

report

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Human Rights in Iran

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No free teaching at Iranian Universities

Professors critical of the Iranian regime are being replaced by ones with less qualifications and experience.

The Iranian government policy under Mahmud Ahmadinejad is undermining the freedom of education in universities.

The minister of science, research and technology, Kamran Daneshjoo is responsible for these restrictive policies. He continually restricts university freedom in order to “stabilize their leadership“.

However this policy already had its beginning in Ahmadinejad's first period of office from 2005 to 2009. Daneshjoo has sped up this process. The radical Basij-militia with their student representations also plays an important role in enforcing this policy.

Daneshjoo has been promoted to this office as a reward for loyalty to Ahmadinejad in the electoral commission of the ministry of interior during the controversial premiership election of 2009. His university policy is characterized by eleven measures, all contributing to the restriction of a free and critical education. The removal of professors who are critical of the regime, or who seem disloyal to the government and the restriction of the universities in their free choice of teaching staff should be strongly condemned.

Professors in the humanities departments who are known to be critical of the government are released or given early retirement and replaced by staff with lesser qualifications. For example the 'Allameh Tabatabai University in Tehran since 2005 has sent many professors to early retirement, because they criticized the economic policy of the ninth (2005-2009) and tenth (since 2009) Iranian governments under Ahmadinejad. During the summer of 2010 a

total of eight university directors were removed after Daneshjoo had announced that their policies were inconsistent with government policies.

The basis of the humanities lies in the Koran

Daneshjoo has put the selection of teaching staff in the faculty of humanities into the hands of his ministry. The universities no longer have a share in this decision-making. A great number of the sacked professors are in prison or have fled abroad, where they can teach at some of the best institutes of the world including the USA. Officials of the ministry for science, research and technology, have falsely claimed that these directors have been removed for criticizing Islam rather than for criticizing the government.



The Iranian Minister for Science, Research and Technology, Kamran Daneshjoo, is continuing his restrictive educational policy.

High Council of the Culture Revolution

The “High Council of the Culture Revolution“ reduced the funding for humanities and redirected them into technical and religious departments. This was after the revolutionary leader Khamenei stated, that the basis of the humanities cannot be found in the West but must be searched for in the Koran.

Zohreh Elahian representing the influential Basij-militia demands that the ministry of science, technology and research puts the highest priority on the removal of secular professors claiming they are active enemies of the government and are colluding with foreign countries. The radical Student Basij groups are already increasing their influence with branches in a third of universities.

The Basij-militia becomes increasingly influential in universities

Daneshjoo also increased action against protesting students. The student Mohammed Amin Valian was accused of being a „mohDreb“ (Fighter against God) and sentenced to death, because he “had flung stones” on Ashura, which is a very important Shiite holiday. He has not been executed to date.

Daneshjoo has also not released those students who were imprisoned during the protests after the premiership election of 2009. The only student organizations that are able to participate in university activities are those ones who sympathize with the Iranian government.

A great number of student magazines were closed because they can only survive with support through public funding and Daneshjoo no longer tolerates independent Magazines.

External and paramilitary institutions

External and paramilitary institutions are given more and more power in the universities. The student-organizations of the Basij-militia supported by the government of Ahmadinejad, are also involved in violent suppression of protests at universities.

In 2007 the student-Basij had 600.000 members. According to plans of the Iranian government this number is to climb to more than 900.000 by 2014, which would be a third of all Iranian students. They are the main decision makers at Iranian universities and in the academic institutions. However, only a small part of the student-Basij members are ideologically convinced. The majority join the Basij because of the material and financial advantages that gives them.



Mesbah Yazdi, the confidant of the supreme leader of the revolution Khamenei and the ideological mentor of president Ahmadinejad.

Ahmadinejads ideological mentor sets the agenda

The mentor and confidante of the Iranian revolutionary leader Khamenei, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, has declared (1. September 2010) that „democracy, freedom and human rights would have no place in Islamic theology“ (ISHR report).

Yazdi is a Shiite fundamentalist. He issued a fatwa for the premiership election in 2005, in which all supporters of the Basij-militia were asked to elect Ahmadinejad.

Even before Ahmadinejad became president in 2005 Yazdi was an important representative of backward, anti-university policies. After the election of Ahmadinejads as president all universities and institutions were forced to follow Yazdis policies. The relatively independent thinking institutions Jihad University and the Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) could, until then, fight successfully against interference from Ahmadinedjads government. They are now being influenced more and more in choosing personnel.

Iranian Bahá'í leaders sentenced

The sentencing of seven Iranian Bahá'ís has resulted in a strong international response.

Strong international protests are the response to the long awaited judgments of seven leading members of the religious community of the Bahá'í in Iran.

On August 8th 2010, they were sentenced to 20 years in prison each. The two women and five men have been imprisoned since spring 2008 and have been kept in captivity without any trial.

