

Chronology of Events in Iran, May 2002*

May 1

A woman sentenced to death for killing rapist (ProQuest Gender Watch)

Iran's Supreme Court confirmed a death sentence for Afsaneh Norouzi, who killed a man who tried to rape her. Witnesses testified that she killed the man in self-defence against attempted rape. She has been in jail since 1997. The Women's Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran calls on the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international human rights and women's rights organizations to voice their protest against the death sentence for Afsaneh Norouzi.

Journalist receives suspended sentence for insulting Islam (Agence France-Press / AFP)

The editor of a regional weekly was handed a two-year probational sentence for "insulting values of the Islamic revolution and false reporting". Hodjat Heydari, director of the *Payam-e-Qom* paper, published in the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran, was found guilty of "insulting values of the Islamic revolution and false reporting". The Qom provincial court handed him a suspended six-month jail term and four-month ban from journalism that will be implemented only if Heydari is found to insult Islamic values during the next 24 months. The court said "the articles in *Payam-e-Qom* reporting corruption in the holy city were spreading immorality and corruption in Qom where its' residence are firm believers and famous for observing religious values".

Workers march against low salaries. (AFP)

Some 5,000 Iranian workers took part in a march on Labour Day in Tehran to protest against rising inflation and low salaries. The demonstrators, among them 100 women workers, chanted "forget Palestine and think about us instead," called for an end to temporary jobs and demanded pay rises. The demonstrators marched peacefully about two kilometers in southern Tehran and gathered at Razi square. Among the demonstrators, the workers of Jamco, a clothes factory said they had not received their salary for the last 14 months. The demonstration ended peacefully at 11 am, after police dispersed a group of some 100 workers who intended to follow up their rally outside Parliament.

* *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.*

May 2

**EU includes Mojahedin-e Khalq (PMOI) in the list of “Terrorist Groups”.
(Reuters)**

An EU statement confirmed that the list of "persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts" whose assets are to be frozen under United Nations rules had been extended, but it did not specifically identify the movements added. The diplomats said 11 groups and seven individuals had been added to the list, notably the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Iranian People's Mujahideen Organisation (PMOI). The EU move was a significant gesture towards NATO ally Turkey, a candidate for EU membership, and Iran, with which Brussels is developing closer ties despite U.S. misgivings. However, diplomats said the "terrorist" designation would not cover the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which is effectively the PMOI's political arm and is headed by the wife of PMOI leader Masoud Rajavi, with headquarters near Paris and offices across Europe.

**Mojahedin-e Khalq (PMOI) says Tehran security forces attacked (BBC
Monitoring Service)**

The Command Headquarters of the State Security Forces located at Nilufar Square in northeast Tehran was allegedly pounded by [a group] in an operation at 9:30 pm, the Mojahedin command inside Iran reported. The operation was allegedly carried out in a highly protected security and military district. According to the PMOI statement, “the facilities and vehicles of the internal security force were damaged. Ambulances and fire engines subsequently rushed to the operational area where several military and intelligence centres are located. The security forces had put up metal barricades at the entrances and various other locations of Nilufar Square to beef up their headquarters' security. In solidarity with the strike of Jahan Chit workers in Karaj and in response to the suppression of the protests of these workers, the operation was named Operation Jahan Chit Workers. On 27 April, Jahan Chit workers revolted and blocked Tehran-Qazvin main road in protest to non-payment of their wages for nearly one year. An hour later, the state security forces attacked the protesting workers, beating and wounding a large number and arresting many more. Earlier, on the eve of the Iranian new year [20 March], the state security forces had launched another attack on Jahan Chit workers and killed a worker”.

May 4

Journalist sentenced to eight years in prison (AFP)

Iranian opposition journalist and writer Siamak Pourzand was sentenced to eight years in prison for "actions against state security through monarchist and counter-revolutionary links". Pourzand, 70, was found guilty of threatening "national security and collaborating with the Savak," the late ousted Shah's political police, and the court took the journalist's age and confessions into account when ruling on the sentence. The Iranian press had reported two months ago that Pourzand, the editor of several political and literary publications before the 1979 Islamic revolution, had admitted the charges and faced the death penalty. It was reported that he “confessed” having had "direct and indirect links" with monarchists abroad, including "relations with the

entourage" of Prince Reza Pahlevi, son of the late Shah. Pourzand had also admitted to running a private" projection club that showed American and European films to young people over 18 and members of families close to the former imperial family." Purzand, who recently worked for opposition radios based in the United States, was arrested in December 2001.

