

URGENT ACTION

DISAPPEARED JOURNALIST AT RISK OF TORTURE

Journalist Issa Saharkhiz was arrested on 4 July 2009. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of the peaceful expression of his views, including regarding the outcome of the election and is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Issa Saharkhiz (aged 56), journalist and a campaigner for presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi was arrested in Northern Iran on 4 July and taken away to an undisclosed location. His whereabouts have still not been disclosed by the Iranian authorities, despite his family and lawyer's efforts, putting him at danger of torture. Amnesty International fears that he has been subjected to enforced disappearance.

On 20 June 2009, his family home in Tehran was raided whilst he was travelling in Northern Iran and his computer and elections campaigning materials supporting the opposition presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi were confiscated. On 2 July, Issa Saharkhiz had posted an article on news website Rooz in which he criticized the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei.

Journalist Issa Saharkhiz is the co-founder of Iran's Association for the Defence of Press Freedom. He is the former editor of the monthly magazine *Aftab* and the newspaper *Eghtesad*, both suspended in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Issa Saharkhiz as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely on account of his peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression;
- urging the authorities to immediately disclose his whereabouts and to ensure that he is allowed immediate access to his family members, lawyer of his choice and to any medical treatment he may require;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Issa Saharkhiz is protected from all forms of torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to remove unlawful restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly in Iran.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE DD/MONTH/YEAR TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran, Islamic
Republic of Iran

Email: info_leader@leader.ir

via website:

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter>
(English)

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter>
(Persian)

Salutation: Your Excellency, Ayatollah

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi
Shahroudi
The Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of
Iran

Email: shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir

(In the subject line write: FAO
Ayatollah Shahroudi)

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Head of the Iranian Journalists'
Association
Rajabali Mazrooei
N°87, 7th St., Kabkanian St.
Keshavarz Boulevard, Tehran, Islamic
Republic of Iran
Fax: 98-21-896.35.39
E-mail: generalsecretary@aoij.org
Salutation: Dear Mr Mazrooei

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the announcement on 13 June that President Ahmadinejad had won the previous day's presidential election, which hundreds of thousands of Iranians dispute, the Iranian authorities have imposed draconian restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly. Access to the internet has been blocked or significantly interrupted. Iranian publications have been banned from publishing information about the nationwide unrest since the result was declared. Foreign journalists have been banned from the streets, and some foreign reporters have been expelled from the country.

According to statements by officials recorded by Amnesty International, at least 2277 people have been arrested since 12 June by the police and Basij forces across the country during demonstrations or their aftermath. These include prominent political figures close to either Mir Hossein Mousavi, fellow presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi or former President Khatami, who supported Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign. Some human rights defenders, as well as journalists have also been detained. On 16 June lawyer and human rights defender Abdolfattah Soltani, was also arrested and detained (please see UA 160/09, MDE 13/059/2009, 19 June 2009: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/059/2009/en>). Journalist Sa'id Hajjarian – a former Tehran city councillor and advisor to former president Mohammad Khatami – who is confined to a wheelchair following an attempted assassination in 2000 - was arrested on 16 June 2009 at his home. He was transferred to hospital from Evin Prison on 3 July (please see UA 159/09, MDE 13/058/2009, 18 June 2009: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/058/2009/en>). On 24 June, 70 academics met leading opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, and were arrested as they left his office. All but four were later released. Those still detained include the head of Mir Hossein Mousavi's election campaign, Dr Ghorban Behzadian and Ardeshir Amir Arjomand who is a professor of law at Shahid Beheshti University. Hundreds of others have been arrested during demonstrations against the outcome of the election which have been met with excessive use of force. Many have been beaten and, according to the authorities, up to 21 have been killed, although the true number is likely to be higher.

UA: 181/09, AI Index: MDE 13/067/2009, Issue Date: 06 July 2009

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