They have been accused of spying for Israel, presenting propaganda against the state and the creation of an illegal organization. Later on, the accusation was enlarged and they were accused of being “moĐĐreb” [Fighters against God], which in most cases is fined with the death penalty. Since 1983, Iran has banned the Bahá'í.

International concern

Markus Löning, the commissioner of human rights and humanitarian aid on the German federal government, states: “The prison sentence against the Bahá'í board members is a heavy setback for all, who are fighting for human dignity and human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. There is severe doubt, that during the trial, basic judicial rights have been granted”. A press release from US-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hillary Clinton, described that the



US-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hillary Clinton, shows her “serious concern” regarding the continuous prosecution and discrimination of the Bahá'í and other religious minorities in Iran.

Markus Löning, the Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, considers the judgments a deep setback for human dignity and human rights in Iran.



USA “is severely worried about the continuing discrimination of the Bahá'í and other religious minorities in Iran”.

The seven convicts are members of the Iranian board of Bahá'í. This board is an informal organization for coordination of the Iranian Bahá'í. They call themselves “friends of Iran”. The convicts bear the following names: Fariba Kamalabadi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behruz Tavakkoli, Vahid Tizfahm and Mahvash Sabet. The first six persons were arrested in their houses in Tehran on May 14, 2008. The latter has already been taken into custody on March 05, 2008 in the North-Eastern city Mashad, while following a subpoena from the Iranian Ministry of Information.

Twenty months in prison – no trial

Right after their arrests, the seven persons have been kept in the infamous Evin-prison for political prisoners of Tehran for 20 months without a trial. According to article 33 of the Iranian Code of Criminal Procedure it is required that all cases have to be tried within one month of imprisonment. Extensions of this timeframe require a special court decision. In the case of the seven Bahá'í this possibility was applied. During the 20 months to the trial, several times their imprisonment was extended for two months at a time.

Accumulation of two-month extensions

The accumulation of the two-months extensions have resulted in an imprisonment of more than two years until the judgment was presented. Of this time, they spent several months in solitary confinement. Two days after the last bimonthly imprisonment timeframe expired, the lawyers of the seven Bahá'í filed for their release on bail on July 24, 2010. In the end of July, the responsible judge informed the convicts that their imprisonment will be extended by another two months.

Islamic Republic breaks international law

The International Pact on Civil and Political Rights has been ratified by the Iran during the reign of the Shah in 1975. Hereby the Iran has agreed to grant to any of its people, who is tried, to be tried in a competent, independent and objective court.

Additionally, the accused must have sufficient time to prepare his defense and to communicate with his lawyer. In the case of the seven Bahá'í, those presuppositions have not been given. The lawyers of the seven, among them the Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, did not have the possibility to communicate sufficiently with their clients. During the total imprisonment, it is said that the lawyers did have contact with them for less than one hour.

Additionally, in the beginning they were not allowed to enter the court room. "It seems that the judgment against the accused is based on them being members of a religious minority and the trial was implicated by severe faults. Neither international commitment, which have been committed to by the Iran by ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, nor the national jurisdiction concerning fair trials have been followed," says the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union, Catherine Ashton.

The British Minister of External Affairs, William Hague, has demanded strongly of the Iranian Administration to accept the appeal and to stop the discrimination of the Bahá'í-community.

Ashura protests in December 2009

Due to unrest during the Ashura protests in the end of December 2009, the imprisonment of the Bahá'í-board has been extended to January 2010. On December 27, 2009, one of the highest Shiite bank holidays, the Ashura-Day, the protests started.



The seven convicted members of the Iranian Bahá'í board.

During Ashura, the Shiites remember the battle of Kerbela, in today's Iraq.

During that battle in the battle against the Umayyad, Muhrram Husain, the son of the fourth caliph Ali, as well as nearly all masculine relatives has been killed on the 10th day. The Bahá'í as well as other groups were accused of being the main cause for the protest on Ashura, which have been part of the demonstrations against the presidential elections in June 2009. The Bahá'í reject any connection to this.

Accusation of espionage for Israel

On January 12, 2010, the trial against the seven began. When the case was presented, they were accused of espionage for Israel, propaganda against the state, collaboration with the intention of endangering the national security, creation of an illegal organization and dispersion of corruption in the world. Later, the accusal was enlarged to the claim that they are "moĎĎreb" [fighters against god]. Most of the time, such an accusation leads to the death penalty. The law suit consisted of six short, non-public hearings. Nevertheless the last hearing on June 14, 2010 was a public one.

On August 08, 2010, the department 28 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced the seven Bahá'í to 20 years in prison each. They were found guilty of espionage for Israel, defamation of religious holinesses, illegal organization and propaganda against the state. It seems that the accusation "Fighter against god" had been dropped. For most of the convicted, the sentence means imprisonment of 20 years a lifelong sentence, as there is no real chance that they will survive it.

