

Chronology of Events in Iran, January 2005*

January 4

Peyman Aref Summoned to Disciplinary Committee. (Iranian daily *Hambastegi* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Tehran University's Law student, Peyman Aref, said he was summons to the Disciplinary Committee because of 'Student Day' ceremonies held on December 6, 2004. Two other members of Law Faculty's Islamic Association have also been subpoenaed by the same committee.

Councils for Resolution of Disputes Not Authorized to Issue Travel Bans. (Iranian daily *Aftab* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Deputy Judiciary Chief for Executive Affairs, Amir-Abbas Sohrab-Beygi, said travel bans issued by the Councils for Resolution of Disputes are not valid. Recently, reformist journalist Issa Saharkhiz, former Sixth Majlis lawmaker Fatemeh Haqiqatjou, dissident writer and journalist Emadeddin Baqi and political activist Azam Taleqani have been banned from traveling abroad.

January 5

Director of Naqshineh Website Summoned to Court. (Iranian daily *Hambastegi* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

The head of *Naqshineh* website, Hamed Mottaqi, appeared before the 5th Circuit of Qom's Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Rostami. At the hearing he was notified of his charges of 'spreading lies with intent to disturb public opinion'. Mottaqi said the complaint, filed by the public prosecutor, was related to his note in *Payam-e-Qom* weekly in regard to recent arrests in Qom. Mottaqi denies the charges and claims that by writing the article in question he intended to support and protect the legal organizations in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

January 6

Journalists receive death threats after testifying. (Human Rights Watch)

After testifying to a presidential commission about their torture during detention, a group of Iranian journalists have received death threats from judicial officials under Tehran chief prosecutor Saeed Mortazavi. Human Rights Watch is extremely concerned about the safety of the journalists, whose testimony to a presidential commission, tasked with investigating mistreatment of detainees, provided detailed information on their torture and mistreatment while they were detained, without being charged, by secret squads operating under the authority of the judiciary. On December

* Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara.

25, Hanif Mazroi, Massoud Ghoreishi, Fereshteh Ghazi, Arash Naderpour and Mahbobeh Abasgholizadeh—all of whom are journalists detained by the government—testified about their detention before the presidential commission. Fereshteh Ghazi provided details of her treatment by interrogators, including severe beatings that resulted in a broken nose during one interrogation session. The detainees were kept under lengthy solitary confinement in a secret detention center and were repeatedly subjected to psychological and physical torture. On January 1 two other former detainees, Omid Memarian and Ruzbeh Mir Ebrahimi, also appeared in front of the commission. In their testimonies, as made public by commission member Mohammad Ali Abtahi, they confirmed details of their torture.

Since their appearances before the commission, Saeed Mortazavi, chief prosecutor of Tehran, has threatened each of these former detainees with lengthy prison sentences and harm to their family members, as punishment for their testimony. Mortazavi continues to issue numerous subpoenas for the journalists without specifying charges. His operatives also harass the journalists by phone on a daily basis. On January 3, Mortazavi held a press conference denying any mistreatment of detainees and threatening to prosecute the former detainees for “allegations against security forces and prison officials that are politically motivated.” The journalists’ testimonies exposed Mortazavi’s role in authorizing their torture to extract confessions and in compelling them to appear on television to deny their mistreatment while under detention.

January 7

Iranian protester sentenced to over three years in jail. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)

Bina Darabvand, one of the family members of political prisoners who staged a protest in front of the UN office in Tehran in August 2004 has been sentenced to jail term and lashes. Darabvand's case was investigated in Bench 26 of Revolution Court. Judge Haddad sentenced Bina to 3.5 years in prison and 50 lashes after hearing the defence. Bina Darabvand has been accused of participating in unlawful protests.

January 9

US confirms repatriation of Mujaheddin-e Khalq members. (Agence France Press / AFP)

The US State Department confirmed "voluntary" repatriation to Iran of some members of an Iranian opposition group that used to be based in Iraq and said the possibility of sending them to third countries was also being studied. "Some of them that have been found not to have engaged in terrorist activity have been voluntarily repatriated to Iran," Department Spokesman Adam Ereli said. The International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement that it had helped repatriate to Iran 28 alleged members of Mujaheddin-e Khalq.

