

PUBLIC

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UA 52/07 Prisoners of conscience/III-treatment

IRAN **More than 30 women**

More than 30 women are reportedly being held incommunicado without charge in Evin Prison in the capital, Tehran. Amnesty International believes them to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for participating in a peaceful protest.

The women were reportedly arrested by officials of Iran's National Security Police on 4 March in the course of a peaceful demonstration outside Branch 6 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. According to unconfirmed reports, at least one woman, Nahid Ja'fari, was reportedly injured during her arrest, when police allegedly hit her head against a police van, breaking one or more of her teeth. She was apparently denied access to medical treatment afterwards.

Those arrested were taken immediately to the Vozara Department for Social Corruption, a detention centre usually used for people accused of minor crimes such as violations of state regulations on women's dress, which can be punished by a reprimand, fine or imprisonment. Family members of those detained went to the detention centre in an attempt to secure the release of their relatives, but were not permitted to see the women. Later on 4 March, it was reported that all those detained had been transferred to Section 209 of Evin Prison, run by the Ministry of Intelligence and outside the control of Iran's prison service.

There are fears among Iranian human rights defenders that those arrested will be kept in detention until after 8 March, International Women's Day. This may be an attempt to prevent planned events from taking place, including a demonstration in protest at discriminatory laws due to be held in front of the Majles (Iran's parliament).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The women were protesting about the trial of five women's rights activists (Fariba Davoodi Mohajer, Shahla Entesari, Noushin Ahmadi Khorassani, Parvin Ardalan and Sussan Tahmasebi) in Branch 6 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on charges of "propaganda against the system", "acting against national security" and "participating in an illegal demonstration," in connection with a peaceful demonstration on 12 June 2006 demanding equal rights in law for women in Iran. The demonstration was forcibly broken up by security forces, who arrested at least 70 people. Others have also been charged in connection with the 12 June demonstration, but have not yet been summoned to court. Journalist Zhila Bani Ya'qoub, who is among those detained at Evin Prison, was tried in January 2007 and acquitted of the charge of "participating in an illegal demonstration" in relation to the 12 June demonstration.

In August 2006, Iranian women's rights activists launched a "Campaign for Equality", aimed at collecting one million signatures from Iranians in support of changes to the law to end legalised discrimination against women. The campaign's website has been filtered by the Iranian authorities on several occasions in recent weeks, making it difficult for people in Iran to access information about the campaign.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of over 30 women on 4 March 2007 during a peaceful demonstration outside Branch 6 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all of them as they appear to be held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association;
- expressing concern at the reports that at least one, Nahid Ja'fari, may have been injured during her arrest and if so, may not have been granted access to medical treatment;
- calling for all of those detained to be granted immediate and regular access to their families; lawyers and to any necessary medical treatment;
- calling for all charges to be dropped against anyone in connection with the peaceful demonstration on 12 June 2006 which called for an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,

Leader of the Islamic Republic

The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shahid Keshvar Doost St., Tehran. Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 251 7774 2228 (mark "For the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah Khamenei")

Email: Via website, in English: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/EN/index.php?p=sendletter>

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: iranprobe@iranprobe.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President:

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: Via foreign affairs: +98 21 6 674 790 and ask to be forwarded to H.E Ahmadinejad
Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email
Salutation: His Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building
Panzdah-Khordad Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying; send appeals by post or email if you cannot get through)
Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line please write: For the attention of Ayatollah Shahroudi)
Salutation: His Excellency

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Baharestan Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 3355 6408
Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir
Salutation: Dear Sir

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 16 April 2007.
