

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iran-press-freedom-violations-recounted-26-07-2011,39381.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Iran

Repression live

Press freedom violations recounted in real time (from 1st January 2011)

14 September 2011

14.09.2011-Crackdown in northwest continues

The repression in Iran's northwestern region of Azerbaijan is continuing. **Ebrahim Rashidi**, a blogger and journalist with the weekly *Bayram*, was arrested by intelligence ministry officials in the city of Ardabil on 12 September. He has been arrested several times before in recent years.

Abolfazle Vesali, a journalist with the weekly *Saghi Tabriz* and former editor of the now closed daily *Nedai Azarabadegan*, was meanwhile released conditionally on 12 September after being arrested on 3 May to begin serving a jail sentence imposed in 2005. Vesali was sentenced to six months in jail by a revolutionary court in Tabriz, the capital of East Azerbaijan province, in April 2005 on a charge of "inciting revolt" while his newspaper, *Nedai Azarabadegan*, was banned by an East Azerbaijan provincial court for "publishing false information."

12.09.2011-Two journalists freed but a dozen netizens and journalists arrested

Two journalists have been released in the past week but a dozen other netizens and journalists, and human rights lawyer **Abdolfatah Soltani**, one of the founding members of Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi's Centre for Human Rights Defenders, have been arrested.

Soltani was picked up at his home on 10 September during a raid by plain-clothes officials from the intelligence ministry. His family still does not know why he was arrested or where he is being held. He was previously arrested on 16 June 2009 and was held for 70 days before being released on 100 million toman (90,000 euros) in bail.

Two other members of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders are already in prison. One is human rights lawyer **Mohammad Seifzadeh**, who was sentenced to nine years in prison and a ten-year ban on working as lawyer because of his work for the centre. He was arrested in April. The other is human rights lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, who has been detained since September 2010 and who is serving an 11-year jail sentence.

More than a dozen netizens were arrested during raids on 7 and 8 September, including members of the staff of [Majzooban Nor](#), a website that supports Iran's Sufis. The site has also been the target of a cyber-attack and is no longer accessible. The arrests follow a bloody crackdown against Sufis last week in Kavar, in the southern province of Fars. Various Dervish fraternities have been the targets of attacks and arrests during the past five years. The following are still held:

- Alireza Roshan, a book reviewer for the newspaper Shargh
- Ali Akrami, editor of the Sheydagooyi blog (<http://sheydagooyi.blogfa.com/>)
- Ali Straki
- Mehdi Hossini
- Mehdi Osanlo
- Hamid Moradi
- Mehran Rahbari

- Mostafa Abdi
- Nosrat Tabassi
- Ali Moazemi
- Reza Entesari

The two journalists released in the past week are:

- **Nader Karimi**, who wrote for newspapers such as *Gozarash*, *Feker* and *Syasat Rouz*. Arrested in Tehran on 21 November 2009 on charges of spying and undermining the country's security, he was sentenced by a revolutionary tribunal to 10 years a prison, reduced to five years on appeal. He has had various ailments stemming from a wound sustained during the 1980-88 war with Iraq. He was released on 4 September.
- **Masoud Lavassani**, a blogger and journalist who was arrested on 26 September 2009 and was sentenced to eight years in prison the following December. His sentence was reduced to four years in March 2010 and then to two years by a Tehran appeal court. After several heart attacks involving hospitalization, he was granted parole in December 2010 and again July 2011. He was notified of his full release on 5 September.

27.07.2011-Blogger freed

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Pegah Ahangarani**, an actress, filmmaker and blogger who was arrested at her Tehran home by intelligence ministry officials on 10 July, was released yesterday on bail of 100 million toman (75000 euros). Since 2009, she has been writing for a blog that was specially created by the German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

26.07.2011 journalist jailed

Mashaallah Shamsolvaezin, the spokesman of the Association of Iranian Journalists and editor of one of Iran's first pro-reform newspapers (now closed), was ordered on 18 July to report to Tehran's Evin prison to begin serving the 16-month jail sentence that a Tehran revolutionary court gave him in December 2010 on a charge of insulting the president.

