

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 77/09 (MDE 13/022/2009, 16 March 2009) and follow-up (MDE 13/033/2009, 16 April 2009) - Prisoner of Conscience

IRAN Roxana Saberi (f), aged 32, journalist, dual US-Iranian national

Prisoner of conscience Roxana Saberi, was released from prison on 11 May 2009. Branch 14 of the Tehran Appeal Court heard an appeal against her conviction on 10 May and commuted her eight-year sentence to a suspended two-year term. She also received a five-year ban on working as a journalist in Iran.

Roxana Saberi was arrested on 31 January 2009. She was initially accused of illegally buying alcohol, which is banned in Iran. She was later accused of continuing to work as a journalist after her press credentials were revoked.

She was eventually convicted in a closed trial of unspecified "espionage". She had been charged under Article 508 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes "collaborating with a hostile state", for which Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced her to eight years' imprisonment on 18 April 2009.

According to her father, Roxana Saberi was deceived into "confessing" to certain activities when questioned in pre-trial detention. She had been told that she would be released from detention if she cooperated. Roxana Saberi retracted her "confessions" during the trial.

On 19 April, Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, instructed the Tehran General Prosecutor to ensure that Roxana Saberi was granted her full legal rights in defending herself. On 20 April, the Head of the Judiciary gave instructions to ensure that her appeal happened quickly and was fair.

On 10 May, Branch 14 of the Tehran Appeal Court overturned her conviction and commuted her eight-year sentence to a suspended two-year term on the charge of "collecting classified information" and a five-year ban on working as a journalist in Iran. One of her lawyers, Saleh Nikbakht, told the international news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP) that the appeal court had overturned this conviction on the grounds that the United States and Iran could not be defined as hostile towards each other.

Roxana Saberi, who was born in the USA to an Iranian-born father and Japanese-born mother, has reported for the BBC, Fox News and US-based National Public Radio (NPR), which produces news and cultural programming. She has been living in Iran for six years, where she has been working as a journalist and studying for a master's degree in Iranian studies and international relations.

Roxana Saberi was quoted by AFP after her release stating: "I am very happy and thankful to all the people who helped me. I want to be with my family... with my mother and my father". She is expected to return to the United States soon.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.