

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION LEADERS AND WIVES DISAPPEARED

Iranian opposition leaders **Mir Hossein Mousavi** and **Mehdi Karroubi**, along with their wives **Zahra Rahnavard** and **Fatemeh Karroubi**, have been subjected to an enforced disappearance. They were taken from their houses by security forces on 24 February 2011 and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Mir Hossein Mousavi and **Mehdi Karroubi** have faced severe restrictions on their freedom of expression, association and movement since the unrest which followed the disputed 2009 presidential election. After they called for nationwide demonstrations in support of the people of Tunisia and Egypt on 14 February 2011, both men were de facto placed under house arrest, with no one allowed to enter or leave their homes. On 24 February, both men and their wives were taken away. After speaking to a neighbour, one of Mehdi Karroubi's sons said, "at midnight ... eight vans belonging to security forces appeared...where Karroubi's house is located. Minutes later, they left inside a car....once they left, the building was completely vacated and the lights to the residence were turned off." They may be held in a "safe house", over which the Judiciary has no control, belonging to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, part of Iran's armed forces under the Supreme Leader's authority. Other reports suggest they may be held in Heshmatiyeh Prison, Tehran. Their enforced disappearance coincides with calls by the Coordinating Council of the Iranian Green Path of Hope for a demonstration on 1 March to protest against their continued house arrest.

Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi were both unsuccessful candidates in the 2009 presidential and both protested at the announcement that incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the election. They have since continued to voice opposition to the government and to human rights violations by security forces. **Zahra Rahnavard**, a former Chancellor of Al-Zahra University in Tehran, and **Fatemeh Karroubi**, a former Deputy Minister of Social Affairs under former President Khatami, both campaigned on behalf of their husbands in 2009, and have spoken out against attacks on their families and others.

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

- calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi, Zahra Rahnavard and Fatemeh Karroubi and to release them immediately and unconditionally, if they have been arrested solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association;
- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to their family, a lawyer of their choice and adequate medical treatment, and ensure that they are protected from all forms of torture or other ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to allow peaceful demonstrations by those who wish to express their opinions.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 APRIL 2011 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](http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter) (English)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Speaker of Parliament
His Excellency Ali Larijani
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic
Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3355 6408
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General, High Council for
Human Rights
Mohammad Javad Larijani
High Council for Human Rights
[Care of] Office of the Head of the
Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

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

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 5 February 2011, Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi addressed an open letter to Iran's Interior Ministry, requesting permission to hold a rally on 14 February "[i]n order to declare support for the popular movements in the region, in particular, the freedom-seeking movements of the people of Egypt and Tunisia..." Despite official statements of support for the popular protests in Egypt, the authorities did not grant permission for any demonstration, nor did it appear to have been formally banned. On 9 February 2011, a Judiciary spokesman said that Iranians should show their solidarity by taking part in official rallies on 11 February, held to commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

The authorities imposed severe restrictions on freedom of expression, which includes the right to receive and impart information, during the lead-up to the demonstrations by blocking access to phone services, including SMS messages, foreign media and various internet and social media sites. The two leaders were also put under house arrest. On 10 February 2011, police officers surrounded Mehdi Karroubi's home and his sons said that they each tried to enter the house to see their father, but were stopped from doing so. On 14 February, Mir Hossein Mousavi and his wife were stopped from leaving their home to join the demonstration in Tehran. Communication links to and from both homes were cut. The authorities arrested journalists and political activists ahead of the demonstration to prevent them from attending. See *Iran: Several Arrested Before Iran Protest* (Index: MDE 13/020/2011), 18 February 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/020/2011/en>.

On 14 February, thousands took to the streets in several cities around Iran, such as Tehran, Rasht, Esfahan, Shiraz and Kermanshah. The demonstrations began peacefully and silently but were subsequently met by apparently excessive force at the hands of mainly plain-clothes security forces who violently beat protestors and fired tear gas in order to disperse the crowds. Some were seen to fire live ammunition. An Iranian human rights organization, the Committee for Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), has suggested that as many as 1,500 arrests took place in Tehran alone. Dozens may have been wounded and two demonstrators were killed: Sane' Zhaleh, aged 26, and Mohammad Mokhtari, aged 22. The authorities blamed the deaths on the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), a banned political group, but the PMOI has denied any involvement in them. Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that gunfire in the vicinity of the area where the two individuals killed were demonstrating came from areas where security forces were posted. Amnesty International is concerned that the Iranian authorities are seeking to blame the PMOI and monarchist groups for the deaths of these protestors, which could lead to the execution of prisoners allegedly linked with banned groups. In January 2011, two people were executed for alleged links to the PMOI after participating in demonstrations against the authorities which took place in Iran in late December 2009 during the Ashoura religious commemorations. In January 2010, two other men were executed in connection with alleged membership to the Anjoman-e Padshahi Iran (Kingdom Assembly of Iran), a group which advocates the establishment of a monarchy in Iran.

On 15 February, over 220 parliamentarians signed a statement which was read out in Iran's parliament calling for Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi to be tried and for the "most severe penalty" to be imposed. At the same time, a group of parliamentarians shouted slogans such as "Death to Mousavi, Karroubi and [former President] Khatami" and "Mousavi and Karroubi should be executed".

On 20 February 2011, hundreds, if not thousands, took to the streets in Tehran, Esfahan, Shiraz, Mashhad, Babol and other cities to commemorate the seventh day of mourning for the two demonstrators killed on 14 February 2011. Hamed Nour Mohammadi, a student, died after being thrown off a bridge in Shiraz. A police website said only that a person had died in a traffic accident. An unknown number of people were arrested (see UA 31/11 and follow ups).

The authorities have not acknowledged holding the two couples. However, on 28 February 2011, the State Prosecutor said in a press conference that the movements and communications of an "internal anti-revolutionary current" had been blocked, "as a first step".

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