

Chronology of Events in Iran, April 2003*

April 1

Guardian Council rejects Election Bill. (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA and Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL *Iran Report*).

The Guardians Council rejected an amendment to the election law on the grounds that it violated the constitution and Islamic law. The bill to reform the election law was introduced on 1 September 2002 with the objective of eliminating or at least reducing the Guardians Council's power of "approbatory supervision" (*nizarat-i estisvabi*) through which the council vets, and rejects, candidates for elected office. The legislation had widespread support amongst reformist parliamentarians, and the rejected bill has been sent back to them for revision. If the Guardians Council and parliament cannot reach a compromise, the bill will go to the Expediency Council.

April 2

Iranian dissident released on health grounds. (Agence France-Presse / AFP).

Ghassem Shoele Saadi, a prominent Iranian dissident, arrested on February 24 after criticizing the Islamic regime and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been released for health reasons. Ghassem Shoele Saadi, who still faces charges said "I was released on bail because of my health problems but I still do not know the date when my trial will be held". He was arrested at Tehran airport after flying into the country on February 24. In late 2002 while in France, Saadi sent an open letter to Khamenei denouncing Iran's domestic and foreign policies. Saadi recently teamed up with another dissident intellectual, Mohsen Sazegara, and set up the National Coalition of Liberal Partisans.

April 3

Three journalists arrested. (Reporters sans frontieres / RSF).

In the last two weeks of March, three journalists - Behzad Khorshidi, Alireza Jabari and Siamak Pourzand - have been arrested and jailed during Iran New Year festivities after being summoned by the *Edareh Amaken* (Public Places Police) department of the Teheran police, which usually deals with "public morality" and is close to the Intelligence Ministry. Jabari was summoned by *Edareh Amaken* on 17 March and then arrested. A translator and freelance contributor to several independent

* *Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara.*

newspapers, including *Adineh*, he was arrested at his office in Teheran last 28 December and freed on 6 February this year. Videotapes, books and his computer's hard drive were seized when he was arrested. An interview with him had appeared on 25 December in a Persian-language newspaper in Canada, *Sharhvand*, in which he said the country's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, wanted the crisis in Iran to get worse. His new arrest may be connected with his recent statements to the media about his conditions of detention and the pressure exerted on him to make confessions. Khorshidi, editor of the monthly *Piramoun*, was summoned by *Edareh Amaken* on 29 March. Since then, his family has had no news of him. He had been arrested on 17 March in similar circumstances and then freed a few days later. Pourzand, who contributes to opposition radio stations based in the United States, was arrested on 30 March and taken to Evin prison near Tehran. He been released conditionally in early December last year, a procedure sometimes used by the judiciary in response to international pressure. Since he had no document saying he had been officially released, he was liable to be arrested and jailed again at any time. Between 26 and 28 February, Kambiz Kaheh, who writes for the film magazines *Cinema-Jahan*, *Majaleh Film*, *Donyai Tassvir* and *Cinema-No*, Said Mostaghasi, of *Haftehnameh Cinema*, Mohammad Abdi, editor of the monthly *Honar Haftom*, and Amir Ezati, of *Mahnameh Film*, were arrested at their homes. At the same time, Sepideh Abroaviz, Narghess Vishkai, Assal Samari and Mehrnaz Teherani, all journalists with film magazines, were interrogated by *Edareh Amaken*. Yasamin Soufi, another film journalist, was arrested and held twice (24-26 February and 17-20 March) by *Edareh Amaken*. Officials accused them of criticising the regime's cultural policies and of being close to Pourzand.

Iran introduces male, female segregation on Tehran metro. (Iranian Students News Agency / ISNA).

The management board of Tehran's underground rail service has decided to allocate the first two compartments of all metro trains exclusively to women from April 5, 2003. Men are forbidden from boarding the first two compartments of the metro trains, but women may enter any other wagon in addition to these two compartments.

April 5

Appeal lodged in case of defendant sentenced for foreign radio interviews. (IRNA).

The appeal of Narges Mohammadi has been referred to the revolutionary court. Mohammadi's defence lawyer Mohammad Sharif said that the office of the court had registered the receipt of the appeal in the morning. Sharif also said that Mohammadi's case had been referred to the public court after her charges were announced to be beyond the authority of the revolutionary court, adding that he had received no notice from the public court on the date of a trial. Mohammadi, the wife of political dissident Taqi Rahmani, has already received a one-year term for charges of insulting state officials following her interviews with the press about the imprisonment of her husband.

April 6

Aghajari given prison leave. (Associated Press / AP).

Hashem Aghajari, a history professor at Tehran's Teachers Training University, began a one-week prison leave, his lawyer said. Hashem Aghajari, a history professor at Tehran's Teachers Training University, was released after paying a hefty 1 billion rials (US\$125,000) bail, said his lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht. Although the death sentence was lifted in February, Aghajari remains behind bars while an appeals court reconsiders the rest of his sentence.

Parliament empowers President to stop court proceedings. (IRNA).