Most likely, the condemnation following the accusation of espionage for Israel is caused by the fact that the Bahá'í have their spiritual center in the Israeli city Haifa. On August 09, 2010 the seven convicts were transferred from Evin-prison to Rajai Shahr prison, which is located 25km North-West of Tehran.

Bahá'í-AIḌh

The Bahá'í are no Islamic religious group, but they are the biggest non-Muslim religious minority in Iran. In Iran, roughly 300 000 to 350 000 people consider themselves members of the Bahá'í-community. There are more than five million Bahá'í worldwide. In Iran, the Constitution does not recognize the Bahá'í. Therefore, in contrast to the Christians, the Jewish or the Zoroaster, they are not protected, as the Bahá'í are a post-Qur'an Religious community [Canon 13 of the Iranian Constitution].

The Zoroastrianism has been founded in the Persian cultural region before Christ and it is a monotheistic religion, which started originally as dualistic.

The Bahá'í have their origin in the shiitic Islam. In Shiraz, a man named BḌb declared in 1844 that he was the hidden 12th Imam. For further explanation it should be noted that in today's Iran the so called velḌyat-e faqḌe is applicable, the reign of the highest cleric; in this case the leader of the revolution Khamenei. He rules in representation of the hidden 12th Imam. The BḌb did replace the Islamic religious law, the Sharia, by a new one. In a very short time he gained many followers and therefore was executed in 1850.

At this time, there were already followers of BḌb all over Iran. However the original founder of the Bahá'í-religion was a follower of the BḌb, who was released from prison in 1853. His name was Bahá'í-AIḌh. In 1863, he declared his claim to be the voice of God. Some of the followers of BḌb followed his half-brother, but the majority stayed with Bahá'í-AIḌh. His discipleship grew rapidly and became known as "Bahá'í".

In 1925, the "Highest Religious Court" in Egypt declared that the Bahá'í should be seen as fully independent of the Islam and its laws. This judgment of an Islamic authority has been the starting point of a development, which resulted in the fact that the Bahá'í are universally known as an independent, accepted religious system of this world. Due to the widespread incorrect presentations and systematic oppression of the Bahá'í in Islam-dominated countries, it remains a long-lasting challenge to communicate a clear picture of the being and the goals of this faith to the population and the clerical and secular institutions.

Bahá'í considered as apostate

In Iran, the Bahá'í are considered as apostates, as they consider Bahá'í-AIḌh as the last prophet and not Muhammed, as done by the Muslims. Since the Islamic Revolution 1979, they are subjected to systematic repressions. Since then, nearly 200 Bahá'í have been executed. Since 1983 the Bahá'í are forbidden in Iran. After Mahmud Ahmadinedschad took office in 2005, the repressions of the Bahá'í have been increased. According to the speaker of the Iranian Human Rights Council, Mohammed Javad Larjani, none of the sentenced Bahá'í are sentenced because of their belief. However the systematic attacks give enough reason to seriously doubt this.

Systematic discrimination of Bahá'í

There is a systematic campaign for discrimination of Bahá'í in Iran. Among others, this includes creation and distribution of lists with the name of Bahá'í, which includes assignments to survey secretly the activities of community members, raids in houses and confiscation of personal property, mass arrests and interrogations of Bahá'í, daily stirring up of hatred against Bahá'í in all means within the media close to the government, countryside destruction of cemeteries, destruction of holy sites and tombs, incendiarism of Bahá'í-homes and –property, refusal of higher education, defamation of Bahá'í-children by teachers at the school, exclusion of many business units, refusal of loans, closure of shops, denial of new shop licenses and organization of anti-Bahá'í-symposia and seminars by clerics including organized attacks against Bahá'í-houses and –property in the cities and villages, where the symposia are being held.

The fact that the spiritual center of the Bahá'í is located in Haifa, Israel, can be explained through the fact that the son and successor of Bahá'í'-AIḌhs is buried there. In Haifa, there is the Universal House of Justice, and here is the seat of the nine-headed board of the Bahá'í, which is elected every five years.



Abd-al-Bahá's son
and successor of
Bahá'í-AIḌh

Comment:

The one who steals our votes from the ballot box also steals our martyrs

On February 14, 2011, the Iranian opposition leaders, Mousavi and Karoubi, had called for protests. During these protests two young men were killed in Tehran. The 26 year student Sane Jaleh and the 22 year Mohammad Mokhtari were shot to death. While regime critics have no doubts that governmental security forces are responsible, the government accuses the protestors. Official authorities claim that the protestors fired on government security forces.

Meanwhile, the Islamic regime is attempting to characterize the two dead men as government supporters. On Tuesday state news agencies published pictures of a membership card which supposedly belonged to Sane Jaleh. Accordingly he was a member of the notorious Islamic Basij-militia. When it became known that Jaleh was of Kurdish-descent and Sunnit, the first doubts on the accuracy of this announcement spread over the internet. The Islamic government is known for discriminating against ethnic and religious minorities, and it seems unlikely that the militias would have admitted a Sunnite Kurd.

