

URGENT ACTION

TWO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IMPRISONED

Members of two human rights organizations have been detained in Tehran's Evin Prison, some for over two months. Human rights defenders Shiva Nazar Ahari and Ali Bikas are prisoners of conscience and whilst remaining in detention they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Naseh Faridi, who was released on bail on or around 1 September, is still facing charges.

Shiva Nazar Ahari, a female journalist, blogger, and member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR) and other human rights groups, was arrested from her work place on 14 June in Tehran. The arresting security forces had searched her house the previous night in her absence and confiscated some of her personal possessions. She has been held since then in Section 209 of Evin prison. She has been allowed several short phone calls to her family and allowed one family visit on 17 August. She has not been allowed access to her lawyer. In late August, her family was informed that bail for her release had been set at 5000 million rials (US\$500,000). Her mother said that when she told the judge she could not afford that amount, he told her "well, let her stay in jail". On 8 September, the interrogator in charge of her case said it was not possible to change the bail amount.

Ali Bikas, a male journalist and doctorate student in history, a member of the Student Committee for the Defence of Political Prisoners (SCDPP) and an activist for the rights of the Iranian Azerbaijani minority, was arrested in Tehran in mid-June. Ali Bikas is also held in Section 209 of Evin Prison, and has not yet been allowed a family visit, nor access to a lawyer. Ali Bikas appeared in a "show trial" session on 1 August in which he was accused of being a "field agent for a velvet coup". **Naseh Faridi**, another male SCDPP member, was detained on 15 June and released on bail of 500 million rials (US\$50,000) around 1 September. Naseh Faridi was accused in a judicial indictment, published by the *Fars News Agency* on 1 August, of passing information to the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, a proscribed organization, on account of his activities in the SCDPP, including interviews with foreign media.

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

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Shiva Nazar Ahari and Ali Bikas, as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association;
- urging the authorities to protect them from all forms of torture and other ill-treatment and to be provided with immediate and regular access to their families and lawyers;
- calling for all charges against Shiva Nazar Ahari, Ali Bikas and Naseh Faridi imposed on account of their human rights activities, including their work publicising human rights violations, to be dropped.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 23 OCTOBER 2009 TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani, Office of the Head of the Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Via website:

<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.aspx> 1st starred box: your given name; 2nd starred box: your family name; 3rd: your email address

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of Special Parliamentary

Committee to review post-election arrests

Parviz Sorouri, Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 334 40309

Email: sorouri@majlis.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director

Evin Prison, Chamran Highway, Near Hotel Azadi, Dasht-e Behesht Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Via website:

<http://www.tehranprisons.ir/index.php?Module=SMMComplain>

Click (E) beside boxes to change alphabet. 1st box: blank; 2nd box: your name; 3rd box: your email address; 4th box: blank; 5th box: blank; 6th box: your city; 7th box: message subject; 8th box: message; 9th box: blank; 10th box: select third option; 11th box: click to send

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The SCDPP was founded in 1998. It provides support to political prisoners and their families, without regard to their political affiliation. It was denied permission by the Iranian authorities to register as an NGO, on the grounds that "there are no political prisoners in Iran". The CHRR was founded in 2006 and campaigns against all kinds of human rights violations, including against women, children, prisoners, workers and others.

Shiva Nazar Ahari was the fourth secretary general of the SCDPP, but is no longer a member. She is a founding member of the CHRR and is also a member of the registered NGO, the Society for the Defence of Street and Working Children, which was closed by police in 2008, but which was later allowed to reopen. She is also active in the Council for the defence of the right to education and in the One Million Signatures campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality), which aims to collect a million signatures of Iranians to a petition demanding the reform of legislation which discriminates against women. In 2008 she was banned from beginning a higher degree in civil engineering on account of her past activities. Shiva Nazar Ahari was previously detained for three weeks in 2004, during a demonstration with families of political prisoners outside a UN building in Tehran. She received a one-year prison sentence, suspended for five years, which could still be implemented. She has been summoned for interrogation by intelligence officials on numerous occasions and has received many threatening phone calls apparently from security officials.

Ali Bikas, a member of Iran's Azerbaijani minority, was previously detained following student demonstrations in Tabriz University in 1999 which erupted after plain-clothes groups apparently acting on behalf of the Iranian authorities stormed into university campuses and assaulted students who had gathered to protest against the closure of a reformist newspaper, *Salam*. Initially sentenced to five years' imprisonment for his part in the demonstrations, the sentence was reduced to two years on appeal and he was then pardoned by the Supreme Leader and released in December 2000. He is a member of the Islamic Iran Azerbaijani's Association and was an active member of Mir Hossein Mousavi's recent election campaign, until he resigned in protest at a video allegedly showing former President Khatami, who supported Mir-Hossein Mousavi's campaign, telling jokes insulting to Azerbaijanis.

Naseh Faridi is a former chairman of the Islamic Students Association in the Teachers' Training University in Tehran and is a member of the central committee of the SCDPP.

In the days following the 13 June 2009 announcement that incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the presidential election, mass demonstrations were swiftly repressed with excessive force, in which dozens of protestors were killed, and hundreds more injured. Some died later of their injuries. At least 4,000 people were detained across the country. Most have since been released, but several hundred are believed to remain detained, and arrests are continuing.

Mass trial sessions of over 100 people, which started on 1 August 2009, have been grossly unfair. Detainees "confessed" to vaguely-worded charges, many of which have not been recognizably criminal offences. These "confessions", apparently obtained under duress, have been accepted by the court. Some of those on trial were filmed making similar "confessions", which were aired on TV before their trials took place. Some of those on trial could face the death penalty.

Iranian officials have confirmed that at least some of those detained after the post-election protests have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and that abuses took place in at least one detention centre, Kahrizak, a centre outside of Tehran, since closed on the order of the Supreme Leader. Twelve police officials and a judge who had been involved in transferring detainees to Kahrizak are said to be facing trial for their role in abuses. On 9 September 2009, Farhad Tajari, a member of the Iranian parliament's Special Parliamentary Committee to review post-election arrests, told the *Fars News Agency* that a "court hearing for addressing law violations by suspects in the Kahrizak case will be held in the near future".

UA: 239/09 Index: MDE 13/098/2009 Issue Date: 11 September 2009

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