

## **Chronology of Events in Iran, April 2004\***

### **April 2**

#### **Home-made bomb shatters windows in Zahedan. (Agence France Presse / AFP)**

A home-made bomb blew up at night in a central square of the city of Zahedan, shattering windows but causing no casualties.

### **April 4**

#### **Iran's Sunni population protest over book. (Iranian newspaper *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*)**

*The Truth About the Penetration in the Religion*, by Yaqubeddin Rastegar Juybari, led to protests by a number of Sunni inhabitants of Piranshahr and in Sunni-inhabited areas of West Azarbayjan Province. In this book, the sanctities of the Sunnis are insulted and the union between the Shiites and Sunnis is disapproved. In a statement, the Sunni clergy of Piranshahr have requested that the author of this book be punished. It is said that 20,000 copies of this book were distributed during the Nowruz holidays in the Sunni-inhabited areas of West Azarbayjan Province. In a meeting with the Sunni clergy of that region, the governor of Piranshahr has promised to follow up the case with the Kurd deputies in the Islamic Consultative Majlis and to ask the Minister of Islamic Culture and Guidance to provide explanations in this regard.

### **April 6**

#### **Security fears prompt UNHCR to halt refugee convoys from Iran to south Iraq. (AFP)**

The UN refugee agency froze weekly convoys carrying refugees from Iran to southern Iraq due to heightened fears of hijacking as the war-torn country spiralled into a third day of bloodshed. Earlier in the day, a convoy of 208 refugees was stopped just inside the Iranian border and told to wait for the situation in Iraq to improve and transport beyond the port city of Basra to become available. "Our partners on the ground tell us ... there have been a number of road blocks and illegal check-points set up," said UNHCR spokesman Peter Kessler. "There have been of course car hijacking incidents and ... the demonstrations in Basra," he told a news conference. While the UNHCR is not promoting return to Iraq at present it is helping those who insist they want to go back to overcome such obstacles. Some 10,000 people have returned from Iran, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon since last July with UNHCR-facilitated repatriation convoys but hundreds of thousands more remain outside the country.

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\* *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*

## **April 7**

### **Swedes held prisoner in Iraq risk execution in Iran. (AFP)**

At least 100 Swedish citizens or residents of Iranian descent, who have been held prisoner near Baghdad for nearly a year, risk extradition to Iran where they could be executed, Swedish media reported. The Swedes are among approximately 4,000 fighters in the People's Mujahedin (PMOI), an Iraq-based Iranian opposition movement, who have been held prisoner since last spring at Camp Ashraf. The United States decided last December that members of the opposition group would be expelled from Iraq, and although it decided that they should not be sent to Iran, Swedish activists and lawyers are worried that they will end up there. Most of the Swedes being held in the camp were women.

## **April 11**

### **Sentenced Iranian lecturer Aghajari not allowed prison leave (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)**

Aghajari's spouse Zahra Behnudi said that her husband was not allowed prison leave. According to the rules of procedure of the prison, every prisoner may enjoy five days of leave per month. However, Aghajari was allowed his leave in the past year.

## **April 12**

### **Actor sentenced for his role. (Turkish Anatolian News Agency)**

Mehran Modiri, an actor, was sentenced for "insulting the security forces" in bribing a police officer in a TV serial.

## **April 14**

### **Condemned Iranian dissident's jail sentence dropped, death sentence pending. (AFP)**

Iranian dissident intellectual Hashem Aghajari has had his four-year jail sentence for insulting religious values dropped, but must await a review of his death sentence for blasphemy before he can hope to be released from prison, a judicial source said. Aghajari "has been pardoned for the four years in prison, but he will not be freed because the second part of his case is still an open matter," Zekrollah Ahmadi, judiciary chief in Hamedan province, said. "We will have to wait for the Supreme Court's decision" on the death sentence "to know if he can be freed or not," Ahmadi added.

Aghajari's lawyer, Saleh Nikhbakht, said his client "could be freed if the original arrest warrant against him were converted into a warning." Nikhbakht said the prison sentence had been set aside because Aghajari had completed one-third of it and because the law stipulates releases in cases where the original sentence is less than five years.