Although he was not made to start the serving sentence at the time, he was banned from political and journalistic activities. His conviction is still the subject of an appeal. His defence lawyer, **Mohammad Seifzadeh**, has meanwhile been detained since April.

Arrested by plainclothes men at his home on 28 December 2009, Shamsolvaezin was released on bail on 28 February 2010 pending the outcome of his trial.

20.07.2011-Two bloggers arrested in continuing repression

Mehdi Khazali, an outspoken government critic in his [blog](#), was detained on 18 July after responding to a summons from the intelligence ministry in Tehran. It is his third arrest in less than two years. The last time he was arrested, on 13 October 2010, he was held for a month before being released on bail of 200 million tomans (150,000 euros). Khazali is the son of Ayatollah Abolghasem Khazali, an influential member of the Council of Guardians of the Iranian Constitution for the past 30 years. Despite his frequent run-ins with the authorities, he is very scathing about the government's policies and human rights violations in his blog.

The judicial authorities confirmed on 18 July that **Pegah Ahangarani**, a young actress, documentary filmmaker and blogger, was arrested in Tehran on 10 July as she was about to leave for Germany to cover the Women's Football World Cup. Since 2009, she has been writing in blog specially created by the German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

Both Ahangarani and Khazali are being held in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison.

Reporters Without Borders was meanwhile told on 16 July that **Maryam Majd**, a sports photographer working for several newspapers, has been released. Intelligence ministry agents arrested her at her home on 17 June, on the eve of her departure for Germany to cover the Women's Football World Cup at the invitation of Petra Landers, a member of the German national team.

17.06.2011 - Release, jail sentence and closure

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Reza Rafiee Foroshani**, a freelance journalist who worked for Iranian and international news media, was released on 12 June. Arrested on 26 June 2009 in Tehran, he was included in one of the Stalinist-style mass trials held in Tehran in August 2009 and was given a seven-year jail sentence, plus a five-year suspended sentence, on a spying charge. The jail sentence was reduced to three years last year.

Fariborz Rais Dana, a well-known economist and writer and member of the Association of Iranian Writers, has been given a one-year jail sentence by a Tehran revolutionary court on charges of anti-government propaganda and membership of an illegal organization. He was arrested at his home on 19 December 2010 after criticizing the lifting of price controls in an interview for the *BBC's* Farsi-language TV station, and was released provisionally on bail of 30 million toman (22,500 euros) on 17 January.

The conservative weekly *9 day* (<http://www.9day.ir>) was meanwhile closed on 13 June by the Commission for Press Licensing and Surveillance, the censorship arm of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. It was suspended for "insulting the clergy" and publishing a business section without permission. It is published by **Hamid Rasaee**, a parliamentarian who now supports Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and used to support President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Rivalry between the Khamenei and Ahmadinejad factions is taking its toll on pro-government media and conservatives.

18.05.2011 Two journalists released

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Taghi Rahmani**, a freelance journalist and staunch defender of freedom of expression, was released on 17 May after being held for 100 days. He was given a preliminary release on 15 May but was summoned back to Evin prison two days later to sign administrative documents and was re-released in the evening.

Plainclothes men arrested Rahmani at his Tehran home on 9 February, five days ahead of a demonstration being organized by government opponents in solidarity with the Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings.

He has been a journalist since 1981, working for various media, and has spent more than 16 years in Iranian prisons. He has been prosecuted both for working for underground newspapers such as *Pishtazan* and *Movahed* and for working for legal newspapers such as *Iran-e-Farda* and *Omid Zanjaan*.

Reporters Without Borders can also confirm that journalist and researcher **Mohammad Norizad** was freed on 8 May, as reported on his blog <http://nurizad.info/>. Arrested on 20 December 2009 after being summoned by the police, he was sentenced on 29 May 2010 to 50 lashes and three and a half years in prison on charges of anti-government publicity and insulting the authorities. He subsequently staged several hunger strikes in protest against his detention.

Norizad worked for several years as a columnist for the daily *Kayhan*, the leading mouthpiece of Iran's conservatives. Following President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection in June 2009, he began to openly criticise the Supreme Leader of the Revolution, the government and the judicial system.

