

Chronology of Events in Iran, August 2002*

August 3

National-Religious group rejects order to dissolve. (Agence France Press / AFP)

The banned Iran Freedom Movement (IFM) formally rejected an order by the Islamic regime's judiciary to dissolve and said it will appeal prison terms handed down to its members. The IFM stated that they would answer the unfounded accusations against the party and would publish its answer in the press to inform public opinion.

Head scarves and robes no longer required in class. (Reuters)

Girls will be allowed to go without head scarves and robes in all-female schools in Tehran - a move religious conservatives criticized as "encouraging nudity." The Education Ministry directive applies to schoolgirls aged 7 to 18 and their teachers in Tehran's 11,000 girls' schools when classes open in September.

August 5

Court finds daily managing editor guilty of unspecified charges. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)

The Press Court jury in its verdict found the managing director of daily *Gozaresh-e Rouz* (Daily Report) Ali Mohammad Mahdavi-Khorrami guilty of the charges brought against him. The Public Relations Department at Tehran's Justice Department reported that Bench 1408 of Tehran's Public Court had in two open sessions investigated the charges, raised against Mahdavi-Khorrami, in the presence of his attorney. The jury board found the accused guilty of the charges filed against him by the deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), by the head of the joint staff of the IRGC, by the Legal Affairs Department at Intelligence Office of Police, by Abdolhamid Mohtasham and the prosecutor-general. The board, however, found him not guilty in the cases raised against him by the Information Ministry and certain other complaints by the prosecutor-general. It did not entitle Mahdavi-Khorram to any leniency in view of his record in press offences and absence from court sessions.

Demonstrations and clashes in several locations reported. (Student Movement Coordination Center for Democracy in Iran / SMCCDI)

Unauthorised demonstrations were reportedly held in several cities of Iran on the occasion of the 96th anniversary of the 1996 Constitution, which is known to be one

* *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.*

of the symbols of the secularist opposition in Iran. According to Los Angeles-based opposition movement SMCCDI reports, these demonstrations turned into clashes in various occasions. In Tehran, clashes reportedly rocked several areas, including Baharestan square, Pamenar, Sar Tcheshme, Mohseni, Tajrish, Heshmati e, Vali e Asr, as well as the southern suburbs of Rey and Eslam Shahr and the western suburbs of Ghohar Dasht and Pardis in Karadj. According to these reports, clashes ensued from attacks by the militia. In Esfahan, the demonstrators reportedly clashed with the militia in narrow streets. Security forces intervened in these demonstrations when the demonstrators chanted the former Iranian anthem. Violent clashes in the cities of Ghazvin and Ghoochan in the evening hours were also reported. In Tehran and its suburbs, demonstrators were said to take to the main roads by their cars at about 9 pm.*

Arrest of journalist abroad ordered by the court. (Agence France Press / AFP)

The judiciary has ordered the arrest of reformist journalist Massoud Behnud, who travelled abroad after being sentenced to 19 months in jail for "actions against the security of the state". Behnud, 52, left Iran legally in May 2002 after he was freed on bail, and is now in Canada. He will be arrested if he returns to Iran as the appeals court has upheld his prison term. He was jailed from August 2000 until February 2001 during a massive crackdown on the press and journalists. Behnud, also a historian, had questioned sensitive issues of the Islamic Republic, including the Islamic dress code that forces women to cover their hair and bodies in the presence of men. In December 2000, he appeared in court on charges of "action against the security of the state", "cooperation with foreign media" and "insult to supreme leader". He was also accused of "consuming alcohol" and "keeping instruments for smoking opium".

August 6

Journalist stopped publication for fear of imprisonment. (Iranian newspaper *Resalat*)

The managing editor of *Aref*, a publication in Qazvin, has closed down her own publication for fear of imprisonment. Mahjabin Abutorabi has claimed that pressures have caused the closing down of her publication after publishing four issues. However, she did not indicate from where these pressures were exerted. The managing editor of *Aref* publication of Qazvin has claimed that she has been told not to write about nationalist-religious [activists] and the banning of *Norooz* newspaper.

August 8

Newspapers banned. (AFP)

A newspaper was banned a week after converting from provincial weekly to a national daily, and its reformist MP publisher is to face trial. *Ayene-Jonoub* (Mirror of the South), published by Mohammad Dadfar, was formerly published once a week in the southern Bushehr province. It was launched nationwide as a daily on August 1. The judge responsible for the case, Saeed Mortazavi, said that one of the reasons for

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

suspending the paper was the previous sentencing of Dadfar for "anti-regime propaganda" in Tehran's appeals court. Dadfar is a member of the reformist Islamic Iran Participation Front from Bushehr.

