



The Case

On 25.08.2021, Homayoun Sabetara, a father fleeing Iran, was arrested by Greek authorities in Thessaloniki after having driven a vehicle across the Turkish-Greek border. Following an unfair trial, on 26.09.2022, Homayoun was then sentenced to an 18-year prison sentence for alleged smuggling. Homayoun was reportedly coerced into piloting the vehicle from their departing point near the Turkish-Greek border, having to transport seven additional persons. Since his arrest in August 21, he has been held in prison in Greece. At the time of his escape from Iran, Homayoun had no legal and safe passage available to travel to Germany, where his children reside. His appeal trial was scheduled to take place on 22 April 24 in Thessaloniki.

Background

Homayoun's case is emblematic of a broader trend. For every boat or car that arrives, at least one person is arbitrarily arrested and systematically accused of smuggling. In 2022 1.374 migrants were arrested in Greece under similar charges. Trials last an average of 37 minutes and result in sentences of around 46 years in prison, as a study by Borderline Europe found. Instead of offering safe entry points, the EU criminalizes irregularized entry, leaving refugees with no choice but to take perilous journeys.

The #FreeHomayoun-Campaign

Mahtab Sabetara initiated the #FreeHomayoun campaign to spotlight the EU's harsh immigration policies. Through social media and advocacy, the campaign aims to raise awareness of the flaws and double standards in the current system. It calls for a fair treatment, uphold human rights, and provide safe pathways for all. This happens through [social media engagement](#), [media outreach](#) and [petitioning](#) key figures on the EU level. The campaign demands the acquittal of Homayoun Sabetara, as well as all migrants who are criminalized for 'smuggling'.

The appeal trial on 22nd April 2024

Homayoun's lawyers Harry Ladis and Dimitris Choulis believe the trial to be mainly political and demand his freedom. To support Homayoun, a large alliance of supporters, ranging from individuals to groups, came to Thessaloniki, as well as independent trial monitoring by the association Democratic Jurists Switzerland, Border Violence Monitoring Network and Human Rights Legal Project. But: The court failed to bring the only witness for the prosecution, so the trial was postponed for a further five months, during which Homayoun Sabetara must remain in custody. The new trial date is 24 September 24.

Covering Homayoun's case and the campaign

As initiator of the campaign, Mahtab Sabetara is available for interviews and other media requests. For a first exchange, we would kindly ask you to get in touch with the campaign by mail. All contact to Mahtab Sabetara will be arranged in the following steps. For additional and background information, please consult our [website](#), the [study about criminalization by borderline europe](#) and our [image database](#) and [videos](#).

Contact

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