### **UNHCR to monitor Iran's expulsion of Afghans. (Reuters)**

UNHCR will use spot checks at the border in an effort to ensure that Iran does not send back genuine refugees in its drive to expel illegal Afghans, the head of the U.N. refugee body said. Iranian officials have said they want to expel all Afghans without

residency permits by March 2005. Ruud Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, said Iran expelled 50,000 to 60,000 Afghans last year but had agreed that U.N. inspectors could check buses at border posts to see if anyone on board had a case for seeking political asylum.

Lubbers said 202,000 Iraqi refugees were trying to return home from Iran, but were not a priority for the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in Baghdad. "The CPA has been slow," he said, adding that the authorities in Iraq were preoccupied with rebuilding the oil industry and restoring water and electricity supplies.

## **April 15**

### **Iran opposition exiles protest over jailed activists. (Reuters)**

Scores of Iranian opposition exiles protested outside the Syrian embassy in London to demand the release of two activists seized by Damascus a year ago before being handed to Tehran. Abraham Khodabandeh, 51, and Jamil Bassam, 50, both members of the [PMOI-dominated] National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and refugees in Britain for about 30 years, were visiting family in Syria in April 2003 when they were arrested in their hotel. They were deported to Iran in June 2003 and are awaiting trial on unknown charges, the NCRI said. Syrian officials have confirmed the two men were deported to Iran, although they have not explained why.

### **Dissident Amir Entezam denies sending message to political meeting abroad (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)**

Yusef Mowla'i, the lawyer for Amir Entezam, the longest held political prisoner in Iran stated that certain political groups outside the country recently claimed that Amir Entezam sent a message to their meeting or congress. He said he categorically denied the sending of any messages to political meetings abroad.

### **Iranian diplomat assassinated in Baghdad (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)**

Khalil Nai'mi, the cultural and press attache of the Iranian embassy here, was shot dead by unknown assailants in Baghdad. Witnesses said the assailants riddled the diplomat's car just as he drove out of the mission. Nai'mi's body is lying inside the vehicle on the street across from the embassy, and police have been called in. No individual or group has taken responsibility for the assassination yet.

## **April 18**

### **Clerical society withdraws from Iran's reformist coalition. (Iranian newspaper *Resalat*)**

Regarding forming a new reformist front and the new approach of 2nd Khordad Front faction in the seventh Majlis elections, Razavi Yazdi, member of the Central Council of Clergy Society, said that there is no chance of agreement between the Participation Front and the Islamic Revolution Mojahedin Organization. He said that the 2nd Khordad groups would participate in separate groups in the presidential election.

**Sunni Iranian MPs call on leader to examine conditions in Sunni-inhabited areas. (Iranian newspaper *Aftab-e Yazd*)**

The Sunni MPs in the Majlis have sent a letter to the Iranian “Supreme Leader” requesting that the cultural, economic, and religious conditions in the Sunni-inhabited areas be examined and that the rights of the Sunni citizens be vindicated based on the constitution and based on the principle of equality and justice.

**Iran lawmaker resigns. (Reuters)**

A leading member of Iran's outgoing parliament resigned, complaining that the reformist-dominated assembly had been unable to defend people's rights due to the resistance of religious conservatives. Behzad Nabavi, one of parliament's two deputy speakers, said unelected bodies, appointed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had blocked reformers at every turn since pro-reform President Mohammad Khatami took office in 1997. "I am resigning because of not being able to defend people's rights as a deputy," he said.

**Leader of Mojahedin political group summoned to court. (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA)**

A court session will be held on May 1 to investigate allegations made against Mohammad Salamati, the secretary-general of the Organization of the Mojahedin of Islamic Revolution. The session, to be held at court 1083 of Tehran's General Court, will investigate a complaint filed by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps about a statement issued by the group.