The Press Court also barred publication of the new daily *Rouz-e-No*, which was scheduled for publication next week, saying that the paper was a continuation of the recently banned *Norooz*.

Hashem Aghajari detained. (Iranian news agency IRNA)

Hashem Aghajari, a journalist who stirred up a row after calling for religious restructuring in Iran, was detained in the western city of Hamedan on a local judge's order. Mohsen Armin, a member of the Islamic Revolution's Mojahedin Organization (IRMO), to which Aghajari belongs, said that the journalist was detained after attending a court for interrogation.

August 9

Hundreds of students banned from entering universities. (SMCCDI)*

Hundreds of students have been banned from entering the Iranian universities for the new academic year despite passing the National Admittance Test. These bans have been issued by "Herassat Daneshguah" (The Office for Surveillance of the Universities) on the basis of former or current political activities of the candidates or simply because one or several of their family members are linked to political activities against the regime.

Students on "closed door trial" for "moral offense". (SMCCDI)**

The branch 4 of the Islamic judiciary of Fooman has placed tens of students on "closed door trial" for "moral offence" following the mass arrest of more than 300 students which occurred in northern Iran in June 2002. About 40 students face punishments, such as ban from university, jail and lashes at the issue of verdict. The students, including boys and girls, were visiting the historic site of "Ghale Roodkhan" located in the Guilan province. They were arrested by the militiamen for non-conformity with Islamic principles.

August 10

The assassination of Iranian Kurd in Arbil, Northern Iraq. (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran periodical *Kurdistan Bulletin*). ***

A 17 year old Kurd, Masood Karimian, from Sardasht, Iran, who had fled the intelligence and revolutionary corps, was gunned down [in Arbil] on 10 August 2002. The assassin has been captured by the security forces in Northern Iraq, and he is reportedly questioned.

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August 11

Riots in Eslam Shahr reported. (SMCCDI)*

Los Angeles-based opposition movement SMCCDI alleged that “hundreds” of citizens in Eslam Shahr protested their living conditions, and the law enforcement forces intervened, wounding several. SMCCDI said that the conservative daily *Kayhan* commented on the riot.

Cleric seeks death penalty for Aghajari. (The Gulf News)

The head of Iran's Assembly of Experts, Great Ayatollah Ali Meshkini, seeks the death penalty for a pro-reform journalist who allegedly insulted Prophet Mohammed in a speech in the western city of Hamedan. Speaking during the Friday prayers in the holy city of Qom, Ayatollah Meshkini said: "The judge should consider a verdict of death penalty for the man." Meshkini said offending Islam and the clerics is unforgivable and can lead to a death penalty. Controversial pro-reform journalist Hashem Aghajari, who allegedly offended the powerful Shi'ite clergy, was arrested on a court order issued in the western city of Hamedan. But he was released later on a \$250,000 bail. Meanwhile, several protests also took place against Aghajari in several cities in Iran, notably in the holy city of Qom.

August 13

Female workers arrested following protest rally. (SMCCDI)**

Several female workers have been arrested following a demonstration in front of the governmental "Bonyad" in Tehran. These women and their families and supporters had moved from the Lorestan province to protest against their poor conditions and the non payment of their wages by this governmental entity. Most of the arrested have been transferred to the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) Headquarters located in the Zandjan avenue and the neighbouring Security Houses near the Argentina square.

August 15

Man condemned to cross amputation. (AFP)

A man convicted of stealing a car was condemned to amputation of his right hand and left foot by a revolutionary court in southern city of Shiraz. The thief, identified only as Ruhollah, was wearing make-up and women's dress to pass for a prostitute, together with his cousin, to rob his clients.

Suspended paper closed. (AFP).

Iran's press court has definitively closed a reformist daily newspaper, *Bamdad-e-No*, which was suspended in April 2000. At the same time, *Bamdad-e-No* publisher Abolghassem Golbaf was given an unspecified fine.

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August 18

Two jailed Iranian journalists granted leave. (AFP)

Two imprisoned journalists were granted home leave after each paying 25,000 dollars for the privilege. The journalists, Akbar Ganji and Emadeddin Baghi were freed for one week after each paying the 200 millions rials, although the leaves could be extended. Both men were granted similar leaves in December 2001 and again in March 2002.

Iranian Forensic Institute reveals number of hanged and killed by bullets in the capital. (SMCCDI)*

The Islamic Republic's Legal Medical Department issued a report on the number of deaths which have occurred in the city of Tehran for the 1st quarter of the current Iranian year starting on March 20. Based on this statement, the deaths of only 7 from a total of 14,970 Tehrani residents who died during this period were due to natural causes. 44 Tehrani residents died, during the same period, "due to hanging" and 27 other "due to bullet shots".

