

Chronology of Events in Iran, April 2002*

April 2

Several political prisoners qualified as "mentally ill". (Students Movement Co-ordination Centre for Democracy in Iran / SMCCDI)*

The Islamic Republic authorities have started to use a new method in order to deal with the cases of some of the imprisoned activists in Iran. Several of these prisoners have been qualified as "mentally ill" by the judiciary and needing "long term treatment". They are subject to persistent psychological torture. These activists are Akbar poor-Heydar, Mohssen Alivandi and Parviz Mohebi-Azar held in Tabriz and Farzad Hamidi held in Tehran. They are members of the Iranian Third Force which is looking for a secular regime.

April 5

Five offenders flogged in Esfahan, "gang leader" sentenced to death. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Five alleged "armed bandits" received each 74 lashes of the whip in one of the major squares of Esfahan for a variety of crimes including "rape, armed robbery, hooliganism and disrupting public security on various occasions". The convicts were handed over to Esfahan's Central Prison authorities where they are sentenced to stay for the next 15 years after being whipped publicly. The said "band chief", Rasul Chatra'i has been found guilty for two counts of premeditated murder, using Kalashnikov sub-machine [gun] during one of their armed robberies according to his own confessions in court and was sentenced to capital punishment. Chatra'i and his band members, hand-ties and clad in special prisoners' attire, were put in the back of two police pick-up vehicles and toured in most major streets of Esfahan before being whipped. The band leader is scheduled to be publicly hanged in one of the densely crowded Esfahan streets.

April 7

Nationalist-religious activist on trial (Iranian newspaper *Bonyan*)

The first session of trial of nationalist-religious activist Habibollah Peyman was held at Bench 26 of the Revolution Court. The court was chaired by judge Haddad. Dr

* *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*

* Editor's Note: This report is not confirmed by any major information source.

Amir Hoseynabadi, Peyman's lawyer, said: "This session was held behind closed doors and we believe this is against the law. We are not allowed to say anything about the session. However, we have objections to the court regarding jurisdiction and other matters."

April 10

Nationalist-religious activist released on bail. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)

A liberal opposition figure close to the outlawed Iran Freedom Movement (IFM), Habibollah Peyman, was freed on bail after spending a year in prison, his wife said. Peyman, 59, was released on bail of one billion rials (125,000 dollars), said Marzieh Mortazi-Langhroudi, who is also a member of the liberal movement. Another liberal opponent, Taghi Rahmani, is still in jail and his family said they were unaware of his place of detention.

Associated Press comment on the same news: Habibollah Peyman, a well known author who wrote several books on political and social issues in Iran, said that: "I spent 13 months in jail, including 8 months in solitary confinement. The guards blindfolded me everywhere they took me. I don't know where they were holding me," said Peyman, who enjoys wide popularity among Iranian students. Peyman was among 40 dissidents, mostly university professors and journalists, attending a meeting at the home of a prominent political activist in March 2001 when security forces arrested them. The Revolutionary Court immediately charged the dissidents with plotting to overthrow the Islamic establishment.

April 12

Yadollah Sahabi died (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Yadollah Sahabi, a senior member and co-founder of the now-banned Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI), died at the Jam hospital, several days after being admitted to hospital for cerebral haemorrhage, unconfirmed reports said. According to press, Sahabi was admitted to hospital two weeks ago and had been announced clinically dead a week later. Abolqasem Khoshrow, a representative of President Mohammad Khatami, called on the ailing former minister at the hospital where he paid tribute to Sahabi for his national liberation efforts during the rule of Shah, and his services after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

April 14

Nationalist-religious activist on trial after 13-month detention (IRNA)

Member of "nationalist-religious" group Taqi Rahmani appeared at Branch 26 of Tehran revolutionary court for his first in-camera hearing. No details on his hearing were given.

