

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iran-lives-of-several-imprisoned-10-07-2012,42995.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Stop the barbarity

Lives of several imprisoned journalists and netizens in danger

10 July 2012

Around 30 members and supporters of Reporters Without Borders and Iranian activists demonstrated outside the Iran Air office on the Champs Elysées in Paris this afternoon in protest against the arbitrary arrest and torture of journalists and netizens in Iran, some of whom have already died in detention and others are in danger of dying.

Five of the demonstrators played the part of journalists who have been targeted. They were made up to look as though they had been beaten or tortured, with whip marks, bruises, split eyebrows, broken noses and so on. The demonstrators brandished placards saying "Iran: solitary confinement, torture, murders" and "Free journalists in Iran" and distributed flyers.

Today is the ninth anniversary of Iranian-Canadian photographer **Zahra Kazemi's** death in detention as a result of mistreatment by judicial officials in Tehran's Evin prison. Deaths such as Kazemi's go completely unpunished in the Islamic Republic. Reporters Without Borders calls for more vigilance as other journalists could die at the hands of its prison torturers.

"We fear for the lives of several imprisoned journalists who are ill, whose physical and psychological health has been undermined, and who are being held in the same jail or in the same conditions as Kazemi when she received the blow that killed her," Reporters Without Borders said.

"We draw the international community's particular attention to the cases of **Narges Mohammadi, Mohammad Sadegh Kabodvand, Bahman Ahamadi Amoe, Arash Honarvar Shojai** and **Mohammad Solimaninya**, and we call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those who have been arrested for reporting news and information, a legitimate activity, or for exercising their right to free expression."

Five detained journalists and netizens whose lives are in particular danger

Former newspaper editor **Mohammad Sadegh Kabodvand** has been on hunger strike for more than 40 days in protest against the continuing inhumane refusal by the judicial authorities to allow him to visit his son, who is very ill and who is hospitalized in Tehran.

The onetime editor of *Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan* (a newspaper closed by the authorities in 2004), Kabodvand has been held since July 2007 in Evin prison, where he is serving an 11-year sentence for creating a human rights organization in Iran's Kurdish northwest. The prison authorities have also repeatedly refused his requests for medical parole for a heart ailment.

Bahman Ahamadi Amoe, a journalist held in Evin prison since June 2009, was transferred to Rajaishahr prison in the northern city of Karaj on 12 June after participating in a ceremony by inmates in Section 350 in honour of [Hoda Saber](#), a journalist who died on 12 June 2011 as a result of going on hunger strike.

Rajaishahr is one of Iran's worst prisons, one where many cases of torture, rape and murder have been reported. Amoe has been constantly harassed by the judicial authorities ever since his arrest. On his return from appearing before a Tehran revolutionary court on 25 June 2011, he was placed in isolation and denied visits. His family has not heard from him since then.

Arash Honarvar Shojai, a 30-year-old theologian and blogger (<http://honarvarnetessays.persianblog.ir>), was arrested on 28 October 2010 in Tehran and was sentenced to four years in prison, a fine of 800,000 tomans (53 euros) and 50 lashes on a charge of keeping a blasphemous blog anonymously, a charge he denies. He has been on hunger strike since the start of July to protest against prison conditions. His family is very worried as he has had several nervous breakdowns and the prison authorities refuse to give him the medicine he needs.

Reporters Without Borders learned on 30 June that **Mohammad Solimaninya**, the head of the

social networking site *u24*, was arrested again after being summoned to Evin prison. He was [previously arrested on 10 January](#) and was then released on bail of 40 million tomans (4,500 euros) on 22 May. His family has not heard of him since his second arrest and the authorities refuse to tell them where he is being held.

A journalist and spokesperson for the Centre for Human Rights Defenders, **Narges Mohammadi** was arrested in the northern city of Zanzan on 21 April and was taken to Tehran's Evin prison to begin serving a six-year jail sentence on charges of anti-government propaganda, collaborating with the centre and "meeting and conspiring against the Islamic Republic."

