



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 2 DECEMBER 2024

IRANIAN RAPPER TOOMAJ SALEHI RELEASED FROM PRISON

Joint Statement by the International Counsel Team at Doughty Street Chambers, Index on Censorship and Human Rights Foundation

Monday 2 December 2024: Doughty Street Chambers, Index on Censorship and Human Rights Foundation welcome news that their client, Iranian rapper and activist Toomaj Salehi, has been released from prison overnight by Iranian authorities.

Mr Salehi's release comes after 753 days spent in prison in Isfahan. He was initially arrested in October 2022 for his involvement in the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini whilst in the custody of Iran's morality police. In April 2024, Mr Salehi was sentenced to death for crimes including "corruption on earth" – using his music and activism to support Iranian women and human rights in Iran. Even after his death sentence was overturned by Iran's Supreme Court in July 2024, Mr Salehi remained in custody on a series of overlapping and shifting charges.

In May 2024, Mr Salehi's counsel team at Doughty Street Chambers and Index on Censorship filed an [Urgent Appeal with two UN Special Rapporteurs](#). In July 2024, Human Rights Foundation submitted an [individual complaint to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#), in conjunction with the counsel team at Doughty Street Chambers and Index on Censorship.

In response to the news of his release, Mr Salehi's cousin, **Arezou Eghbali Babadi**, said:

"The regime tried to silence Toomaj with a death sentence, tortured him to death to break his spirit, and now, after so much pain and injustice, they released him. The truth is: Toomaj should never have been in prison at all.

And the root cause still remains—the inhumanity of the regime in Iran, a system that thrives on oppression and fear. That's why we must remain vigilant to ensure Toomaj stays safe and his voice for freedom is never silenced again."

Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC, international counsel for Mr Salehi's family, Index on Censorship, and Human Rights Foundation said:

"This is a time of celebration: our brave, brilliant client Toomaj Salehi is finally free, after 753 days' imprisonment. Mr Salehi has long used his powerful art – his rapping, his music, his words – to support the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement and human rights in Iran. For this, the Iranian authorities have targeted him for years, attempting to silence him through arrests, imprisonment, torture, assaults, and even a death sentence.

But this is also a time for vigilance. Mr Salehi's release has been achieved through sustained pressure upon the Iranian authorities, both inside and outside Iran. The world must not look away now: we must ensure Mr Salehi remains free and is never again subjected to the egregious violations of his rights which he has endured over the past 753 days."

Jemimah Steinfeld, CEO of Index on Censorship, said:

"We are thrilled that Toomaj Salehi is finally free. He is a courageous and principled man who should never have been in jail. While he won't be able to get back the years he has lost it is a relief for us to know he is reunited with his family. It has been a privilege to support Toomaj since his arrest and to work alongside brilliant colleagues at Doughty Street Chambers and Human Rights Foundation. Our thoughts are with Toomaj today. We are also thinking of the many other political prisoners still behind bars in Iran simply for exercising their free expression. Our fight for their rights continues."

Claudia Bennett, legal and programs officer at Human Rights Foundation, said:

"HRF celebrates Toomaj's release but demands the Iranian regime end its cycle of injustice. After enduring 753 days of wrongful detention, Toomaj should never face such persecution again. Even one more day behind bars on bogus charges is unacceptable. Let Toomaj rap, express himself, and live freely – this is his right, and it's time the regime respects it."

Speaking on X, Mr Salehi's friend and manager of his social media accounts, **Negin Niknaam**, said:

"Toomaj Salehi, the son of Iran, after enduring 753 days of cruel, unjust and undocumented re-incarceration, by going through the excuses and legal games of those with interests, was released today on December 11, 1403 from Dastgerd prison in

Isfahan, and the prisoner who was taken was victorious. He returned to the arms of his big family. While expressing joy and happiness at the end of more than one year, 9 months and 21 days of this cruel double captivity, we will wait for the end of all cases and false accusations and the complete and unconditional release of Toomaj.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- The international legal team at Doughty Street Chambers is led by [Caoilfhionn Gallagher KC](#), working with barristers [Jonathan Price](#), [Sam Jacobs](#) and [Nikila Kaushik](#). Any press queries for the international legal team should be directed to c.gallagher@doughtystreet.co.uk or press.enquiries@doughtystreet.co.uk.
- Any press queries for Index on Censorship should be directed to **Jemimah Steinfeld** on jemimah@indexoncensorship.org.
- Any press queries for the Human Rights Foundation should be directed to **Claudia Bennett** at claudia@hrf.org or media@hrf.org.
- Previous statements with more background information regarding the UN appeals and the quashing of Toomaj Salehi’s death sentence are available:
 - [Statement of 3rd May 2024](#): Urgent Appeal filed with United Nations for Iranian rapper sentenced to death for his music
 - [Statement of 22nd June 2024](#): Iran’s Supreme Court Overturns Death Sentence given to Iran Rapper Toomaj Salehi
 - [Statement of 24th July 2024](#): Index on Censorship, Human Rights Foundation and Doughty Street Chambers submit complaint to UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in response to Ongoing Judicial Persecution of Toomaj Salehi
 - [Statement of 24th September 2024](#): Iranian Rapper Toomaj Salehi: United Nations Member States urged to press Iranian President to release him immediately

- More background about Toomaj Salehi is available on social media, at @OfficialToomaj (X) and @ToomajOfficial (Instagram). More details of the campaign can be found using the hashtag #FreeToomaj.