April 16

Journalist summoned to court. (IPR Strategic Information Database)

Former *Azad* managing editor Mohammad Reza Yazdanpanah-Fadai was summoned to court on the basis of a complaint made by former Law Enforcement Forces counter-intelligence chief General Gholam-Reza Naqdi. Naqdi had made the complaint in the year beginning on 21 March 1999 after *Azad* published a story about Naqdi and the torture of Tehran district mayors - Naqdi and several of his junior officers were tried for using force to extract confessions from the mayors, who were being held on corruption charges. Naqdi was acquitted of the torture charges but was found guilty of slander. Naqdi eventually was relieved of his duties with the LEF, but rather than being dismissed he was appointed as deputy chief of Depots and Support and Industrial Research Division of the Armed Forces.

April 17

Prostitute killer hanged in prison compound. (Associated Press / AP)

Prison authorities hanged a man convicted of a series of prostitute slayings that exposed the growing networks of drugs and illicit sex in Iran. Saeed Hanaei was sentenced to death in October 2001 for strangling 16 prostitutes with their head scarves in the city of Mashhad. The judge originally promised a public execution, but the decision was changed and Hanaei was hanged in the prison compound. Hanaei, a 39-year-old construction worker, told police he began the killing spree in 2000 after a man mistook his wife for a prostitute. He confessed to 16 slayings, but several more prostitutes had been killed and police have made no additional arrests. The victims - many with previous convictions for drug use - were strangled with their Islamic head scarves, which were left wrapped around their necks.

Paper editor, sentenced to jail and flogging, says not notified of ruling. (IRNA)

Ali Hamed Iman, editor of the [Iranian Azeri] provincial weekly *Shams-e Tabriz*, has been sentenced to seven months in jail plus 74 lashes by a court in Tabriz. He said that the court had not formally notified him of the ruling. Charges against the defendant include "publishing lies, stoking up ethnic differences, insulting officials and Islamic sanctities." The ruling has been issued by the Bench 38 of the Tabriz general court, taking into account Iman's "repeated press offences and his "persistence" on committing more violations.

Azerbaijani newspaper *Azadliq's* report of the same news: Ali-Hamed Iman, founder of *Shams-e-Tabriz* newspaper has been found guilty of attempting to create dissension among ethnic groups. According to a report from the United Azerbaijan Association, the 38th city court of Tabriz has sentenced the newspaper founder to seven months in jail and 74 lashes and ruled to close down *Shams-e-Tabriz*. Among other things, Ali-Hamed Iman has been convicted for false reporting, insulting leaders of the regime and religion. It was reported that the suit against the newspaper was filed by the Tabriz Main Security and Intelligence Department. Ettela'at [Iran's secret service] demanded that *Shams-e-Tabriz* be closed down for a period of four weeks. According to the suit, by raising ethnic problems the newspaper aims to divide society. Besides, the paper is being blamed for insulting the Islamic religion,

spreading false and slanderous reports and attempting to create a Turkic-Persian confrontation. To substantiate its accusation of creating dissension among ethnic groups, Ettela'at has used the newspaper's articles "Who is Xandadas?", "Iran's foreign policy is directed against Azerbaijan", "Azerbaijan is right to defend its cause", "Left and right strategies are both intended to silence Azerbaijan's national movement". As to the allegation of insulting religious values, Ettela'at cited the paper's article entitled "All prophets were shepherds and had to emigrate to spread their beliefs". According to the newspaper's founder, the mentioned articles contain no evidence of the accusations put forward. Ali-Hamed Iman says the trial was held in haste and was a formality, while the ruling had been prepared beforehand. Since Ali-Hamed Iman and his lawyer have appealed to a higher instance court, the ruling of the 38th city court was not executed yet.

**Violent protest in small town against administrative division of province.
(Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)**

A number of people were injured in a demonstration held by the people of [the town of] Ferdows against the [administrative plans for the] division of the [Khorasan] Province. During this protest several thousand people marched in the city to express their opposition to the division of the Khorasan Province. The protest march began at 3:30 p.m. in the main streets of Ferdows, turned violent in front of the Office of the Governor and resulted in dozens of people being arrested. The protesters then called for the release of the detainees. Reports from private sources indicate that the clashes were continuing. A member of the Ferdows City Council, Dr. Bavaqar, said that reports indicate dozens of people were arrested. People then called for their release and, after a while, this led to clashes resulting in four people being injured. The injured were moved to the 96-bed Chamran hospital of Ferdows.