Lawyer of head of Freedom Movement prevented from attending trial (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)

The lawyer defending Ebrahim Yazdi was prevented from going to the Revolution Court with his client. Mohammad Ali Dadkhah declared that he had accompanied Ebrahim Yazdi to the court in the morning. However, despite the fact that, at first, the court had received them properly, the judge presiding over the case had asked him to leave. He said: "At the court, they announced that because the head of the branch had made a case against me at the 1410th branch, I would not be able to attend the session. Therefore, they asked me to leave the court and I left accordingly."

Court bans two reformist newspapers. (Reuters)

An Iranian court closed two leading reformist newspapers. The government daily *Iran* and independent *Bonyan* are the latest of dozens of reformist publications banned in the Islamic republic since the crackdown started two years ago. *Iran* daily, run by the official IRNA news agency, was closed for "insulting religious sanctities and publishing lies".

May 5

Judiciary lifts ban on reformist newspaper. (Reuters)

Iran's judiciary lifted a ban on the state-owned newspaper *Iran*, less than 24 hours after it was ordered to close for "insulting religious sanctities and publishing lies". Judiciary Chief Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi ordered the ban on *Iran* newspaper to be lifted. No reason was given for the decision to revoke the ban on *Iran*, which was the first state-owned publication to be shut down in the wave of closures. *Bonyan* remained closed.

May 6

Opposition leader not allowed to say what charges he is facing. (ISNA)

Ebrahim Yazdi has been informed of the charges against him in court. Yazdi refrained from saying what the charges were and said that this was because the court had emphasized this point. As to the detention order against him, he said: "Having deposited 3bn rials in bail, the detention order was changed [to bail] and I am free for the moment".

May 7

Released cleric describes detention conditions, interrogations. (ISNA)

A cleric, Ahmad Qabel, who was released after detention, described prison conditions and mistreatment. Ahmad Qabel said: “During the time I was in prison, I was kept totally in the dark about the news and I did not have access to newspapers, radio or television. And, even during visits, I was not allowed to say more than a few words such as greetings, and how are you and I am well. During telephone conversations, too, there was always someone standing next to me and telling me directly that I was only allowed to say those few things. I was also totally unaware of the things happening outside the prison and, had I known about some incidents, I may have behaved differently regarding my case; there was a case of our family being insulted. During the time I was in prison, I was held outside the public section [in solitary confinement] for 50 days and, from the 50th day, I was taken to a four-man cell where, until my release, I was still alone in the cell...” As to a trial, he said: “They used to tell me that it is not to the advantage of the system of the Islamic Republic to put you on trial or to imprison you. And, in the end, they decided to change the detention order [to bail]. But, after holding me in solitary confinement for 125 days, something interesting happened. At the beginning, before I had telephoned them, my family had gone to the Special [Clerical] Court and an official there had said: Ahmad Qabel is in Evin [Prison]. So they went to Evin and asked for me and the officials there had said: We have no such person here. My family had gone back to the Special Court and said: He is not being held at Evin and we are worried about him. They had told them in reply: It is not our fault; Evin must have failed to register him. And, on the day when I was released, the relevant papers were brought by an agent of the Special Court and the prison guard said: When were you detained? I said: On 10.10.80 [31 December 2001]. He said: That's not what it says here. Here it says you were detained on 15.2.81 [5 May 2002] and your are being released on the same day; as far as we are concerned you were not held for 125 days.”