His friends and fellow students deny vehemently any affiliation of Jaleh with the Basij-militia. In the meantime several of them have taken a firm public position and described Sane Jaleh as a dissident. Supposedly he was volunteering in the electoral office of Mousavi during the 2009 presidential elections. Additionally, a picture was published on the internet, which shows Jaleh during a visit to the most important clerical opponent of the regimes, Ayatollah Montazeri.

In spite of all interviews and statements by his friends, the Iranian government holds firm to its version of the story. For Wednesday the government had called for a commemoration at the Teheran Art University (where Jaleh studied).

Students of the university organized a counter-event via the Internet. They did not want to allow that „the murderers carry the coffin of the martyr “. According to eyewitnesses, on early Wednesday, several buses with Basij-militia arrived at the Art University. The students were attacked and locked up in a hall. The coffin of Jaleh was carried to Tehran University without any participation of his fellow students and friends. The Basijis shouted slo-



The blogger Parisa Tonekaboni criticizes the policy of disinformation as done by the Iranian government concerning the death of the Kurdish student during protests in Tehran

gans and demanded the death penalty for Mousavi, Karroubi and the ex-president Khatami.

In the meantime the brother of Sane Jaleh has given an interview to the sender VOA-Persian and crying he declared that his brother never was a Basiji and that the membership card was forged. He and his family were put under pressure to confirm to the regime's version of the story. The regime will not release the corpse of his brother and he does not know any more what he can do.

The funeral of Mohammad Mokhtari, taking place as well on Wednesday afternoon, was taken over by the government. The state news agency stated that the „revolutionary population“ did carry the coffin of Mokhtaris. In this case the opposition drew attention to his Facebook site. On February 11 2011, prior to the protests, Mokhtari had written: „Dear God, let me get up and die, because I can't stand the degradation in such idleness any longer“”. By applying such methods, the government apparently attempts to prevent that the deceased become heroes, as it was the case with Neda Aghasoltan. She and other protesters, who have died during demonstrations after the controversial presidential election 2009, are symbol figures and heroes for the Iranian opposition.

With regard to the last elections one sentence dominates the Persian-speaking weblogs and Facebook sites: „The one who steals our votes from the ballot box also steals our martyrs“.

Parisa Tonekaboni

Black list for publishers and authors

Government-near think tank circulates detailed black list – publishing houses and bookshops are closed

The Islamic Republic of Iran is increasingly cracking down on independent publishers and authors. A government-near think tank has circulated a detailed report of 67 pages on Iranian publishers and authors, who supposedly intend an overthrow of the system.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran such a reproach is particularly serious. Criticizing the Islamic-oriented government can be considered as “fight against god” and capital punishment can be administered. Over the past weeks, dozens of Iranian publishing houses have closed down.

The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) refers the document as a “black list justifying the arrest and assassination of independent publishers and authors”. The document was created by a state-near institution, indicating their name as “Islamic Republic of Iran’s Soft Security Strategic Think Tank” on their website. This institution published an essay of 67 pages entitled “Investigation of a Soft Overthrow in the Publishing Field “. It was published both on their website <http://jang-narm.com> (“Soft War”), and on their blog www.amniateenarm.ir (“Soft Security”).

In this essay selected publications of seven well-known Iranian publishers are shortly introduced and examined and it is demonstrated how these publishers and their staff are accused of planning to overthrow the government. Dozens renowned Iranian authors, interpreters, Islam scientists, political scientists, scriptwriters, historians, philosophers and clerics are listed.

Closing of subsidiaries and bookshops

The publisher Nashr-e-Ney is under attack. The publishing house is considered to have a leading role among the publishers who don’t agree with the Islamic system in Iran. Since Ahmadinejad’s first term, Dschafar Homayi, the head of this publishing house is allegedly one of the most important critics of the Ministry for Culture and Islamic Guidance. On January 1st, 2011, the state news agency ISNA



Screenshot of the website www.amniateenarm.ir on which the report of 67 pages can be found.

reported that the publisher Nashr-e-Ney had closed down its Tehran office a few weeks earlier.

It remains unclear why the branch was closed down. According to ISNA, the publisher was travelling and could not be contacted. Ney published mainly articles in the field of literature, sociology and philosophy. Additionally, dozens of other publishers have also closed down their branches in Tehran – supposedly for economic reasons.

Several internationally renowned Iranian intellectuals were among the authors denounced by the publisher Nashr-e-Ney such as the reform cleric Mohsen Kadivar and the authors Jahan-Beglu, Hossein Nasr, Emadeddin Baghi, Ebrahim Nabavi and Mohsen Makhmalbaf.