AFP report on the same news [April 18]: One person was killed in riots sparked by a decision not to name Ferdows city a provincial capital. It was reported the unrest claimed two lives, naming them as Mehdi Tajalli, 14, and Hadi Ahmadi, 26, and adding that scores of people were injured and arrested. The Interior Ministry spokesman confirmed some people had been injured during the protest but did not mention any arrests. The paper said "thousands of residents" of Ferdows, in Khorassan province, gathered in the city's main square and blocked roads to protest against a government decision to split the province into three smaller provinces and not name their city one of the new provincial capitals. Police opened fire and threw tear gas on the rioters and arrested scores of them, while people "set tires on fire", threw stones and chanted slogans against their deputy in parliament. Khorassan deputy governor and local Friday prayer leader addressed the protestors, calling for calm, and promised "to follow popular demands", state radio reported. According to the latest reports from Khorassan, relative calm had returned to Ferdos city but shops and governmental offices were closed. A plan to carve up Khorassan sparked anger among the residents of various cities which led to violent clashes last summer. In August 2001 police arrested 154 people and jailed 34 of them following riots in Sabzevar city that left a young boy dead and scores injured.

UN rapporteur points to serious rights abuses of Azeris in Iran (Azerbaijani News Agency Turan)

Maurice Copithorne, a special representative of the UN Commission on Human Rights, pointed to instances of serious human right abuses of Iran's Azerbaijani population in his speech at the 58th session of the commission. Mr Copithorne said the human rights situation in Iran had remained difficult for a long time and did not seem to be improving. In present-day Iran, a struggle is under way between the "elected and unelected authorities", he said. According to him, Iran's ruling elite continues persecuting whoever it considers to be enemies of the state and religion. Numerous security services have made a point of abducting the discontented, casting them behind bars and subjecting them to torture. Particularly deplorable is the plight of students and journalists who advocate reform in Iranian society. Reports are arriving on the execution of representatives of ethnic minorities. Besides, the authorities are banning the use of the Azeri language in newspapers in Azerbaijani-populated provinces. The special report Mr Copithorne forwarded to the session participants says that the Azerbaijani language is ignored and attempts are made towards assimilation of Azerbaijani culture in Iran. Iranian Azeris are asking the authorities to organize education not only in Persian but also in Azeri in the provinces largely populated by Azerbaijanis. At the same time, Azerbaijanis are raising the question of organizing television and radio broadcasts in the Azeri language and Azeri-language education at Tabriz University. The most active advocates for the rights of Azerbaijanis are persecuted by the Iranian authorities. Today, representatives of Iran's Azerbaijani intelligentsia are accusing the central authorities of persecuting those struggling for cultural rights, changing Azeri geographical names, prohibiting the registration of children with Azeri names, propagandizing that Azerbaijanis are ethnic Persians who have changed their language under pressure from Turkic nomads.

April 18

Political activist Taqi Rahmani released (ISNA)

Taqi Rahmani, one of the nationalist-religious figures, was released from prison at 1230 [local time]. Rahmani's detention had been turned into a bail of 100m tumans.

April 20

Leading Iranian dissident back home to face charges. (Reuters)

Ebrahim Yazdi, a former Iranian government minister turned prominent dissident, returned home to face charges of acting against national security, relatives and witnesses said. Iran's Revolutionary Court a year ago ordered the head of the now banned Freedom Movement of Iran (FMI) to return home from the United States, where he went to undergo cancer therapy. "I am returning to my country as an Iranian and I have decided to live in this country like my compatriots," Yazdi told reporters on arrival at Tehran's Mehrabad airport. Asked why he had returned home, Yazdi said, "I went to the United States to continue my treatment. This is my country and returning to my country doesn't need a reason." A spokesman for the judiciary said he had no information on whether Yazdi would be taken into custody or not.

April 22

Human Rights Watch: U.N. fails to condemn rights abuses, emergence of illegal detention centres. (Human Rights Watch).