10.05.2011 - Journalist arrested six years after being sentenced

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Abolfazle Vesali**, a journalist with the weekly *Saghi Tabriz* and former editor of the now closed daily *Nedai Azarabadegan*, was arrested on 3 May to begin serving a jail sentence imposed in 2005. He managed to tell friends the next day that he was in the main prison in Tabriz, the capital of the northwestern province of East Azerbaijan.

Vesali was sentenced to six months in jail by a Tabriz revolutionary court in April 2005 on a charge of "inciting revolt" while *Nedai Azarabadegan* was banned by an East Azerbaijan provincial court for "publishing false information."

He and several other journalists were arrested in 2006 when members of Iran's Azeri minority staged a series of angry protests in Tabriz in response to a cartoon of a cockroach saying

“What?” in the Azeri language in the children’s section of the supplement of Iran, a daily published by the government news agency IRNA. The newspaper quickly apologized for the cartoon, which Azeris regarded as an insult. Vesali was released on bail after 45 days.

19.04.2011 Six-year jail sentence for woman journalist

Nazanin Khosravani, a journalist who writes for several reformist newspapers such as *Bahar*, *Karghozaran* and *Sarmayeh*, has been notified that a Tehran revolutionary court has sentenced her to six years in prison on charges of anti-government propaganda and activities that threaten national security. She had been released on 15 March.

18.04.2011-Government news agency journalist arrested Manoucher Tamary, a journalist with the government news agency IRNA, was arrested yesterday at his home in Sanandaj (in the western province of Kurdistan) by men in plain-clothes, who searched his home and seized his computer. It is not known where they took him. Aged 56, Tamary has worked for IRNA since 1994. IRNA reports that he had received a summons from the intelligence ministry a week before his arrest. The news agency’s management has called for his release.

17.03.2011-Two women journalists freed Reporters Without Borders has learned of the release of two women journalists in the past two days.

One is **Nazanin Khosravani**, a contributor to *Bahar*, *Karghozaran*, *Sarmayeh* and other reformist newspapers, who was released on 15 March after being held for 135 days. Her family spent two weeks without any news of her, without even knowing where she was being held, after her arrest at her home by intelligence ministry agents on 2 November.

The other is **Mahsa Amrabadi**, a reporter for the now closed newspaper *Etemad Melli*, who was released yesterday. She was arrested at the end of a demonstration held in Tehran on 1 March in protest against the detention of opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, and their wives.

03.03.2011 - Two women journalists arrested at Tehran demonstration Reporters Without Borders has learned that two women journalists – **Mahsa Amrabadi**, a reporter for the closed newspaper *Etemad Melli*, and **Fakhrolsadat Mohtashamipour**, a blogger – were arrested at the end of a demonstration in Tehran on 1 March in protest against the arrests of opposition leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi.

Amrabadi was previously arrested on 14 June 2008, obtaining her release on bail of 200 million tomans (150,000 euros) on 22 August 2009. A revolutionary court sentenced her to a year in prison on 14 October 2010.

She is the wife of Masoud Bastani, a journalist with the daily *Farhikhteghan* who was arrested on 4 July 2009 and who was one of the many journalists subjected to the Stalinist-style mass trials that the authorities began holding in August 2009. On 1 November 2009, a revolutionary court gave him a six-year sentence, which he is now serving in Rajai Shahr prison.

Mohtashamipour is the wife of Mostapha Tajzadeh, a reformist leader held since 12 June 2009. Ever since his arrest she has been defending the cause of political prisoners on her blog (<http://www.mohtashami.info/>), which has been blocked four times.

Both Amrabadi and Mohtashamipour have probably been incarcerated in Tehran’s Evin prison.

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile learned that **Mazyar Khosravi**, a journalist with the daily *Shargh*, was released on 24 February. After intelligence ministry officials told his family he had been admitted to a military hospital following a heart attack, the family deposited bail so that he could be released provisionally and transferred to a civilian hospital.

He was arrested at his workplace on 11 February by intelligence ministry officials.