Online journalist Javad Gholam Tamayomi released. (Reporters Without Borders / RSF)

Journalist Javad Gholam Tamayomi, who was arrested on 18 October 2004 for contributing to reformist websites, was released between 3 and 7 January. Reporters

Without Borders pointed out that weblogger Mojtaba Saminejad remains in prison. Mojtaba Saminejad was arrested at the beginning of November for condemning on his website (<http://man-namanam.blogspot.com>) the arrest of four webloggers, who have since been freed.

Teachers and nurses protest in Tehran. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL Iran Report)

A group of teachers and another group of about 200 nurses gathered outside the Iranian parliament in Tehran to stage employment-related protests, according to Iranian newspapers on 10 January. The teachers, who taught at overseas Iranian schools, complained that they had not received their full salaries and benefits. The teachers' earlier demonstration outside the Management and Planning Organization did not yield results, and legislator Mohammad Hussein Nejad-Fallah asked them to select one person to represent them.

The nurses demanded salary increases, an end to privatization in their field, fewer night shifts, and a larger pool of nurses. Several parliamentarians met with the demonstrators and promised to look into their grievances. The result of this was an agreement to hire more nurses, Dashtestan representative Seyyed Abdolmajid Shoja said.

University student in court. (Iranian daily *Tose'eh* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

The hearing of the student activist Ali-Reza Nouri was held at the 26th Circuit of the Tehran Revolutionary Court. Nouri is charged with 'action against national security'.

Darabvand gets 3.5-year prison term. (Iranian daily *Hayat-e No* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Bina Darabvand, who was detained during the sit in support of political prisoners, which took place in front of the UN office in Tehran, has been sentenced to a 3.5-year prison term and 50 lashes at the 26th Circuit of the Revolutionary Court.

January 10

Tehran prosecutor general blocks sites. (Iranian newspaper *Iran Daily* / Iranian diaspora website *IranMania*)

Tehran's Prosecutor General, Saeed Mortazavi emphasized that to filter out the 'illegal, anti-religious' Internet sites, the Judiciary does not need to seek any committee's approval, referring to Iran's Telecommunication's three-man Committee apparently responsible for determining the legality of websites' activities. "The committee itself has issued a general statement which authorizes the Judiciary to independently block the websites it finds in contradiction with the religious and moral principles of Iranian society." Mortazavi noted. The Prosecutor General's remarks come at a time when Iran's Telecommunications Company still rejects receiving orders for blocking the two internet sites of 'Orkut' and 'Persian blog'.

January 11

Punishment of Leyla Mafi suspended. (Amnesty International)

Leyla Mafi, who was sentenced to death for "morality-related" offences arising from her being forced into prostitution as a child, is no longer in imminent danger of

execution. The Iranian authorities are reviewing her case, in an attempt to investigate press reports that Leyla Mafi has a mental age of eight. Leyla Mafi was reportedly sentenced to death by a court in the central Iranian city of Arak on charges of "acts of "acts contrary to chastity" (*a'mal-e khalaf-e 'ofat*) by controlling a brothel, having intercourse with blood relatives (*eteham-e zena ba maharem*) and giving birth to an illegitimate child (*tavallo-d-e bache-e haram*). A Tehran newspaper report on 28 November 2004 claimed that tests carried out by social workers have repeatedly shown her to have a mental age of eight. However, she had been tried and sentenced to death solely on the basis of her explicit confessions, without being examined by court-appointed doctors and without consideration of her background or mental health.

January 12

UNHCR concerned over wave of refugee arrests. (UN OCHA Integrated Regional Information Network / IRIN)

Hundreds of Afghans have been arrested by Iranian police in a crackdown against illegal migrants, according to press reports. The Iranian daily, *Iran Emrooz*, said on Sunday that legal Afghan refugees have also been arrested and that the arrests have been taking place in the eastern cities of Zahedan, Zabol, Mashad and Kerman over the last two weeks. The newspaper said those arrested were held in a detention centre for up to four days and that some claim to have been beaten, although the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that so far, they could not confirm these reports. "UNHCR is concerned that some registered refugees could have been taken in this wave of arrests and we have intervened to make sure this doesn't happen - it has happened but only in a few cases," Xavier Creach, UNHCR press officer, in Tehran said. Recently the Iranian government launched a campaign aimed at deporting illegal Afghan migrant workers and introducing heavy fines for Iranians who employ them. UNHCR is negotiating the renewal of the tripartite agreement which will end on 22 March this year. UNHCR is working with the Iranian authorities to find solutions for the remaining Afghans, which includes the possibility of temporary economic migratory status.

