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### **Iran- Sepideh Rashnu receives summons to serve almost four years in in prison**

On 17 February 2024, woman human right defender **Sepideh Rashnu** was summoned to prison as an initial procedure before she starts serving a three year and eleven months imprisonment sentence. The sentence was upheld on 22 November 2023 by The Tehran Revolutionary Court for three years and seven months on charges of "gathering and colluding against the national security" and four months undertaking "propaganda against state."

[Sepideh Rashnu](#) is a woman human rights defender, graphic designer, and a graduate student of painting at Alzahra University in Tehran. Her commitment to gender equality came into the spotlight after being arrested in July 2022 when a video capturing her encounter with a woman on a bus went viral. In the video, she was confronted by a woman advocating Iran's law which makes it compulsory for women to wear the hijab. This incident led Sepideh Rashnu to become a prominent campaigner in the ongoing struggle against the mandatory veiling rules and women's rights in the country.

On 17 February 2024, Sepideh Rashnu was summoned to prison as an initial procedure before she starts serving an imprisonment sentence. On 22 November 2023, Branch 26 of The Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced her to three years and seven months on the charge of "gathering and colluding against the national security", in addition to another four months, on the charge of "propaganda against state". According to Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code of Iran, the three years and seven months prison sentence is executable. However, the court verdict stayed the implementation of the sentence, considering it as a suspended prison sentence, to be executed only if she committed any other criminal acts that are punishable by prison during the period of five years.

Sepideh Rashnu was arrested for the first time in July 2022 due to unveiling in a bus on her way to work. At that time, she was forced to admit her guilt on a [televised confession](#) where her eyes were shown to be bruised. The confession triggered a strong reaction from Iranian social media and the woman human rights defender was released on bail in September 2022.

Between February and April 2023, Sepideh Rashnu, commuted to the main campus of Alzahra university without hijab. As a result, the security of the university has referred her case to The Evin Court, where she had been initially charged with undertaking "propaganda against state" and "promoting immorality and prostitution", based on the university security reports on her student activities and Instagram posts. On 20 June 2023, she was arrested for a few hours before being released on a 10 billion IRR bail. Subsequently, she was acquitted of the charge of "propaganda activities against state", and her case was referred to Branch 1099 of the Ershad Court, which oversees the veiling related issues.

On 13 May 2023, the woman human rights defender announced on her Instagram [page](#) that she had been suspended for two academic semesters from her studies at Alzahra University because of commuting to the university while not complying with mandatory hijab. The Instagram [post](#) of the woman human rights defender containing a picture of her without hijab capturing “as a citizen, I am entitled to choose what I wear” was interpreted as "promoting immorality and prostitution" by the Ershard Court. Further, a third court case was brought against her based on her presence without hijab before the Ershad court on charge of "unveiling in public" at the same Branch 1099 of the Ershad Court for which she received a 15 M IRR fine.

On 2 October 2023, the woman human rights defender was summoned by the Ershad court where she appeared without a hijab in front of the Court building. Consequently, she was not allowed inside the court building. Sepideh Rashnu was sentenced to six months in prison, and 100 M IRR fine, however, the prison sentence was reduced to four months before the Court of Appeal. Nevertheless, this verdict brought the suspended three years and seven months prison sentence into execution which led to an overall sentence of three years and eleven months of prison. The woman human rights defender has been summoned to serve this sentence on 17 February 2024, while her lawyer’s request for retrial before the Supreme Court has been accepted, Sepideh Rashnu has been given an extension until 10 March 2024 before she starts serving the prison sentence.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the sentencing of woman human rights defender Sepideh Rashnu. Front Line Defenders believes the judicial action against Sepideh Rashnu and her suspension from studies at university is in reprisal for her peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the Iranian authorities to:

- 1- Quash the convictions against Sepideh Rashnu immediately and unconditionally as Front Line Defenders believes she has been targeted solely as a result of her legitimate human rights work;
- 2- Ensure that Sepideh Rashnu and other students’ rights defenders are granted their rights to education in Iran;
- 3- Cease targeting human rights defenders in Iran, and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisal and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.