

THE OBSERVATORY - PRESS RELEASE

IRAN: Release of prominent human rights defender, while others remain detained

Geneva-Paris, June 29, 2011. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), welcomes the release of human rights defender Emadeddin (Emad) Baghi, founder of the Centre for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights and laureate of the 2009 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, but expresses its deepest concern about the ongoing arbitrary detention of other human rights defenders in Iran.*

On June 20, 2011, prominent human rights defender **Emad Baghi** was released. He had been arrested on December 28, 2009 and had spent 6 months in detention – including 5 months in solitary confinement, before being released on June 23, 2010 on health grounds. He was imprisoned again on December 5, 2010. He had been sentenced on July 27, 2010, by the Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court, to one year of prison for heading the Centre for the Defence of Prisoners' Rights, which was considered “propaganda against the system”. On August 17, 2010, he was sentenced in another case by the Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court, to six years of imprisonment for “propaganda against the system” and “colluding against the security of the regime” in relation to his interview with the late Grand Ayatollah Montazeri. The second sentence was later reduced to one year by the Court of Appeal of Teheran. In total, Emad Baghi spent five years and 19 days in prison since 2000.

Other human rights defenders are facing ongoing arbitrary detentions in Iran, including Ms. **Mansoureh Behkish**, human rights activist fighting against the execution of prisoners and member of the “Mourning Mothers”, arrested on June 12, 2011 and subsequently transferred to the Evin prison where she remains detained for “acting against national security”; Ms. **Maryam Bahrman**, member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, detained since May 11, 2011 for “acting against national security”, Ms. **Mahbubeh Karami**, member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, sentenced to three years imprisonment in February 2011 on charges of “membership to human rights activists collective”, “propaganda against the system” and “assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against the national security”, detained in Evin prison since May 15, 2011; Mr. **Mohammad Seifzadeh**, prominent human rights lawyer and founding member of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), detained since April 11, 2011, serving a sentence of 9 years imprisonment on charges of “acting against national security” for founding the DHRC, and “propaganda against the system” for his interviews with foreign media. He had appealed his sentence.

The Observatory firmly denounces the ongoing arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Bahrman, Ms. Mansoureh Behkish, Ms. Mahbubeh Karami, Mr. Mohammad Seifzadeh, as well as of dozens of human rights defenders in Iran, with the only aim to sanction the legitimate exercise of their human right activities, amid the continuing repression of the Iranian civil society.

The Observatory urges the Iranian authorities to put an end to these acts of harassment against human rights defenders, to immediately and unconditionally release those presently detained in the country, 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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