Thirteen "penitent members" of Mojahedin opposition group return to Iran. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Some 13 penitent members of the [Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization, known as MKO or PMOI] returned to Iran. They arrived at Mehrabad International Airport under supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They will join their families after medical tests which may last five to seven days, said a security official at Mehrabad International Airport.

Izeh defendants seek attorney from Human Rights Organization. (Iranian daily *Hambastegi* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Following the post-election unrests in Izeh, Khuzestan Province, several defendants were sentenced to 3-10 year prison-terms and 15-30 years of exile on charges of 'action against national security and disturbing public opinion'. Recently the representatives of these prisoners have called on the Human Rights Defenders' Association to engage an attorney to defend them.

January 13

Iranian rape case woman pardoned. (British Broadcasting Corporation / BBC)

An Iranian woman sentenced to death for killing a police official she said had tried to rape her has been pardoned by the victim's family, officials said. The family of Behzad Moghaddam agreed to accept compensation instead of seeking Afsaneh Norouzi's execution. The decision by Mr Moghaddam's family to accept a "blood money" payment of \$62,500 (£33,200) instead of seeking Mrs Norouzi's life brings the case to an end. A judiciary official said the death sentence could not be brought against Mrs Norouzi, now 34, again. Mrs Norouzi had refused to plead for mercy because she believed she had justly defended herself.

In Iran, a married woman who is raped risks the death penalty for adultery if she cannot prove she was violated. If she kills her attacker, she may also face the death sentence for murder.

January 16

Weblogger summoned to court. (ILNA)

Fereshteh Qazi, who has been charged in connection with the so-called "Internet dossier", and her husband have been summoned to Branch One of the Prosecutor's Office at the Court of Government Employees. Qazi said: "My husband is not involved in the media or in politics but he has been summoned recently and accessed of spreading lies."

January 18

Legislature approves bill to investigate judiciary. (RFE/RL Iran Report)

Iranian Majlis approved a bill authorizing legislative investigations of the judiciary on 18 January. If the bill becomes law, the legislature can look into the judiciary's anticorruption campaign, moral and ethical issues, budgetary matters, and implementation of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's orders.

January 19

Fear of imminent execution of a minor. (Amnesty International)

Ali, a 16-year-old student, may be at risk of imminent execution for the murder of another student in his high school, which took place between mid-January and mid-February 2003. It was reported that Ali was sentenced to death in June 2004, and his sentence has already been confirmed by the Supreme Court. The case reportedly went before Branch 122 of the Karaj General Court, where the head of the Special Court for Children (Dadgah-e Vije-e Jora'yem-e Etfal) sentenced Ali to death, or qesas (retribution). Milad was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for his participation in the incident. Branch 27 of the Supreme Court has reportedly upheld Ali's sentence, though Amnesty International is unaware of the date when this occurred. It is thought that Ali remains in detention, awaiting execution. According to a 15 January 2005 report on the internet news site, ILNA, at least 30 other individuals under the age of 18, who have been sentenced to death, are currently detained in a juvenile detention centre (Kanoun-e Eslah va Tarbiyat) in Tehran and Raja'i Shahr, a town close to Tehran.

Convict publicly hanged. (Iranian diaspora website IranMania)

An Iranian man convicted of murdering seven people has been hanged publicly before a cheering crowd in the eastern desert oasis of Tabas. The man, identified as Mehdi Rashidpour, had been convicted of carrying out the crimes in Esfandyar village in the northeastern province of Khorasan.

January 20

Amnesty for Afghans in Iranian prisons. (RFE/RL Iran Report)

The Iranian judiciary has announced an amnesty for imprisoned Afghans, including those on death row. Afghans who are being sued by other people will not be released, unless the complainant pardons them. Supreme Court official Ali Qahramani said that the released Afghans will be repatriated. If they return to Iran and commit a new crime, the remainder of the previous sentence will be added to the new sentence. Qahramani said he does not know how many Afghan prisoners there are.

