

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

IRN 004 / 0611 / OBS 091
Arbitrary arrest / Arbitrary detention
/ Judicial harassment
Iran
June 17, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Iran**.

Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the arbitrary arrest and detention of Ms. **Mansoureh Behkish**, an Iranian human rights activist fighting against the execution of prisoners, and a member of the "Mourning Mothers"¹, and of ongoing judicial harassment against other supporters of the "Mourning Mothers".

According to the information received, on June 12, 2011, Ms. Mansoureh Behkish was arrested by a group of security agents in a street of Tehran at 8 p.m., and was subsequently transferred to the Evin Prison, where she reportedly remains detained as of issuing this appeal. No information could be obtained about whether any charges were brought against her.

Ms. Behkish has been subjected to several interrogations and arbitrary detentions in the past as a result of her human rights activities, in particular with regards to her defence of political prisoners in Iran.

The Observatory fears for the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Behkish, and calls for her immediate and unconditional release, since her detention is arbitrary as it seems to only aim at sanctioning her human rights activities.

In addition, according to the information received, on April 9, 2011, Ms. **Leyla Seyfollahi**, Ms. **Jila Karamzadeh-Makvandi** and Mr. **Nader Ahsani**, supporters of the "Mourning Mothers", were notified of the sentences issued against them, following their arrest on February 8, 2010 and their summary hearings before the Court of First Instance of Tehran in May 2010 and March 2011. Mr. Ahsani was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of alleged "intent to commit crimes against national security" and "propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic". Ms. Seyfollahi and Ms. Karamzadeh-Makvandi were for their part sentenced to four years in prison for the creation of an "illegal organisation, namely *The Mourning Mothers*, taking action against national security". The three defenders remain free pending their appeal.

Amid a general crackdown on the Iranian civil society, the Observatory expresses its deepest concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention of Ms. Behkish and about the sentencing of three other human rights defenders members of the "Mourning Mothers". The Observatory calls upon the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ms. Behkish, and drop the charges held against Ms. Leyla Seyfollahi, Ms. Jila Karamzadeh-Makvandi, as well as against Mr. Nader Ahsani.

¹ The "Mourning Mothers" ("Madaran-e Azardar") is a group formed by women whose children have been killed, executed, detained or disappeared since 1981. The group calls for the acknowledgement of secret political executions in the past three decades and disclosure of burial places of the victims. It also organises silent public protests each Saturday evening in Tehran's Laleh Park, calling for the release of all the detainees who were arrested for protesting election fraud.

Finally, the Observatory recalls that in February 2011, a wave of arrests, detentions, and judicial sentences in Iran targeted human rights activists and members of the “One Million Signatures Campaign”, and that two of them, Ms. **Maryam Bahreman** and Ms. **Mahbubeh Karami**, arrested on May 11, 2011, remain detained incommunicado².

The Observatory calls upon the Iranian authorities to immediately put an end to the continued measures of harassment against human rights defenders in the country, and to unconditionally release all those presently detained.

Actions requested:

Please write to the Iranian authorities and ask them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Mansoureh Behkish, Ms. Leyla Seyfollahi, Ms. Jila Karamzadeh-Makvandi, Ms. Maryam Bahreman, Ms. Mahbubeh Karami and Mr. Nader Ahsani as well as all human rights defenders in Iran;
- ii. Release Ms. Mansoureh Behkish, Ms. Maryam Bahreman and Ms. Mahbubeh Karami immediately and unconditionally since her detention is arbitrary and only aims at sanctioning her human rights activities;
- iii. Put an end to any kind of harassment – including at the judicial level – against human rights defenders in Iran, including members of the “Mourning Mothers”, notably Ms. Mansoureh Behkish, Ms. Leyla Seyfollahi, Ms. Jila Karamzadeh-Makvandi and Mr. Nader Ahsani;
- iv. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular:
 - its article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”;
 - its article 5.b, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, (...) to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups”;
 - its article 6.b, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others (...) freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms”;
 - its article 12.2 which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;
- v. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Iran.

² See Observatory Press Release, February 8, 2011 and Urgent Appeal IRN 003 / 0511 / OBS 077.

Addresses:

- Leader of the Islamic Republic, His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shahid Keshvardoost St., Jomhuri Eslami Ave., Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, E-Mail: info_leader@leader.ir Faxes: + 98 21 649, + 98 21 649 / 21 774 2228
- President Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98 21 649 5880.
- Head of the Judiciary, His Excellency Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani, Ministry of Justice, c/o Public relations Office, Number 4, 2 Azizi Street, Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: +98 21 879 6671 / +98 21 3 311 6567, Email: lrjpr@iranjudiciary.com / bia.judi@yahoo.com / info@dadgostary-tehran.ir
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: +98-21-66743149, Email: matbuat@mfa.gov
- Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 7330203, Email: mission.iran@ties.itu.int
- Embassy of Iran in Brussels, 15 avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 762 39 15. Email: iran-embassy@yahoo.com

Please also write to the diplomatic representations of Iran in your respective countries.

Geneva-Paris, June 17, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, an OMCT and FIDH venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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