

THE OBSERVATORY - PRESS RELEASE

IRAN: Series of sentences, acts of judicial harassment and arbitrary detentions of human rights defenders

Paris-Geneva, February 8, 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), deplores yet another massive wave of repression against human rights defenders and expresses its deepest concern over the arbitrary arrests, sentencing and judicial harassment faced by lawyers, journalists and other human rights activists in Iran.*

The Observatory denounces the intensive judicial harassment and arbitrary detention of dozens of human rights defenders in Iran, which merely aims at sanctioning the legitimate exercise of their work, amid a general crackdown against the Iranian civil society.

The Observatory condemns in particular the ongoing incommunicado detention of Ms. **Fatemeh Masjedi**, human rights defender and member of the "One Million Signatures Campaign", who was arrested on January 28, 2011 while she was travelling from Qom to Tehran. Furthermore, it is feared that Ms. **Maryam Bidgoli**, human rights defender and member of the same campaign, could also be arrested at any moment. In May, 2009, Ms. Fatemeh Masjedi and Maryam Bidgoli were arrested, condemned on charges of "propaganda against the [political] system" and condemned on appeal to six months imprisonment by the Court of Appeal in Qom Province on December 7, 2010.

The Observatory was also informed by reliable information received on February 2, 2011 that human rights lawyer **Khalil Bahramian** was sentenced by Branch 28 of Islamic Revolution Court to 18 months in prison and banned from practising law for 10 years on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "insulting the head of the Judiciary". Mr. Bahramian has appealed the sentence.

In addition, on January 31, 2011, women rights defender Ms. **Haleh Sahabi** started to serve a two-year sentence issued by Branch 26 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court. She had been violently arrested on August 5, 2009 in Baharestan, spent 13 days in detention and again arrested at the end of December, 2009. The appeal court upheld the sentence against Ms. Sahabi, who is also a member of Mothers for Peace group, on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "disturbing public order".

On January 30, 2011, Mr. **Kaveh Ghasemi Kermanshahi**, Executive Member of the Kurdistan Human Rights Organisation and also a member of the "One Million Signatures Campaign to End Discriminatory Laws" as well as Iran's largest student organisation, Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat, was sentenced by Branch 1 of the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Kermanshah to five years' imprisonment on charges of "acting against the national security through membership of the Kurdistan Human Rights Organisation", "propaganda against the system by publishing reports and news" and "contacts with families of prisoners and executed political prisoners." He will appeal the sentence. Mr. Ghasemi Kermanshahi was arrested on February 3, 2010, and released on a \$100,000 bail in May 2010¹, after spending 110 days in prison (80 of which were in solitary confinement).

Furthermore, according to reliable information dated January 23, 2011, Messrs. **Farshid Yadollahi** and **Amir Eslami**, both members of the Human Rights Commission of the Iranian Bar Association and lawyers of Gonabadi Dervishes, were sentenced to six months of

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See Observatory Urgent Appeal IRN 002/0210/OBS 015.

imprisonment by the Court of First Instance of Kish Island, on charges of "forging title of lawyer", "acting against national security", "publishing lies" and "disturbing public minds". A seven-month imprisonment sentence against the third lawyer of Gonabadi Dervishes, Mr. **Mostafa Daneshju**, was upheld by the Mazandaran Appeal Court in the northern city of Neka on charges of "publishing lies and disturbing public minds". He is likely to be taken to prison any time. Mr. Daneshju was disbarred along with another lawyer, Mr. **Omid Behrouzi**, for defending the rights of Dervishes.

In addition, Mr. **Navid Khanjani**, member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters and considered as a significant figure in awareness on educational rights, was sentenced by Branch 26 of the Islamic Revolution Court to 12 years imprisonment and a monetary fine for "spreading lies", "disturbing the public opinion and propaganda against the system by giving interviews to foreign media", and "membership of Human Rights Reporters Committee". Mr. Khanjani was arrested in Esfahan in March 2010 and spent 65 days in Evin Prison before being released on a \$100,000 bail (around 73,319 Euros). Mr. Khanjani, who was previously banned from pursuing higher education for being a member of the Baha'i religious minority in Iran, was also charged of "founding an organisation for people banned from pursuing higher education". He was also banned from travelling abroad in an earlier sentence. He appealed the sentence.

Further, Ms. **Mahbubeh Karami**, human rights activist and member of the "One Million Signatures Campaign" was sentenced to three years imprisonment by Branch 54 of the Islamic Revolutionary Appeal Court and is likely to be taken to prison any time. She had previously been sentenced to 4 years in prison by the court of first instance on charges of "membership to Human Rights Activists collective", "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against the national security", and "publishing lies". She was acquitted of the last charge. She had already been detained several times before - twice in 1999, then in June 2008 for 70 days, and on a fourth occasion in April 2009 for 13 days. She had then been acquitted of the charges, before being re-arrested in March 2010, and detained for 170 days. She was released in August 2010².

The Observatory urges the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders presently detained in the country and to guarantee in all circumstances their physical and psychological integrity, as well as to conform with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

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See Observatory Press Release issued on March 15, 2010.