



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iranian Cartoonist Detained for Trying to Post a Cartoon on a Wall Next to Presidential Palace

Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), PEN America, Cartooning for Peace, Cartoonists Rights, and Freedom Cartoonists Foundation Condemn the Arrest and Mistreatment of Iranian Cartoonist Atena Farghadani and Call for her Immediate Release

(NEW YORK) -- [Artists at Risk Connection](#) (ARC), [PEN America](#), [Cartooning for Peace](#), [Cartoonists Rights](#), and the [Freedom Cartoonists Foundation](#) condemn the violent [arrest](#) of Iranian cartoonist [Atena Farghadani](#) and call for her immediate release from Evin prison. Farghadani was arrested by intelligence agents from the Revolutionary Guard (IRGC) on April 13, 2024, while attempting to post one of her drawings on the Pasteur Avenue wall, where the presidential palace is located. According to her lawyer, she suffered severe mistreatment during her arrest, leaving visible scarring on her face.

“We are outraged by the violence deployed by Iranian authorities against Atena Farghadani, whose work upholds human rights, democratic values, and free expression. We are deeply concerned for her well-being and call for her immediate and unconditional release. We call on the Iranian authorities to immediately and permanently cease their deliberate and brutal campaign against artistic freedom, and artists like Farghadani, and for the charges against her to be dropped immediately,” said Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) Managing Director [Julie Trébault](#).

On April 13, Farghadani was attempting to post some of her caricature artwork in public on a wall on Pasteur Street in Tehran, near the compound of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, when she was detained by security agents from the IRGC. According to information Atena shared with her husband (when he visited her in prison on April 21) and passed on to her lawyer, she was initially taken to a so-called "safe house" run by the IRGC and was severely beaten. She became unconscious after being struck several times on her nose and head. When she regained consciousness she found herself in the prayer room of the Fateb security police detention center. She noticed that she was missing some pieces of clothing that she had been wearing during the arrest. When they were returned to her, they were stained with blood, though they had been washed. On April 14, 2024 she was transferred to Evin court where she had a hearing on two charges: “propaganda against the state” and “insulting the sacred [the Messiah

the twelfth Imam Shia].” [According](#) to her lawyer, she is being held in Evin Prison and will be brought to a Revolutionary Court.

Farghadani was last arrested in [June 2023](#) after posting a satirical cartoon on her Instagram account earlier that day. She was later released on bail. In August 2014, [Farghadani](#) was [sentenced](#) to 12 years and nine months imprisonment for “spreading propaganda against the system,” “insulting members of the parliament through paintings,” and “gathering and colluding against national security.” Following public pressure and a [joint letter](#) signed by dozens of leading cartoonists, human rights groups, and other supporters calling for Farghadani’s immediate release, an appeals court reduced her sentence to 18 months in April 2016. She was released from Evin Prison on May 3, 2016.

“Cartoonist and activist Atena Farghadani’s commitment to upholding democratic values amid the most severe repression shows incredible courage. We are very concerned about her safety, considering the brutality and charges that she is confronted with. Everything must be done for her immediate liberation,” said Cartooning for Peace President and cartoonist Kak.

At last month’s [United Nations Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva](#), PEN America joined a coalition of Iranian and international human rights organizations calling on the UN’s Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to extend the mandate of the [Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) (FFMI). The FFMI’s [inaugural report](#), released on March 8, emphasized the severe human rights violations carried out by the Iranian authorities since the start of the Woman Life Freedom protests in September 2022. In a [joint letter](#) sent to Member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the coalition also demanded that the mandate of the [UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran](#) be renewed, stressing the value of the “two distinct and complementary mandates... essential for the Council to fulfill its mandate of promotion and protection of human rights in Iran.”

According to PEN America’s 2022 [Freedom to Write Index](#)—an annual count of imprisoned writers worldwide—Iran was [ranked](#) second (after China) for jailing the highest number of writers. This was a significant increase over the previous year, with the addition of 39 new cases for a total of 57. The Index also showed that Iran imprisoned more than one-third of the total number of women writers jailed worldwide, indicative of the Iranian authorities’ efforts to suppress women’s voices and their demands for full human and equal rights.

About Artists at Risk Connection (ARC)

Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) is dedicated to assisting at-risk artists and cultural workers, and fortifying the organizations that support them.

About PEN America

PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect open expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Our mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible.

About Cartooning for Peace

Cartooning for Peace, a French non-profit organization, is an international network of 319 committed press cartoonists whose aim is to promote human rights and democratic values through press cartoons, while respecting cultures and freedoms.

About Cartoonists Rights

CARTOONISTS RIGHTS is a US non-profit that envisions a world where cartoonists are free from persecution; they seek to strengthen the interconnectedness of cartoonists, campaign to protect their human rights, and defend those threatened as a result of their work.

About Freedom Cartoonists Foundation

Based in Geneva, the Freedom Cartoonists Foundation supports professional editorial cartooning as an essential part of civic debate. The Foundation stands for a free press as a pillar of democracy and of which political cartoons are a vital element. Through its actions, it defends freedom of speech in a spirit of dialogue.