Human Rights Watch expressed deep regret at the decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights not to renew the mandate of the Special Representative on Human Rights in Iran. In a vote of 19 in favour, 20 against, with 14 abstentions, the Commission rejected a resolution, sponsored by the European Union, that would have renewed for one year the mandate of an independent expert on human rights in Iran. Hanny Megally, executive director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch, said, "The human rights crisis in Iran is only getting worse, and this unfortunate decision will not help it to get better."

One sign of a deteriorating human rights situation in Iran is the emergence of illegal detention centers in the country. One of these, the Prison 59 in Tehran, is reportedly administered by Revolutionary Guards Corps and clandestine paramilitary forces, and is entirely beyond official oversight. Some political prisoners have been detained there for months at a time, without their families or lawyers being informed of their whereabouts. Megally also cited an alarming increase in public executions and floggings, which he said reflected a widespread campaign by the conservative-controlled judiciary to intimidate and silence supporters of greater political freedom.

April 23

Islamic Guidance Ministry explains "offensive" publication by daily *Iran*. (Iranian news paper *Resalat*)

The Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, issuing a statement, explained the following points on the publication of a book about music: The book entitled: "The Women of Iranian Music, from legend up to today", was published in 1380 [2001] and the daily *Iran* introduced it in its weekly supplement. The country's cultural circles discussed the reference made by the daily about the book. In this connection the ministry deems it essential to point out the following: One: Immediately after the publication of the daily, the press deputy of this ministry pursued the matter and is currently investigating the issue at the Press Supervisory Board. Two: Before publication of the book, the author submitted a copy to this ministry for endorsement. He was asked to alter some parts of the book. However, it seems that the matter was neglected by the author and the publisher of the book. This was contrary to the law, but nevertheless the book was not banned, in accordance with the ministry's policy to avoid the exploitation of the matter [by the opponents] to abuse the system. Three: The managing editor of the daily *Iran*, while investigating the matter, has stopped publishing the weekly supplement until the task of necessary supervision is completed.

April 25

Six hanged in Tehran, four of them in public. (AFP)

Six Iranians sentenced to death for prejudicing national security after being found guilty of a wave of armed robberies were hanged at dawn in Tehran, four of them in public. Reza Soltani, 44, considered the gang leader, Morteza Maassumi, 31, Behnam Nuri, 21, Turaj Shafii-Qanegha, 32, Mohammad-Reza Bozorgi, 26, and Farhad Akrami, 21, had also been convicted of "warring against God." They had allegedly committed between 20 and 27 armed robberies each, judicial authorities said. "Two were hanged by the bus station on Azadi Square in western Tehran, and two in Khavaran", in the southeast of the capital, an official said. The last two were executed inside Tehran's Qasr prison.

April 27

Tehran court summons editor of daily. (IRNA)

A Tehran court has summoned the editor of the Persian daily *Mardomsalari*, Mostafa Kavakebian, for explanations on yet unspecified topics. Bench 1410 of the Tehran Administrative Court has served the summons, asking the editor to appear before the court on the scheduled date which he did not specify. Kavakebian played down the gravity of the summons, saying his paper could not be found guilty on any wrongdoing. "*Mardomsalari* (Democracy) has been following a reformist line, serving as a mouthpiece of 2nd Khordad Defenders' Party. It does not seem to get into any trouble during a short period since its first publication," he said...

April 28

Kurdish publication under renewed pressure. (IRNA)

A court in Tehran summoned the managing editor of a weekly published in Sanandaj city in Kurdistan Province on yet unspecified charges. Jalal Jalalizadeh, the head of the *Sirvan* publication, said that Bench 1410 of the Tehran Administrative Court had given him three days to attend the court for some explanations. "The summons has not pointed to the suit and the plaintiff," he said.

