

LDDHI

جامعه دفاع از حقوق بشر در ایران

Public Statement

Stop discrimination and suppression of women in Iran!

Free all prisoners of conscience!

13 August 2011

Karim Lahidji, vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and President of the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI) said today: *“The Iranian government should be pressured to release all women prisoners of conscience unconditionally and immediately, abolish all the discriminatory laws and join the CEDAW. The international community should express full support for the Iranian women’s movement and its fight for the establishment of basic freedoms, equal rights and respect for human rights in Iran.”*

Over the past three months, several Iranian women’s rights activists and professionals have been detained or otherwise ill treated for their legitimate activities or practising their profession. Some of them were later released on bail, but they are threatened by unfair and undue judicial prosecution and imprisonment. Some others are still in arbitrary detention. The following are non-exclusive examples:

- **Maryam Bidgoli** (arrested 29 July 2011); **Marzieh Vafammehr** (detained early July 2011); **Mahboubeh Karami** (arrested 31 May 2011); **Maryam Bahreman** (detained 31 May 2011); **Laleh Hassanpour** (arrested 24 April 2011) [For more details → **Annex**]
- **Mahnaz Mohammadi** (documentary filmmaker) was detained on 26 June 2011 and released on bail on 27 July 2011.
- **Maryam Majd** (sports photographer) was detained on 17 June 2011 on her way to Germany to cover the Women’s Football World Cup. She was released on bail on 18 July 2011.
- **Pegah Ahangarani** (actress), who was on her way to Germany to write a blog for the German network Deutsche Welle on Women’s Football World Cup competitions, was detained on 10 July and later released on bail on 27 July 2011.
- **Narges Mohammadi** (human rights activist) was tried on 28 June 2011 on charges of membership of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), propaganda against the system and assembly and collusion with intent to commit crimes against the national security. She had been detained in front of her very young children on 10 June 2010 and released on bail on 1 July 2010.
- **Zahra Yazdani**, journalist, was detained on 21 June and released on 29 June 2011.
- **Mansoureh Behkish** (supporter of ‘Mourning Mothers’ and human rights activist) was detained in the street on 12 June 2011 and released on bail on 9 July 2011. Having lost six members of her family in the executions of political prisoners in the

1980s, she has been arrested and kept in detention several times during the past few years.

- **Raheel Ashnagar**, blogger and women's rights activist, was detained in the northern city of Bandar Anzali on 31 May and released on bail on 6 June 2011.
- **Fatemeh Tamimi** (lawyer) was detained on 17 May and released on bail on 22 May 2011.
- **Homa Dorothy Parvaz**, an Al-Jazeera journalist of Iranian origin, disappeared on arriving in Damascus on 29 April 2011. The Syrian authorities handed her over to Iran on 1 May. On 4 May, the Iranian foreign minister said he had no information about her. She was released two days later on 16 May 2011 and left Iran.
- **Assal Esmaelzadeh** (political activist) was detained on 1 May and released on bail on 1 June 2011.

Background Information

There are scores of women prisoners of conscience and political prisoners in Iran. We have recorded names, sentences, date of arrest and imprisonment location of 47 such prisoners in a table here (→**Annex**). The list which includes names of women's rights activists, student activists, former political prisoners, followers of the Baha'i faith, protestors, a human rights lawyer, a journalist, several bloggers, and an actress is far from being comprehensive.

Independent groups of women have faced increasing persecution and suppression in the past few years. The following are some of the groups that have faced the cruelty of the Islamic Republic of Iran's authorities:

- 'Campaign for Equality' ('One Million Signatures') is a group campaigning against legalised discrimination against women.
- 'Ban Stoning Forever Campaign' was a group that campaigned for abolition of the stoning punishment. Its activists have mostly been forced to flee Iran.
- 'Mourning Mothers' are women who have lost their children in political executions and massacres during the last 30 odd years. Since the beginning of their weekly silent protests in the Laleh Park of Tehran in 2009, they have been attacked by the security forces time and again.
- 'Mothers for Peace' are women who are active against war and military intervention in Iran.