Deputy Interior Minister and Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs chief Ahmad Hussein said on 19 January that Afghan refugees can no longer stay in Iran because there is no more aid from international organizations with which to support them. According to Hussein, one million Afghan refugees remain in Iran.

UNHCR chief Ruud Lubbers said in Kabul on 15 January, "We think that the Iranian authorities have gone too far...we are not going to be instrumental in forced repatriation." If the forced repatriations continue, Lubbers said, the UNHCR will not renew its agreement with Iran and Afghanistan. Hussein said on 17 January that the UNHCR does not have the right to interfere in Iranian affairs, and he added that the UNHCR has not provided any funding "since last summer."

***Khorshid-e-Nimrouz* publication banned. (Iranian daily *Iran* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)**

The Press Supervisory Board has banned the *Khorshid-e-Nimrouz* publication, allegedly due to the violation of the Press Law. The Press Supervisory Board has referred the case to the Press Court.

Journalist and weblogger arrested. (RSF)

Reporters Without Borders has called for the immediate release of journalist Arash Sigarchi who was arrested on 17 January 2005, after responding to a summons from the Intelligence Ministry in Rashat in the north of the country. He had been updating a weblog that has been banned by the authorities, *Panhjareh Eltehab* (The window of Anguish), in which he had spoken out against recent arrests of cyberjournalists and bloggers. Sigarchi is the editor of the daily *Gylan Emroz*. He had already been imprisoned for several days, from 27 August 2004, for an article, illustrated with photographs, of a rally in Tehran by families of prisoners who were executed in 1989. Sigarchi has for nearly three years run a political and cultural weblog www.sigarchi.com/blog, in which he mounted repeated criticism of the regime. He had condemned harassment of journalists arrested in a series of Internet cases (see : http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=12249) and in particular the mistreatment inflicted on his colleagues Shahram Rafihzadeh and Rozbeh Mir Ebrahimi. The authorities have made his blog inaccessible within Iran. He has been held since 17 January at Lakan Prison in Rashat where he has been denied the right to see a lawyer

and bail has been set at 2 billion rials (around 200 000 euros). The authorities have put pressure on his mother to deny that her son has been arrested.

Nearly 20 people have been arrested over the past three months in a crackdown against the online press. Apart from Sigarchi, another weblogger, Mojtaba Saminejad, is still in prison. At the start of January, Tehran's prosecutor-general, Said Mortazavi, ordered Internet Service Providers to block the main weblogs - Orkut, Nedstat, Blogspot, Persianblog, Blogrolling and others. Iranian Internet-users are now almost entirely cut off from the blogosphere.

January 21

Under-age criminal executed in Tehran. (*IranMania*)

Three convicted murderers have been hanged in Tehran, one of whom was a minor when he committed the crime. Iman Farrokhi was 17 when he stabbed a soldier to death in a fight over a girl in the mountains outside Tehran. Iran issued a denial earlier in January that it was executing criminals under the age of 18 or stoning people to death, dismissing as foreign propaganda reports that such punishments were continuing. Rights activists and diplomats have said that while Iran appears to have respected a moratorium on stoning, there have been cases of minors being executed. This week Iran's judiciary commuted death sentences for two brothers who were 17 and 18 when they attempted to hijack a plane in November 2000. They had been due to go to the gallows.

Iranian student activist sentenced to two years prison and 74 lashes. (*ILNA*)

The Revolution Court has sentenced Reza Ashrafpur, dentistry student of Iran Medical University to two years of prison and 74 lashes. He had been accused of acting against national security, propagating against the state, disturbing public opinion and insulting state officials.

January 22

Tabarzadi rejects court verdict. (*Iranian daily Shargh & Iranian news site Iran Daily News*)

The dissident activist Heshmatollah Tabarzadi has been sentenced to a 16-year prison term. In a letter from Evin Prison, he said he doesn't accept the court verdict because it violated the 168th principle of the Constitution.

Eshkevari paroled. (*Iranian daily Farhang-e Ashti & Iranian news site Iran Daily News*)

The Judicial Council of the Special Court for Clergy has agreed to parole the jailed cleric Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari. He was jailed after attending the Berlin Conference on a charge of 'action against the national security'.