May 8

Judiciary chief unveils reform programme. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

Head of the Judiciary Ayatollah Mahmud Hashemi-Shahrudi unveiled his plan to control the arbitrary power of the judges. Addressing an 'International Conference Studying Alternatives to Imprisonment', Ayatollah Shahrudi put forward a dramatic reform plan unprecedented since taking office. He told the conference that arbitrary power the judges enjoy in Iran's judicial system should end, because it caused more corruption in the past. Shahrudi also said that temporary detention also lacks legal justification and should be terminated from the judicial procedure. Ayatollah Shahrudi said that the judges have been empowered to sentence temporary prison terms for the defendants from three days to nine months which is un-Islamic and the cause of corruption in the justice system. Ayatollah Shahrudi challenged as non-Islamic the current legal codes and said that the Shari'a law prescribed imprisonment for very specific cases of crimes.

Court jails reformist MP, closes his paper. (Reuters)

A court has sentenced a senior reformist MP to six months in jail and suspended the newspaper he manages for breaching Iran's press laws. The court also banned Mohsen Mirdamadi, who heads parliament's foreign affairs commission, from working in the press for four years, after finding him guilty of several charges including anti-state propaganda. *Norooz*, which supports President Mohammad Khatami's liberal reforms, was suspended for six months, he said. The court heard a long list of charges brought against Mirdamadi by several government bodies including the state broadcasting agency and an Islamic militia. Mirdamadi has been outspoken in his calls for reforms and criticism of conservatives opposed to Khatami. He was quoted as saying he had information about Iran holding secret talks with the U.S.

May 12

Former Interior Minister Nuri returns to jail (Iranian newspaper *Norooz*)

[Former interior minister] Abdollah Nuri was transferred to jail following part of his convalescence from surgery. Abdollah Nuri's transfer to jail, in view of his doctor's diagnosis and the coroner's opinion, was unexpected.

Security guards thwart plane hijack bid. (Reuters)

Iranian aircraft security guards overpowered a man who tried to hijack a plane by dousing himself in industrial alcohol and threatening to set himself alight. The armed guards, present on all Iranian flights, pounced on the man as he tried to enter the cockpit during the flight. The private Mahan Air plane, carrying 138 passengers from the southeastern city of Kerman, later landed safely at its destination, Tehran. Iranian passenger planes have carried plain clothes Revolutionary Guards agents since a spate of hijackings in the 1980s by Iraq-based rebels. The agents foiled a hijack attempt on another domestic flight in November 2000. A Revolutionary Court sentenced three hijackers to death and 15 other people, most of them members of the same family, to prison terms ranging from 18 months to 10 years. The family had wanted to flee the country.

May 14

Military court sentences interrogators of intelligence agents to prison (Associated Press / AP)

An Iranian military court has convicted five interrogators for "insulting and harassing" former intelligence agents who had confessed to killing dissidents, and has sentenced them to prison and lashes. The interrogators, who were not identified, have requested an appeal. It did not say when the convictions and sentences were handed down. The convictions followed complaints by the agents they had been insulted and harassed. The intelligence agents admitted killing four Iranian dissidents, beginning with the November 22, 1998, stabbing deaths of Dariush Forouhar and his wife, Parvaneh, who ran a small opposition party. In the following weeks, writers Mohammad Jafar Pouyandeh and Mohammad Mokhtari were kidnapped and apparently strangled, their bodies dumped on the outskirts of Tehran.

May 15

Detained journalist sentenced to 11 years, could face death sentence. (ISNA)

The judge in Siamak Purzand's case has said that the case remains open. Judge Ja'far Saberi, the head of Bench 1610 of Tehran's General Court - based at Mehrabad airport - and the person in charge of Siamak Purzand's case also said: "The verdict on Siamak Purzand has been issued and his lawyer has objected to the verdict and lodged an appeal. The verdict has therefore been sent to the appeals court and is not final yet." Regarding the charges against Purzand, he said: "Propaganda against the system of the Islamic republic, news espionage for the benefit of a foreign government and against the Islamic system which has inflicted harm on the country's national and cultural security, provoking and misleading the people with the aim of disturbing the country's security, encouraging individuals to commit immoral acts, illegitimate relationships and drinking alcoholic beverages are among the charges in this case". Judge Saberi added that Purzand had been sentenced to 99 lashes for illegitimate relationships, but, in view of his advanced age, it was changed to a 1m-rial fine and he would also face Islamic punishment for drinking alcoholic beverages. He pointed out that Purzand has been sentenced to five years in jail for encouraging individuals to commit immoral acts and noted: "In total, for committing the said deeds, Siamak Purzand has been sentenced to 11 years in jail".

