



Iran

30 April 2007

Sentencing / Releases - IRN 002 / 0307 / OBS 023.4

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the sentencing of Ms. Azadeh Forghani, Ms. Sousan Tahmasebi, Ms. Fariba Davoudi-Mohajer, Ms. Parvin Ardalan, Ms. Shahla Entesari, and Ms. Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani six of the activists who had organised a peaceful protest on June 12, 2006 as well as the "One Million Signatures Campaign"[1] demanding for an end to discriminatory laws against women.

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), has received new information concerning the situation of two women rights activists in Iran.

New information:

According to the information received, on April 11, 2007, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced Ms. Azadeh Forghani to a suspended sentence of two years for "acting against national security by participating in an illegal gathering".

On April 18, 2007, Ms. Sousan Tahmasebi and Ms. Fariba Davoudi-Mohajer were sentenced by the Revolutionary Court to prison for "actions against the State" and "threatening national security" (article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code). Ms. Davoudi-Mohajer, who is currently abroad, was sentenced to four years in prison, three of which are suspended. Ms. Tahmasebi was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, with one year and a half suspended.

On April 24, 2007, the Sixth Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran sentenced Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani, Shahla Entesari and Parvin Ardalan to three years' imprisonment for "collusion and assembly to endanger the national security" (article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code), two-and-half years being suspended.

The women were all tried in absentia. They will be required to serve the suspended sentences if "found guilty of another crime" during the next five years. Their lawyers appealed their sentences.

Finally, the Observatory was informed that Ms. Nahid Keshavarz and Ms. Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh, two other women who had been taken to the Revolutionary Court on April 3, 2007, and then transferred to Evin prison, were released on bail on April 14, 2006.

Background information:

On March 4, 2007, 33 women rights activists were arrested while peacefully gathering in the front of the Tehran Revolutionary Court to mark International Women's Day, which was to be celebrated on March 8, 2007. They were also protesting against the trials of six women human rights defenders who are prosecuted in connection with their participation in a peaceful assembly in June 2006, and with their involvement in the "One million signatures" campaign[2].

The 33 women who were arrested include Ms. Assieh Amini; Ms. Gila Baniyaaghouh; Ms. Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh; Ms. Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh; Ms. Sara Loghmani; Ms. Zara Amjadian; Ms. Maryam Hosseinkhah; Ms. Jelveh Javaheri; Ms. Niloufar Golkar; Ms. Parastou Dokouhi; Ms. Zeynab Peyghambarzadeh; Ms. Maryam Mirza; Ms. Saghar Laghai; Ms. Khadijeh Moghadam; Ms. Saghi Laghai; Ms. Nahid Keshavarz; Ms. Mahnaz Mohamadi; Ms. Nasrin Afzali; Ms. Talat Taghinia; Ms. Fakhri Shadfar; Ms. Maryam Shadfar; Ms. Elnaz Ansari; Ms. Fatemeh Govarai; Ms. Azadeh Forghani; Ms. Samiyeh Farid; Ms. Minou Mortazi and Ms. Sara Imanian.

Five of the six women currently prosecuted before the Tehran Revolutionary Court were amongst those arrested on March 4, 2007: Ms. Nahid Jafari; Ms. Sousan Tahmasebi; Ms. Parvin Ardalan; Ms. Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani and Ms. Shahla Entesari. Ms. Fariba Davoudi-Mohajer is the sixth woman to be prosecuted in this case. One of their lawyers, Ms. Shadi Sadr has also been arrested.

Between March 6 and 9, 2007, 31 of these 33 women were released on bail.

On March 19, 2007, Ms. Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh and Ms. Shadi Sadr were released on bail. They had to pay respectively 250,000 and 200,000 USD for the bail

On April 2, 2007, Ms. Nahid Keshavarz and Ms. Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh were again arrested at the Laleh park, in Tehran, while collecting signatures in support of a petition to change discriminatory laws against women. Three other members of the Campaign, Ms. Sara Imanian, Mr. Homayoun Nami and Ms. Saiedeh Amin, were released after spending a day in detention at the police station.