Shift towards totalitarianism

Several people mentioned in the document are in custody, others have already left Iran. According to the ISHR, the Islamic Republic of Iran is shifting further towards totalitarianism. Different-minded people are increasingly criticized and punished. The emerging climate of fear is supposed to facilitate “forcible-coordination”.



Screenshot showing the link on www.amniateenarm.ir to the report of 67 pages

Legal “permission“ to kill without court decision

The Criminal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran contains passages, which legitimize the assassi-

nation of certain persons without prosecution and legal proceedings – this means legalizing self-administered justice without any consequences for the perpetrator. This can for example be found under article 226 of the Iranian Criminal Code and is called “mahdur ad-dam”, which comes from the classical Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh).

This concept refers to people, whose blood is considered “without any value”. This particularly refers to apostates, people who turned away from Islam, and „unprotected“ people such as atheists and “fighters against God“. This legal opinion is against international law; however, it is still part of the Iranian criminal law.

The ISHR criticizes this situation and considers it as an invitation for extremists and militia members to intimidate and kill opponents of the Islamic system.

Article 295 of the Iranian Criminal Code states that even if the murderer claims that he or she “wrongfully” considered to having “permission” to kill his or her victim, the charges will be dropped. The perpetrator will not be executed, but will only have to pay „blood money“. It is known that in several cases murderers have made use of this article in Iran.

More than 100 executions in 37 days

On 26th January 2011, the ISHR referred to the fact that, since 19th December 2010 there have been more than 103 known cases of executions in Iran. However, the actual number is expected to be higher, because executions are not always officially confirmed by the Iranian authorities.

In several cases the victims were Kurds, who were activists for minority rights in Iran. The ISHR have urged the German Federal Government to act immediately, as more political prisoners are threatened by the death penalty.

In Iran the extraordinarily high number of executions keeps on rising dramatically. The Islamic Republic holds the sad record of the most executions per capita. There are roughly 74 million people living in Iran. Of those, only slightly more than half are Persians; the remaining population is members of ethnic minorities such as Kurds, Aseris, Balotsch and others.

The ISHR stated, that at least fourteen Kurds, who are activists for minority rights, are immediately threatened with execution. Concerning this issue,

the ISHR already contacted the German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs Westerwelle (FDP) on January 18th. In addition, they drew attention to the idleness of the UN Security Council and the European Commission. The ISHR demanded that a focus should not only be put on the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic, but that systematic torture, comprehensive intimidation, custody against dissidents and political murder must not be ignored.

For years Iran has violated the “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights” in many respects, although it has repeatedly confessed publicly to that obligation, e.g. during the Iranian application membership in the UN Human Rights Council in the years 2006 and 2010.

The ISHR states that even though the UN has regularly reported on violations of human rights in the Islamic republic of Iran it has yet to act upon those reports. It is incomprehensible why the UN Security Council and European Commission remain so passive in defending or enforcing human rights (in the Islamic Republic of Iran).

Internet Police wage war against bloggers

Author: Seyed Amir Raschidi, ISHR Germany

In countries where the police role is to protect citizens they are generally welcome, but where their role is to suppress freedom their presence is seen as a threat. Since the fraudulent presidential election in 2009 people have turned to the e virtual space of the internet for expressions of freedom.

When the Internet was launched in Iran, there was no evidence of internet control. People could easily share their opinions without fear of arrest. Social networking sites emerged very fast and were popular among young Iranians, who quickly became the world's second highest Orkut users – (a social network similar to Facebook) – One of the major Iranian demands remains the need for open, uncensored communication.

After the last presidential elections, almost all access to websites was closed. There were days when one could not even access one's own email account. Nevertheless, blogs and social networking sites remain the most effective tools in Iran for protesting against the results of the election.

In previous years, security strategists within the jurisprudence of the Islamic Republic have been struggling to gain control of the tools of modern media. There have been a number of arrests of activists and internet services for corporations has been severely restricted. After the presidential elections surveillance was greatly intensified. In the absence of free and independent news, websites and blogs became the most important sources of information.

During Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's first legislation he commenced the ambitious effort „to control cyber space“, by controlling websites and blogs. This was supported by the Ministry of Culture. „As it is a policeman's duty to ensure security in society, within the internet space security must be established as well. Considering the extensive use of the internet, the police force must be increased“, the Iranian Labour News Agency (ILNA) quotes Colonel Omid, chief of the internet police. He added that “if in this sphere, illegal work is done, the police will act”.

They don't want anybody to hear us

In 2001 the internet began to grow very fast. I think the Iranians welcomed and adjusted to



The highest police chief Ahmadi Moghaddam, who chases bloggers in Iran

the Internet for two reasons: Firstly, the Iranians love technology. Almost all Iranians have a computer and often they possess the latest models of any kind of technical devices (i.e. mobile phones, TV).