**April 21**

**Iranian KDP says six of its militants executed by government in 1996. (Iraqi Kurdish newspaper *Hawlati*)\***

The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran announced in a statement that six of its peshmergas had been executed after they were handed by the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan over to Iranian government in 1996. The Islamic Movement reportedly rounded up and then handed over to the Iranian forces seven peshmergas on 20 October 1996 in Anabi near the town of Halabjah. The names of the seven are as follows: Arshad Rezayi, Mohammad Aziz Qadri, Yunis Mohammad Poor, Adnan Isma'il, Muzafar Kazimi, Ma'ruf Suhrabi and Darush Islamdost. The group of peshmergas managed to liberate Darush Islamdost from captivity so that he can work for them. However, once he was freed he then managed to reach Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran's positions in northern Iraq and gave full details of their capture. According to the statement, the fate of the six peshmergas has remained unknown since 1996 and up until 29 March 2004 where after pressure by human right supporters, the Iranian government was forced to admit their knowledge about the fate of the six in a letter to Jeremy Coburn, the head human rights group in the British parliament. In the letter, the Iranian government claimed that the peshmergas, after returning to their base, have along with forces from the Islamic Movement in Kurdistan met head-on with Iranian forces and the six were killed as a result of the gun fight that ensued.

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\* *Editor's note: This news has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

**April 22**

**Court of Appeal upholds one-year suspended sentence for student activist. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA)**

Branch 23 of the Court of Appeal for Tehran Province has upheld a sentence given to Vahid Abedini, the secretary of the Islamic Association of The Department of Law and Political Sciences at Tehran University. Vahid Abedini, who was in charge of the student magazine *Sutak*, was given a one-year suspended sentence last year for the publication of an article about rallies held after the arrest of jailed dissident writer Hashem Aghajari and for the publication of false reports with the aim of creating public unrest, the Islamic Association said.

**April 23**

**Baha'i U.N. delegate says Iran razed holy site. (Reuters)**

Authorities in the northern Iranian town of Babul have bulldozed a religious site important to the minority Baha'i faith, the Baha'i representative to the United Nations said. The gravesite of *Quddus* (The Most Holy), a prominent figure in early Baha'i history, was razed in recent days despite Baha'i protests. Iran's Interior Ministry has not responded to requests for the remains, said Diane Ala'i, U.N. representative in Geneva. The house-like structure marked the grave of *Quddus*, the foremost disciple of the Bab, the prophet of the monotheistic Baha'i faith.

**Students affiliated with Zanjan association arrested for unknown reasons. (ISNA)**

Two former members of the Islamic Association of Students at Zanjan University were arrested, the secretary of the association, Rahim Hasanitabar said. The Islamic Association of Students at Zanjan University reported that Reza Abbasi and Sa'id Na'imi were detained a week before and that the reason for the arrest is not known. Fakhreddin Haidarian, the former secretary of the Islamic Association of Students at Buali University in Hamedan said that Kakvand, a member of the Islamic Association of Students at Hamedan University, went to court to be informed of accusations against him. The accusations against him are in connection with events of June 2003.

**April 24**

**Journalist banned from press activities for two years. (Iranian newspaper *Aftab-e Yazd*)**

Mohammad Hasan Alipur, the managing-editor of the *Aban* bimonthly, was convicted by Branch 76 of Tehran Criminal Court of encouraging people and groups to act against the security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to clause 5 of Article 6 of the press law and Note No 12 of the said section and Article 698 of the Islamic Penal Code, the defendant was sentenced to a six-month suspended sentence over a period of two years. According to Article 19 of Islamic Penal Code the defendant will be banned from pursuing in any journalistic activities for two years.

