

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 13/048/2013
25 November 2013

IRAN: President Rouhani must deliver on human rights promises

In the first 100 days of President Rouhani's government, human rights in Iran have remained a low priority despite earlier promises made during the presidential campaign, said Amnesty International. The organization urges the Iranian authorities to go beyond the rhetoric and to take urgent and concrete measures¹ to address the country's deplorable human rights situation.

On 24 November 2013, President Rouhani posted on Twitter “[t]omorrow is 100th day since cabinet was formed & government has been in office. Glad to have reached agreement before 100th day”. For years, Iran's human rights situation has been overshadowed, both internationally and at home, by discussions about the country's nuclear programme. Now that an agreement has been reached, there must not be any more delays in addressing Iran's dire human rights situation, as shown by the United Nations General Assembly resolution, overwhelmingly adopted on 19 November 2013.

Despite initial positive developments – notably the release of a few political prisoners and the reinstatement of some banned university students and lecturers, Iran's prisons remain full of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, many of whom suffer from lack of adequate medical care. While prominent human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh was released from prison on 18 September 2013, scores of other prisoners convicted on vaguely worded offences are still languishing in jail. They include:

- prominent human rights lawyer **Abdolfattah Soltani**, serving a 13-year prison sentence for “spreading propaganda against the system”, “gathering and colluding against the state”, and “establishing an illegal group” – the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), which he co-founded with Noble Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi;
- trade unionist **Reza Shahabi**, serving a six-year prison sentence for “gathering and colluding against state security” and “spreading propaganda against the system”;
- **Bahareh Hedayat**, a student and women's rights activist, serving a 10-year prison sentence for “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security”;
- journalists and brothers **Khosro Kordpour** and **Masoud Kordpour**, who were sentenced on 10 November 2013 to a six-year imprisonment and a three-and-a-half-year imprisonment sentence respectively, for “gathering and colluding against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the system”;
- **Navid Khanjani**, a human rights activist is serving a 12-year prison sentence in relation to his peaceful work for human rights organizations. Navid Khanjani has been suffering from numbness in his left foot as a result of spinal injuries and is denied adequate medical care;
- **Omid KOKabee**, an Iranian physicist and a PhD student in the USA is serving a 10-year prison sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for having “connections with a hostile government” after a Revolutionary Court convicted him in a trial marred with irregularities. Amnesty International believes that he is held solely for his refusal to work on military projects in Iran;
- **Maryam Shafi' Pour**, a student activist and member the women's committee of Mehdi Karroubi's electoral campaign during the 2009 election, has been held since her

¹ Amnesty International, *Iran: Human Rights Agenda for change* (Index: MDE 13/30/2013, 2 August 2013) available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/030/2013/en>

arrest on 27 July 2013. Her first court hearing was on 21 October 2013 in a Revolutionary Court in Tehran and she is still detained in Evin Prison awaiting the outcome of her trial. It appears that she has been accused of having contacts with family members of the opposition leader, Mehdi Karroubi.

Opposition leaders and 2009 presidential candidates **Mir Hossein Mousavi** and **Mehdi Karroubi**, along with **Zahra Rahnavard**, a political activist and wife of Mir Hossein Mousavi, continue to be held under de facto house arrest since February 2011. On 24 October 2013, Narges Mousavi, Mir Hossein Mousavi's daughter, reported that she was slapped in the face and bitten by a female intelligence officer after visiting her parents along with her sister Zahra Mousavi. She said the attack happened after she protested against degrading body searches. The Minister of Justice on 30 October stated that President Rouhani's administration would not participate in any effort to release the opposition leaders and Zahra Rahnavard and appeared to also deny the assault against Narges Mousavi stating that it amounted to "noise from the media".

During his electoral campaign President Rouhani made promises regarding freedom of the press, yet journalists continue to face arrest and detention solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression. On 28 October 2013, the Press Supervisory Board, under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, banned the reformist newspaper *Bahar* after it published an article the Ministry deemed to be "distortive of the history of Islam". Security forces subsequently arrested Ali Asghar Gharavi, the journalist who wrote the article, on 11 November 2013.

Amnesty International is alarmed by the increasing rate of executions in Iran, particularly since President Rouhani took office. While the implementation of death sentences are under the responsibility of the Judiciary in Iran, whose Head is directly appointed by the Supreme Leader, President Rouhani has yet to take a stance against the ever increasing rate of executions in the country. On 25 October 2013, the authorities executed **Habibollah Golparipour** and **Reza Esmaili**, both political prisoners from Iran's Kurdish minority, on national security charges. Then on 26 October, another 16 individuals from Iran's Baluchi minority were executed. According to the Justice Chief of Sistan- Baluchestan province, southeast Iran, the executions were carried out in "retaliation" for a border attack by a Sunni armed group that had reportedly killed 14 border guards in the city of Saravan in the same province, near the border with Pakistan, although the executed men were not involved in that attack and reportedly had been sentenced to death several years earlier. On 4 November, officials executed another Kurdish prisoner, **Sherko Moarefi**, who had been sentenced to death after an unfair trial before a Revolutionary Court. Officially, 331 executions have been acknowledged by Iranian authorities for 2013 but reliable sources have reported at least 262 additional executions during the year. At least 367 of these executions have taken place since President Rouhani's electoral victory in June 2013. For all of 2012, 314 executions had been officially acknowledged, but with reliable reports of at least 230 additional executions, the total for that year was believed to have been at least 544.

The scant progress thus far achieved has been in the field of academic freedoms. Under the Interim Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Ja'far Tofighi, a number of students who were "starred" and banned from higher education were said to be permitted to enrol in university during the current academic year. Some university lecturers, who had been forced to retire after the contested 2009 presidential elections, were also reportedly permitted to return to teaching. Amnesty International welcomes this news, but also urges the authorities to lift all bars placed on the pursuit of higher education, including the discriminatory policies which restrict women's access to higher education and those against members of religious minorities such as Baha'is who are not permitted to attend university.

Human rights violations are rife in Iran. Torture and other-ill treatment, particularly during pre-trial detention are common and are committed with impunity; scores of prisoners of conscience including, journalists, human rights defenders, trade unionists, and students

continue to receive grossly unfair trials based on vaguely worded national security charges; and women and members of ethnic and religious minorities continue to face widespread discrimination in law and practice.

Despite its 2002 standing invitation, Iran has ignored repeated requests from UN human rights experts to visit the country and has not allowed in the country any such mechanism since 2005.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org
International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org