

Chronology of Events in Iran, February 2005*

February 1

Mujahedin suspect held in solitary confinement for 3 months. (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL Iran Report)

The father of former Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO, a.k.a. PMOI) member Said Masuri stated that his son has been held at Evin prison in Tehran for about four years, and in solitary confinement for the last three months. The unnamed father added that his son's first 14 months were in solitary confinement, and the jailers will not give a reason for the most recent solitary confinement. He asked that his son be amnestied.

February 2

Journalists visit Evin Prison. (Iranian news site Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Tose'eh*).

Iranian journalists visited the Evin Prison and inspected women's and men's wards as well as solitary confinement cells. The head of the Tehran Province prisons, Sohrab Soleymani, described to reporters the activities taking place in different parts of the prison.

February 3

Alleged "spy working for Israel" sentenced to 10 years in prison in Iran. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)

The head of Tehran's Revolution Court has said a spy working for Israel has been sentenced to 10 years in prison. The head of Tehran's Revolution Court, said: "The spy has been sentenced to 10 years in prison." According to Mobasheri, no verdict has been issued in the case of the "nuclear spies". Ali Mobasheri said that the case of the "nuclear spies" concerned people who worked for the Nuclear Energy Organization.

February 5

Woman sentenced to stoning, man to execution. (News site IranFocus, sourcing Iranian newspaper *Etemad*)

A Tehran court has sentenced a couple to death by stoning and hanging. Iran's Supreme Court has reportedly upheld the verdicts and has confirmed that the woman only identified by her first name Massoumeh will be stoned to death and her husband

* *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.*

identified by his first name Ismail will be hanged to death. The couple were reportedly accused of murder.

February 5

Cleric sentenced to imprisonment terms in Qom. (Human Rights Watch)

On February 5 a cleric in the city of Qom who wrote social and political commentary on his blog, Mojtaba Lotfi, was sentenced to three years and 10 months imprisonment by the Special Court for the Clergy. A widely-read political blogger, Mojtaba Saminezhad, was initially detained on November 1 and held for 88 days in solitary confinement, where he was tortured. He was released on January 27 but was detained again on February 13 after his bail was set at 1 billion Iranian rial (or \$127,000).

Afghan prisoners released, handed over to Afghan officials. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Shargh*)

64 Afghan prisoners, who were jailed in Iran on various charges, were freed and handed over to Afghan authorities. According to one of the high-ranking Afghan officials, 3285 other Afghan prisoners in Iran are due to be released in a near future.

February 6

Iranian dissident cleric released after 4 years in jail. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Dissident cleric Hasan Yusefi-Eshkevari was released from jail after serving about two-thirds of his seven-year jail for a series of charges. He once escaped death sentence for apostasy, handed down by the Special Court for the Clergy. The mid-ranking cleric was arrested on 5 August 2000 upon his return to Iran from a controversial conference in Berlin which he attended.

Thousands of Iranian prisoners benefit from anniversary amnesty. (Agence France Presse /AFP)

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has amnestied or reduced the sentences of 3,401 prisoners. The traditional amnesty coincides with celebrations marking the anniversary of Iran's Islamic revolution. In keeping with tradition, the report did not identify the prisoners who benefited, although they are usually said to be those convicted of non-violent or petty crimes.

Four recent detainees summoned to court. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Etemad*)

Four recently-released activists have been summoned to Qom's Revolutionary Court again. Journalist and Weblogger Farid Modaresi and three members of the Islamic Iran Participation Front, Masoud Rahbari, Abbas Kousha and Hussein Abdullahpour must appear before the Revolutionary Court.

February 7

Former legislator appears before the court. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Hambastegi*)

The former Tehran legislator in Sixth Majlis, Elahe Koulai, appeared before the 2nd Circuit of the Administrative Court after she was sued by the public prosecutor on a charge of 'propaganda against the Islamic system'. During her talks with a Dutch Parliamentarian in the Sixth Majlis, Koulai had referred to the successful efforts of reformists in promotion of religious democracy for "the oppressed nation of Iran".