Parcell bomb kills boy in Hamadan. (AFP)

A 10-year-old boy was killed in the Hamadan region of western Iran when a parcel bomb exploded. The parcel exploded in front of a house in the Ansar al-Emam village, near the city of Hamadan.

August 21

Dissident's says his life is being threatened. (Iranian newspaper *Aftab-e Yazd*)

A member of the national-religious group, Mohammad Bastehnegar and his wife, Tahereh Taleqani, have been threatened by unidentified individuals. Bastehnegar told that the letter said: "You are a member of corrupt circles offending and acting against the values. Therefore you are warned that next time actions will be taken against you."

Revolutionary Guards warn Khamenei against declaring the state of emergency. (Opposition web site *Iran Press Service*)*

In a letter to Ayatollah Ali Khameneh'i, the leader of the Islamic Republic, several commanders of the Guardian Corps of the Islamic Revolution (GCIR), have warned him against trying to use the Revolutionary Guards to proclaim a state of emergency. The letter, which was not published by Iranian media, was delivered to Khameneh'i hours after several conservatives had urged the leader and other high-ranking officials to install an emergency situation, close the Majles (parliament), arrest several leading political activists among the reformers and clampdown on the press. At about the same time, a senior pro-conservative commander of the Guards, that is also known as Sepah (army), or Pasdaran (guardians) had attacked 151 lawmakers who had called for the release Siamak Poorzand, a 71 years-old veteran journalist accused of

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** Editor's Note: While calls for declaring a state of emergency is noted in the Iranian press, this specific report has not been confirmed by major information sources available to BO Ankara.

fomenting dissidence and collaborating with anti-revolutionaries abroad for the overthrow of the Islamic Republic and defended the banned Iran Freedom Movement. "We have to beg you not to try to manipulate your mighty sons guardians of the Islam and revolution, for, in case you want to use them for bringing emergency situation, this could lead to bloodshed among the Pasdaran", the dissident commanders warned Khameneh'i who, as the leader of the regime, is also commander in chief of all Armed Forces, including the Revolutionary Guards.

According to information confirmed by Iranian newspapers, former president Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has proposed a state of emergency be proclaimed by the leader, permitting the closure of the Majles which is dominated by the reformers and reduce the government to the strict minimum. They also reminded Khameneh'i that the great majority of the revolutionary guards, "like the rest of the Muslim Shi'a Iranians", are both followers of Grand Ayatollah Hoseinali Montazeri and have voted massively for the reforms. Nima Rashedan, an expert on Iranian military and intelligence affairs says Pasdaran commanders had always been divided in two opposing groups.

Tehran college stops reformist lecture. (BBC)

A lecture by an influential Islamic scholar, considered as the main thinker behind the reformist movement in Iran has been cancelled at short notice. Abdolkarim Soroush was due to speak at Tehran's Amir Kabir University in the morning. The university's Islamic Society of Students stated that the speech had been cancelled "because of what the university management described as security reasons". Abdolkarim Soroush has been prevented from teaching in Iran in recent years and taught at Harvard University for the past two years. He returned to Iran in July 2002. He is a hate figure for the so-called "Hezbollahi" fundamentalists in Iran, who have often disrupted his lectures. Once, when he was due to speak at Amir Kabir University in the 1990s, the Hezbollahis set up gallows outside the lecture hall.

August 22

Theater director convicted for promoting immoral conduct. (Reuters)

An Iranian court has convicted a theater director for promoting immoral conduct because a scene in one of his plays showed a man forcing his sick wife to drink wine to hasten her death. The court fined director Ali Rafii 1.5 million rials (\$190) and gave him a suspended two-year ban from the theater after ruling that the scene promoted wine drinking which is forbidden by Islam.

August 23

Iranian Azeri gets prison sentence following march to fort. (Azerbaijani newspaper *Hurriyyat*)

The trial of those who marched to the Fort of Bazz opened in Kaleybar town in north-western Iran. They had marched to the Fort of Bazz on the occasion of historical hero Babak's [Babek, legendary Iranian hero who fought against the Arab caliphate]

birthday on 4 June. Iranian police arrested several people in this march, in which over 8,000 Azeris reportedly took part.

