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## **Iranian journalist and human rights defender set to face trial**

An Iranian journalist and human rights defender set to face trial tomorrow on a series of charges must be released immediately and unconditionally, Amnesty International said today.

Shiva Nazar Ahari, a member of the Iranian organization, the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), has been detained since 20 December 2009.

Shiva Nazar Ahari appears to be facing three vaguely worded charges of "assembly and collusion to commit a crime", "propaganda against the state" and mohabereh (enmity against God) for her reporting and activism.

No formal written charges have been presented to her lawyer.

“Such vague charges do not amount to a recognizable criminal offence. The Iranian authorities must immediately release Shiva Nazar Ahari and drop any charges brought against her solely for the peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and association,” said Philip Luther, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Programme.

“This trial seems to be more about the Iranian security forces seeking to justify the continuation of the clampdown on dissent and human rights defenders than about a genuine process towards obtaining justice.”

Shiva Nazar Ahari’s lawyer, Mohammad Sharif, told Amnesty International today that he was not permitted to challenge her continued detention and had only been permitted one face-to-face meeting with her to help prepare her case.

“Not granting Shiva Nazar Ahari regular access to her lawyer, or her family, not only dramatically increases the potential for her to be exposed to torture and other ill-treatment, but has also undermined the integrity and fairness of the whole trial,” said Philip Luther.

Shiva Nazar Ahari’s mother told Amnesty International today that she was concerned that the hearing on Saturday would not be fair, adding that both she and her husband hoped to attend, as the judge said that it would be an open trial.