

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST AT RISK OF TORTURE IN IRAN

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (known as Heshmat), a journalist and leader of a banned political party in Iran, is at high risk of torture in Evin prison in Iran's capital, Tehran. He was arrested shortly after writing an article for a US-based international newspaper which may be the reason for his arrest. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience.

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, aged 53, leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran opposition party, was arrested on 27 December 2009 at his home in Tehran. Mass anti-government protests had taken place across Iran earlier that day. He was arrested by Revolutionary Guards intelligence officers with an invalid arrest warrant. His computer, phone book, photo albums, video tapes, fax and mobile phone were confiscated. Heshmatollah Tabarzadi is accused of "insulting the Supreme Leader", "insulting the Islamic Republic" and "acting against national security". He has not been allowed to see his lawyer. He has had at least two visits from relatives and has been able to phone them several times, although the prison administration has monitored the calls. He has been beaten whilst blindfolded during interrogation, and intelligence officers have threatened him with the death penalty. After a 10 March 2010 visit, his wife reported that he had lost weight and his black hair had turned grey since he was detained.

The arrest of Heshmatollah Tabarzadi may be linked to an article he wrote published on 17 December 2009 in the Wall Street Journal, in which he concluded: "If the government continues to opt for violence, there very well may be another revolution in Iran. One side has to step down. And that side is the government—not the people". On 27 December 2009 he was also interviewed on the Persian service of Voice of America (a state-run radio and TV station in the USA), and said that the protests were the largest he had ever seen. He called on protesters not to use violence.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Heshmatollah Tabarzadi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, that the reports that he was beaten are investigated and anyone found responsible for abuses is brought to justice and that he has regular access to his lawyer, his family and any medical treatment he may require;
- Reminding the authorities that, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is obliged to uphold the right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 APRIL 2010 TO:

Head of the Provincial Judiciary in Tehran
 Ali Reza Avaei
 Karimkhan Zand Avenue
 Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No. 152
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir
Salutation: Dear Mr Avaei

Head of the Judiciary
 Ayatollah Sadeqh 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/75/Default.aspx>
First starred box: your given name;
second starred box: your family name;
third: your email address
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights
 Mohammad Javad Larijani
 Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh
 Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri
 Tehran 1316814737
 Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3390 4986
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)
Salutation: Dear Mr Larijani

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi is a leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran party, established in about 2000 to promote a secular democratic system of government in Iran... He is also a member of "Solidarity for Democracy and Human Rights in Iran", a coalition of groups and individuals, including lawyers, journalists, human rights, political and civil rights activists aiming at the promotion and improvement of democracy and human rights in Iran which was formed on 25 May 2009. Many members of this organization have been arrested. Some are still detained, while others have been released on bail. Heshmatollah Tabarzadi was formerly a student leader who has been arrested several times and has spent over eight years in prison.

Since the disputed presidential election in June 2009, over 5,000 people have been arrested, including over 1,000 during and following mass demonstrations on the religious festival of Ashoura on 27 December. Those detained include political figures and activists, students, human rights defenders and journalists. Since the beginning of March, a widespread wave of arrests of human rights defenders has taken place, particularly members of the group Human Rights Activists in Iran, which publishes news about human rights violations in Iran. This follows the arrest of at least eight members of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters since December 2009, of whom four remain in detention.

Many of those arrested since June 2009 have been tried in grossly unfair trials, resulting in long prison term sentences and some sentences of flogging. At least 13 have been sentenced to death, of whom two have been executed and three have had their sentences commuted to prison terms. Those known to be on death row include two people convicted of "*moharebeh*" (enmity against God) for alleged membership of the Anjoman-e Padashahi Iran, a group which advocates the restoration of a monarchy in Iran, and five unnamed individuals (two women and three men) said to have been tried and convicted in January 2010 of "*moharebeh*" for alleged membership of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (a banned opposition group based abroad) and organizing the Ashoura demonstrations. 20-year old Damghan university student Mohammad Amin Valian has also been sentenced to death, although his appeal has not yet been heard. He was one of five people charged with "*moharebeh*" during the trial of 16 people in January and February 2010. Video footage of him throwing stones during the Ashoura demonstrations was shown in court and was used as evidence to convict him of "*moharebeh*".

The Iranian authorities are continuing to severely restrict freedom of expression in Iran, arresting journalists (of whom scores are believed to remain in detention), imposing restrictions on the use of the internet, including social networking sites, and shutting down newspapers. In addition, the Iranian authorities are continuing to deny permission for anti-government demonstrations to take place, and have taken brutal measures to suppress such demonstrations, thereby restricting freedom of assembly. The authorities have acknowledged over 40 deaths; opposition sources put the true figure much higher, at over 80.

In February 2010, Iran accepted several recommendations to guarantee freedom of expression and press activities made by other states in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record before the UN Human Rights Council (see para 90, recommendations 52-58 at http://www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/A_HRC_WG-6_7_L-11_Iran.pdf) but rejected other recommendations calling for an end to measures such as harassment and arbitrary arrest of writers, journalists and bloggers. It appears that, despite such public commitments, in practice, the Iranian authorities are continuing to disregard their human rights obligations relating to freedom of expression and assembly.

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