A representative of the Tabriz branch of the Congress of World Azerbaijanis said that the Tabriz Revolutionary Court considered the case of two of the participants in the march - Asiq Cabrayil Xalili and Adigozal Cabrayil. Both of them are accused of distributing magazines and leaflets. The representative of the Tabriz branch of the Congress of World Azerbaijanis said that Adigozal Cabrayil was released according to the court verdict. Xalili was sentenced to six months in prison in line with Iranian legislation. The representative of the Congress of World Azerbaijanis also said that there were some more Azeris in Iranian prisons who had been arrested at the Fort of Bazz.

August 24

Iran busts ring trafficking women to Pakistan. (AFP)

Iranian authorities busted a ring based in the north-eastern city of Mashhad responsible for trafficking dozens of young women to Pakistan where they were forced into prostitution. Police in Mashhad uncovered the ring after a young woman named Fariba called her mother from Karachi in Pakistan to tell her she had been forced into prostitution. The ring included two Afghans, and 30 men and women from the southern Sistan-Baluchestan province near the long border with Pakistan. They had tracked down dozens of young women in the impoverished province and convinced their families to marry them off to seemingly wealthy men. The women were then transferred to Pakistan, notably Karachi, where they were sold for 400 to 1,200 dollars to mostly Afghan-run prostitution rings. The ring was busted after a joint investigation led by police in Mashhad's Khorassan province and Pakistani authorities, who returned at least eight "young girls" back to Iran. "We lived like slaves. Many times, I wanted to run away or commit suicide but every time, I failed," said one of the girls named Maryam.

August 25

Members of the provincial governmental TV arrested. (SMCCDI)*

Several members of the provincial governmental TV station of Hamadan have been arrested following the interruption of the regular programs and the broadcasting of pictures [on August 22] showing abuses made in Iran. The Hamedan official TV program was interrupted for several minutes following this pirate broadcasting.

Iranian Students News Agency [ISNA] report related to the same news: Around midday on Thursday 29 Shahrivar [22 August] unethical images were broadcast on the news network in Hamedan city. An informed source at the Hamedan centre of Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting confirmed the news and said that the broadcast continued for 25 minutes. He said the reason was an unauthorised intervention in the frequency of a satellite receiver. According to eye-witnesses, after the broadcast of the

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pictures was cut off, broadcasting was totally cut off on the news network in Hamedan for more than 10 minutes.

Protesters beaten and arrested in Khorram Abad. (SMCCDI)*

The security forces reportedly attacked tens of protesters who gathered in the evening in the central part of the City of Khorram Abad located in the Lorestan province. Several demonstrators who shouted slogans against the regime were beaten and arrested while the plainclothesmen were filming the crowd who gathered in the perimeter going from the Motahari Avenue toward the Q Square. Clubs, chains and tear gas sprays were used against whomever not respecting the injunctions of the security forces. Several young women are among the injured and arrested for having opposed the orders to leave the area.

Majlis approves a bill to give women equal right to divorce. (US newspaper *The New York Times*)

Iran's Parliament has approved a bill that grants women equal rights to divorce like men for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution. Part of the bill requires men to provide the financial resource for the health care for their sick wives, and if necessary employ a maid or nurse. Men who refused to pay for their sick wives' health care so far were sent to courts and judges ruled differently. The new bill needs to be approved by the Guardian Council before it can be enforced as law.

August 26

Jewish MP asks pardon for imprisoned Jewish Iranians. (AFP)

Iranian Jewish MP Maurice Motamed said he had asked the Iranian leader Khamenei to pardon eight Jewish citizens imprisoned two year ago on charges of spying for Israel. "I have asked the Supreme Leader for a pardon, considering their good conduct in the prison and in perspective of the (Jewish) new year, the September 7 feast of Rosh Hashanah. I met the prisoners one month and a half ago. They were in good condition and I hope that my request will be helpful to them", the deputy said. In February and March 1999, 11 Jews and two Muslims were arrested on charges of spying for Israel, and were sentenced to prison in 2000.

Workers and demonstrators injured and arrested in Tabriz (SMCCDI)**

Several workers and demonstrators were reportedly arrested following violent clashes that took in Tabriz. The workers of the Bargh Lameh Factory were staging protest when the security forces intervened in the 17 Shahrivar avenue of Tabriz by beating them. The security forces intervened by shooting tear gas and using clubs and chains against the demonstrators.

Reporter of radical daily *Kayhan* escapes assailants. (Iranian newspaper *Kayhan*)

Two unidentified motorcyclists chased a correspondent of *Kayhan*, Mohammad Khomehyar, in Qom with the intention of beating and battering him. But Mohammad managed to escape. Mohammad Khomehyar had received some threatening telephone

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calls earlier. This issue was under investigation by the Law-Enforcement Force in the province.

