



## Iran

19 April 2011

### Iran: Stop discrimination and repression against ethnic Arabs

**Protests by members of the Iranian Arab ethnic community in Ahvaz, the provincial capital of the southern Iranian province, Khuzestan, which started on 16 April 2011, have been brutally suppressed by the Iranian security forces. According to reports, several people have been killed and injured and a large number of others have been arrested. In a letter to Ms. Navanethem Pillay, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, on Monday, 18 April 2011, Ms. Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate, called for investigations into the events in Khuzestan.**

The recent peaceful protests marked the sixth anniversary of protests in Ahvaz in April 2005, when large numbers of the community members demonstrated against the government policies to move Arabs to other areas of the country and to settle non-Arabs in Khuzestan.

The Arab ethnic community in Khuzestan has faced widespread political, economic and cultural discrimination by the Islamic Republic authorities for many years. The only political party that had represented them was banned in 2006. A considerably high number of Iranian Arab political activists have been executed in Khuzestan, in particular after the 2005 protests.

Like other ethnic communities in Iran, the Arabs are also denied the right to education in their mother tongue. The rate of unemployment among the ethnic Arabs is much higher than the national average. During her 2005 visit to Iran, the UN Special Rapporteur for adequate housing concluded: Iranian Arabs in Khuzestan have been consistently living in poor conditions, without access to adequate housing and basic services; their farm lands have been expropriated by the government at remarkably low prices (E/CN.4/2006/41Add.2, 21 March 2006, Summary).

Karim Lahidji, vice-president of FIDH and President of the LDDHI said: *"The authorities must immediately release all the detainees and investigate and bring to justice all those responsible for the killing of peaceful Arab protestors. The crackdown on the peaceful Arab protestors is only the latest in a long string of attacks against the Iranian ethnic communities, e.g. Arabs, Azeris, Baluch, Kurds, and Turkmen among others ever since the inception of the Islamic Republic. It is also in line with the authorities' consistent denial of the rights of the ethnic communities. We are confident that the future UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran would allocate an important part of their report to the dire conditions of the Iranian ethnic communities."*

For more information on the conditions of the Iranian ethnic communities, please see the related sections in our following reports:

<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Irandis...> <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport...>

<http://www.fidh.org/Iran-Stop-discrimination-and-repression-against>