However, I believe the main reason was the fact that the Internet is a free and open medium. In fact, when the Internet was activated in Iran individual, political and social freedoms were at their lowest.

I remember my first contact with the Internet. The website, which attracted my attention the most, was a site called “Iran BB” which was some sort of forum. In this website you could open a topic that was of interest to you and openly discuss your own opinions and share them with others. I remember that a lot of threads were about religious matters. This site gave us an opportunity to discuss our own ideas and opinions about religion without fear of identification. Over time, news websites started and blogs were established. Anyone could become a blogger and present his opinion and express whatever he/she wants, without fearing any governmental penalties. Shortly after the internet was established in Iran, it became the main news source for Iranians. It was at this point the government realized that there was a serious challenge to its own television and radio broadcasting.

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The journalist Nazanin Khosravani shall be tried because of “Propaganda against the system”

On November 02, 2010 the Iranian journalist Nazanin Khosravani was arrested. Currently she is kept in solitary confinement in the Evin prison. She is awaiting her trial to be opened by the courts.

None of the accusations have been officially confirmed, nevertheless the attorney in Tehran has mentioned that she will be tried for “her actions against the national security” and “propaganda against the system”. Her independent reporting seems to be the basis of her arrest.

The Evin prison is known for its terrible condition, especially in the winter; the temperature is nearly unbearable. So far, contact with her family has been rarely allowed.

The Person

On March 31, 1976, the Iranian journalist Nazanin Khosravani was born. She studied journalism, is currently single and without children and until her arrest she lived with her parents in Tehran.

According to her family, she suffers from heart problems. Her psychological state is unknown. Former prisoners reported that inmates are often not allowed to receive medical treatment, regardless of sickness, maltreatment and torture.

Not even intimidation could stop her

It is implicated that Nazanin Khosravani has cooperated and worked for more than 15 reform-oriented newspapers, magazines, online-media and publishers, which have all been banned or closed by other means. Due to that, Nazanin Khosravani could not continue working as a journalist since the beginning of 2010.

Among others, she also worked for the well-known papers such as Bahar, Norooz, Dorane Emrouz, Kargozaran and Sarmayeh Sobh-eh Emrouz and Shargh. Nazanin Khosravani was not a member of any party or political direction. To the understanding of ISHR she was imprisoned only due to her work as a journalist, who did not give in to the intimidations of administration and continued her independent reporting.



The journalist Nazanin Khosravani who has been kept in the Tehran Evin prison for more than four months.

Arrest and trial

On Tuesday, November 02, 2010, Nazanin Khosravani was arrested. Security officers of the Islamic Republic have ordered her parents to let them enter the house. They did not present any search warrant. If the parents had not cooperated, they would have used force.

No sign of her whereabouts

Thereupon her family contacted the police, which finally confirmed the identity of the security officers. So the family accepted the search of their house. The security officers confiscated all notebooks and several personal belongings, without giving receipts.

For days the parents were refused to gain knowledge on the reasons of the arrest, as well as on the whereabouts of their daughter. Three days after the arrest of Nazanin Khosravani, naming on November 05, 2010, Iranian security forces searched the house of her parents again. On

December 26, 2010 the Tehran attorney Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi told to the governmental news agency IRNA, Khosravani would be guilty of “actions against the national security” and “Propaganda against the system”. Until now, her trial has not been opened by any courts. Khosravani's lawyer, Farideh Gheytrat, was not permitted any access to the files of this case. Farideh Gheytrat is one of the leading Iranian human rights lawyers.

Along with the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi and few other well-known human rights activists, she has founded the “Center for Human Rights Defenders”. Without any legal grounds, it has been closed by Iranian administration. Many of the employees – all of them volunteers – have been arrested, threatened at or intimidated by other means.

Conditions in prison

Nazanin Khosravani is imprisoned in the Evin-prison, which is infamous for its torturers. Located in the northwest of Tehran, the Evin prison, functions merely as a pre-trial detention center. Already before the Islamic Revolution 1979, during the reign of the Shah, political prisoners have been arrested here. Evin is infamous for its inhuman treatment and it is considered a synonym for arbitrariness, maltreatment and torture.

According to eye witnesses, humiliation and torture of the prisoners are standard procedures. Khosravani is kept in solitary confinement in Wing 209, which is controlled by the Security Service.

So far, her family could contact her only a few times: once with a short phone call on November 8, 2010 and during a short meeting on December 30, 2010 and on January 13, 2011. Even with midwinter temperature, Nazanin Khosravani was not provided with adequate clothing. Even her family were not allowed to provide her with warm clothing. In the section of the prison where she is being kept, there are no beds. Even in the winter, the inmates have to sleep on the floor without blankets.