On April 3, 2007, Ms. Nahid Keshavarz and Ms. Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh were taken to the Revolutionary Court. During their interrogations, they were asked to sign a statement agreeing to end their activities in the "Campaign". When they refused to do so, the two women were charged with "actions against national security" and transferred to the Evin Prison.

In particular, they were told that the demands of the "Campaign" with respect to equal rights to inheritance for women, equal value of testimony of men and women, equal financial remuneration for bodily injury or death, and the elimination of polygamy were in contradiction with the tenants of Islam.

Ms. Nahid Keshavarz is a member of the Women's Cultural Center and provides regular news reports and articles for the website of this leading women's NGO www.herlandmag.info and the site of the "Campaign" www.weforchange.net. Ms. Keshavarz is a sociologist and also a regular contributor to other leading publications.

Ms. Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh is a member of the Iran Civil Society Organisations Training and Research Centre www.koneshgaran.net, which was recently shut down by security forces. She served as a journalist for the website of this leading NGO engaged in capacity building for civil society. She has also been a journalist with reformist dailies for seven years.

Actions required:

Please write to the Iranian authorities and ask them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Sousan Tahmasebi, Ms. Fariba Davoudi-Mohajer, Ms. Parvin Ardalan, Ms. Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani, Ms. Azadeh Forghani, Ms. Shahla Entesari as well as all above-mentioned activists;
- ii. Ensure that Ms. Sousan Tahmasebi, Ms. Fariba Davoudi-Mohajer, Ms. Parvin Ardalan and Ms. Noushin Ahmadi-Khorasani be granted a fair and impartial trial when appealing their sentencing, so that the charges against them be dropped as they seem to merely sanction their human rights activities and as such are arbitrary.
- iii. Drop all arbitrary charges against them and the other women rights defenders above-mentioned;
- iv. Put an end to all acts of harassment against human rights defenders in Iran;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially its Article 5a, which states that "for the purpose of promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, to meet peacefully" and Article 8(2), which provides that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to submit to governmental bodies and agencies and organisations concerned with public affairs criticism and proposals for improving their functioning and to draw attention to any aspect of their work that may hinder or impede the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms";
- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Iran.

Addresses:

* Leader of the Islamic Republic, His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran, Faxes: + 98.21.649.5880 / 21.774.2228, Email: info@leader.ir / istiftaa@wilayah.org / webmaster@wilayah.org * President, His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98.21.649.5880, E-mail: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir * Head of the Judiciary, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi, Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: +98.21.879.6671 / +98 21 3 311 6567, Email: Irjpr@iranjudiciary.com * Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Manuchehr Motaki, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98.21.390.1999, 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

* Ambassador Mr. Ahani, Embassy of Iran in Brussels, avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 15 A. 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 762 39 15. Email: iran-embassy@yahoo.com

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

Geneva-Paris, April 30, 2007

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

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

The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line: Email : Appeals@fidh.omct.org Tel et fax FIDH : + 33 1 43 55 55 05 / 33 1 43 55 18 80 Tel et fax OMCT : +41 22 809 49 39 / 41 22 809 49 29

[1] The "One Million Signatures Campaign" started its activities in July 2006, and seeks to provide education on legal rights of women at the grassroots level with a view toward changing discriminatory laws against women. Along these lines, the "Campaign" collects signatures in support of its aims, which it plans to submit to the Parliament.

[2] See Urgent Appeal IRN 001/0107/OBS 003, issued on January 17, 2007 as well as the Press Release of January 29, 2007. The meeting in June 2006 was held to protest against discriminatory laws in Iran. The six women were subsequently charged with "organising activities against State security" and with "organising an unlawful assembly".

<http://www.fidh.org/Sentencing-Releases-IRN-002-0307-OBS-023-4>