August 27

Court bans daily, sentences its editor to 28 months in prison. (IRNA)

A court has banned the daily *Gozarash-e Rouz* (Daily Report) from publishing and sentenced its editor Mohammad Mahdavi Khorrami to 28 months in prison on a series of charges. The Press Court convicted Khorrami on charges of propagating against the Islamic Republic, brought by the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps and the Police as well as the Ansar-e Hezbollah group.

Iran arrested “counterrevolutionaries” and “spies”. (Associated Press / AP)

Iran arrested 150 people in the past five months on charges of terrorism and espionage, the Minister of Information said. Since March 20, "50 spies, 100 terrorists and other counterrevolutionaries have been arrested and 1,000 pieces of illegal weapons confiscated," Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi said. He did not specify any groups, but Iranian officials usually use the words 'terrorist' and 'counterrevolutionary' to refer to the Iraq-based Mujahedeen Khalq (PMOI). The group frequently launches attacks inside Iran against the country's leadership.

Fifth group of refugees who fled Iran to Iraq during the war return. (IRNA)

A fifth group of Iranian refugees residing in Iraq during the eight-year imposed war arrived in Iran through Shalamcheh border, 16 km from Khorramshahr. The returnees are members of 19 families who migrated to Iraq from Khuzestan, Ilam and Kermanshah provinces during the war period. The repatriation process is based on a tripartite agreement involving the two states which provides for the voluntary return of refugees living in the other country and is implemented under the supervision of UNHCR. The group will go to their home cities after completion of health quarantines, vaccination and customs requirements. During the past month, some 762 Iranians living in Iraq came back to Iran via the Shalamcheh border, while 6,000 Iraqis were returned to their country during the last two months.

August 28

Police arrest Afghan refugees after repatriation deadline. (Reuters)

Police in the Iranian capital said they would start to round up Afghan refugees after a deadline for them to report for repatriation passed. Iran had set an August 27 deadline for more than two million Afghan refugees to report themselves to the authorities to be repatriated. "Police will round up Afghans who illegally work in Tehran and vicinities," the official Hamid Ahadi said. More than a third of Afghan refugees in Iran live in the sprawling, over-populated capital. Tehran authorities have in the past months been trying to identify them, as in many other parts of the country. UNHCR has voiced concern that the rising number of Afghans returning home from Iran are leaving under pressure from Tehran.

Worker activist declared “committed suicide”. (SMCCDI)*

A worker activist of the "Chit e Rey" factory located in south of Tehran, [who was under detention] is reported “committed suicide” by the authorities. The victim’s name has been reported as "Azad Alizadeh". The "Chit e Rey" factory has been the scene of violent clashes between workers and the security forces. Its workers supported the Iranian students by making a rally on July 9, 2002.

Police free ethnic Azeris arrested for commemorating ex-Azeri president. (Azerbaijani news agency MPA).

Mahmud Fazli, Ibrahim Jafarzadeh, Maqsd Qaray, Mahni Zanjali and Parviz Makun, who had been arrested for visiting Sabalan, were set free three days later. The aforementioned people were arrested by the Iranian police. They were released due to the lack of *corpus delicti*. [Mount Sabalan is in Azarbayjan, northwestern Iran. The visit was paid on 22 August on the occasion of the second anniversary of the death of former Azeri President Abulfaz Elcibay, who promoted the idea of a united Azerbaijan.]

Weekly in Qazvin suspended. (AFP)

Iran's judiciary suspended a pro-reform weekly newspaper in the western province of Qazvin. *Nameh-Qazvin* was accused of "publishing lies", "insulting moral people" and "disturbing public opinion". Publisher Ali Shahruzi told that he had not received a suspension order in writing and was not aware of the accusations.

August 29

Police arrest 17 youths for listening to music on beach. (AFP)

Iranian police arrested 17 girls and boys for an "immoral gathering" after catching them listening to music on a beach on the Caspian Sea coast. The youths were enjoying themselves in the coastal residential area of Bandar-Anzali, but were caught by police and charged with "anti-Islamic acts" and listening to "illegal music". The youths offered police 1.4 million rials (175 dollars) to buy their release, but instead received an additional charge of trying to bribe officials.

The Guardian Council reject Majlis bill on children's rights. (Iranian newspaper *Iran*)

The Guardian Council has once again rejected the Majlis bill in support of children's rights. The spokesman for the Guardian Council, Ebrahim Azizi, in this connection said: The first time that the bill was passed to the Guardian Council for its ratification, the council rejected it because seven sections of the bill were criticized for being contrary to the Shari'ah laws. The bill was returned to the Majlis, but only four of the points criticized by the council were amended. The bill in support of children's rights was, therefore, returned to the Majlis again.

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