Parliament passed a legislation empowering the president to stop implementation of a verdict or legal proceedings at the court of justice whenever he deems them to be contrary to constitutional provisions. The legislation envisaged that the president would demand the Supreme Court to stop prosecution. According to the legislation, the president would forward his demand to a special panel at the Supreme Court comprising of three senior judges appointed by the Judiciary chief. The president's demand to stop the implementation a verdict or a court proceedings will be studied by three lawyers on behalf of the parliament and three lawyers on behalf of the cabinet ministers. The six lawyers will confirm to the special panel at the Supreme Court that they agree to the president's demand to put an end to a special case at the court of justice. The legislation made at the request of the president empowers the chief executive to safeguard the constitutional rights of citizens.

April 7

Iran says Iraq-based armed opposition defecting in face of US-led occupation of Iraq. (AFP).

Scores of militants from Iran's Iraq-based armed opposition have allegedly defected and returned home in the face of the US-led onslaught of their Baghdad backers, Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi said. British and US troops have yet to overrun any of the People's Mujahedeen's Iraqi bases, Yunesi said, but Iranian border forces had already received a flood of "repentant" militants from the group which is reviled by both Iran and the Iraqi opposition for fighting alongside the Baghdad regime in the past. "For instance recently around a hundred members of the group handed themselves over to the Islamic Republic authorities." Yunesi promised that the regime would not press criminal charges against repentant opposition members, although they would have to respond to any civil suits. They "can enter Iran without fear, but if they have civil cases, they will have to settle them," he said.

April 8

Jailed ethnic Azeris go on hunger strike in Iran. (Azerbaijani news agency Turan).*

Several dozens of members of the National Revival Movement of Southern Azerbaijan in Iranian prisons have gone on a hunger strike. They were arrested in December 2002 during mass rallies in Tabriz and are still being kept imprisoned without any reasons. The Iranian authorities released some of the prisoners only after they paid a bail of 25,000 dollars. The reasons for mass demonstrations of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Tabriz and other Iranian towns were demands to restore social and cultural rights of Iran's Azerbaijanis.

Clashes in southern Tehran. (Iranian newspaper *Iran Daily* and RFE/RL *Newsline*).

Clashes between mobs and policemen in the working-class district of Shahr-e Rey in southern Tehran on 6 April led to two policemen being taken hostage. No details were given as to what led to the clashes, but the hostages were freed with the intervention of Basij militia. As a result, an official of the Tehran governor-general's office stated on 8 April that henceforth, "All meetings and public gatherings must have official permission from the security authorities."

Arab minority stage pro-Saddam demonstrations. (AFP).

Iran's Arabic-speaking minority have staged a series of demonstrations in support of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in towns in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, Iranian newspapers reported. It was reported that supporters of the Abadan Oil Industry football team chanted pro-Iraqi slogans at the end of a friendly match in the town. And the reformist newspaper *Yas-e Now* published a letter signed by 60 prominent citizens from the province denouncing the show of pro-Saddam feeling. According to the letter, a major anti-war protest two weeks ago was marred by an Arabic-speaking group "brandishing the Iraqi flag through the streets of Ahwaz ... and chanting that they would sacrifice themselves for Saddam while the majority of demonstrators were shouting that they would sacrifice themselves for Islam".

Molotov cocktails thrown at British embassy in Tehran. (AFP).

Molotov cocktails were thrown at the British embassy as around 250 Iranian students demonstrated against the war in Iraq. Riot police immediately arrested two demonstrators who threw the home-made petrol bombs which hit the gates and fell inside the compound but did no damage to the main building. The protestors comprised mainly of members of Basij Islamic militia from Tehran University medical department. The demonstrators, who were calling for the expulsion of the British ambassador, burned US and British flags and chanted "death to America, death to Britain", while throwing tomatoes and eggs at the embassy. They also distributed the photograph of the driver who was killed as his car smashed into the wall of the embassy compound on April 1, with a note reading "martyr of a suicide operation". The car carrying containers of petrol and diesel slammed into the walls of the embassy compound and burst into flames, killing the driver but injuring nobody inside the building. The Iranian authorities insisted it was an "accident" but British diplomats

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

do not reject a possibility of an attack. The embassy has been the scene of anti-war demonstrations since US-led coalition began their assault on Iraq on March 20. Hundreds of protesters hurled stones at the embassy on March 28, breaking several windows.

April 9

Several celebrators beaten and arrested in Tehran. (Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran / SMCCDI).*

Several Iranian celebrators were beaten and arrested in the evening by members of the Bassidj force as they shouted slogans against the clerical administration of Iran while cheering the downfall of the Iraqi regime. Young demonstrators were seen beaten and transferred to cars which left the Madar square but noise of firecrackers were still heard in the neighboring streets.

April 11

Iraqi refugees in Iran storm their embassy in Tehran. (IRNA and RFE/RL Newswire).

Approximately 60 Iraqis who were chanting "Death to America," "Death to Saddam," and "No to Colonialism, No to Ba'ath Party" forced open the gates of the Iraqi Embassy in Tehran and entered the compound. The protestors tore up photos of Saddam Hussein, destroyed furniture, and broke windows, as police tried to disperse people outside the embassy. They also made off with embassy documents. The protestors displayed photos of Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) leader Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim.