A number of women have died in custody in the past or at the hands of the security forces, e.g. Ms. **Zahra Kazemi** (a photojournalist; as a result of blow to her skull in custody at Evin Prison/Tehran, 2003), Ms. **Zahra Baniyaghoub** (a medical doctor; allegedly committed 'suicide' in temporary detention in Hamedan, 2007), and Ms. **Haleh Sahabi** (a member of 'Mothers for Peace' died as a result of blows by the security forces in an attack on her father's funeral in Tehran, June 2011). Furthermore, a number of women – as well as men – were reportedly raped by the security forces in custody after being detained during the protests that followed the 2009 Presidential Election. The perpetrators of those crimes enjoy impunity and the Iranian judiciary has failed to bring to justice even a single perpetrator.

The Iranian women face extremely discriminatory laws that deny them their most basic rights. Some of the discriminatory legal provisions are as follows:

- They are obliged to obey the husband's sexual demands;
- They are deprived of the right of divorce; the husband has the power to divorce;

- The husband's permission is obligatory for travelling abroad or working;
- Female children's share of inheritance is half the share of male children; married women inherit only one-eighth of the husband's assets;
- Muslim women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men;
- A man's testimony is worth the testimony of two women;
- Men have the right of polygamy;
- The savage punishment of stoning is practised for adultery for both women and men, but most victims are women, because the right of polygamy occasionally provides a way out for men.
- The age of legal responsibility for women is 9 lunar years (8.7 solar years).

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the seven UN member states that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The crackdown on women activists and suppression of women's rights constitute a part of the overall repression of the Iranian people's movement for democracy and freedom, as a result of which a large number of women activists and journalists have been forced to leave Iran to avoid persecution.

We call on all members of the international community to urge the Iranian government to:

- Free unconditionally and immediately all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and stop the persecution of women's rights activists and professionals, starting as a first step with the release of all women prisoners of conscience and dropping all the charges against scores of women activists who are awaiting trial.
- Allow the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran and other independent experts such as those of the Lyon-based International Observatory of Prisons to inspect the Iranian prisons, and in particular the women's prisons.
- Join the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Amend or abolish all the laws discriminating against the Iranian women, including but not limited to the legal provisions mentioned above, as the first step for joining the CEDAW.
- Allow freedom of operation to all the groups campaigning for equal rights of women, the abolition of the death penalty and inhuman punishments such as stoning, justice, peace... including the 'Campaign for Equality', 'Ban Stoning Forever Campaign', 'Mourning Mothers', 'Mothers for Peace', lawyers defending political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, student groups as well as other groups.

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Annex: A non-exhaustive list of women prisoners of conscience in Iran

	Name	Prison Sentence	Date of beginning; prison	Status/affiliation
1	Ronak Safazadeh (aka Saffarzadeh)	6 years & 9 months	9 Oct 2005; Sanandaj	Campaign for Equality; Kurdish rights activist
2	Zaynab Jalalian	Death row	since 2007; Sanadaj	Kurdish political activist
3	Mahvash Sabet	20 years	5 March 2008; Evin/Tehran	follower of the Baha'i faith
4	Fariba Kamalabadi	20 years	5 May 2008; Evin/Tehran	follower of the Baha'i faith
5	Masoumeh Ka'abi	4.5 years	28 Sept 2008; Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz	A member of the Iranian Arabic-speaking minority; her husband is active abroad; the Syrian government extradited her to Iran on 10 September 2008.
6	Zaynab Bayazidi	4 years imprisonment in internal exile	16 Nov 2008; Zanjan Prison	Campaign for Equality
7	Sahba Rezvani	3 years & 8 months	16 Dec 2008; Evin/Tehran	follower of the Baha'i faith
8	Kobra Banazadeh-Amirkhizi	5 years imprisonment in internal exile	17 Jan 2009; currently in Evin/Tehran	believed to be imprisoned for her family ties to opposition members abroad
9	Alieh Eghdamdoost	3 years	30 Jan 2009; Evin/Tehran	Campaign for Equality
10	Shabnam Madadzadeh	5 years imprisonment in internal exile	21 Feb 2009; ; currently in Evin/Tehran	Student activist
11	Nazila Dashti	3 years	25 May 2009; Evin/Tehran	believed to be imprisoned for her family ties to opposition members abroad
12	Atefeh Nabavi	4 years	15 June 2009; Evin/Tehran	Student activist
13	Fartemeh Rahnama	10 years imprisonment in internal exile	29 July 2009; Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz	a political prisoner in the 1980s; believed to be imprisoned for family ties to Mr. Moussavi (a 2009 presidential candidate)
14	Masoumeh Yavari	7 years imprisonment in internal exile	18 Sep 2009; currently in Evin/Tehran	Street protestor
15	Zahra Jabbari	4 years imprisonment in internal exile	18 Sept 2009; ; currently in Evin/Tehran	street protestor; believed to be imprisoned for her family ties to opposition members abroad
16	Hengameh Shahidi	6 years	2 Dec 2009; Evin/Tehran	Journalist
17	Mahdieh Golrou	2 years	2 Dec 2009; Evin/Tehran	Student activist
18	Rayhaneh Hajj-Ebrahim-Dabbagh	15 years imprisonment in internal exile	27 Dec 2009; currently in Evin/Tehran	accused of sending films of street protests to opposition groups
19	Mottahraeh Bahrami Haghghi	10 years imprisonment in internal exile	27 Dec 2009; currently in Evin/Tehran	believed to be imprisoned for family ties to opposition members abroad; her husband and son are on death row
20	Kefayat Malek-Mohammadi	5 years	27 Dec 2009; Evin/Tehran	Street protestor
21	Farah Vazehan	17 years imprisonment in internal exile	29 Dec 2009; currently in Evin/Tehran	Street protestor
22	Maryam Akbari-Monfared	15 years imprisonment in internal exile	31 December 2009; ; currently in Evin/Tehran	accused of <i>moharebeh</i> [fighting God]
23	Bahareh Hedayat	9.5 years	31 Dec 2009; Evin/Tehran	Campaign for Equality & student activist

