



Iran

Iran: Enforced disappearances and increased repression

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Iran: Enforced disappearances and increased repression of freedom of expression 21st December 2010 The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Iranian League for Defence of Human Rights are extremely concerned by the launch of yet another extensive wave of repression of freedoms of expression, press, arts and information in the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to the latest information: - The award-winning and internationally renowned filmmaker, Jafar Panahi, was sentenced to six years of imprisonment according to reports on 20 December. In addition, he was banned from all professional, public and social activities for 20 years, including film making, writing film scripts, travelling abroad and giving any interviews to domestic and foreign media. The charges against him included "assembly, colluding and propaganda against the state." His colleague, Mohammad Rassulof, another renowned film maker, was also sentenced to six years imprisonment on the same charges. They had both been arrested in March and spent about three months in detention. - On 19th December, 6 individuals were arrested for reasons our organisations believe are related to the exercise of their freedom of expression and opinion. Their whereabouts are unknown, and they are considered to have disappeared: " The economist and economic researcher Fariborz Ra'ees-Dana, a member of the Iranian Writers Association, was arrested at midnight, only hours after giving an interview to the Persian Service of the BBC. In the interview, he strongly criticised the government of Ahmadinejad for implementing "neo-liberal economic policies in hypocritical disguise with the help of military might" in favour of "military capitalism, which the previous governments of Rafsanjani and Khatami had tried to implement in favour of clerical capitalism." Mr. Ra'ees-Dana's lawyer has been unable to trace his detention with official judicial authorities. " Hadi Haydari, a cartoonist and journalist with pro-reform newspapers. He had been arrested in October 2009 and spent nearly a month in detention. " Alireza Taheri, a drama director and graphic artist, " Fatemeh Arabsorkhi, whose detention is believed to be a measure of pressure against her father Fayzollah Arabsorkhi, a political prisoner " Mohammad Shafi'i " Abdolfazi Tabarzadi, a close relative of another political prisoner, Heshmatollah Tabarzadi.

- Earlier on 7 December, the security agents had stormed the daily Shargh's offices, and arrested its editor, Ahmad Gholami, its international and political editors Farzaneh Rustaei (f) and Kayvan Mehregan as well as its managing editor, Ali Khodabakhsh. Rayhaneh Tabatabaei (f), political correspondent of the daily Shargh, was detained on 12 December. These journalists are reportedly held in an unknown detention centre and consequently considered to have disappeared. The Tehran prosecutor said they were facing security-related charges. Mehran Faraji, another journalist, was detained during a trip to the city of Qazvin on 9 December.
- On 7 December, that Saeed Malekpur, a web designer and programmer, would have been sentenced to death by the Islamic Revolution Court, on the vague charges of "moharebeh [fighting God] and 'corruption on earth', insulting sanctities, propaganda against the state and insulting the leader". Saeed Malekpur, a post-graduate student in Canada had been arrested on his arrival in Iran in October 2008 and has been sitting in prison ever since. In a detailed letter from prison in March 2010, he gave a horrifying account of the torture he had been subjected to, forcing him to incriminate himself. His coerced confessions were used as evidence against him in a show trial.

Background

The latest harsh and widespread crackdown is taking place while some 40 journalists and bloggers are already sitting in detention. Scores of them have been sentenced to long term imprisonment and to bans on public and professional activities after grossly unfair trials. Others have been spending long spells in detention. These include Abdolreza Tajik, journalist and member of the Human Rights Defenders Centre (member league of the FIDH, in Iran), and winner of the Freedom of Press award of Reports without Borders on 9 December 2010. He was arrested on 12 June 2010 for the third time since the disputed presidential election in 2009.

The harsh repression is rising while the UN General Assembly is considering a resolution condemning the human rights situation in Iran. FIDH Vice President and President of the Iranian League for Defence of Human Rights, Karim Lahidji called on the Iranian authorities *"to conform to their international obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a party, to prosecute all alleged acts of torture, and to drop all charges against and release all individuals detained for the exercise of their freedom of expression and information"*.

<http://www.fidh.org/Iran-Enforced-disappearances-and-increased>