January 24

University student sentenced to two-year prison term and 76 lashes. (*Iranian daily Aftab & Iranian news site Iran Daily News*)

Dentistry student of Iran's Medical Sciences University, Reza Ashraf-Pour, was sentenced to two years in jail and 76 lashes by the 15th Circuit of the Revolutionary Court. Ashraf-Pour is charged with 'acting against national security, propaganda



against the Islamic system and insulting high-ranking officials'. He had taken part in the 2002 student unrest.

January 25

Journalist banned from leaving country. (ILNA)

Bench 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court has confirmed banning Isa Saharkhiz, the head of the Association to Defend the Freedom of the Press [Anjoman-e Defa' az azadiye matbu'at], from leaving the country and dismissed his appeal against the verdict. It was reported that the representative of the claimant, together with the State Inspectorate Office filed a complaint against Saharkhiz to the Prosecutor's Office of district seven of Tehran, accusing him of propaganda against the Islamic regime and holding interviews with foreign media, creating psychological war in the country, exploiting his position, illegal use of government property and money laundering. The court issued a verdict to ban him from leaving the country at the time.

January 27

Blogger Mojtaba Saminejad freed. (RSF)

Mojtaba Saminejad was released after almost three months in detention. But he has been charged by the Tehran prosecutor's office and is due to be tried soon. It was not immediately known if he had to pay bail.

Iranian dissident begins prison sentence. (ILNA)

The former secretary of the Islamic society of the Sabzevar Teacher Training College, charged with publishing false reports and stirring up public opinion, has started his prison sentence. Abdolrahman Naderi, a former member of the central council of the Islamic society of the Sabzevar Teacher Training College, has been in Saqez prison for 10 days now. It was reported that this verdict was issued a year ago and with no prior notice was carried out 10 days ago.

Revolutionary Court confirms travel ban imposed on Saharkhiz. (Iranian daily *Aftab* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

The 15th Circuit of the Tehran Revolutionary Court has confirmed the travel ban imposed on the outspoken reformist journalist Issa Saharkhiz. The public prosecutor and the State Inspectorate Organization had recently filed lawsuits at Tehran's 7th District Public Prosecutor's Office against Saharkhiz, which resulted in his travel ban.

Vigilante released. (Iranian daily *Shargh* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Six of the defendants in the case of hardliner vigilantes who attacked the Tarasht Student Dormitory in 2003, have been sentenced to prison terms and lashes by the 15th Circuit of the Revolutionary Court. The court hearing of the other three defendants will be held on February 12, 2005. Meanwhile, Saeed Asgar, a major figure in the case, is out on bail.

January 28

UN urges Iran to halt execution of young offenders. (Reuters)

A United Nations human rights body called on Iran to abolish the death penalty as well as amputation, flogging and stoning for people who committed crimes as minors.

The U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child "deplored" the fact that during its three-week session an Iranian was executed for a killing carried out when he was 17 -- contradicting Iran's statement that it had suspended the death penalty for people accused of crimes while juveniles. U.N. officials said Iman Farrokhi, found guilty of killing a member of Iran's security forces at age 17, was hanged in Tehran's notorious Evin prison on January 20. At least two other Iranians who committed crimes as juveniles are believed to be on death row, activists said. It expressed deep concern over the fact that the age of majority in Iran is 15 for boys and 9 for girls, which implies that they are not protected by the Convention above these ages. This could also result in "forced, early and temporary marriages," the committee said. The committee said the Iranian delegation, led by Mohamad Mahdi Akhoondzadah, head of international legal affairs at the Foreign Ministry, had said that executions and floggings of people who committed crimes as minors had been suspended because a new juvenile justice bill was before parliament.

January 30

Student fined five million rials. (Iranian daily *Shargh* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

Tehran University student Ali-Reza Nouri was fined five million rials by the 26th Circuit of the Tehran Revolutionary Court. The fine was related to Nouri's participation in last year's student unrest.

January 31

Nabavi's assets to be confiscated again. (Iranian daily *Siyasat-e Roz* & Iranian news site *Iran Daily News*)

The assets of outspoken reformist Sixth Majlis lawmaker, Behzad Nabavi, will be confiscated again. One of these properties is his house in Tehran's Zafarianeh district, which is worth billions of rials. Following the Islamic Revolution, this house was confiscated. However, Nabavi finally managed to regain its ownership several years ago.

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