The person in charge of Siamak Purzand's case went on to say: "The accused was transferred to Evin [prison in north Tehran]. But because of the above-mentioned points, he was transferred back to the relevant law enforcement unit for investigations aimed at establishing whether he is a 'muharib' [the Enemy of God]^{*} or not." Finally, judge Saberi said that Purzand was at a detention centre which was under the supervision of the Prisons' Organization. Dabir Daryabeygi, Purzand's lawyer, said for his part that his client had been sentenced to 11 years in prison, and been sentenced to state punishments [in addition to the Islamic punishments].

Continued detention of journalist (ISNA)

Saleh Nikbakht, the lawyer of Emadeddon Baqi has given the latest news on his client's situation. Nikbakht described as incorrect the interpretation of the guidelines governing pardon by the Judicial Complex for Government Employees. He said that his client had already been in jail for over 20 months by the time this order was issued on 22 Bahman [11 February 2002]. However, it was announced that in view of the complaints filed by the former Deputy Minister and Minister of Information against him regarding serial murder case, Baqi was not eligible for a pardon. According to him, based on their interpretation of the order, the Judicial Complex for Government Employees believed that the 20-month jail sentence only applied to the death and retribution sentence. And that the pardon only applied to the four months remaining from that sentence. However, they also said that the one-year jail sentence relates to the charge of publishing lies. The pardon does not apply to this case in view of the plaintiff's complaint. And therefore, Baqi must remain in jail according to this interpretation.

^{*} * Editor's note: "*Muharib Ba Khoda*" is the legal definition for the "convicted" who is to be punished by the death penalty.

Official says over 90,000 drug addicts in prison. (IRNA)

Head of Anti-Narcotics Headquarters Mohammad Fallah said that Iran has over 90,000 drugs addicts in prison. Speaking at a drug-related seminar, he added that in addition to addicts imprisoned, "the same number of addicts have been arrested and are under investigation."

Newspaper editor taken to court for interviewing jailed writers. (ISNA)

The managing editor of *Aftab* monthly spoke about the public prosecutor's complaint against his periodical. [The managing editor] Isa Saharkhiz said that he was invited to Tehran's public court Bench No 1410 via telephone and that he appeared there in the morning. Saharkhiz said: "According to Judge Mortazavi's remarks, the new press law forbids me from speaking about the subject and detail of the complaint prior to the open trial. I am therefore prohibited from commenting on the subject. But at any rate, I can say that in general the lawsuit relates to a series of articles [published in our monthly] quoting Kadivar about divine government. Furthermore, we published an interview with [Hashem] Aghajari, in the third edition of our monthly, on analysis of the revolution, violence and reforms. These articles were part of the lawsuit. At the same time, we published an interview and an article by [Akbar] Ganji, which were published in the seventh and eleventh editions. This is another part of the indictment." [The interviewees are jailed journalists and writers].

May 16

14 convicts to be hanged (AFP)

14 persons found guilty of murder, armed robberies and drug trafficking will be hanged next week. One of them, Ahmad Dolatyari, nicknamed "Ahmad Russian," was arrested after escaping from prison in 2000. He will be hanged in public on [May 18] in southern Tehran.

