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<http://www.rsf.org/iran-call-for-exemplary-enquiry-into-13-11-2012,43673.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

PR operation?

Call for exemplary enquiry into blogger's death in detention

13 November 2012

Reporters Without Borders has deep reservations about the announced investigation into the blogger **Sattar Beheshti's** death in detention on 3 November, four days after his arrest in Tehran.

"The causes of Beheshti's death must be fully established," Reporters Without Borders said. "The announced enquiry must not be used as a smokescreen or for a PR operation to deflect all the national and international criticism that followed the announcement of his death.

"The still many unclarified circumstances surrounding Beheshti's death have been compounded by disturbing and contradictory reports by different government officials about his arrest and burial. We reiterate our demand for an independent commission of enquiry into his death."

On 11 November, the [Higher Council for Human Rights](#) issue a communiqué announcing "the opening of a thorough investigation on the special order of the Head of the Judicial Authority, Sadeq Amoli Larijani. The results of this investigation will be made public soon."

The council is a government body overseen by Larijani. Its members represent various branches of the government and judicial apparatus. They include the ministries of intelligence, justice, interior, foreign affairs and "Culture and Islamic Guidance," as well as the head of police, the prosecutor-general, the head of the high court and the head of the prison system. They also include the council's secretary-general, the National Security Commission's vice-president, and two judges named by Larijani.

During a news conference yesterday, prosecutor-general Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, gave some details about the young blogger's death including the date that it took place, which he said was 3 November, not 6 November as originally supposed.

"It is not normal that someone dies in prison four days after his arrest," Mohseni Ejei said. "The cause of death is not known (...) the forensic doctor's autopsy did not reveal any special or suspicious circumstances and it is not the case that bruises were seen on his wrists, ankles, legs or shoulders before the autopsy."

Mohseni Ejei confirmed that Beheshti sent a letter to the head of the prison on 31 October, after 12 hours in Section 350 of Evin prison, complaining of having been beaten and tortured by the police. But, at the same time, the prosecutor voiced doubt about some of the claims Beheshti made in the letter.

Mohseni Ejei also reported that a judge could have released Beheshti on bail on 31 October, but the police removed him from Evin prison in the afternoon, without telling his family about the bail possibility, and took him away to an unknown location.

The authorities are clearly trying to produce evidence showing that Beheshti died from natural causes. Mohseni Ejei said that, on his arrival in Evin prison, Beheshti reported having "a heavy heart" and that the prison doctor gave him some medicine after establishing that he had no heart problem. But he could have suggested that he see a neurologist, Mohseni Ejei added.

According to the information gathered by Reporters Without Borders, Beheshti had no special health problems.

Mohseni Ejei said the investigation was currently verifying what happened from 1 to 3 November, when Beheshti was in police custody, in order to establish the cause of death.

Several members of the parliamentary commission for national security, including its chairman, Allaedine Boroujerdi, have meanwhile said that "there were no marks of torture on the blogger's body," and that he could have died "from a natural cause." The commission has said it will carry out its own enquiry and will report its findings to parliament and the public when it has been completed.

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