

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### Iran : Arrests of demonstrators continue

Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to ensure that all persons detained in recent weeks during peaceful demonstrations, such as those which have been held in support of women's rights and by striking teachers, are released immediately and unconditionally.

#### **Arrest of teachers**

Dozens of teachers are reported to remain in custody following a peaceful demonstration on 14 March in front of the Majles (Iran's parliament). Scores, if not hundreds, are believed to have been arrested. Many were quickly released but several teachers' leaders continue to be detained, including AliAkbar Baghani, Secretary General of the Teacher's Union; Mahmoud Beheshti Langaroudi, the union's spokesperson; and Alireza Hashemi, Secretary General of the Teacher's Organization. Amnesty International has received the names of eighteen others arrested on 14 March: it is not clear if they are still detained. Reports indicate that at least some may have been summoned to appear before the Revolutionary Court on 19 March.

The teachers announced that they would begin a nationwide strike on 6 March 2007 in support of their demand for implementation of a law which would increase their pay, and held several large-scale demonstrations in the following days. On 8 March AliAkbar Baghani, Mahmoud Beheshti Langaroudi, Alireza Hashemi and up to 17 others were detained briefly in the middle of the night in Tehran. On 13 March, three teachers' activists were reportedly arrested in the city of Kermanshah in western Iran.

On 13 March, a meeting between teachers' representatives and members of the Majles took place in the presence of security and intelligence officials and ended without agreement, after which the teachers announced that they would hold a demonstration on the following day in front of the Majles.

#### **Arrests in Kordestan province on International Women's Day**

At least eight people are reported to have been arrested during an initially peaceful demonstration to celebrate International Women's Day, which was held on that day, 8 March, in Sanandaj, the capital of Kordestan province. Most are believed to have been released shortly afterwards, but at least one, Aso Saleh, a journalist working for the weekly newspaper *Didgah*, is believed still to be detained. Previously, in 2006, he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, suspended for three years, in connection with an article in a student publication concerning an argument among members of Sanandaj city council. He is reported to have gone on hunger strike to protest at the illegal manner of this latest arrest. Several people were also reported to have been arrested in another demonstration on the same day in Saqqez, but all were released shortly afterwards.

#### **Two women's rights activists still held**

Shadi Sadr and Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, who were arrested in the course of a peaceful demonstration on 4 March held to protest against the prosecution of five other activists in connection with an earlier, peaceful demonstration in June 2006, continue to be held in Section 209 of Evin Prison. Shadi Sadr is the lawyer for one of those on trial on 4 March. According to reports both women were allowed to telephone their families on 15 March and informed them that bail for their release had been set at 200 million toumans (over US\$215,000).

On 15 March the Raahi Legal Centre, founded by Shadi Sadr, and the Non-governmental Organizations Training Centre, founded by Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh, were shut down by Revolutionary Court officials who reportedly inspected the premises, took pictures and sealed the offices shut. Another NGO, Volunteer Activists ( Koneshgaran-e Davtalab) was also shut down on the same day