She was originally arrested at her home in June 2010 but had a nervous breakdown as a result of the pressure put on her during interrogation. After being granted a provisional release in July 2010, she was hospitalized with muscle paralysis. Although still seriously ill and despite having recurring heart problems, she was transferred on 16 May from Tehran back to the main prison in Zanzan, where the director, acting on the intelligence ministry's orders, refused to let her be hospitalized. He eventually authorized her transfer to Vali Asar hospital in Zanzan, on 9 July. Narges Mohammadi, whose health is rapidly deteriorating, must not be sent back to jail. She has to be released as soon as possible.

Kazemi's death in detention still unpunished

The degree of impunity enjoyed by Iranian government officials is exceptional. Zahra Kazemi, a 54-year-old photographer of Iranian origin who lived in Canada, was arrested during a visit to Iran on 23 June 2003, as she was photographing families of detainees waiting outside Evin prison. She was badly beaten during detention and died on 10 July 2003 from the injuries she had received. The authorities issued a report 10 days later that failed to specify the cause of death.

Under duress, Kazemi's mother, an Iranian resident, agreed to a hasty burial on 22 July 2003. Ever since then, Kazemi's son, Stephan Hashemi, who lives in Canada, has been asking for the body to be exhumed and repatriated to Canada so that an independent autopsy can be carried out.

The Kazemi family's lawyers have repeatedly condemned all the judicial proceedings in Iran as a sham. Their requests for senior judicial officials to appear in court have never been satisfied, depriving them of key witnesses. In particular, Saeed Mortazavi, the prosecutor who ordered Kazemi's arrest and was present when she was interrogated in Evin prison, has never been questioned in court. Protected by Iran's two Predators of Freedom of Information, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, he enjoys complete impunity and continues to extend his influence under the theocratic regime.

Reporters Without Borders supported the civil lawsuit that Hashemi brought against the Iranian government before the Quebec high court, claiming damages for his mother's arrest, detention, torture and death. We urge Canada and the European Union to support this legal action, in order to end the impunity in this case.

Tribute to other victims of the regime

Former *Iran-e-Farda* editor **Hoda Saber**, a 52-year-old journalist who had been detained since August 2010, died of a heart attack on 12 June 2011. The next day, 64 political prisoners held in the same section of Evin prison as Saber, Section 350, issued a joint statement that was smuggled out of the prison. It said: "The prison authorities did not do what was necessary to transfer him to hospital in time, and he was mistreated by the staff of the Evin prison infirmary."

Ten days before Saber died, he had begun a hunger strike in protest against the tragic death of **Haleh Sahabi**, a fellow journalist and women's rights activist. Sahabi died a few hours after being physically attacked on 1 June 2011, at the funeral of her father, Ezatollah Sahabi, a leading opposition politician who had died of natural causes two days before. Eye witnesses are convinced that her death was a direct result of this attack. As a result of pressure from security agents, she was hastily buried at night without the traditional rites that normally accompany a Muslim woman's funeral.

Alireza Eftekhari, a 29-year-old former journalist died on 15 June 2009 from a cerebral attack

after being beaten. His family was not given his body until a month later and the exact circumstances of his death are still unknown. His name joins the long list of journalists who have been murdered in Iran. An investigation is needed to establish exactly how he came to die.

Those responsible for the deaths of four journalists in 1998 – **Majid Charif, Mohamad Mokhtari, Mohamad Jafar Pouyandeh** and **Pirouz Davani**– must also be brought to account. At the same time, the authorities never explained how **Ayfer Serçe**, a Turkish woman journalist of Kurdish origin working for the *Firat* news agency, came to be killed by Iranian soldiers sometime between 20 and 23 July 2006 in Keleres, in Iran’s northwestern region of Azerbaijan. And finally, an investigation is needed into the young blogger **Omidreza Mirsayafi**’s death in detention in 2009.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the world’s second biggest prison for news providers, with a total of 33 journalists and 19 bloggers currently detained.

Other images



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