11.02.2011 - New wave of arrests, crackdown on media

The Iranian authorities launched a new wave of arrests of journalists in the run-up to a

demonstration called by government opponents for 14 February in solidarity with the Egyptian and Tunisian peoples. At least four journalists and bloggers have been arrested in Tehran since 9 February:

- **Taghi Rahmani**, an independent journalist and staunch free speech activist, was arrested at his Tehran home on 9 February.
- **Meisam Mohammadi** and **Omid Mohadess**, journalists with the Behesti foundation's website (<http://www.beheshti.org/>), were arrested at their homes by plain-clothes police on 10 February. It is not yet known why they were arrested or where they are being held.
- **Mazyar Khosravi** of the daily *Shargh* was arrested at his workplace on 11 February by intelligence ministry agents.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, a number of journalists and bloggers have also been summoned for questioning by Revolutionary Guards and intelligence ministry officials in various parts of the country.

7 February 2011 - Four-year jail sentence for journalist who interviewed gays

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Siamak Qaderi**, a former journalist with the government news agency *IRNA*, was sentenced on 21 January to four years in prison and 60 lashes. He was arrested on 5 August 2010 on charges of anti-government propaganda and disseminating false information on his blog liable to disrupt public order.

Qaderi was fired from *IRNA* after interviewing gays in Iran and posting the interviews on his blog, regardless of the fact that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had proclaimed, during a visit to the United States in September 2007, that "there are no homosexuals in Iran."

Mehran Faraji, a journalist with the daily *Shargh* and the now-closed daily *Etemad Melli*, was meanwhile released on bail on 4 February pending trial. He was arrested on 12 December 2010 in Tehran.

24.01.2011 - Journalist begins serving one-year jail term for talking to international radio stations

Ehsan Mehrabi, a journalist with the daily *Farhikhteghan*, was arrested on 22 January to begin serving the one-year jail sentence he received from a revolutionary court in November on a charge of "anti-government publicity" for giving interviews to the *BBC's* Farsi-language service and *Radio Farda*. The sentence was upheld by a Tehran appeal court.

Initially arrested on 18 February 2009, he had been released on bail of 50 million toman (45,000 euros) on 13 March 2010.

19.01.2011 - Two journalists freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Keyvan Mehregan**, political editor of the daily newspaper *Shargh* and **Fariborz Rais Dana**, writer and member of the Association of Iranian Journalists, have been freed on bail. Keyvan Mehregan had to post bail of 10 million tomans (about 7,500 euros) and Fariborz Rais Dana 30 million tomans (about 22,500 euros).

17.01.2011- Two journalists freed on bail in Iran; others held, sentenced

Reporters Without Borders learned today that two Iranian journalists working for the daily *Shargh*, **Rihaneh Tabatabai** and **Farzaneh Roustaei**, have been freed on bail of 10 million toman (about 7,500 euros) each. Rihaneh Tabatabai was arrested at his home by officials of the information ministry on 12 December last. Farzaneh Roustaei, in charge of the international pages, was detained five days later.

Fariborz Rais Dana, writer and member of the Association of Iranian Journalists, was arrested on 19 December at his home by plainclothes officers of the information ministry. His lawyer **Nasser Zarafshan**, said he faced two charges. "One relates to criticism of the government

policy of liberalization of prices in an interview with BBC television; the other concerns the activities of the Association of Iranian Journalists," he said.

He told Reporters Without Borders that the cases had been referred to the 2nd chamber of the revolutionary court in Tehran and that he had asked for his client to be freed provisionally. The lawyer said he had visited Fariborz Rais Dana, with his wife at the Evin prison on 6 January.

The 36th Tehran appeal chamber sentenced journalist and human rights activist **Shiva Nazar-Ahari** to four years in jail and 74 lashes for propaganda against the regime and action against national security. She was arrested by the police on 20 December 2009, the day before the funeral of Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri. On 28 August 2010, the 26th chamber of the Tehran revolutionary court gave her a six-year prison sentence.

Nasour Naghipour, blogger and human rights activist was given a seven year sentence on 8 January this year. He had been arrested on 2 March 2010. He is editor of the website <http://www.nasour.net/> and was detained at his home in the city of Qazvin before being freed on 20 June 2010 on bail of 100 million toman (75,000 euros).

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