

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iran-press-freedom-violations-recounted-21-01-2015,47521.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Press freedom violations recounted in real time January 2015

9 March 2015

09.03.2015 - Four website activists freed after three and a half years

Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn that four lawyers and contributors to the Sufi news website [Majzooban Noor](#) – **Afshin Karampour, Amir Islami, Farshid Yadollahi** and **Omid Behrouzi** – were released on 2 March as a result of a court decision to halve their jail sentences.

Arrested in raids in Tehran and Shiraz from 8 to 10 September 2011, they were sentenced to seven years in prison at the end of an unfair trial before a Tehran revolutionary court on 13 July 2013. Last December, a Tehran appeal court reduced their jail terms to three and a half years (plus a suspended 30-month term).

six other contributors to the site who were given jail terms ranging from six to ten years – **Reza Entesari, Hamidreza Moradi, Mostafa Abdi, Kasra Nouri, Salehldin Moradi**, and **Mostafa Daneshjo** – are still detained.

27.02.2015 - Authorities block two websites

Reporters Without Borders condemns the blocking of two websites since yesterday at the behest of judicial officials. They are [Jamaran](#), the official site of the Islamic Republic's late founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and [Bahar](#), a site that support Iran's reformers.

The judicial authorities ordered them blocked for posting a photo of former President Mohammad Khatami attending the mourning of a member of the Khomeini family.

Judicial system spokesman Golamhossien Mohsseni Ejechi told the media on 16 February [that any coverage of Khatami](#) was henceforth banned at the behest of the High Council for National Security and Justice. Media that ignored the prohibition would be subjected to publishing bans or other sanctions, he warned.

23.02.2015 – Journalist arrested to serve old jail sentence

Reporters Without Borders condemns the 21 February arrest of **Ali Maghamai**, a journalist and son-in-law of a prominent human rights defender, to begin serving a jail sentence he received more than a year ago.

Originally arrested on 27 December 2010 and then released on bail, Maghamai, was sentenced to four months in prison on 11 January 2014. He was also given a suspended eight-month jail sentence. He did not appeal and was not told that an appeal court had upheld the sentence.

The editor of the networking section of a website specializing in information technology, Maghamai also worked for several reformist newspapers including *Mardom Emroz*, [which was closed last month](#).

Like *Mardom Emroz* editor **Mohammed Ghoochani**, he is the son-in-law of **Emadoldin Baghi**, a leading journalist and defender of prisoner rights who has been hounded by the authorities.

Prosecutors attached to the Tehran "media and culture" court charged Ghoochani on 26 January with "insulting Islam" for publishing a front-page photo of US actor George Clooney under an "I am Charlie" headline on 13 January.

The Islamic Republic's intelligence services still often harass the relatives of leading journalists and human rights defenders as a way of putting pressure on the media.

13.02.2015 - Six months in jail and 74 lashes for "insults"

Reporters Without Borders condemns the six-month jail sentence imposed on former journalist **Abass Salimi Namin**, who heads an Iranian history research society and edits its website (<http://www.irhistory.com/index.php>).

In an [open letter](#) on 2 February revealing the sentence and requesting the help of his colleagues, he denounced "the repeated and baseless complaints" brought against him by the prosecutor and "the profits made by those who own power and wealth."

Namin was given the six-month sentence for his comments about former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a 2011 TV debate, in which he said "Ahmadinejad's extravagance was the result of the conservatives' silence." He was also sentenced to 74 lashes and a fine for insulting the judicial authorities and those running the University of Tehran.

Namin used edit to *Kyhan Havai* – a supplement of the newspaper *Kyhan* that was targeted at diaspora Iranians and stopped publishing in 1998 – and for years was one of a number of journalists known to have close links with the intelligence services.

03.02.2015 - Court closes online paper run by Ahmadinejad supporters

Reporters Without Borders condemns the Tehran culture and media court's decision to close the online newspaper *HMA*, which derives its name from the initials of "Supporters of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad" in Persian.

[The newspaper posted the court's decision on its front page today](#). Issued on 26 January, the ruling said *HMA* is to be closed under paragraph D of article 7 of the press law for "publishing without permission," and in order to "prevent the occurrence of a crime" under paragraph 5 of article 156 of the constitution.

President from 2005 to 2013 and, like Supreme [Leader Ali Khamenei](#), named as a Predator of Press Freedom by Reporters Without Borders, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was one of the architects of a relentless crackdown on opposition politicians, journalists and human rights defenders accompanied by Stalinist-style trials.

Dozens of newspapers were closed during his two terms in office and more than 200 journalists and bloggers were arrested after his controversial reelection in June 2009. Some of them are still in prison.

