

Who is Narges Mohammadi?

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An undated photograph of Narges Mohammadi. Credit... Mohammadi Family, via Reuters

By [Farnaz Fassihi](#)

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Narges Mohammadi, the most prominent human rights activist in Iran, has dedicated her career to fighting government repression with a focus on women’s rights. She is currently serving a 10-year jail sentence in Tehran’s Evin Prison for “spreading anti-state propaganda.”

Her [30 years of activism](#) to peacefully bring grass-roots change to Iran through education, advocacy and civil disobedience and to strengthen civil society has come with a hefty price: her liberty, her health and separation from her husband, children and parents.

Even from inside prison, Ms. Mohammadi, 51, has been one of the most outspoken critics of Iran’s government. She has organized protests and sit-ins as part of the uprising, led by women, that rocked Iran last year, [written guest essays](#) and organized weekly workshops for

women inmates about their rights.

“The global support and recognition of my human rights advocacy makes me more resolved, more responsible, more passionate and more hopeful,” Ms. Mohammadi said in a written statement to The New York Times. “I also hope this recognition makes Iranians protesting for change stronger and more organized. Victory is near.”

Ms. Mohammadi’s husband and fellow rights activist, Taghi Rahmani, and her twin 16-year-old children, Ali and Kiana, live in exile in France. She has not seen her children in eight years.

Mr. Rahmani said this week that the Nobel Prize would be a nod to his wife’s decades of work from the ground in Iran, but that the recognition would be bigger than Ms. Mohammadi.

“It is also a prize for all the human rights activists who have been fighting for change in Iran for many decades in a society that has unjust laws,” Mr. Rahmani said in an interview. “It is a recognition of the Women, Life, Freedom movement in Iran.”

Ms. Mohammadi is the second Iranian woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Shirin Ebadi, a human rights lawyer and Ms. Mohammadi’s longtime mentor and colleague, received the award in 2003. The two women worked together in Iran at Defenders of Human Rights Center, founded by Ms. Ebadi in 2001. The organization was shut down in a violent raid in 2009.

Ms. Mohammadi was born in 1972 in the central Iranian city of Zanzan to a middle-class family, seven years before the Iranian Revolution. Her path to activism began with two childhood memories: her mother stuffing a red plastic shopping basket with fruit for weekly prison visits with her brother, and her mother sitting on the floor near the television screen to hear the names of prisoners executed each day.

She studied physics at a university in Qazvin, Iran, where she quickly became involved in activism, founding a women’s hiking group and another group focused on civic engagement. She met her husband, a well-known figure in Iran’s intellectual circles, when she attended an underground class that he taught on civil society. The couple rotated in and out of prison for most of their marriage and have not been together as a family unit with their children since they were toddlers.

Ms. Mohammadi has earned many accolades, including the PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award at its annual gala in New York this year. The United Nations also named her as one of the three recipients of its World Press Freedom Prize in May.

“I have to keep my eyes on the horizon and the future even though the prison walls are tall and near and blocking my view,” she said in an interview with The Times earlier this year.