April 12

Mujahedeen says 18 fighters killed in clashes in Iraq. (AFP).

The Iranian armed opposition group, the People's Mujahedeen Organisation of Iran (PMOI), said 18 of its fighters had been killed in Iraq this week by Iranian government forces who had entered the country. The group said another 43 fighters were wounded and several others missing after clashes on April 10-11 near camps in Al-Khalis, Jalula and Al-Muqdadiyah. Iranian forces "entered Iraqi territory and captured parts of the Iraqi (border) town of Khanaqin and surrounding areas," the PMOI statement said. It claimed that Iranian forces had moved 46 army and elite Revolutionary Guards brigades, equipped with tanks and missiles, to the border with Iraq.

Associated Press (AP) report of the same news on April 14: An Iranian opposition group based in Iraq has lost 10 of its fighters in clashes with Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards who crossed into Iraq, where the group is based. The People's Mujahideen said that Iran's Supreme National Security Council had ordered its

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

revolutionary guards, intelligence forces and mercenaries to attack the group. Ten mujahideen were killed during the clashes in three towns on April 13. Earlier, the group said Iranian-backed forces inside Iraq killed 18 mujahideen members and wounded 43 others in central Iraq near the Iranian border on April 11-12. State-run Iranian television reported that "tens" of mujahideen fighters had been killed in clashes with Iraqi fighters near Khaneqin, about 145 kilometres north of Baghdad. A day earlier, state TV also reported fighting between mujahideen and Iraqi fighters on April 10-11 in Al-Saadiyah, a desert region some 160 kilometres north of Baghdad. It said five Iraqis were killed when one of their patrols was attacked late on April 11.

Iranian Press Service (IPS) report of the same news on April 13: Mojahedeen Khalq Organisation (PMOI) confirmed they have lost at least 18 of their members, with 43 other wounded after some of their bases in Iraqi Kurdistan was attacked by forces they claimed were Iranian Revolutionary Guards. But the Iranian Radio and Television said the attackers were "Iraqi Muslim combatants" who attacked the "terrorist group" near the Kurdish city of Kirkuk, "killing scores of them", adding that the bodies of PMOI terrorist members still lie in their camp. Before the arrival of Kurdish and U.S. forces in the oil-rich city, the people of Kirkuk had already killed some PMOI members, and their bodies were lying alongside the bodies of Iraqi intelligence (*Estekhbarat*) agents, the state-run Radio reported. Jalal Talebani, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), announced that the second phase of PUK attacks against the PMOI would start soon. It was reported that some members of the PMOI had started negotiations with Mr. Talebani and American commanders in the region to surrender and being moved either to Iran or another country of refuge. In a letter signed by 30 PMOI members to Talebani, they called on him to stop attacking, promised to surrender, blaming their leader, Mas'ood Rajavi and other Organisation's high-ranking officials for the tragic situation, stating that Mr. Rajavi and some of his closest colleagues had already fled Iraq to an undisclosed destination.

Iran Appeal Court reduces pollsters' jail sentence. (Reuters).

An Iranian court of appeal has reduced prison sentences against two opinion pollsters jailed for publishing a survey which showed Iranians favoured resuming talks with the United States. The sentences against Hossein Ghazian, head of the Ayandeh polling centre, and board member Abbas Abdi were cut to 4 1/2 years, from nine and eight years respectively. They had been convicted in February of "cooperation with foreign governments" and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic".

Aghajari gets prison leave extension. (IRNA and RFE/RL Newslines).

Saleh Nikbakht, the attorney of political activist and university professor Hashem Aghajari, said that the court agreed to extend his client's home leave for another week. Aghajari had to post bail of 1.2 billion rials (\$150,000) in order to get the home leave. He was sentenced last August to death, an eight-year banishment, a flogging, and a teaching ban, but Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei subsequently ordered the court to review the case. Aghajari had given a speech in Hamedan in June that questioned the clerical hierarchy and other matters of orthodoxy.

Ethnic Azeri movement protests at "Iran's support for Kurdish separatists". (Azerbaijani news agency Turan).

The National Revival Movement of Southern Azerbaijan [northern Iran] has issued a statement protesting against alleged killings by Kurdish armed formations in Kirkuk and Mosul, which are populated by the Iraqi Turkomans. According to the statement, “the Kurdish separatists' idea of creating ‘Great Kurdistan’ envisages the annexation of towns of Southern (Iranian) Azerbaijan - Urmia, Khoy and several others”. The statement also says that the Tehran government supports “Kurdish separatists”. According to the Movement, “the Iranian authorities encourage Kurds to buy lands and property in districts populated by Azerbaijanis with the aim to alter this region's ethnic composition.”

April 13

Iraqi refugees at Iranian border. (IRNA).

Some 1,000 Iraqis from various cities sought refuge in Dehloran border strip. Secretary of the Iraqi crisis headquarters in Ilam Ali Zeynivand said that the Iraqis who have settled inside the Iraqi soil and in border areas called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide them with humanitarian aid. He said Iraqi refugees in this region suffer from lack of food and medicine.