**April 27**

**Iranian Judiciary bans use of torture, "abnormal measures" to get confession. (Iranian TV Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran Network 1)**

In a letter to the country's judicial, law enforcement and intelligence departments, Judiciary spokesman called on judges, executive officers, inspectors and supervisors to avoid the use of personal preference, the misuse of power or unnecessary detentions. The Judiciary spokesman said: "Concerning the safeguard of the dignity and supreme values of human beings and respect for legitimate freedoms and civil rights, this letter stresses that courts should always allow the accused access to a lawyer... Investigators and interrogators have been instructed not to resort to abnormal measures such as covering up the face of the accused. Instead, they should use scientific and technical investigation methods and modern techniques... On the basis of this circular, the use of torture to get confession or the use of force for any other reason is forbidden and confessions made using such methods do not have any religious or legal credibility and violators will be prosecuted." Announcing that a special delegation will monitor the correct implementation of this circular, Mr Elham said: "Individuals have the right to file cases against courts or illegal conduct of executive officers, and the Judiciary will investigate such cases."

**Iranian student activist beaten up. (ILNA)**

Qarib Sajjadi, the secretary of the Students Islamic Association of the Social Sciences Faculty and member of the Central Council of Islamic Association of Tarbiate-e Mo'allem University, was beaten up by three people affiliated to one of the internal institutions of the university. The attackers reportedly stated that the reason they were beating up Sajjadi was that he had expressed dissident views.

**Clashes between Azerbaijanians and Armenians in Teheran. (Azerbaijani TURAN Information Agency)\***

Clashes between local Azerbaijanians and Armenians have taken place in Teheran. They began when the Armenians made an attempt to burn a Turkish flag in the course of the action timed to the genocide day, reported the Baku bureau of the National Awakening Movement of South Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijanians did not allow the Armenians to march to the Turkish embassy either. According to the Movement's Baku bureau, the Armenians used cold steel during the clashes and injured 10 Azerbaijanians. At the same time, the Iranian police reportedly detained up to 40 Azerbaijan activists. The destiny of 10 activists of the National Awakening Movement of South Azerbaijan arrested by Iranian law-enforcers on April 22 remains unknown.

**April 28**

**Iranian Interior Ministry grants conditional permit for workers' rally. (ISNA)**

The Article 10 Committee for Parties based at the Interior Ministry said that a workers' rally in Baharestan Square, in an area away from the State Management and Planning Organization, was permissible on condition that the location of the concluding rally is moved away from the State Management and Planning Organization to another part of Baharestan Square.

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\* *Editor's note: This news has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

**Three people arrested for demo in support of political prisoners released. (ISNA)**

Individuals arrested at the 25 April gathering have been released, the director-general for political affairs at the Office of Tehran's Governor-General announced. Ali Ta'ali said one of the individuals was released on the day and two others have now been released on bail. Speaking about the identity of the arrested individuals who participated in a gathering without a permit, Ta'ali said they were university students who had joined the outer circle of the gathering in front of the UN office.

**Iranian women protest conservatives promoting polygamy. (AP)**

Around 250 people, mostly women, protested against state-run Iranian TV for broadcasting a series that promoted polygamy, saying it was evidence that the Islamic state was trampling women's rights. Wearing brightly colored clothing as opposed to the traditional head-to-toe black chador, the women gathered at a building in central Tehran to denounce policies by conservatives that seek to restrict women to roles such as obedient housewives. There are no official statistics available on polygamy in Iran, but it is prevalent in many small cities and rural regions.

**Tabriz students protested the arrest of Azerbaijanis in Tehran. (Armenian Arminfo News Agency)\***

Nearly one thousand students of private Azadi University in Tabriz held a protest action. Sources in Baku office of National Revival Movement of Southern Azerbaijan said that students condemned violence of Iranian security forces against Azeris in Tehran on 24 April. Students reportedly demanded the release of Azeris arrested on April 24. Police reportedly interfered into the action and detained several students.

**April 30**

**Iranian workers demand better conditions in Tehran rally. (IRNA)**

A large number of workers held a rally on the eve of the International Labour Day, calling for defending the rights of workers. A number of MPs and representatives of Iran's labour community delivered speeches on labour law, privatization, the Fourth Development Plan (2005-2010) and temporary contracts. Secretary-General of the Labour House Ali Reza Mahjub, addressing the ceremony, called for ratification of bills to secure the rights of Iranian workers.

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\* *Editor's note: This news has not been confirmed by major information sources.*