February 8

U.N. expert criticises Iran on women's rights, executions. (Reuters)

A U.N. human rights investigator criticised Iran over "arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment" of women and called on the Tehran authorities to abolish the death penalty. UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Yakin Erturk, also urged Tehran to adopt a national action plan to promote and protect human rights which would emphasise the elimination of violence against women. Although they had seen some advances, Iranian women still face violence in and outside the home and are blocked from defending their rights by discriminatory laws and an unfair justice system, Erturk said. "Discriminatory laws and malfunction in the administration of justice result in impunity for perpetrators and perpetuate discrimination and violence against women," she said. Erturk issued her criticism in a preliminary report for the world body's Human Rights Commission - which holds its annual six-week session in Geneva in March and April - following a government-approved visit to the country. She said she was "troubled by the widespread practice of arrest for political opinion, including of female human rights defenders, and for 'moral offences'," and by the failure of the judicial system to enforce safeguards ensuring fair trials. Erturk had also seen an emerging civil society with active female lawyers, journalists and academics "engaged in working to promote human rights and prevent violence against women". But she said: "In the family, women face psychological, sexual and physical violence" which existing laws did little to protect against, while divorce and custody of children were difficult for abused wives to obtain. In the wider community, victims of rape face numerous obstacles in accessing justice, she said. Women risk punishment for adultery if they fail to prove rape, and can face death for killing a rapist in self-defence. To improve the situation, she said, the Iranian authorities should make it a priority to bring the country's laws and practices into line with its own constitution and with international rights pacts that it has signed. They should also seek alternative punishments "orientated towards prevention and rehabilitation rather than revenge, and in this context abolish the death penalty" as well as reviewing the evidence against all detainees sentenced to death.

Political activist imprisoned. (Human Rights Watch)

A reformist political activist, Nargis Adib, was seized at her house on February 8 and is being held in Evin prison.

Farid Modarresi summoned to court. (Iran Daily News and ISNA)

According to this reformist news agency, Journalist Farid Modarresi was summoned to the 13th Circuit of Qom's Revolutionary Court, charged with 'acting against

national security'. Modarresi's lawyer said his client had "only taken part in the meetings of Islamic Iran Participation Front as a reporter and isn't involved in politics".

February 9

Political prisoners held with violent criminals, hunger strikers protest conditions. (Human Rights Watch)

The confinement of political prisoners in Iran together with violent criminals endangers their lives, Human Rights Watch said. Six prisoners in Rajaii Shahr prison near Karaj, a suburb of Tehran, launched a hunger strike on January 25 to protest their confinement with dangerous and belligerent criminals who have assaulted and intimidated them. The six prisoners are Bina Darab-Zand, Arzhang Davoodi, Hojat Zamani, Mehrdad Lohrasbi, Farzad Hamidi, and Jaafar Iqdami. Prior to their hunger strike, Farzad Hamidi was assaulted inside the prison by a well-known drug dealer who threatened his life. Bina Darab-Zand and Farzad Hamidi were arrested in June 2004 in front of the United Nations building in Tehran during a protest against human rights violations in Iran. Darab-Zand was sentenced to three and half years' imprisonment for his participation in the protest. Mehrdad Lohrasbi was arrested during the student protests at Tehran University in 1999 and is serving a 15-year prison term. Human Rights Watch is extremely concerned for the safety and health of prisoners who are on hunger strike. After the first week of hunger strike, the health of one of the prisoners, Mehrdad Lohrasbi, deteriorated so considerably that other prisoners asked him to end his participation in the hunger strike. Human Rights Watch said Iran has recently intensified its harsh treatment of political activists. The judiciary is handing down lengthy prison sentences following unfair trials of critics.

February 11

Iranian Kurdish refugees stranded on Iraqi side of Jordan border. (AFP)

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) voiced concern for 102 Iranian Kurds stranded on the Iraqi side of the border with Jordan after being refused entry into the kingdom. The refugees fled in three batches over the past four weeks a camp for Iranian Kurds west of Baghdad and include at least five pregnant women and a large number of children, the UNHCR said in a statement from Geneva. "They have not been permitted to enter Jordan, nor to join another group of 660 refugees -- mostly Iranian Kurds from Al Tash -- who have been living in a camp in no-man's land between the two countries for the past year and a half," it said. The agency said the refugees "are believed to be surviving on the charity of passers by" but warned that this situation "will clearly not be tenable for much longer". The UNHCR "has so far not been permitted to bring assistance across from the Jordanian side", the statement added. The agency said it would try to relocate the Iranian Kurds to northern Iraq or return them to Al Tash, a camp near the flashpoint Iraqi cities of Fallujah and Ramadi that has suffered from the volatile security situation in Iraq.