24	Fatemeh Khorramjou	Not clear	7 Jan 2010; Evin/Tehran	charged with actions against national security
25	Manijeh Monzavian (Nasrollahi)	3 years and 4 months	27 Feb 2010; Evin Prison/Tehran	follower of the Baha'i faith
26	Rozita Vasegh	5 years	15 March 2010; Vakilabad Prison in Mashhad	follower of the Baha'i faith
27	Soussan Tabyanian	1.5 years	7 June 2010; Evin/Tehran	follower of the Baha'i faith
28	Hanieh Farshi-Shotorban	7 years	18 July 2010; Evin/Tehran	blogger; charged with insulting the leader and Islamic sanctities
29	Ladan Mostofi-Ma'ab	5 years	18 July 2010; Evin/Tehran	blogger; charged with insulting the leader and Islamic sanctities
30	Nasrin Sotoudeh	11 years imprisonment 20 years of ban on practising law and travelling abroad	4 September 2010; Evin/Tehran	Human rights lawyer
31	Layla Tavassoli	2 years	5 Dec 2010; Evin/Tehran	street protestor; daughter of a political activist
32	Nazanin Hassan-Nia	1 year	Feb 2011; Evin/Tehran	Street protestor
33	Zahra Rahnavard	disappeared	since 28 Feb 2011; unknown	Wife of Mr. Moussavi (a 2009 presidential candidate)
34	Fatemeh Karroubi	disappeared	since 28 Feb 2011; unknown	Wife of Mr. Karroubi (a 2009 presidential candidate)
35	Laleh Hassanpour	1 year imprisonment plus 4 years suspended	23 April 2011; Evin/Tehran	human rights and women's rights activist
36	Tahereh Pour-Rostam (Sodagari)	detained	1 May 2011; unknown	former political prisoner; family ties to opposition members abroad
37	Sedigheh Moradi	detained	1 May 2011; unknown	former political prisoner; family ties to opposition members abroad
38	Arya Haeri	detained	1 May 2011; unknown	former political prisoner family ties to opposition members abroad
39	Fatemeh (Hour) Ziaei	detained	1 May 2011; unknown	former political prisoner family ties to opposition members abroad
40	Ashraf Alikhani	3 years	25 May 2011; Evin/Tehran	blogger
41	Mahboubeh Karami	3 years	31 May 2011; Evin/Tehran	Campaign for Equality; human rights activist
42	Maryam Bahreman	arbitrary detention	31 May 2011; Shiraz	Campaign for Equality
43	Marzieh Vafammehr	arbitrary detention	early July 2011; Qarchak Detention Centre at Varamin (far away in the south of the capital Tehran)	actress and documentary filmmaker; for her role in a lawfully authorised documentary (My Tehran for Sale) produced in 2008
44	Maryam Bidgoli	6 months	21 July 2011; Qom	Campaign for Equality
45	Fatemeh Darvish	not clear	not clear; Evin/Tehran	not clear
46	Sholeh Ta'eb	not clear	not clear; Evin/Tehran	not clear
47	Maryam Hajjilouyi	not clear	not clear; Evin/Tehran	not clear