Iranian journalist transferred to Tehran's Evin prison. (IRNA).

Dissident writer and journalist Ahmad Zeydabadi, who has been sentenced to prison terms by the Special Administrative Court, was transferred to Evin prison. Zeydabadi appeared before Bench 1410 of the Special Administrative Court, presided over by judge Sa'id Mortazavi, last year where he had been sentenced to 23 months in prison and a five-year deprivation of social rights. Tehran's Appeal Court lessened Zeydabadi's jail term to 13 months, he said. Since he has been in custody for seven months, he has to serve the remaining six-month prison term, Zeydabadi said.

April 14

Majlis ratifies Iran's accession to convention against torture. (IRNA).

The parliament ratified Iran's accession to the Convention against Torture, head of parliamentary commission on Judicial and Legal Affairs Naser Qavami said. He said that that Iran will be a signatory state to the convention if the Guardian Council approves the parliament's decision. On 16 March, some 107 members of parliament called for Iran's accession to the convention against Torture. The MPs said that Article 38 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic prohibits torture and the international convention is in conformity with Iranian constitution.

Rights official urges Khamene'i to pardon Mojahedin members. (ISNA).

Secretary of Islamic Human Rights Commission Mohammad Hasan Zia'ifar has written to Ayatollah Khamene'i urging him to pardon a number of “deceived Iranians” [reference to members of the Iraq-based armed opposition, Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization]. The letter says: “One of the issues which, in pursuant of previous investigations, has caught the serious attention of our organization and several other international human rights organizations concerns the plight of the deceived Iranians

who have, for many years, been trapped in their particular ideologies and within a brutal organization. At present, with the flight of the aforementioned organization leaders from Iraq, they [the members] have become trapped in deadly circumstances, in the sense that they are being attacked by both the foreign invading coalition forces and the Iraqi opposition. Their families have appealed to the Islamic Human Rights Commission to take effective measures in that regard.

Iran will not allow Iraqi leaders to enter that country. (IRNA).

Iran said it will arrest and prosecute any element of Iraq's Ba'ath regime, including its leaders, who possibly cross into the Iranian territory. "If they want to come legally, we will naturally reject it, but if they come illegally, we will try them because of the crimes they have committed against our people," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi said...

Iranian Jews convicted of espionage still in prison. (AFP).

Five Iranian Jews convicted of spying for Israel are still in prison, judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Elham said. "The Jews accused of espionage were not pardoned and are still in prison," Elham said. In February, Louis Joinet, the head of United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, said five Iranian Jews jailed for spying for Israel, who were freed on bail, had been definitively released but not yet officially told so.

AFP report of the same news on April 24: All the Iranian Jews convicted amid widespread controversy in July 2000 of spying for Israel have been freed from prison, Iran's foreign minister announced. "Those among our Jewish compatriotes who were in prison in Shiraz are now free," Kharrazi said during a press conference with visiting French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin.

April 15

Coalition forces bomb Iranian Mujahedeen inside Iraq. (AFP).

Coalition air forces have bombed camps of Iranian rebels inside Iraq and some of them were expected to surrender soon, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said. "We did bomb some PMOI camps," said General Richard Myers. "We are still pursuing elements ... inside Iraq. It's possible some may surrender very soon to coalition forces." Myers, who did not say when or where the air strikes occurred, said it was too soon to say what effect those actions might have on US relations with Iran.

The Times report of the same news on April 16: Heavy air raids struck PMOI bases on April 4 and 5, causing a "handful of casualties", a British diplomat said. "The PMOI's support network with Saddam's forces has gone and there's not much of their infrastructure left," the British diplomat said. He also rejected as "propaganda" PMOI claims that Iranian forces had crossed the Iraqi border, killing 18 of its fighters. The future of several thousand PMOI fighters thought to be in Iraq is uncertain. Many were said to have left before the war or to have defected.

RFE/RL Iran Report account of the same news on April 21: U.S. Defense Department officials said in "The New York Times" of 17 April that American ground forces are trying to pursue and detain members of the Iraq-based Mujahedin-e

Khalq Organization (PMOI), whose bases have recently been targeted by U.S. air raids. The bombings have received scant public attention. An anonymous senior American military officer said the U.S. "bombed the heck" out of two MKO bases, one of which was Camp Ashraf, which is 60 miles north of Baghdad. Other MKO facilities are Camp Alavi, about 65 miles northeast of Baghdad, and Camp Anzali, about 80 miles northeast of Baghdad. U.S. officials explained the PMOI was bombed because it is an extension of the Iraqi military and is a security force for the old regime. "These forces were fully integrated with Saddam Hussein's command and controls and therefore constituted legitimate military targets that posed a threat to coalition forces," an anonymous White House official said.

Mujahedeen refugees stranded at Jordan border. (AFP).