Women in prison

According to sources of the ISHR, the women are regularly subject to sexual assaults, humiliation and even rape, inside of Iranian prisons. In some cases, Iranian clerics have wedded female inmates with Pasdaran – so called warden of the Islamic Revolutions – for a time-confined marriage – against the clearly expressed will of the women. According to Iranian law, the wife has to be sexually obedient to her husband and he has “the right” to claim this by force. According to that logic, there

is no “rape within a marriage”. The Iranian administration reject that there are rapes within prisons of the Islamic Republic – even though high Iranian politicians have confirmed it.

Background

After the fraudulent presidential elections on June 12, 2009 and the following protests, the administration and militias have increased their repressions of journalists considerably. The police, attorneys, secret service, Pasdaran (engl: “Army of Guards of the Islamic Revolution”) and the Basij (engl: “the mobilized of the oppressed”), a paramilitary militia, tried to prevent all criticism towards the government and the system of the Islamic Republic. Several reformist journalists and bloggers have been threatened, arrested, heavily abused and tortured or intimidated in any other way. Often, there was no trial. Others have been sentenced to prison for many years, but by paying an exorbitantly high bail they were “preliminarily” released. Some have not been released although they paid the exorbitantly high bail. In most of the cases the accusations claim “endangering the national security”, “propaganda against the system” or “defamation of the leader”. For the Iranian level of income, the applied amounts of bail are astronomically high. Journalists are always under the threat of new arrests.



The Tehran attorney, Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi, claims Khosravani of having performed “actions against the national security” and “propaganda against the system”.

Student and woman rights activist: Bahareh Hedayat

Bahareh Hedayat was condemned to nine and a half years of prison

Bahareh Hedayat is an Iranian student and woman rights activist, who was born in Tehran in 1981. Since 2002, she has been a member of the Iranian student organization "Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat" („Office for Strengthening Unity“, OSU), where she is the only female representative on the central council. The OSU was founded in 1979 as an organization against secular and left student organizations. Meanwhile it divided itself into two parts. The reform-oriented wing campaigns against the existing political system.

She played an essential part in organising the “One million-signature Campaign“ which drew worldwide attention. She has been arrested repeatedly and detained in solitary confinement.

On December 31 2009, Bahareh Hedayat was arrested for the last time and was accused of 16 offences.

Among others she was accused of “propaganda against the system“, “breach of the public order“, “participation in illegal meetings“, “insulting the president“, “insulting the leader“, “communication with foreign media“ and “actions against the national security“. She was condemned to nine and a half years of prison, and is jailed in the Tehran Evin prison.

The person

Bahareh Hedayat was born on August 5th 1981 in Tehran and is married to Amin Ahmadian. Hedayat has two younger sisters and a younger brother. Together with her parents and her siblings she lived in Tehran.

In the year 2001 she began studying economics at the Tehran University. Quickly she became an active member in the student union. In 2002 she became the first woman committee member elected to this union and remained a member of this committee having been popularly re-elected in the following three elections.

Meanwhile, she also became actively involved in the Tehran department of the largest Iranian student organization, the “Office for Strengthening Unity“ (OSU (Persian: „Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat“). Finally



The women rights activist Bahareh Hedayat who had great influence in founding the “One Million Signature Campaign”.

she joined the main committee of this organization. In 2003 she was a member of group of activist women, who protested against the death sentence passed on Dr. Aghajari, a university lecturer.

Dr. Said Hashem Aghajari was arrested on August 08, 2002, after he publicly appealed for a “religious renewal“ on June 19, 2002, in which he asked Muslims not to blindly follow their religious leaders.

In addition to her student activities, she was and is an active women rights activist. In this field, her biggest achievement was the foundation of the “women’s commission“ in 2005 . This commission was founded to motivate female students to collaborate and to support the demands of the women’s rights movement, which was also one of the central demands of the student movement. During this time the women’s commission of the OSU elected her into the position of Manager.

One-million-Signature campaign

In September 2006 Bahareh Hedayat was substantially involved in the foundation of the “One-million-

Signature campaign“, which called for the abolition of discriminating laws against women.

The campaign is the largest and most successful initiative ever organized by women rights activists in Iran. From the beginning, Bahareh Hedayat was involved in the advertising of the campaign at universities. In the same year she got elected into the central committee of the OSU with the highest number of votes and as the only female member. In addition she became nominated for the membership of the OSU Human Rights committee.

Since then she was re-elected again and again for the same positions and is also active as speaker for the OSU.

Nomination for Student Peace Prize

In 2010 Bahareh Hedayat was nominated for the student peace prize by the European Students Union.

Arrest and trial

On June 12, 2006, Bahareh Hedayat was arrested during a protest meeting, after this meeting was violently attacked by the police. The court found her guilty for „organizing illegal meetings“ and condemned her to two years of solitary confinement.

The court of appeal confirmed the judgment, however adjourned it for five years. In 2007 together with six more members of the central committee of the OSU Hedayat organized a strike in front of the Amir Kabir University in Tehran, to protest against arbitrary arrests and torture of students.

