafshan experienced in detention at the hands of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Intelligence Organization, which Human Rights Watch independently confirmed. The group arrested Derafshan on June 7, 2020 and, Dehghan said, detained Derafshan in 2-Alef ward of Evin prison in Tehran, which is under the Revolutionary Guards supervision. While Derafshan was in detention, Dehghan said, the authorities injected Derafshan with a substance that resulted in physical and psychological damage.

The authorities revolting abuse and medical negligence of a prominent human rights lawyer should make us extremely concerned about the situation of dozens of lesser-known political prisoners in Iran, said [Tara Sepehri Far](#), senior Iran researcher at Human Rights Watch. The authorities should promptly investigate abuses against Payam Derafshan, prosecute anyone responsible, provide him with adequate redress, and urgently investigate the prevalence of torture and abuse in prisons across the country.

Derafshan has represented high-profile rights cases in Iran, including the prominent lawyer [Nasrin Sotoudeh](#) and the family of [Kavous Seyed Eammi](#), an Iranian Canadian environmental activist who died in prison in suspicious circumstances in February 2018. The authorities granted Derafshan conditional release in September 2020.

Dehghan said that soon after his arrest, Derafshan protested his solitary confinement, in which the lights in his cell were always kept on. Three officers then took him out of his cell and injected him with an unknown substance against his will. Derafshan was returned to his cell, where he experienced a serious convulsion that caused him to lose consciousness and to bite off part of his tongue.

The next day the authorities took him to Baghiatollah Hospital in Tehran, where he underwent surgery on his tongue and was admitted to the neurology ward due to impaired perception of his surroundings. Before Derafshan completed his treatment, however, the authorities took him before Judge Mohammad Moghiseh at branch 28 of Tehrans revolutionary court to extend his detention order, which the judge did. The authorities then transferred him to ward 4 in the general population section of Evin prison.

Dehghan said that Derafshan experienced further side effects, including convulsions, and that the authorities transferred him to a psychiatric hospital, where he received shock therapy that has reportedly resulted in damage to his brain.

During this period, Derafshans family was not informed about his whereabouts. They found out about his condition from other prisoners in ward 4, who had helped care for Derafshan.

On July 20, 2020, Dehghan [had reported](#) that the court acquitted Derafshan of the charge of assembly and collusion against national security but sentenced him on charges that included acting against national security, propaganda against the state, and carrying an unauthorized taser to two-and-a-half years in prison, which an appeals court upheld. The authorities granted Derafshan a medical leave in September 2020 and ultimately granted him a conditional release after the completion of one third of his sentence.

Over the past three years, several cases of potential negligence and lack of access to medical access for prisoners have resulted in serious harm. The authorities have also failed to investigate allegations of torture and abuse in custody and even prosecuted people who reported torture. According to [Amnesty International](#), since 2010, at least 72 people have died in custody in Iranian prisons, while the authorities have failed to provide accountability despite credible reports of torture and ill-treatment.

On August 24, in response to [apparently hacked videos](#) of Evin prison that showed mistreatment and abuse against prisoners, Mohammad Mehdi Haj Mohammadi, the head of the Prisons Office, apologized and promised to investigate abuses and prevent further violations. On August 30, Etemad Online [reported](#) that the Prosecutors Office had reported without additional details that six officials are under prosecution for wrongdoing.

Since 2018, the authorities have increased their repression of human rights lawyers and have sought to increasingly [prevent](#) them from representing activists. Since August 14, the authorities [have arbitrarily detained](#) three prominent human rights defenders who intended to file a complaint against Iranian authorities for mismanagement of the Covid-19 crisis.

Under article 32 of United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules, the relationship between the physician or other health-care professionals and the prisoners shall be governed by the same ethical and professional standards as those applicable to patients in the community, in particular: (a) The duty of protecting prisoners physical and mental health and the prevention and treatment of disease on the basis of clinical grounds only; (b) Adherence to prisoners autonomy with regard to their own health and informed consent in the doctor-patient relationship.

Irans intelligence apparatus, in close collaboration with the revolutionary court, have turned the justice system into a cornerstone of repression, where victims experience horrific mistreatment and are left with no means to seek redress and accountability, Sepehri Far said.

**10/27/2021:** This version of the press release has been updated to correct Mohammad Mehdi Haj Mohammadi's last name.

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