More than 70 members of Iran's opposition People's Mujahedeen (PMOI), including a prominent Iranian singer, have been stuck for more than 48 hours in no man's land on Jordan's border with Iraq. "More than 70 Mujahedeen who carry refugee cards from France, Germany, Canada and the United States are stranded in the no man's land two kilometers (one and a quarter miles) from Jordan's Al-Karama border post," an NGO official said. Among them is singer Ashraf Sadat Mortezaei, 77, known by the stage name "Marzieh," and Ali Mostashari, a political science professor at a Paris university, the official said. "Twenty-eight of these Iranians claim to have French refugee documents but we are not sure that these documents are valid and we cannot verify them until the UNHCR provides us with lists," a diplomatic source stated. "Sending them back to Iran is out of the question but unless we can verify the lists we cannot know whether or not they are political refugees in France," the source said.

The NGO official said many of the Iranians do not have valid documents. On April 13, the UNHCR urged the Jordanian authorities to allow those blocked at the border to be transferred on a temporary basis to a refugee camp set up in Rweished, the Jordanian border town near Al-Karama. A Jordanian official said the authorities were first waiting for a commitment from the embassies concerned that they will take the necessary measures to repatriate these refugees, before allowing them into the country. "Third country refugees must be repatriated to their host country or their country of origin in line with the agreements reached with them," said the Jordanian.

Student leader announces establishment of democracy web site. (ISNA).

The *Tahkim-e Democracy* [Consolidation of Democracy] web site began operating (www.tahkimdemocracy.com). Sa'id Razavi-Faqih, secretary for political affairs of the Allameh wing of the Office for the Consolidation of Unity, said: "This site has been put into operation by me and a few student friends and is not related to the Office for the Consolidation of Unity [Persian: *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*; main association of university students]." He said: The site will reflect opinion holders' views about democracy and about the formation of a Front for Democracy.

April 16

Five alleged political activists executed in Iran. (SMCCDI).*

The Islamic republic executed five more political activists in Ghasr prison located in the center of Tehran. These five persons were hanged due to their anti-regime activities and what has been qualified as "murder" and "attack against the sanctity of Mosque" The name of the killed are Ali Keshavarz, Akbar Sharifi, Majid Bagheri, Yooness Siah-Poosh and Habib Afrasiabi.

AFP report of the same news: Five Iranian men sentenced to death for murder have been hanged at Tehran's Qasr (Palace) prison. The men -- Habib Afrasiabi, Majid Bagheri, Ali Keshavarz, Younes Siahpoush and Akbar Sharifi -- were put to death, an Iranian daily said without giving any further details.

April 17

Guardian Council vetoes parliamentary bill on equal blood money for all citizens. (AP).

The Guardian Council has vetoed a bill passed by parliament that would allow members of Iran's religious minorities to receive an equal amount of blood money as Muslims, legislators Maurice Motamed and Gorjic Abramian said. Motamed, the parliament's only Jewish member, said the council ruled the bill contradicted Islamic law.

April 18

Azeri journalist arrested in Iran. (Azerbaijani newspaper *Hurriyyat*).*

A reporter from an Ardabil-based newspaper, Azar Ahmad, has been arrested for writing about problems of the Azeri Turks and propagating ethnic rights. There are no reports about his whereabouts or the date of his trial.

April 19

Iran dissident Aghajari back in prison after two weeks' home leave. (AFP).

Hashem Aghajari, whose death sentence for blasphemy was quashed by the Supreme Court in February, returned to prison to await retrial after two weeks' home leave. During his two weeks of liberty, Aghajari met with the speaker of the reformist-led parliament, Mehdi Karrubi, and other reformist legislators. He also met with four clerics in the holy city of Qom including the dissident ayatollah, Hossein Ali Montazeri.

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

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Journalist sentenced to four years in prison and 253 lashes. (RSF).

Alireza Jabari, a translator and freelance contributor to several independent newspapers, including *Adineh*, was sentenced to four years in prison, 253 lashes and a fine of six million rials (1,000 euros) for "consuming and distributing alcoholic drinks" and for "adultery and incitement to immoral acts." According to the RSF, he was actually being punished for belonging to the Writers' Association and sending material to foreign-based news websites, especially articles defending a jailed lawyer, Nasser Zarafshan. Jabari's lawyer said he was arrested illegally and that he himself had not been allowed to attend Jabari's trial. He was arrested at his office in Teheran last 28 December and freed on 6 February 2003. He was arrested again on 17 March. An interview with him had appeared on 25 December in a Persian-language newspaper in Canada, *Sharvand*, in which he said the country's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Guide of the Islamic Revolution, wanted the crisis in Iran to get worse. His latest arrest came soon after he told the press about his conditions of detention and the pressure exerted on him to make confessions.

April 20

Journalist detained in Iran over interviews with foreign media. (AP).

A journalist and liberal critic of the conservative clerics who rule Iran was arrested after police questioned him for several hours, his wife said. Sina Motallebi was taken to jail after he responded to a summons on April 19 to report to a police station for interrogation, Farnaz Ghazizadeh said. She said police promised to release her husband in two days, but she believed he would be held longer. "Sina has been summoned by the judiciary several times over the past four months," Ghazizadeh said. "They object to materials in his web site including interviews he gave to foreign media." Motallebi runs the Farsi Web site "www.rooznegar.com", which he developed after the judiciary banned the reformist newspaper he wrote for, the daily *Hayat-e-Nou* (New Era). The newspaper had published a cartoon showing the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, leader of Iran's 1979 revolution, being crushed by a hand.