Special police unit dispatched to prevent clashes at Arak University. (ISNA)

A special security unit has been stationed at Arak University to prevent possible clashes. The security forces have barricaded the streets leading to the university. Following repeated requests by the members of the Office to Foster Unity (OFU), a special police unit was stationed at the main gate of Arak University in the afternoon to provide security for their meeting. Although, all the streets and alleys leading to the university were cordoned off, in order to provide greater security for the meeting, the number of demonstrators gathered in front of the university's main gate protesting the meeting of OFU reached 250. A student leader had to leave the meeting in the university president's car. The car was attacked and its windows were broken. Mehdi Mo'meni, a member of the central council of the Islamic Students Society of Gorgan University, who was present at the meeting of the OFU in Arak said a number of the protesters were riding motorcycles and threatening students as they were leaving the university. Organisers and participants of the meeting took refuge in the governor's office. Mo'meni said: "The Law Enforcement Force has not dealt with the protesters so far. Their number keeps growing. The protesters kept saying that they would turn this place [Arak] into a second Khorramabad. At the present time, none of the students can leave. We are concerned about how to leave the university after our

meeting has ended. A number of cameras which have been positioned at various locations are filming the participants in this gathering.”

May 18

Publisher to stand trial for book on women's rights. (ISNA)

A judiciary official has said that the manager of ‘Nashr-e Ney’ publishing house is to be prosecuted. Following the confiscation of more than 1,400 copies of the book “Women behind a veil” by Bench 1410 of Tehran Public Court, the judge said: “Following a declaration and complaint by the representative of the public [prosecutor] that the book ‘Women behind a veil’ contained insult to sacred figures and the holy Prophet of Islam, the court summoned the officials concerned at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The judge at Bench 1410 added: The director-general of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's book department told the court that the ministry had ordered the confiscation of the book and cancelled its publication permit. Therefore, Nashr-e Ney publishing house was inspected based on a judiciary writ.”

May 19

Explosion in Tehran injures two. (Iranian Radio)

There was an explosion late last night in Maham Boulevard, in the Chaharsad-Dastgah area of Piruzi Avenue, in Tehran. The explosion broke the windows of several residential units, caused fear and injured two people.

Reuters comment on the same news: In a statement faxed to an international news agency in Dubai, exiled armed opposition People's Mujahideen (PMOI) said "young dissidents" had "pounded" a barracks belonging to the Islamic Basij militia in the same Tehran neighbourhood. The Iraq-based rebels have carried out mortar attacks and assassinations of senior officials in Iran. The statement said the attack was in response to a wave of public executions.

Lawyer for dissident group barred from practice for 10 years. (Iranian newspaper *Norooz*)

Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, the lawyer for Freedom Movement has been barred from practice for 10 years. He has also been sentenced to five months imprisonment. The ruling by Branch 1410 of the Judicial Complex for Government Employees has stated: “Based on the evidence in the case and in view of the defendant's unsupported defence in court, he has been convicted of publishing lies aimed at agitating public opinion. He has also been found guilty of levelling false accusations against the Islamic Revolution Court. Based on Article 698 of the Islamic penal code, he has, therefore, been convicted and sentenced to five months imprisonment. Based on Article 19 of the Islamic Penal Code, the court has barred the defendant from practicing law for 10 years.”

May 20

Some 150 detained in crackdown on prostitution in Iran's holy city. (AFP)

About 150 people including 44 women have been arrested in Iran's holy Shiite Muslim city of Mashhad, in the biggest crackdown on vice since the 1979 Islamic revolution. A total of 148 people, members of 11 prostitution rings, "were identified and arrested". Those arrested in the police raids, included "44 runaway women aged from 15 to 30 years with criminal antecedents, including anti- Islamic behavior". Eight brothels were "discovered and closed and a number of mobile phones, cars, motorcycles, pornographic films as well as alcoholic beverages" were seized, he added.

Public hanging in Tehran (Reuters)

A convicted murderer was hanged in public in southern Tehran. A large crowd turned up to watch the hanging from a crane. He had been convicted of killing a man in 2001 and multiple counts of armed robberies. Public hanging is more frequent in Iranian provinces than in the more cosmopolitan Tehran.

May 22

Mortar shell explosion leaves one dead in northern Tehran. (IRNA)

One person was killed after a mortar shell blew off in a company producing chemical and medical substance on a northern Tehran street. The explosion happened on the Gandhi street on [May 25] evening during which a 36-year old man, identified as Mohammad Karim Ekhtiar'odin, was killed. The mortar shell was placed in a bag and belonged to the victim. A police head said that they have still to find out where the trajectory originated from and for what purpose. "Because of relating to security issues, the case has been referred to the intelligence ministry" a deputy police head said. Police were informed by the head of the company after he "came out from his office on hearing a blast to see the partly blown-off body of his partner".