February 13

Voice of Iranian Kurdistan observed on satellite, internet, shortwave. (BBC Monitoring Media)

BBC Monitoring observed Voice of Iranian Kurdistan on the Hotbird 6 satellite at 13 degrees East, frequency 12597 MHz, vertical polarization, symbol rate 27500, FEC 3/4, at 1300-1400 gmt on 13 February 2005. The programme was in Kurdish for the first 40 minutes, identifying as "Aira Dengi Kordestani Irana", then in Persian for the remainder of the broadcast, identifying as "Seda-ye Kordestan-e Iran". The broadcast is also available in the form of on-demand audio files from the station's web site at <http://www.rdkl.com> . The files are dated in accordance with the Iranian calendar, a conversion chart for the Gregorian equivalent can be found on the internet at <http://alavi.us/jcal> . The station was also observed with a Persian programme in progress on the same day at 1510 gmt on 3960 kHz shortwave. Reception was poor due to jamming interference. Voice of Iranian Kurdistan broadcasts in support of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, which advocates independence for the Kurdish region of Iran.

Demonstration in Mahabad. (News site Iran Focus)

Thousands of people flooded the streets of Mahabad in the morning, clashing violently with State Security Forces after days of gas, water, and electricity interruptions. According to local residents, household gas has been cut off in the town for the past four days, electricity has been out for more than 24 hours, and water was repeatedly cut off for several hours at a time over the past day. Protestors gathered in front of government offices, complaining that there was extreme shortage of bread as bakeries could not provide them during the energy blackout. The demonstration quickly turned into a mass rally and youths set fire to banners and poster celebrating the 26th anniversary of the revolution that toppled the monarchy and brought to power Iran's turbaned clerics, residents reported. SSF agents, plainclothes police, and members of the Bassij (Iran's paramilitary police) reportedly attacked the demonstrators with clubs and batons, arresting at least ten individuals, as residents shouted slogans against the Iranian regime. Eye-witnesses reported that at least two plainclothes policemen were injured during the ensuing clashes.

February 14

Journalist sues police force. (Iran Daily News and Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)

The jailed freelance journalist Ensaf Ali Hedayat has filed a lawsuit against the Police Force on the charges of 'battery and foul language'.

February 15

Cheshmandaz-e-Iran managing director to be notified of charges. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Etemad*)

The managing director of *Cheshmandaz-e-Iran* monthly magazine, Lotfollah Meysami, will appear before the 3rd Circuit of the Administrative Court on March 13, to be notified of his charges. He is sued by the public prosecutor on a charge of 'publication of articles against the Constitution'.

Student publication managing director summoned to disciplinary committee. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Shargh*)

The managing director of *Binesh* Student Publication at Qom University, was summoned to the Disciplinary Committee. His subpoena hasn't referred to the charges leveled against him.

Cyberjournalist arrested. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Shargh*)

The attorney for the Cyberjournalist Mojtaba Samiee-Nejad, said: "A 1-billion-rial bail was issued for my client by the court. But, he couldn't afford this bail, so he was arrested". Samiee-Nejad is one of the defendants in the websites' court case.

February 16

Judiciary official says some banned papers can resume publication. (Iranian newspaper *Iran*)

The Spokesman of the Judiciary Power said that the newspapers which were through the legal period of their ban could start their activities once again. This news was announced by Jamal Karimi Rad at an audience with the reporters and in response to a question about the reason for the temporary ban on some newspapers and the fact that their court sessions had not been held yet. Karimi Rad referred to the problems which exist as a result of absence of juries in the Iranian courts. Explaining the reasons for the absence of juries, he said: "The Sixth Majlis approved a law in connection with the method of selection of jury members, but the implementation of this law required a hefty budget."

Referring to the regulations on making power of attorney compulsory, the Spokesman of Judiciary Power said: "These regulations have been put together in the judicial organs, and they will soon be finalised and will become a part of the modus operandi of the council of deputies of the head of Judiciary Power. At first, these regulations will be implemented on a trial basis in one or several provinces of the country, and if the result is satisfactory, they will be then implemented throughout the country."