Workers' rally in Behshahr. (Iranian Labour News Agency / ILNA).

It was reported that around 10,000 workers demonstrated in Behshahr's Martyr Hasheminezhad Boulevard and also gathered outside Mellat Park in Behshahr. The workers were protesting because they were unhappy about their livelihood. The protesters, many of whom were workers of a textile factory, demanded that their wages, which have been delayed, to be paid to them as soon as possible. The protest gathering turned into chaos and there were severe clashes. The Law Enforcement Force became involved when shop windows and signs were smashed. The police resorted to the use of tear gas. Latest reports indicate that calm has not returned to Behshahr yet. The head of [state-sponsored] Islamic Labour Association in Mazandaran Province, Asadi, has said: "We must think of a solution to the chaotic situation so that workers do not come to the conclusion that they can regain their rights by resorting to violence." He added: "The workers are planning to stage a rally in the city of Behshahr. They intend to close the bazaar on the way to the city centre in the hope of attracting more people to their cause. We predict that the same as last

Wednesday [April 16] when more than 25,000 people took part in a rally, a large group of citizens will participate today [on April 21] too.”

Jordan refuses asylum to Iranians. (Reuters).

Hundreds of Iranian Kurds have fled to the Jordanian border from a refugee camp in central Iraq because they fear their lives are in danger, a spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said. Spokesman Peter Kessler said Jordan was refusing to grant asylum to the Iranians and to smaller numbers of Palestinians, more than 1,000 in total, who were now stranded in a no-man's land on the Iraq-Jordan border. He said the number of Kurdish Iranian refugees arriving from al-Tash camp, about 120 km west of Baghdad, had tripled in the last two days. "These are people running for their lives. This is a sign that security is insufficient in some parts of the country," Kessler said. On April 19 alone 450 Iranians arrived along with 120 Palestinians in the area close to Iraq's Treebel border post. Kessler said the U.S. army had an obligation as an occupying power under international law to bring order to Iraq. "This kind of chaos and lawlessness in Iraq has to be halted. The U.S. army as an occupying power has to halt the intimidation, whether against Arabs in the north, or Palestinians in some parts of Baghdad, or ethnic Iranian Kurds," he said. Kessler said UNHCR was not sure what had sparked the exodus from al-Tash, which holds more than 12,000 Iranian refugees, mostly ethnic Kurds. Some refugee accounts cite threats to their lives from local Iraqis and others say they fled deprivation. Some aid workers said U.S. forces who took over the Iraqi border post after the collapse of Saddam Hussein's rule had brought the refugees to the area. Aid workers and officials said some of the Iranians were members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahideen e-Khalq (PMOI) -- also known as the People's Mujahideen -- who had been sheltered by Saddam's government. Aid workers said the Iranian opposition activists sought refuge in Jordan to escape an uncertain fate in the new Iraq. The Palestinians, who have lived for decades in Iraq, fled after attacks by armed Iraqis in the Baladiyat neighbourhood of Baghdad, the aid workers said. Kessler urged the authorities to allow the refugees temporary asylum in a camp erected 60 km inside Jordan for third-country nationals fleeing Iraq. "We have agreed with Jordan that any refugees should be given temporary asylum. We ourselves do not accept they stay for 50 years and become like Palestinian refugees," Kessler said. Information Minister Mohammad Adwan said that the Kingdom's refusal to allow asylum was a long standing policy to prevent any new refugee influx. But the authorities were coordinating with U.N. agencies to end their plight.

April 21

Iran military chief demands US extradite PMOI leader. (AFP).

The head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards demanded the US extradite the head of the Iraq-based People's Mujahideen (PMOI) to show it is sincere in "combatting terrorism". "We know that the US has listed the PMOI as a terrorist organisation, so in order to prove it is sincere in the war against terrorism, the US has to hand over the PMOI's leader to us," Yahya Rahim Safavi said. "Since the US has trapped them and until the time the US hands them over to us, anything they do against Iran, the US bears responsibility," he added.

Security measures increased in Beh-Shahr following unrest. (SMCCDI).*

The security measures and deployment of security forces have increased in the northern city of Beh-Shahr which was reportedly a scene of unrest and strikes in the third week of April. SMCCDI alleged that troops, carried by more than 70 full buses, were transferred to the city in order to avoid further unrest, including destruction of public facilities by workers and residents in the city. The situation in the textile factory, one of the biggest of Iran, has been reported as being very tense and the workers refused to end their strike till the fulfilment of all their conditions in order to obtain better living standards and an end to repressive measures.

SMCCDI report of the same news on April 22: A general protest paralyzed Beh-Shahr as hundreds of workers stroked and walked in the streets. Soon, thousands of residents and students joined them. Most shops and schools were closed and the security forces confined themselves, at the beginning, to closing the accesses to the city.

