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Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Campaign promise

Islamic Republic urged to free all detained journalists and online activists

10 April 2015

In the wake of Iran's historic agreement with the United States on its nuclear programme, Reporters Without Borders calls on President Hassan Rouhani to keep another campaign promise – the immediate release of all detained journalists and online activists, many of whom are very ill and are being denied appropriate treatment.

After the international community hailed the 2 April accord, President Rouhani said on 3 April: "We have had tension and even hostility towards certain countries and we now hope for the end of this tension and hostility (...) The framework agreement envisages new cooperation with the world."

"An agreement with the international community on nuclear issues and the lifting of sanctions was one of Rouhani's main promises during his election campaign, but he also repeatedly promised the release of prisoners of conscience, including journalists and online activists, and he has yet to keep this pledge," said Reza Moini, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Iran-Afghanistan desk.

"President Rouhani, we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all imprisoned journalists and Internet activists. The 'cooperation' you refer to needs above all unconditional cooperation with the United Nations and compliance with your international obligations, especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party. It is vital that you request the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in Iran."

Iran continues to be one of the world's five biggest prisons for news and information providers, with a total of 46 journalists and Internet activists currently detained. Arrested arbitrarily, convicted in unfair trials and held in inhuman and degrading conditions, many of these detainees are in danger.

Reporters Without Borders is especially concerned about the health of these journalists and online activists: **Atena Ferghdani**, who is awaiting trial, **Said Razavi Faghieh**, who was sentenced to a year in prison and should have been freed in mid-March, **Masoud Bastani**, who has been held since July 2008 and who was sentenced to a total of six years in prison, **Hossien Ronaghi Malki**, who was arrested in 2010 and was sentenced to a total of 17 years in prison, and **Saraj Mirdamadi**, who has been held since March 2013 and is serving a three-year jail term.

Bastani and Malki should have been released months ago under article 134 of the new Islamic penal code (as amended in 2013), which says that defendants who are given more than one sentence should serve only the main one.

After visiting Rajaishahr prison on 1 March, health minister **Hassan Ghazizadeh Hashemi** said: "This prison is holding twice as many detainees as its capacity permits and cannot guarantee the required hygiene and health conditions (...) This is the first time I have come to this prison and the situation is really bad. People should not commit crimes, or else they will be incarcerated in this prison and will get ill and have lots of problems."

The minister was referring to conditions in what is one of Iran's worst prisons in terms of cases of torture, rape and murder. Its official capacity is 1,100 inmates but it is currently holding more than 5,000 detainees, including around 100 prisoners of conscience, of whom 20 are journalists or online activists. This prison has been criticized in several reports including the UN Secretary-General's report of 12 August 2014 on the human rights situation in Iran.

You can download those documents on our website :

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