

Biography of Bahareh Hedayat



Bahareh Hedayat, a member of central committee in charge of public affairs of the Office for Strengthening Unity, the largest university students' union in Iran, has been arrested and sentenced to nine and half years of punitive imprisonment. She was charged with propaganda against the regime for her interviews with the foreign press, insulting the Leader (*Vali Faqih*), insulting the president, taking action against national security by participating in social and public gathering, and helping organize group protests.

Bahareh Hedayat was born in 1981. Since 2001, became active while still a university student in the Tehran's Economic and Finance University and rapidly grew into one of the most active members of her university's student associations. Simultaneously, she has been active in the student union, the Office of for Strengthening Unity.

She has also been very active in the field of women's rights. Among her noticeable achievements was founding the Women's Commission in 2005 to promote and encourage the presence of the female students in various student activities and the publication of the women's movement's demands. She was also one of the key figures in founding the Campaign of One Million Signatures for changing the discriminatory laws against the Iranian women.

Bahareh Hedayat was elected to the Office for Strengthening Unity's Central Committee with the highest number of votes and the only women. She also accepted the responsibility of being in charge of the human rights committee in this Office. In her capacity, she continuously pursued the cases of abuse of human rights in the universities in Iran and reported them to the related organizations. Pursuing and reporting cases of rape of female university students in various universities such as Razi, Kermanshah, Zanjan, and Sahand in Tabriz are among her most courageous activities. She was also involved with investigating the legal situation of students who were expelled from universities, denied the right to continue their education, or those arrested.

She was unanimously reelected to the Office in the following term's election by the general assembly. She once more accepted the responsibility of being in charge of public relations as well as being its spokesperson. Bahareh in June 15, 2006, as the secretary of Women's Commission in the Student Union, participated in organizing and issuing a call to protest

against the discriminatory laws against women. While participating in this rally, she was faced with severe police brutality and was arrested for the first time. She was charged with unlawful assembly and sentenced to two years imprisonment that was suspended for five years. However during the next year, in spite of all the warnings and threats she received from the security and information forces, she organized meetings and seminars on various subjects such as "The Women's Movement and Democracy" and "The Women's Movement, Threats, and Resistance," which were very well received among political, civil society, and women activists.

She was arrested on July 9, 2007, while organizing and attending a sit-in in front of Amir Kabir University to protest the unwarranted detention and the torture of students, along with five other members of the central committee of the Office. After spending one month in solitary confinement, she was released on a heavy bail.

She was rearrested on July 13, 2008, on her wedding night, and was released again after spending one month in solitary confinement.

Bahareh Hedayat was arrested yet again at the beginning of the Iranian New Year in 2009 for participating in a peaceful assembly of the family of the political prisoners in front of Evin prison.

Like many other members of the Office, she was an active critic of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's politics. Following the fraudulent presidential election and widespread fraud and crimes committed by the security forces, such as the night attack on the university campus and the dormitory, Bahareh Hedayat, as one of the key figures in student movement, became the main target for arrest by the security forces. They raided her house twice in June and in August to arrest her but did not succeed.

As a result of her message to university students in Europe on Student Day, November 17, 2009, as well as her message of December 7, 2009 (Student Day in Iran), addressed to a meeting in solidarity with Iranian students (held in Holland), Bahareh Hedayat was arrested on Dec. 30, 2009, tried in Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court headed by Judge Maqiseh, and was sentenced to nine and half years punitive imprisonment. She was charged with propaganda against the regime for her interviews with the foreign press, insulting the Leader (*Vali Faqih*), insulting the president, acting against national security by participating in social and public gathering, and helping organize group protests. All together she received seven and half years of imprisonment for the aforementioned charges and, two years suspended imprisonment for acting against national security and organizing an unlawful assembly on June 12, 2006 was added. This judgment was upheld in the Court of Appeal, Branch 54 of Revolutionary Court in July 2010.

Bahareh has been imprisoned now for two years. For extended periods of time during this period, she was deprived of all her basic rights such as the right to have a lawyer, telephone conversations with her family, or meetings with visitors. In December 2010, following her message to the Iranian students, she was charged again with propaganda against the regime and acting against national security, was denied all her lawful benefits in prison, was completely denied any contact with her family, and was put on trial. She was initially sentenced to six months punitive imprisonment, which she appealed and is presently being reviewed in the Court of Appeals.

So far she has been under extreme pressure from the security forces as well as the judiciary to petition for forgiveness and amnesty by expressing her regret over her past activities and positions. However she has refused to accept this request.