Iraqi-based PMOI fighters agree to cease-fire. (AP).

Iranian opposition group PMOI that has conducted attacks against Iran from its bases in Iraq has agreed to a cease-fire and has begun moving its vehicles into U.S.-controlled areas, a U.S. military spokesman said. The move by the Mujahedeen Khalq came after the U.S. military bombed the militia's bases and worked to negotiate the surrender of its members. A US military spokesman said members of the PMOI militia were moving their vehicles into temporary military facilities around Baqubah. The status of the individual fighters wasn't clear, particularly whether they would formally surrender or just be allowed to "melt away," as many Iraqi fighters have been allowed to do.

U.S. newspaper *The New York Times* report on the same news on April 29:

American forces in Iraq have signed a cease-fire with an Iranian opposition group the United States has designated a "terrorist organization", and expect it to surrender soon with some of its arms, American military officials said. Under the deal, signed on April 15 but confirmed by the United States Central Command only on April 28, United States forces agreed not to damage any of the group's vehicles, equipment or any of its property in its camps in Iraq, and not to commit any hostile act toward the Iranian opposition forces covered by the agreement. In return, the group, the People's Mujahedeen, which will be allowed to keep its weapons for now, agreed not to fire on or commit other hostile acts against American forces, not to destroy private or government property, and to place its artillery and antiaircraft guns in nonthreatening positions. An American military official said the group could provide intelligence regarding Iranian government activities both in Iraq, and in Iran itself. A spokesman for the Central Command, in Doha, Qatar, who was responding to a reporter's inquiry, issued a three-sentence statement today that provided the basic outlines of the cease-fire. A senior military officer said he expected the accord to be followed in the next few days by a formal capitulation agreement, and he indicated that the group would eventually have to give up some of its arms. One motivation for allowing the People's Mujahedeen to keep some weapons, officials said, was to leave in place a balance of

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

power between the group and the Iranian-backed fighters known as the Badr Brigade. Muhammad Mohaddessin, a top People's Mujahadeen official, said in a telephone interview from Paris that "this cease-fire agreement gives us the right to keep our weapons in noncombat formations and the right to defend ourselves" against attacks from Iranian-backed forces. None of the group's members had been taken into custody by American forces, Mr. Mohaddessin said. The statement issued by the Central Command said the cease-fire had been signed by "a coalition forces commander and a Mr. Mahdi Baraie of the National Liberation Army of Iran," the armed wing of the Mujahadeen organization.

April 23

Iranian actress escapes lashing sentence. (Britist Broadcasting Corporation / BBC).

A well-known Iranian actress has been given a suspended sentence of 74 lashes for kissing a man during an awards ceremony. Gohar Kheirandish landed in court after kissing director Ali Zamani on the forehead. The lashing sentence was suspended after the actress apologised for her behaviour at the event in October 2002. Zamani appeared in court but was released on bail of 20 million rials (\$2,500).

Iranian opposition says capture 4 Revolutionary Guards in Iraq. (Reuters).

An Iraq-based Iranian opposition militia said it had captured four Iranian Revolutionary Guards after an attack on its positions in a border area. In a statement issued by its Paris office, the People's Mujahideen (PMOI) said the four were commanders of Revolutionary Guards forces which fled after the clash near Mandali. There was no immediate reaction to the Mujahideen report from Iranian officials or U.S.-led forces.

April 24

General strike in Iran being organised. (US newspaper *The New York Sun*).

Opponents of the Iranian regime have called a general strike on July 9 that they hope will expand to topple the government there. The strike is being organized by student groups to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the last student uprising in Iran that saw thousands of students take to the streets against the Islamic Republic's ruling clerics.

April 26

Youth unemployment close to 60 percent. (IRNA).

Deputy Head of Iran's Youth Employment Organization Kambiz Zolfaqari said that about 60 percent of unemployed consists of youth between 15 to 24 years of age. In a comprehensive look at the employment situation in the country, Iran's Statistical Center (ISC) said in a report in March that the unemployment rate among the educated – those with high-school education or higher -- stood at 41.4 percent in the

last Iranian year. "The figure compares with the 23 percent unemployment rate among the lower educated and illiterate groups in the same period," it added.

Source of jamming satellites in Iran identified. (IRNA).

Deputy chairman of Telecommunication Commission in the Iranian Parliament, Ali-Akbar Mousavi Khoeini, said that a certain organization has been identified as the source of signals being transmitted from Tehran to jam satellite broadcasts. Mousavi Khoeini said that the Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone (PTT) has tracked down the source of the signals in an area controlled by the organization. "The parliamentarians have currently decided not to reveal the name of the organization to the media for the fear that the issue might become political, and might thus frustrate the efforts to stop the matter," the MP said. "Still, if the organization refuses to stop the practice, and the efforts by the Parliament, the government and the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) prove useless in that connection, that organization will be introduced to the media." The Health Ministry and the Department of the Environment in separate reports had earlier voiced concerns over the activities of a certain organization in transmitting signals to block satellites broadcasts over Tehran, stressing that the signals are harmful to citizens as well as to the environment. Mousavi Khoeini said no state institution can currently be certain about its radio activities considering that the signals transmitted by the organization might anytime interfere with those of the institutions.

