

THE OBSERVATORY - PRESS RELEASE

IRAN: Double punishment for jailed human rights defenders

Paris-Geneva, October 21, 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), denounces the policy of subjecting jailed human rights defenders to discriminative punitive measures in prison, while the sentencing of journalist Abdolreza Tajik to six years of imprisonment has been upheld in appeal.*

In Iran, the authorities have continued to target human rights lawyers as an attempt to reduce the number of those who are prepared to defend victims of the overtly flawed judicial system, in particular human rights defenders and women's rights activists, trade unionists and student activists, effectively criminalising human rights legal representation. Lawyers are not only subjected to judicial harassment and unfair prison sentences, but they are also subjected to punitive measures in jail aimed at silencing them and sanctioning their legitimate activities.

On October 20, 2011, Mr. **Abdolreza Tajik**, journalist, a member of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC) and winner of the 2010 Freedom of Press Award of Reporters without Borders, was sentenced in appeal to six years of prison on charges of "propaganda against the system", "acting against the national security", "cooperation with the DHRC", and "collaboration with opposition groups". Since the disputed June 2009 presidential election, he has been arrested three times. The third time he was detained during over six months. He remains free on bail but is at risk of arbitrary arrest anytime.

Another recent case is that of human rights lawyer Ms. **Nasrin Sotudeh**, known for defending juveniles facing death penalty, prisoners of conscience, human rights activists and children victims of abuse, serving a six year prison term in Section 350 of Evin prison, who has been banned from having family visits for three weeks as of October 16, 2010, on the pretext that she refuses to wear the chador, although there are no laws requiring the prisoners to wear the chador. In addition, she has not been denied the right to have meetings in person for over three months, contrary to prison rules according to which prisoners may meet their family members in person once a month.

Besides, human rights lawyer Mr. **Abdolfattah Soltani**, a founding member of the DHRC, who was arrested on September 10, 2011, was recently threatened by his interrogator of a prison sentence of 20 years on charges of "participation in founding the Defenders of Human Rights Centre", "propaganda against the system", "assembly and collusion against national security", and "earning illegitimate assets" through receiving the Nuremberg City's Human Rights Prize in 2009. Following his arrest, he has been held incommunicado in Section 209 of the Ministry of Intelligence within Evin Prison's premise. Last week his family was allowed to visit him for the first time. The investigation is closed and under such conditions, Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani should have been released on bail pending trial and a final decision. Nevertheless, Mr. Soltani's detention order was extended for another month in late September.

Finally, Mr. **Amir Eslami**, a member of the Human Rights Commission of the Iranian Bar Association and a lawyer of Gonabadi Dervishes, who has been in solitary detention since September 4, was recently transferred to Evin Prison's clinic owing to serious health problems. Other imprisoned lawyers of Dervishes are Messrs. **Farshid Yadollahi**, **Omid Behroozi**, **Afshin Karampour**, **Reza Entessari** and **Hamidreza Moradi** and are being held in Section 209 of the Ministry of Intelligence within Evin Prison's premises. The latter is also reported to have heart ailment. None of them have been granted access to their families or lawyers since they were detained.

The Observatory firmly denounces the policy of harassment of human rights defenders through arbitrary detention, judicial harassment and punitive measures in prison, which only aim at sanctioning their legitimate human rights activities. It also urges the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained, and more generally to conform to 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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