



## Iran - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 and 28 June 2012

### Treatment of anti-government political activists

An introductory paragraph in the *United States Department of State* report covering events of 2011, issued in May 2012, notes:

“Demonstrations by opposition groups, university students, and others increased during the first few months of the year, inspired in part by events of the Arab Spring...The government responded harshly to protesters and critics, arresting, torturing, and prosecuting them for their dissent” (United States Department of State (24 May 2012) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011*, Introduction).

This report also states:

“The government’s suppression and intimidation of voices of opposition continued at a rapid pace at year’s end” (ibid, Introduction).

It is also noted in this report that:

“Security forces under the government’s control committed acts of politically motivated violence and repression, including torture, beatings, and rape” (ibid, Introduction).

This report also points out that:

“Statistics regarding the number of citizens imprisoned for their political beliefs were not available, but human rights activists estimated the number in the hundreds, perhaps as high as 900. According to the ICHRI, an estimated 500 persons were arbitrarily detained for peaceful activities or the exercise of free expression, and another 500 prisoners of conscience had been sentenced to lengthy prison terms following unfair trials” (ibid, Section 1e Denial of Fair Public Trial/Political Prisoners and Detainees).

It is also stated in this report that:

“Members of political parties and individuals with any political affiliation that the government deemed unacceptable faced harassment, violence, and sometimes imprisonment” (ibid, Section 3. Elections and Political Participation/Political Parties).

A report published by *Human Rights Watch* in March 2012 states:

“Over the past few years, authorities have banned some reformist parties and severely restricted the activities of others. On September 27, 2010, the general prosecutor and judiciary spokesman announced a court order dissolving two reformist political parties, the Islamic Iran Participation Front

and the Mojahedin of the Islamic Revolution. Authorities prevent members of other pro-reform groups, like the Freedom Movement party, from holding gatherings” (Human Rights Watch (1 March 2012) *Iran: Fair Vote Impossible*).

This publication also notes:

“Authorities continue to hold the opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnava, as well as Karroubi, under house arrest more than a year after they called for demonstrations in support of wide-scale protests following the disputed June 2009 presidential election. Dozens of other opposition figures are in prison after being unfairly tried for such offenses as ‘acting against the national security’ and ‘propaganda against the regime.’ “ (ibid).

In January 2012 a report published by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* points out:

“Frequent and arbitrary arrest and detention of political opponents and human rights defenders – journalists, filmmakers, lawyers and activists – who speak out against the regime continues” (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (16 January 2012) *Human Rights in Countries of Concern: Quarterly Update on Iran, October to December 2011*).

A report published in May 2012 commenting on events of the preceding year by *Amnesty International* notes:

“Political dissidents, women's and minority rights activists and other human rights defenders were arbitrarily arrested, detained incommunicado, imprisoned after unfair trials and banned from travelling abroad” (Amnesty International (24 May 2012) *Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Iran*).

A report issued in January 2012 by *Human Rights Watch* reviewing events of the previous year states:

“In 2011 Iranian authorities refused to allow government critics to engage in peaceful demonstrations” (Human Rights Watch (22 January 2012) *World Report 2012, Iran*, p.1).

The *Financial Times* in February 2012 notes:

“This year...opposition supporters appear reluctant to pour into streets and face the regime, which has shown little tolerance of movements it says aim to overthrow the ruling hierarchy” (Financial Times (13 February 2012) *Iranian opposition plans protest rally*).

A publication issued in February 2012 by *Amnesty International* states:

“Waves of arrests in recent months have targeted lawyers; students; journalists; political activists and their relatives; members of Iran’s religious and ethnic minorities; filmmakers, workers rights activists and people with international connections, particularly to foreign media such as BBC Persian. Dozens have been tortured or jailed, among them prisoners of conscience. Many others have been harassed or banned from travelling abroad” (Amnesty

International (28 February 2012) *"We are ordered to crush you", Expanding repression of dissent in Iran*, p.6).

A publication released in April 2012 by the *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office* notes that:

"A number of political opposition leaders remain detained without charge since February" (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (30 April 2012) *Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report - Iran*).

A report issued by the *International Campaign for Human Rights In Iran* in March 2012 notes that:

"...Iranian authorities have ramped up their targeting and persecution of members of the political Opposition" (International Campaign for Human Rights In Iran (March 2012) *Monitoring Iran: One Year into the Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran*, p.5).

In April 2012 *Human Rights Watch* notes:

"An 80-year-old activist who was prominent in Iran's Islamic revolution has been ordered to surrender to serve an eight-year prison sentence, Human Rights Watch said today. Ebrahim Yazdi, a leader of the Freedom Movement party, was convicted in December 2011 on charges solely relating to the exercise of his rights to freedom of association and speech" (Human Rights Watch (27 April 2012) *Iran: Ailing Revolutionary Icon to Be Jailed*).

This document also states:

"Yazdi's prosecution is emblematic of the government's utter lack of tolerance toward any opposition,' said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch...Human Rights Watch called on Iran's judiciary to quash Yazdi's sentence and immediately free all members of his Freedom Movement party who are serving prison terms because of their exercise of their right to freedom of association, or of other political rights" (ibid).

In December 2011 the *International Federation for Human Rights* notes:

"The authorities in Iran are relentlessly pursuing their suppression of every form of peaceful dissent including protests of families of victims and their supporters as well as moderate political activists" (International Federation for Human Rights (29 December 2011) *Iran: Persecution of victims of crimes against human rights and political activists*).

In September 2011 a report published by *Human Rights Watch* notes that:

"Human rights conditions have worsened considerably in Iran since the government crackdown on largely peaceful protests that followed the disputed June 2009 presidential election, Human Rights Watch said. This year, authorities continued their brutal campaign to crush dissent inside the country, using lethal force against peaceful protesters, arresting hundreds,

and killing dozens. Authorities detained opposition leaders, lawyers, journalists, and rights activists on politically motivated charges” (Human Rights Watch (21 September 2011) *UN: Expose Iran’s Appalling Rights Record*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

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