A woman sentenced to death by stoning. (Organization of Iranian People's Fedayee Guerrillas and Nabard Cultural Association)*

A criminal court in Iran sentenced a woman to death by stoning after convicting her of assisting her lover in murdering her husband, according to a report in the *Hamshahri*. The judge of this court, Hossein Koh Kamarehee, announced the sentence after concluding her role in the murder was a proven fact. The family of the victim will be allowed to determine the punishment of her lover. The parents of the victim can pardon his punishment but stoning to death is always a definite and unchanged punishment.

* Editor's Note: This report is not confirmed by any major information source.

Reformist journalist given 23-month jail sentence. (ISNA)

Ahmad Zeydabadi has been sentenced to 23 months in jail and five years deprivation from social rights. The sentence has been given by Bench 1410 of the judiciary complex for government employees. Based on this sentence he would be deprived of working with the press, standing in elections and working in government positions for five years. Zeydabadi stated that he had been accused of propaganda against the system and the pillars of the Islamic republic, questioning the foundations and existence of the Islamic republic, disseminating lies in order to disturb the public's peace of mind, insulting the country's officials, encouraging individuals to disrupt the country's security, membership in illegal organizations and societies, and disrupting the public's peace of mind with provocative speeches in student circles and various parts of the country with the aim of generating crises.

April 30

State of the press in Iran (IPR Strategic Information Database)

Almost 60 Iranian publications have been closed since a March 2000 speech by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ended parliamentary efforts to eliminate restrictive laws, and a number of journalists have been jailed. Among the closed dailies are: *Aftab-i Imruz*, *Ahrar*, *Arya*, *Asr-i Azadigan*, *Asr-i Ma*, *Bahar*, *Bamdad-i No*, *Bayan*, *Dowran-i Imruz*, *Fath*, *Gonbad-i Kabud*, *Guzarish-i Ruz*, *Hambastegi*, *Ham-Mihan*, *Manateq-i Azad*, *Mellat*, *Mosharekat*, *Nosazi*, *Payam-i Azadi*, *Sobh-i Imruz*, and *Talieh*. Among the closed weeklies are: *Aban*, *Amin-i Zanjan*, *Arzesh*, *Ava*, *Ava-yi Varzish*, *Bazar-i Ruz Tehran*, *Cheshmeh*, *Cinema-yi Jahan*, *Farda-yi Roshan*, *Golbang-i Iran*, *Gunagun*, *Hadis-yi Qazvin*, *Harim*, *Iran-Javan*, *Jahan-i Pezeshki*, *Jameh-yi Madani*, *Jebhe*, *Khalij-i Fars*, *Mehr*, *Mihan*, *Milad*, *Mobin*, *Nakhl*, *Omid-i Zanjan*, *Payam-i Hajar*, *Qeseh-yi Zendigi*, *Rahiyan-i Fayzieh*, *Ruzdaran*, *Sepideh Zendigi*, *Shams-i Tabriz*, *Sobh-i Omid*, and *Tavana*. Monthlies and quarterlies have faced problems, too. Among those that have been closed are: *Guzarish-i Film*, *Iran-i Farda*, *Javanan-i Qorveh*, *Kiyan*, and *Payam-i Imruz*.

This list of banned publications does not include student newsletters, and it does not necessarily include all the banned provincial publications. The Association of Iranian Journalists (AIJ) on 23 April issued a communique to mark the second anniversary of the initial press closures. The AIJ stressed the need to revise the press law and improve freedom and security for journalists.

Court interrogates publishers of article "blaspheming" the prophet (IRNA)

A court interrogated several suspects in connection with an article which is deemed blaspheming Prophet Muhammad. Those questioned were Tuka Maleki, Mohsen Shahrnaz-Darreh, female journalist Banafsheh Sa'm-Gis and Mas'ud Kazari, all implicated in the publication of a supplementary book review which appeared in the Persian daily *Iran* previously. The article, written by Sa'm-Gis, reviewed a book by Maleki on women music which Kazari had published. They expressed regret and repentance at the court over the published material, which they accepted, to be false. Other suspects in the case are the editors of the daily *Iran*, including its manager Abdol-Rasul Vesal who was questioned by the court on [April 29 and 30]. A group of

seminary students in the religious city of Qom in central Iran marched through streets [on April 26] evening in protest against the article.

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