February 18

Vigilantes break up lecture by former Majlis deputy in Qom. (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)

A group of unidentified individuals disrupted a lecture by Ahmad Shirzad, a member of the Central Council of the Islamic Iran Participation Party [IIPP], in Qom. Shirzad said during this time the Law Enforcement Force took the necessary action to bring order to the meeting and filmed the chanting protesters.

February 21

Riots rock three Kurdish towns in Iran. (IranFocus)

Heavy clashes between Iranian Kurds and security agents erupted in three towns in western Iran, leaving dozens injured and hundreds arrested. Clashes broke out after State Security Forces agents used force to disperse demonstrations taking place simultaneously in the towns of Sardasht, Saqqez, and Baneh in protest against severe fuel shortages in the area, eye-witnesses reported. The demonstrations quickly turned

violent as protestors fought back and shouted slogans against Iran's ruling clerics. In Sardasht, residents came to the aid of protestors during clashes as the SSF attempted to arrest anyone in the vicinity of the demonstration. At least 200 people, mostly youths, were arrested. In Saqqez, residents reportedly forced SSF agents to flee the scene after serious scuffles. In Baneh, hundreds of protesting youths were reportedly detained by security forces and taken for questioning.

Amini's prison term suspended for four years. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Hayat-e Now*)

Charged with 'holding illegal gatherings', Bahram Amini was sentenced to four years in jail. However, this term was suspended for four years.

Iranian pastor sentenced to three years in Tehran. (US newspaper *The Christian Post*)

A Tehran military court sentenced a 47-year-old Assemblies of God lay pastor to a three-year prison term, five months after his arrest with more than 80 other Christian leaders. The verdict came during the second and final session of a military trial that begun in late January 2005. Hamid Pourmand, a former army colonel who became a Christian nearly 25 years ago, was found guilty of deceiving the Iranian army forces by not declaring that he was a convert from Islam to Christianity when he acquired officer rank. Under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is illegal for a non-Muslim to serve as a military officer. During the final hearing, Pourmand's lawyer produced several documents in which his client's military superiors had acknowledged years ago that the colonel was a Christian. He had even been excused by his commander from observing the Muslim month of fasting, an exemption granted only to non-Muslims. Nevertheless, the court ruled that Pourmand was guilty of giving false testimony and producing falsified documents.

February 22

Blogger sentenced to 14 years in prison. (Human Rights Watch)

The Iranian government sentenced the prominent blogger Arash Sigarchi to 14 years in prison for expressing his opinions on the Internet and in the international press, marking a new low for freedom of expression in Iran. In the northern province of Gilan, the revolutionary court issued the sentence on February 2. However, the court made its ruling public only on February 22. Charges brought against Sigarchi include espionage, "aiding and abating hostile governments and opposition groups," endangering national security and insulting Iran's leaders. The court based its decision on a report by the intelligence ministry agents who arrested Sigarchi on January 17. Sigarchi's lawyer, Mohammad Saifzadeh, told Human Rights Watch that his client's summons, arrest and the search and seizure of his personal documents were marked by numerous irregularities and illegal actions. Saifzadeh is planning to file a formal protest against the court's ruling.

Ebadi defies Iranian court order. (BBC)

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate and human rights lawyer Shirin Ebadi says she has defied an order by the Tehran judiciary to appear in court. She says she was not told the charges against her, which is contrary to the Penal Code. Mrs Ebadi says she

wrote to the court to say that the summons was illegal and that the court was not eligible to put her on trial.

Two students summoned to court. (Iran Daily News and ILNA)

Two members of the Islamic Student Association of Karaj's Tarbiat Moalem University, Abbas Shokouhmand and Mohammad-Ali Ebadi, will appear before the 219th Circuit of Karaj's Public Court. This university's Basij establishment had sued the two students for insult in June 2003 unrest. According to the initial ruling of the 2nd Circuit of Karaj's Revolutionary Court, Ebadi was previously sentenced to a six-month prison term.

Campus magazine banned. (Iran Daily News and ILNA)

Nedaye Daneshjou student publication was banned after releasing its first three issues in Kurdistan Province. This publication is charged with 'stimulating ethnic disputes and publishing articles on Kurdish issues of concern'. Sanandaj's Islamic Azad University students have condemned this ban.