Khamene'i pardons number of military convicts. (ISNA)

Ayatollah Khamene'i, the leader of the Islamic Republic, pardoned or reduced the sentences of a number of military court convicts on the occasion of the "liberation of Khorramshahr" [from Iraqi forces]. The leader agreed to pardon or commute the sentences of these convicts, following a request to that effect by the head of the judiciary and in line with Article 110 of the constitution. Those eligible for the amnesty are as follows:

1. Those who have up to two years remaining of their sentence, provided they have undergone at least one-fourth of their sentence by 3 Khordad 1381 [24 May 2002].
2. Those who have between two to five years remaining of their sentence, provided they have at least undergone one-third of their sentence by 24 May.
3. Those who are still in prison by 24 May because they have not been able to pay a required cash penalty of up to one million rials [approx. 100 pounds].

4. Those who by 24 May have paid off at least one-fourth of a cash penalty of between one to five million tomans (one to five thousand pounds), and are still in prison because they are unable to pay the rest.

5. Those who are undergoing a punitive extra period of military service [convicted for failing to register or attempting to dodge military service], and are still undergoing their sentence of extra military service by 24 May, have their [extra punitive] service period reduced by one-half.

To be eligible for the amnesty, the convict must not have had more than one general criminal record, and not have been given any previous amnesty. Moreover, if there are any private plaintiffs in any of the cases, their consent must be acquired by the end of Khordad [month which began on 21 May], or the plaintiff must be privately compensated. Those convicted of armed robbery, drugs smuggling, weapons and ammunitions contraband, actions against national security inside and outside the country, acts of espionage, kidnapping, rape and establishment of centres of vice and prostitution, and those who are in prison for graft, embezzlement, fraud and theft of over five million rials, are not included in the amnesty.

May 23

Managing-editor of daily prohibited from press activities for six months. (Iranian newspaper *Aftab-e Yazd*)

Sa'id Purazizi, the managing-editor of the daily *Bahar* has been prohibited from any press activities for six months and fined 500 rials. The head of Branch 1408 of Tehran Public Court has dismissed other nine charges against Purazizi. Purazizi is the publisher and managing-editor of the daily *Bahar* which was temporarily closed 21 months ago on 8 August 2000 based on Clause 5 of Article 156 of the constitution and according to Articles 12 and 13 of the law governing guarantees ratified in 1960.

May 24

Three arrested after opposition demonstration in Tehran. (Anatolian News Agency)

The police arrested three persons after dispersing an opposition demonstration in Tehran. Around 200 demonstrators gathering in Vanak Square in Tehran shouted "intellectual freedom, nothing to do with hair". After the intervention by the police, police and the demonstrators clashed in the lower part of Vali Asr Street.

May 25

Justice Department says bias reporting on US talks an offence. (Iranian Radio)

Tehran Province Justice Department issued a statement saying that bias campaigning and reporting on talks with America would constitute an offence under the press law. The statement said that "the need for the mass media to observe the guidelines set by the Supreme National Council and the country's senior officials in order to protect national interest. Publications of material that counter the domestic and foreign

interest in the mass media would agitate the public opinion, harm the system's authority and weakens the country's independence. Such actions would constitute an offence under the Articles 110 and 176 of the constitution and Article 500 of the Islamic penal code as well as the press law.”

Associated Press comment on the same news: Iran's reformers denounced as unconstitutional a ban imposed by the judiciary on discussions promoting Iran-U.S. ties and said they would ignore the orders. Parliament Vice Speaker Mohammad Reza Khatami said the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee will continue debates on the prospects of restoring Iran-U.S. relations. The committee met last week to hear expert views on this topic and plans another session in early June. "The judiciary's ban is unconstitutional and only weakens the judiciary," said Khatami, a younger brother of President Mohammad Khatami.