29.01.2015 – Reformist weekly closed "to prevent a crime"

Reporters Without Borders condemns the closure of the reformist weekly *Setareh Sobh* (Dawn Star) by Tehran's culture and media court on 12 January. The court said it was closed to "prevent the occurrence of a crime" under paragraph 5 of article 156 of the constitution.*

In its 10 January issue, the weekly published an open letter by Ali Motahari, a moderate conservative parliamentary representative for Tehran, to Mohammad Sadegh Amoli Larijani, the head of the Judicial Authority.

It criticized Larijani's claim that the detention of the three leaders of the protest movement against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's controversial reelection in 2009 was "legal and ordered by the High Council for National Security."

The three detainees include two 2009 presidential candidates. They are **Mir Hossein Mousavi**, a former prime minister and owner of the closed newspaper *Kalameh Sabaz*, and **Mehdi Karoubi**, a former parliamentary speaker and owner of the closed newspaper *Etemad Melli*. The third detainee is Mousavi's wife, best-selling author **Zahra Rahnavard**.

Detained on 24 February 2011, they have been held under house arrest and denied all rights.

Before its closure, *Setareh Sobh* had been planning to publish its first issue as a national daily this week.

*Article 156 of the Iranian constitution: The judiciary is an independent power, the protector of the rights of the individual and society, responsible for the implementation of justice, and entrusted with the following duties:

1. Investigating and passing judgement on grievances, violations of rights, and complaints; the resolution of litigation; the settling of disputes; and the taking of all necessary decisions and measures in probate matters as the law may determine;
2. Restoring public rights and promoting justice and legitimate freedoms;
3. Supervising the proper enforcement of laws;
4. Uncovering crimes; prosecuting, punishing, and chastising criminals; and enacting the penalties and provisions of the Islamic penal code; and
5. Taking suitable measures to prevent the occurrence of crime and to reform criminals.

27.01.2015 - Newspaper editor charged with insulting Islam

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Mohammed Ghoochani**, the editor of the reformist daily *Mardom Emroz*, was charged yesterday before a Tehran "media and culture" court with "insulting Islam" for publishing a front-page photo of US actor George Clooney under an "I am Charlie" headline on 13 January.

Ghoochani's lawyer, Mahmoud Alizadeh-Tabatabaie, said he was granted a provisional release pending trial after payment of 100 million toman (100,000 euros) in bail. *Mardom Emroz* was closed on 17 January.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that **Mehrdad Sarjoui**, a Tehran-based journalist who used to work for several English-language newspapers, was released on 13 January after being deemed to have completed his main sentence.

Sarjoui was returned to prison on 28 November 2012 after getting a three-year jail sentence and a suspended seven-year sentence. He was previously arrested on 14 January 2011 and sentenced to 10 years in prison by a Tehran court on a charge of "espionage by publishing interviews of citizens of enemy countries." An appeal court subsequently commuted the sentence.

21.01.2015 - Journalist and rights activist arrested at her home

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Zahra Khandan**, a former journalist with several reformist news outlets who defends women's rights online, was arrested at her Tehran home on 19 January by Revolutionary Guard intelligence operatives in plain clothes. Her home was also searched. The authorities have not said why she was arrested or where she is being held.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, several other women's rights activists have been arrested in Tehran after campaigning for the release of **Mahdieh Golro**, a fellow activist arrested during a protest outside the parliament building in Tehran on 22 October in protest against a series of [acid attacks on women in Isfahan and Tehran](#).

20.01.2015 - Young woman arrested in court over Facebook video

Reporters Without Borders condemns young human rights activist **Atena Ferghdani's** arrest in a Tehran court on 11 January when she responded to a summons about the [video she posted](#) on Facebook and YouTube on 26 December in which she described what happened to her after her arrest last August.

After her arrest on 24 August, she was incarcerated in Section 2A of Tehran's Evin Prison – a section controlled by Revolutionary Guards – and was held until 2 November, when she was released on bail on 600 million toman (700,000 euros) pending trial.

"I was interrogated for nine hours a day," she said in the video. "The questions were mainly about my activities and what I posted on Facebook (...) In the bathroom, they had installed cameras that filmed everything we did. I found it very embarrassing. When I protested, the guards said they were turned off (...) but one day I took a plastic cup back to my cell and guards arrived within two minutes and tore my blouse in order to get it back. I just wanted to use it to do drawings."

Ferghdani is charged with "activities against national security," "anti-government propaganda by means for performance art," and "insulting government officials and parliamentary representatives in a published cartoon."

Her family said that during her appearance in court she was the victim of violence by the guards who took her off to prison. "The guards slapped my daughter right in front of us," her father told journalists. She is currently being held in Gharchak prison in Varamin, a city to the south of Tehran. It is a prison used for holding non-political detainees.

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2014\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2013\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2012\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2011\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(July-December 2010\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-July 2010\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(June-December 2009\)](#)