Amir-Entezam back in jail. (Iran Daily).

Abbas Amir-Entezam, a deputy foreign minister in the 1979 provisional revolutionary government who spent most of the last 24 years in prison after being convicted for espionage and treason in 1979 before being released last year on bail for medical reasons, is back in jail. He was ordered back to Evin prison after making a speech at Tehran University calling for a referendum on whether Iran should remain under clerical rule.

April 27

Heavy sentences for sex ring serving Pakistan brothels. (AFP).

An Iranian court has sentenced a group of 53 tribesmen to a total of 281 years in prison for luring scores of destitute young girls to work as sex slaves in Pakistan, a judicial source said. The senior court official from Mashhad said that the gang, mainly members of an Afghan Baluch tribe living as refugees in Iran, had been handed sentences ranging from lashes to 15 years imprisonment after being found guilty of charges including abduction and slavery. The gang, backed up by several Iranian accomplices, were caught seeking out poor families around Iran's holiest city and offering to marry young girls, some as young as 12. The girls were then whisked away from Iran's northeast to Afghanistan and then Pakistan, where they were put to work in brothels.

Government spokesman charged with insulting Guardians Council. (*Iran Daily*).

Government spokesman Abdullah Ramezanzadeh said he will report to an appeals court in Tehran to respond to charges made by the public prosecutor that he insulted the Guardians Council. The paper's murky account of the charges indicated that they stem from an interview regarding the cancelled results of the 2000 parliamentary elections in two provincial towns, which led to a complaint against Ramezanzadeh by the Guardians Council. He was sentenced to a six-month prison term.

New Iranian Prosecutor-General appointed. (IRNA).

The Iranian judiciary has appointed Said Mortazavi as prosecutor-general of public and revolutionary courts. He had been serving as the judge at Bench 1410 of Tehran's Administrative Court, Mortazavi gained much notoriety among reformists for closing down newspapers and for his harsh sentencing of journalists on charges of publishing lies and influencing public opinion. The post of prosecutor-general in Iranian courts had been vacant since 1993, compelling Iranian judges to also act as prosecutors.

April 28

Forty Iranians arrested by Iranian opposition group in Iraq. (Iranian news site *Baztab*).*

It was reported that Mojahedin Khalq Organization's (PMOI) military police posts have been stationed along the road from Khaneqin to Ya'qubiyah. These forces have arrested more than 40 Iranians in recent weeks and handed them over to US army. American forces have freed most of these individuals who had entered Iraq for pilgrimage.

Alleged political activist executed. (SMCCDI).*

Alleged political activist named Soheil Salehi-Asl-Soreh was executed in Ahwaz. He was reportedly arrested in clashes between protestors and security forces in Ahwaz in March.

Agence France-Presse report of the same news: A convicted armed robber has been publicly hanged in the southwestern Iranian city of Ahwaz. A court spokesman said that Soheil Salehi Asl-Soreh had been convicted of carrying out a series of armed robberies on a road near the city over the past year.

April 30

Iranian MP to face court over prison claims. (UK newspaper *The Guardian*).

A reformist MP faced the threat of arrest yesterday after judicial authorities accused him of undermining Iran's national interests by informing UN human rights monitors about alleged abuses of political prisoners. Tehran's justice department said it would be forced to act on its "legal duty" if Ali Akbar Mousavi Khoeni, a former student activist, failed to answer a court subpoena for spreading "false statements" to a team

* *Editor's note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.*

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of UN monitors. But Mr Khoeni, 34, said in a statement that he had merely exercised his constitutional right to free expression and would refuse to recognise the court proceedings. He has called for an end to "rogue prisons", outside regular legal authority, that are used by intelligence and security services to detain political opponents. Judicial authorities accuse Mr Khoeni of discussing with UN monitors the case of two reformers who were jailed after publishing a poll that showed more than 70% of Iranians favour restoring relations with the United States.

Revolutionary Guards issue warning against “pro-Americanism”. (Opposition news site Iranian Press Service / IPS).

The Revolutionary Guards issued warnings against those who call for normalizing relations with the United States. "The Revolutionary Guards would issues warnings and cautions for the society whenever it feel it is needed. This is one of its duties to enter the arena when it considers it as a necessity", said Ali Sa'idi, the acting Representative of the “Supreme Leader” at the Army of the Guards of the Islamic Revolution, also known as Pasdaran.

Thousands of workers protest working conditions on eve of May Day. (IRNA).

About 2,000 workers from Tehran staged a sit-in at the Tehran Labour House, on the eve of May Day, to protest working conditions, wages and privatization. The protesters in the meeting called for defending the rights of workers and countering capitalism. A resolution, read out at the end of the protest meeting, criticizes zero share for labourers of the profits reaped by capitalists due to laws which facilitate cycle of capital circulation. The resolution also called for a logical system for wage payment, halting privatization, curbing the rising contraband of goods in a bid to support domestic production, scrapping bureaucracy, creating jobs and facilitating investment.

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