The intelligence officers reacted violently against this protest and arrested Hedayat once again. She had to spend more than one month in solitary confinement while being under strong pressure by officers of the Intelligence Ministry. She was released temporarily after paying a high bail. Until today the responsible court has not delivered a judgment for this case.

On July 13, 2008 Bahareh Hedayat was arrested again. After an additional month in solitary confinement, she was released temporarily. However, in the middle of March 2009 she was arrested again, because she had participated in a peaceful meeting of families of political prisoners in front of Evin prison.

This meeting was violently assaulted by the security agents. Since the controversial presidential elections in 2009, Bahareh Hedayat is on top of the

intelligence list. Twice, on 15th June 2009 and in September 2009, the police attempted unsuccessfully to arrest her in her house.

“Insult of the leader – propaganda against the system – actions against the national security”

On December 31, 2009 officials finally arrested her. The Tehran public prosecutor informed her that she is accused of 16 offences including “propaganda against the system“, “breach of the public order“, “participation in illegal meetings“, “insult of the president“, “insult of the leader“, “communication with foreign media“ and “actions against national security“.

Sentencing

In May 2010 Bahareh Hedayat was sentenced by Judge Moghiseh of the Department 28 of the Tehran Islamic Revolution court, to nine and a half years of custody because of her student and women right actions. In July 2010 the appeal court confirmed the judgment.

Conditions of custody

Currently Bahareh Hedayat is held in Section 209 of the Tehran Evin-prison, which is infamous for torture. During the Shah Regime, long before the Islamic Revolution 1979, political prisoners were held in the Evin-prison, which is located in the north-west of Tehran. It is known for its inhuman custody conditions. According to eyewitness reports there is constant abuse, humiliation, indignity and torture of the prisoners.

Falling sick during custody

According to reports from end December 2010 Bahareh Hedayat suffers from a gallbladder inflammation and needs to undergo an operation. According to her husband Amine Ahmadian, his wife did not suffer from any illness before the arrest. Since February 2010, he himself is not allowed to visit his wife; all his requests for visiting were rejected by the public prosecutor Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi. For some time now, Hedayat is not even allowed to phone her husband.

Background

In 1979 the Iranian student organization OSU was founded and is known as “Iran best known student organization” and “Iran’s Leading Pro-democratic Student Organization”.

It was founded by Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, the then closest ally of the supreme leader of the revolution Khomeini, as an Islamic organization for the abatement of left-wing, secular student organizations.

The OSU has played a central role in the taking hostages at the US American embassy in November 1979. Among others, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who played a decisive role during the raids at universities in the year 1980, belonged to the members of the general council. Khomeini named those raids "Islamic culture revolution".

At these "purges" regime-critical teaching-personnel and student were arrested and executed later. Just before the election of the reform-oriented president Mohammad Khatami in 1997, the OSU switched to the reformist side. In 2002 the OSU split in two wings. The conservative, smaller wing supports Mahmud Ahmadinejad, whereas the bigger part is against the existing political system.

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Filtering

In 2003, a three-member committee based on a new statute, began filtering sites and analyzing the internet. The stated aim of the government was to „preserve the national culture and the media“.

According to Iranian statistics (by Radio Farda) published September 14, 2006, 10 million websites were filtered, with 200 to 300 sites filtered every day. Sometimes the filtering is so restrictive that even the Google search engine gets blocked.

During the elections in 2009, this trend continued slowly. The Facebook pages of our candidates were filtered. After Mehdi Karroubi protested, the government removed those filters. However, after the elections basically all websites of the opposition were filtered.

Iranian Proxy

At this point, a group called the "Iranian Proxy" was founded. The group created many proxy servers which helped people to have access to information. Head of that group was a young man of 25 years, whom we call Mr. Genius. His real name is Hossein Ronaghi Maleki, and because he provided those proxies he has been arrested, tortured and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Attacks

Later on, the government discovered that filtering would not keep Iranians from accessing free information, so they started attacking websites and social networking sites, such as Radio Zamane's website or Twitter. The opposition's websites, such as Advar News, Saham News, Kalame, Jaras, and Balatarin..., were hacked.

Web remains only means

In Iran, the opposition does not possess any other media outlets except these websites. Therefore those sites provide the only means of communication between the opposition groups. The regime wants to silence us. They want to cut off the exchange of ideas between people.

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- www.hriran.org Current information concerning human rights (English).
- www.mehriran.de Daily and basic information about Sufis (German).
- www.boell.de Under "worldwide" the monthly Iran Report (German).
- www.gozaar.org Forum concerning human rights and democracy (English and Persian).
- <http://www.forequality.info/english> Campaign for equality in Iran organized by women (German, English, French, Italian, Spanish and Persian).
- <http://iranianminorityshumanright.blogspot.com> Detailed information (English) concerning (persecuted) minorities in Iran.

www.igfm.de and www.ishr.org

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