Juybari sentenced. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Jomhuriye Eslami*)

The writer of a controversial book stirring sectarian row, Yasoubeddin Jouybari, has been divested and slapped with a four-year prison term. The sentence has been passed against him by the Special Clerical Court. He had previously stood trial for committing similar offenses.

February 24

Islamic Association member appears before court. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Hayat-e Now*)

The court hearing of the member of the Islamic Association of Tehran's Tarbiat Moalem University, Abbas Shokouhmand, was held at the 119th Circuit of Karaj Public Court. He was previously charged with 'beating members of the university's other establishments and insulting students'. However, the presiding judge later dropped his first charge and he is, now, only accused of 'insulting the students'.

Faculty Dean threatens to throw out protesting students. (Iran Daily News and Iranian newspaper *Etemad*)

The students of Alameh Tabatabai University have staged a sit-in, to protest against the maltreatment of political prisoners by the Judiciary. Meanwhile, the dean of the Faculty of Political Science at this university threatened to throw out the protesting students, while handing over all the students' files to the Judiciary.

February 26

Al-Qa'idah, Ansar al-Islam members said arrested in two Iranian provinces. (Iranian Fars News Agency)

The head of Kerman's Justice Department has reported that a number of suspects supposedly belonging to the Al-Qa'idah group have been arrested in Kerman Province and transferred to Tehran. These people were arrested on the order of Kerman's prosecutor and by the Intelligence Ministry. The head of Kordestan Province's Justice Department had earlier reported that a number of members of the Ansar al-Islam and Al-Qa'idah groups had been arrested in the province.

Two MKO operatives arrested. (Iran Daily News and Iranian news site Baztab)

It was reported that two high-ranking MKO operatives, who reportedly intended to leave the country with a large sum of money, were arrested. They were naturalized citizens of a European country. The Revolutionary Court is handling this case.

February 27

Students hold protest over judicial action against lecturer. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

About 150 students of Tehran University's Faculty of Social Science held a sit-in protest to denounce a judicial verdict against one of instructors of Allameh Tabataba'i University. The sit-in protest lasted for two hours from 1230 to 1430 local time at the end of which they issued a statement protesting the verdict against the university teacher and other political activists of the academic community. Other students from the Faculty of Management and Faculty of Foreign Languages joined the sit-in protest, later issuing separate statements in condemnation of the judicial action against the academic activists.

Dissident Amir-Entezam extends sick leave. (Iranian news site Iran News)

The attorney for Abbas Amir-Entezam said that his client's sick leave has been extended for another three months. He is under medical care during his leave. In the early days after the victory of Islamic Revolution, Abbas Amir-Entezam was a cabinet member in Mehdi Bazargan's interim government. He was later arrested for espionage.

February 24

Iran girl gets 100 lashes for sex. (BBC)

A teenage girl and two young men in Iran have been sentenced to lashes for having sex. The court dismissed the girl's claim that she was raped. It said she had sex of her own free will. The girl was sentenced to 100 lashes because her accusations of rape and kidnap could have landed her partners a death penalty, the Tehran judge said. The young men in the case were sentenced to 30 and 40 lashes each. An Iranian paper quotes the girl, who has not been named, as confessing: "I trusted one of these young men, whom I got to know by phone, and went to his place. "But because he betrayed me, I filed the case against him and his friend out of revenge."

Another blogger gets jail sentence. (Reporters Without Borders)

It was reported that the Iranian authorities confirmed a six-month prison sentence and one million rials (85 euros) fine on Mohamad Reza Nasab Abdolahi, editor of the weblog Webnegar (Web Writer), for supposedly insulting the country's leaders and making anti-government propaganda. He was sentenced on appeal on 23 February. The day before, another blogger, Arash Sigarchi, was jailed for 14 years on similar charges. Abdolahi, a student campaigner for human rights and democracy and editor of the student paper *Noghteh Sare Khat*, is thought to have been punished for posting an open letter to the country's Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on his weblog (www.iranreform.persianblog.com). He was also reportedly accused of working for foreign radio stations. The appeal hearing upheld a sentence imposed on 24 January by a court in Kerman (near the southern town of Bam) at the behest of the

intelligence ministry, as with Sigarchi. He began serving his sentence in Rafsanjan prison.

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