May 26

Court summons publisher over jailed journalist's book. (IRNA)

A Tehran court has summoned the head of a printing institute for publishing a book written by journalist Akbar Ganji who is currently in jail on a variety of convictions. Hoseyn Paya, the head of the 'Tarh-e Now' printing house, was summoned for publishing the book "Jail-Like Archipelago". The court also ordered all the copies of the book to be seized. Ganji, 45, is serving a six-year jail sentence since about 25 months ago "for threatening national security" mainly through articles, published in several newspapers, before they were shut down.

60 persons tried on prostitution charges. (Reuters)

About 60 people, including three senior officials, have gone on trial in Iran on prostitution-related charges. The defendants, three of them foreign nationals, were arrested recently in police raids on a "network of corrupt houses". The judge said the three foreign nationals were from Turkey and Kuwait. He said 43 of the suspects were women. The judge said the ring was also involved in smuggling prostitutes to oil-rich Gulf Arab states. Last year, a senior judge, a cleric who headed the anti-vice division of an Iranian court, was jailed for smuggling prostitutes to Arab states.

Vice squad confiscates 11,191 satellite dishes in Tehran Province. (Iranian newspaper 'Iran')

The commander of the headquarters responsible for promoting virtue and prohibiting vice in Tehran Province has announced that the personnel of this headquarters confiscated 11,191 satellite dishes in the province last year. Colonel Hasan Deyhim of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps added: "Among other activities of the personnel of this quarters last year I can mention the seizing and destruction of 42,000 compact discs containing pornographic material and 8,000 pornographic magazines and publications. In the same year we identified and destroyed 13 brothels and centres of debauchery. Last year the officers of this department confiscated and destroyed 600 indecent items of clothing. Moreover, we discovered 10 workshops engaged in fermenting and distilling alcohol in the province. Our officers also managed to confiscate 56,000 litres of alcoholic drinks produced inside the country and 35,000 litres of foreign brand of alcoholic drinks.”

May 27

State prosecutor files lawsuit against daily for supporting US ties. (Iranian newspaper *Resalat*)

The head of Tehran's Justice Department [Abbas Ali Alizadeh], as public prosecutor, has filed a lawsuit against the managing editor of daily *Iran* and Mohammad Na'imipur on charges of publishing an article offensive to the Guardian Council. The daily *Iran* conducted an interview with the Majlis deputy from Tehran, Mohammad Na'imipur [who is also chairman of the pro-reform faction, Islamic Partnership Front]. The interview was printed in 5 Khordad [26 May] edition of the daily. During this interview, Mohammad Na'imipur said: "The Majlis and the process of reform have not reached an impasse as a result of the Guardian Council's performance; on the contrary, the Guardian Council has lost the logic and instead of resorting to its scientific, religious and legal arguments to challenge the reform process, has resorted to political games." In the same connection, the public prosecutor filed a lawsuit and submitted it to the court.

Moreover, the public prosecutor complained to the court against the daily *Iran* for publishing two articles on pages 2 and 3 of the daily by Mohsen Mirdamadi and Mohammad Qaragozlu in which the writers defended continuation of the discussion on negotiation with America.

Military Court commutes death sentence on two serial killers. (IRNA)

Bench Five of Tehran Military Court withdrew the death sentence on two defendants in the case of serial murders, after the families of the victims pardoned the murderers. The Court commuted the death verdict on Mahmud Ja'farzadeh and Ali Mohseni after the families of the victims forgave them and called for their capital punishment to be dropped. However, the Court passed a ten-year prison term for each on charges of disturbing the public security, and banned them from service at the Ministry of Information. The Court also handed prison terms to four of the defendants suspected of complicity in the murders. It sentenced tenth and fifteenth defendants of the case to four years in prison while the eleventh and the twelfth received three years behind the bars. The defendants were not identified by name. The Court announced that there had been no change in the sentences of other convicts, and stressed that the verdicts could be appealed. The Military Court last January convicted some 18 agents of the Ministry of Information for involvement in the 1998 murder of nationalist activist Daryush and his wife Parvaneh Forouhar, and writers Mohammad Mokhtari and Mohammad Ja'far Puyandeh.

