

URGENT ACTION

DEFENDER RELEASED; ANOTHER AWAITS APPEAL

Iranian journalist and human rights defender Shiva Nazar Ahari was released on bail on 13 September. Her colleague, Kouhyar Goudarzi, remains in prison, currently serving a one-year prison sentence subject to an appeal. He is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

Held in Evin Prison, Tehran, much of the time in solitary confinement, **Shiva Nazar Ahari**, who is a member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), was tried in Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on charges of “gathering and colluding to commit a crime”, “propaganda against the system,” “moharebeh” (enmity against God), and “disrupting the public order”. She denied all the charges and is awaiting the court verdict. If convicted, she faces, at the minimum, a long prison sentence. Her family paid the bail of five billion rials (approximately US\$500,000) by surrendering the deeds to three properties owned by family members. Her family thanked Amnesty International for supporting Shiva Nazar Ahari since her arrest.

Kouhyar Goudarzi, also a CHRR member, was sentenced on or around 2 June 2010 to one year's imprisonment for “spreading propaganda against the system by effective cooperation with the website of the CHRR, gathering and circulating news directed against the system and passing on this news to terrorist organisations based outside the country as well as giving interviews to foreign media and publishing articles on websites.” He is held while awaiting the outcome of his appeal. He was among 17 prisoners who went on hunger strike in July 2010 in protest against poor prison conditions and was transferred to solitary confinement as a result. He has since ended his hunger strike but continues to be denied contact with his family.

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

- Welcoming the release on bail of Shiva Nazar Ahari but calling for the dropping of all charges against her and any other member of the CHRR for their peaceful human rights activities;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Kouhyar Goudarzi, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association and meanwhile for him to have immediate and regular access to his family and lawyer;
- Reminding the Iranian authorities that everybody has the right to promote, develop and protect human rights by lawful and peaceful means. This includes the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly which are protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 OCTOBER 2010 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)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhouri
Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: Via website:
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/75/Default.aspx>
First starred box: first name; second
box: family name; third: email address
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran
His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani
Bureau of International Affairs, Office of the Head of the Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com
Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the sixth update of UA 347/09 (MDE 13/132/2009). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/132/2009/en>



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Shiva Nazar Ahari was arrested on 20 December 2009 along with, Kouhyar Goudarzi and Saeed Haeri, two male CHRR members. They were taken from a bus while on their way to the funeral of a senior cleric critical of the authorities, Grand Ayatollah Montazeri, which was to take place the following day. Other CHRR members were arrested later, though have all been released on bail. Some have since left the country.

Saeed Ha'eri, who was released on bail in March 2010, was summoned by telephone to appear before a court on 4 September 2010 on charges of "propaganda against the system" and "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security. Amnesty International has no information as to the outcome of this trial session.

Judicial officials and pro-government news agencies have accused the CHRR and its members of contacting a banned group, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI). For example, in January 2010, the Tehran Prosecutor, Abbas Ja'fari Dowlatabadi, told Shiva Nazar Ahari's family in a meeting: "Experts of the case have reported that the website for the Committee is linked to 'hypocrites' (the authorities' term for the PMOI), and any collaboration with the Committee is considered a crime." The CHRR and Shiva Nazar Ahari have strenuously denied these accusations.

A report in May 2010 by online news agency Raja News, which is said to be close to President Ahmadinejad, set out nine accusations against Shiva Nazar Ahari, none of them amounting to recognizably criminal offences. Among them were that she had had contacts with the PMOI, including sending it information about prisoners; "being a member and former secretary and current spokesperson for the CHRR" and "defending political prisoners;" that she had taken part in "illegal gatherings," for some years and prepared a list of those killed in the period of the revolution. Amnesty International believes that the activities listed above amount to the legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

In 1998 the UN adopted the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders which, although not legally binding, draws together provisions from other legally binding conventions and covenants most relevant to HRDs. The Declaration sets out the prime responsibility of states to take all necessary steps to ensure the protection of everyone who exercises their right to defend human rights. Amongst other things, the Declaration affirms the rights to defend human rights; to freedom of association; to document human rights abuses; to seek resources for human rights work; to criticize the functioning of government bodies and agencies and to access international protection bodies. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is state party guarantees the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Amnesty International is campaigning for the CHRR to be able to carry out its human rights work without fear of reprisals, for all charges faced by CHRR members pertaining to their human rights activities to be dropped. Those held solely for their peaceful human rights work should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Further information on UA: 347/09 Index: MDE 13/088/2010 Issue Date: 14 September 2010

