

Harsh repression continues to hit human rights defenders and NGOs

Paris-Geneva, January 5, 2010. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), strongly condemns the continuing wave of repression against Iranian human rights defenders.*

On January 3, 2010, journalist **Ahmad Zeydabadi**, also a member of the Association for the Defence of Press Freedom and former President of the NGO “Advar Tahkim”, saw his sentence, probably for “activities endangering State security”, to six years' imprisonment - coupled with a five-year banishment in Gonabad - confirmed in appeal

On January 2, Messrs. **Ali Hekmat** and **Mohammad-Reza Zohdi**, journalists and members of the Association for the Defence of Press Freedom, as well as Advar Tahkim members **Rouzbeh Karimi** and **Forough Mirzaï**, were arrested. As of today, they would remain detained but no information could be obtained as to whether charges were brought against them and as to their place of detention. This is the case for the majority of the people arrested after December 27.

The Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI) also reported the arrest on December 30, 2009 of Ms. **Bahareh Hedayat**, women's rights activist and "One Million Signatures Campaign" member. As of today, she remains detained).

On December 20, three other rights activists, Ms. **Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh**, Ms. **Shiva Nazarahari** and Ms. **Kouhyar Goudarzi** were arbitrarily arrested as they were on their way to Qom to participate in the funeral ceremony of Ayatollah Montazeri. If two of them were rapidly released, Ms. Shiva Nazarahari also remain in detention to date. On January 4, 2010, “One Million Signatures” Campaign member and journalist **Bahman Ahmadi Amoui** was sentenced to seven years and four months' imprisonment coupled with 34 lashes. She was arrested in July 2009 and remains arbitrarily detained since then.

Information was also obtained on the deteriorating health status of Mr. **Mohammad Maleki**, founding member of the Association for the Defence of Freedom and Human Rights (ADFHR), detained since August 22, 2009 in Evin prison, Tehran. Mr. Maleki is suffering from a prostate cancer and has reportedly been denied access to an adequate treatment.

"NGOs are the first victims of this raging repression", LDDHI President and FIDH Vice-President Karim Lahidji said today. "The whereabouts of most of the persons arrested remain unknown to date, and it is also unclear whether charges were brought against them. I reiterate the necessity to put an end to the harassment of those who exercise their legitimate and internationally recognised rights to defend human rights. They must be all released and their integrity must be guaranteed in all circumstances".

“In the past few months, the repression carried out by the Iranian regime has widened against all those who try to exercise their fundamental rights to peaceful criticism and to allow the democratic functioning of society”, said Eric Sottas, OMCT Secretary General. “The Iranian regime's inability to respond other than through a violent repression underlines its weakness and its increasing loss of support, including among those who until now had not expressed their opposition”.

The wave of repression intensified in late December, extending to a large number of civil society activists, including Mr. **Emad Baghi**, founder of the Centre for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights and laureate of the 2009 Martin Ennals Award, who is reported to be held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, a section of the prison under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence.

The Observatory calls upon the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders and their relatives currently detained in Iran, and to conform in all circumstances with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

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