

**IRANHojjatoleslam Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari, researcher and journalist  
(diabetic), age 50  
Ahmad Zeidabadi, journalist  
Massoud Behnoud, age 55, journalist**

---

In a renewed crackdown on freedom of speech in Iran, the authorities have arrested three prominent journalists. One of them is diabetic, and has reportedly found it difficult to obtain insulin in custody. Amnesty International considers the three men to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the legitimate expression of their opinions.

Hojjatoleslam Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari was arrested on 5 August, a few hours after he flew into Tehran. He was one of a number of Iranian journalists and academics who attended a conference in Berlin in April, which was marked by protests by Iranian political groups in exile. He learned that a warrant had been issued for his arrest shortly after the conference, and had been staying in Germany and France, effectively in exile, ever since.

Friends and well-wishers greeted him when he arrived, and he was at home with his family when Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) officials came to arrest him several hours later. They searched the house and then took him to Evin prison, in the north of Tehran. He is an insulin-dependent diabetic, and there are unconfirmed reports that he has been unable to obtain insulin in custody.

Hojjatoleslam Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari is the Director of the *Ali Shariati* Research Centre. His office there was reportedly searched the day after he was arrested. He had been a contributing editor of the newspaper *Iran-e Farda*, which was banned in April 2000.

He was detained by order of the prosecutor of the Special Court for the Clergy (SCC), reportedly for "acting against national security," in connection with a speech he gave at the conference, and "defaming government officials in articles," "starting a campaign against the system," and "denying and insulting the holy religion of Islam".

Journalist Ahmad Zeidabadi was reportedly arrested at his house on 7 August, apparently in connection with articles he wrote for newspapers that have since been banned. A group of around a dozen plainclothes officials apparently detained him on the orders of the Court for State Employees. He too is reported to be at Evin prison. He had been working for the moderate newspaper *Hamshahri* (The Citizen), which is owned by the city of Tehran. The order for his arrest was reportedly only issued the day after his arrest.

Journalist Massoud Behnoud was reportedly arrested on Wednesday, 9 August by officials from the Press Court, on the basis of more than 50 complaints about his writing, some of which date from 1997. Massoud Behnoud wrote for the newspaper *Asr-e Azadegan* (Era of the Free), which was shut down in 1999, and the recently banned *Danestani-ha* (Worth Knowing). He has an ulcer and a heart condition.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

A clampdown on freedom of expression in Iran has been underway since July 1999, when the closure of the newspaper *Salam* sparked nationwide protests. Many more

newspapers have since been shut down. Eighteen newspapers were closed in April alone, and many journalists have been arrested.

These latest arrests follow the closure of four more newspapers, including *Bahar* (Spring). Proposals to reform the existing press law, which would have made it harder to prosecute journalists and editors, and which would have shifted legal responsibility to publishers, were controversially withdrawn after Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei called on the parliament (*Majles*) to leave the law unchanged, in a letter read out by the Speaker on 6 August.

The authorities have arrested a number of those who took part in the April conference at Berlin's Heinrich Böll Institute, which was marked by strong protest by exile Iranian political groups. Three of those arrested are reportedly still in custody (see EXTRA 43/00, MDE 13/07/00; UA 103/00, MDE 13/20/00; and UA182/00, MDE 13/13/00.)

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French or your own language:**

- seeking guarantees that the three men will be treated humanely in prison; that Hojjatoleslam Hasan Yousefi Eshkevari will be allowed the insulin he needs for his diabetes; and that Massoud Behnoud will also be allowed the medicine he requires for his ulcer and heart condition;
- urging that the three men be released immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience;
- asking what charges they face;
- seeking assurances that they will be granted immediate access to legal representation of their choice and to their families.

**APPEALS TO:**

1)Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,  
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue,  
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Iran**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2)President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami  
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue  
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

3)Head of Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi  
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegrams: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs,

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far  
Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Commission  
PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Faxes: + 98 21 204 0541**

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 20 September 2000.