

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/062/2009

24 June 2009

UA 171/09 Arbitrary arrest/Fear of torture

IRAN **Mahsa Amrabad (f), journalist**
Abdolreza Tajik (m), journalist
Kayvan Samimi Behbahani (m), editor
Mojtaba Pourmohsen (m), editor
Sa'id Laylaz (m), journalist
Rouhollah Shamsavar (f), journalist
Mohammad Ghouchani (m), editor
Zhila Bani Ya'qoub (f), journalist
Bahman Ahmadi Amou'i (m), journalist
Mostafa Qavanloo Qajar (m), journalist,
Fariborz Soroush (m), journalist
Iason Athanasiadis-Fowden (m), Greek national, journalist
Maziyar Bahari (m) Iranian-Canadian dual national, journalist

At least 13 journalists are among scores of people arrested in their homes or offices since the disputed Iranian Presidential election on 12 June. The whereabouts of most are unknown, although those detained in Tehran are likely to be held in Evin Prison. All are feared to be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Mahsa Amrabad, a journalist for the *Etemad-e Melli* newspaper, (founded by presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi), Abdolreza Tajik, editor of the weekly magazine *Farhikhtegan* and Keyvan Samimi Behbahani, editor of the banned *Nameh* magazine were all arrested on 14 June.

Mojtaba Pourmohsen, editor of the newspaper *Gilan-e Emrooz*, from the northern city of Rasht, was arrested on 15 June. Fariborz Soroush, a freelance journalist who has given interviews to the Prague-based *Radio Farda*, was reported to have been arrested on 16 June. Saeed Laylaz, a journalist who writes for *Sarmayeh*, was arrested on 17 June, and on the same day, Rouhollah Shamsavar was reported to have been arrested in Mashhad, Iran's second city.

The editor of *Etemad-e Melli*, Mohammad Ghouchani, was arrested on 18 June at his home. This was followed on 20 June by the arrest of Zhila Bani Ya'qoub, member of the One Million Signatures Campaign and the editor of the website of the Iranian Women's Association who has written for many reformist newspapers. Her husband, freelance journalist Bahman Ahmadi Amou'i, was also arrested. Mostafa Qavanloo Qajar, a journalist for the monthly magazine *Sepideh Danaei* and *Radio Goftogoo* was reportedly arrested on 22 June.

Journalists reporting for foreign news outlets have also been arrested: Maziyar Bahari, a dual Canadian-Iranian who reported for *Newsweek* from Iran, was arrested on 21 June. On 23 June, the authorities announced that a Greek national who reports for the *Washington Times*, believed to be Iason Athanasiadis-Fowden had been arrested when trying to leave the country the previous week, possibly on 19 June. Amnesty International believes that all these journalists are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to expression of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, either orally, in writing or in print.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the announcement on 13 June that President Ahmadinejad had won the presidential election, which hundreds of thousands of Iranians dispute, the Iranian authorities have imposed draconian restrictions on freedom of expression. Access to the internet has been blocked or significantly interrupted. Iranian publications have been banned from publishing information about the unrest. Foreign news journalists have been banned from the streets, and some foreign reporters have been expelled from the country.

Scores of people are reported to have been arrested across the country, including prominent political figures close to Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi and former President Khatami who supported Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign and some human rights defenders. Other journalists who are also members of political parties or who campaigned on behalf of presidential candidates have also been detained. On 24 June, 70 academics who had met Mir Hossein Mousavi that day were arrested as they left his office. All but four were released later. Those still detained include Dr Ghorban Behzadian, the head of Mir Hossein Mousavi's election campaign. Hundreds of others have been arrested during demonstrations against the outcome of the election which have been met with excessive use of force by security forces. Many were beaten, and according to the authorities, up to 21 have been killed, although the true number is likely to be higher.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all the journalists listed above and anyone who has been arrested solely on account of his or her peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, as they are prisoners of conscience;
- urging that the whereabouts of all those detained be clarified and that they be allowed immediate access to their family members, lawyers of their choice and to any medical treatment they may require, and that they be protected from all forms of torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to remove unlawful restrictions on the freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Office of the Supreme Leader

Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info_leader@leader.ir

via website: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)

Salutation: Your Excellency, Ayatollah

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Head of the Iranian Journalists' Association

Rajabali Mazrooei

N°87, 7th St., Kabkanian St.

Keshavarz Boulevard, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: 98-21-896.35.39

E-mail: generalsecretary@aioj.org

Salutation: Dear Mr Mazrooei

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 August 2009.