Organizer of memorial ceremony for activist found injured. (Iranian newspaper *Norooz*)

The organizer of the memorial service, marking 40th day since the demise of [political activist] Dr Ezzatollah Sahabi, vanished after the ceremony in Shiraz. His badly injured body was found one day after the memorial service.

Iranian opposition web site Iran-Press report on the same news:* In a statement, the Nationalist-religious group said Vahid Sadeqi, an activist of the organisation in Shiraz, had been abducted at the doorsteps of his home by four plainclothes men and

* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.

taken to a safe house where he had been interrogated and subject to a wide-range of mental and physical tortures and abuses, burning his arms with acid, his chest hairs with lighters and injecting "serum of truth". Sadeqi confirmed that he had been abducted by plainclothes men in a taxi he had flagged. "As the car drove to a certain destination, one of the passengers put a gun on my head and ordered to shut up. On reaching the destination, a safe house, I was undressed, put on a metallic bed made specially for torturing, equipped with straps to tie up feet, hands and the body... At first I was thrown acid on my arms and as I was loosing conscience, I was ordered to curse Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, whom they termed 'devilish'. As I refused, telling them he is in my heart, they started throwing more acid, burn hairs on my chest, pour fire powder over the acid and light and inject with truth serum", Sadeqi related, adding that at the end, they curved the names of Peyman, Montazeri and Mosadeq on his back, placing the dots with cigarette bouts. Eventually, he was taken back and abandoned near the house of a prominent Nationalist-Religious personality of the city.

May 28

Police arrest 80 trippers for "immoral behaviour". (AFP)

Iranian police arrested some 80 people of both sexes who went on a bus trip to a scenic region and were found to have been indulging in group photography and carrying contraceptive pills. Accused of "illegal and immoral behaviour," they were in a party of some 200 who had organised a field trip to Fuman in northern Gilan province. Most were aged between 26 and 27 and included 33 students, Azad said. They were arrested after complaints by local people and held overnight in one of the buses before being taken to jail. "They were carrying contraceptive pills and were taking pictures, together," the Fuman police chief said. 47 of the arrested were later released on bail.

May 29

Khamene'i pardons 376 convicts on Prophet's birthday. (IRNA)

"Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution" Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamene'i, on the recommendation of the Judiciary chief, Mahmud Shahrudi, pardoned or commuted the sentences of some 376 convicts. Shahrudi had forwarded the names of some 376 convicts of public, revolutionary and military courts as well as the special court of the clergy eligible for pardon.

Iranian dancer jailed. (AP)

Iran's most famous male dancer, who lives and performs in California, has been jailed on charges of promoting corruption among youths during a visit to Iran. Los Angeles-based Mohamad Khordadian arrived in Tehran from Dubai earlier in May to meet family and old friends. Iranian authorities arrested Khordadian and he was charged by a Tehran court with promoting corruption among youths through his performances. An Iranian artist said Khordadian's detention was related to setting up dance classes for women inside Iran during his visits to the country rather than for his performances in the United States.

Khatami seeks probe into judiciary. (Reuters)

Iran's President Mohammad Khatami called on parliament to open an investigation into the judiciary, which has launched a crackdown on pro-reform activists and newspapers. Khatami said he was powerless to make the judiciary respect the constitution, which guarantees free speech. "I cannot exercise my mandate. They (courts) are not even taking the time to answer my protests," he said. Parliament, where Khatami's allies hold the majority of seats, "has the right to investigate all the government and judicial bodies. They should use it to see what the people are going through in courts", the president said.

Majlis amends law to allow women custody of sons. (IRNA)

In an amendment to Article 1169 of the Iranian Civil Law, women can now hold custody of their children under the age of seven. This bill, which allows divorced women to hold custody of their offspring, was passed in the Majlis on 29 May. Once the bill is endorsed by the Guardian Council, it will give divorced mothers the same custody rights over boys. According to the amended bill, in case of dispute, considering the welfare and well being of the child, the decision on the child's custodianship will rest with the court.

*UNHCR Ankara
Country of Origin Information Team
Revised September 2004*