

PUBLIC

UA 312/07

Arbitrary arrest/prisoner of conscience

IRAN

Maryam Hosseinkhah (f), journalist and women's rights defender

Maryam Hosseinkhah, a journalist and women's rights defender, was arrested on 18 November when she reported to a branch of the Revolutionary Court in the capital, Tehran, for questioning. According to other members of a women's rights campaign, she has been accused of "disturbing public opinion", "propaganda against the system" and "publication of lies" in connection with articles posted on websites she edits.

Amnesty International believes she is a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of her peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran, and is calling for her immediate and unconditional release.

Maryam Hosseinkhah is an active member of the Campaign for Equality, which aims to collect a million signatures in support of an end to legislation which discriminates against women, and is one of the editors of the campaign's website (<http://www.we4change.info/>). She is also a member of the Women's Cultural Centre, a women's organization founded in 2001 to promote women's human and political rights in Iran. Several days before her summons, the website of the WCC was shut down on the orders of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Judiciary.

On 17 November, Maryam Hosseinkhah was called in to a branch of the Revolutionary Courts, which deals with cases involving security-related issues, for interrogation about her work in defence of women's rights. She was questioned for over two hours and was told to report for further interrogation the next day. On her arrival at the court on 18 November, an arrest warrant was issued, and she was detained and transferred to Section 3 of Tehran's Evin Prison, an open section which is used to hold those convicted of non-violent crimes and where other women's rights activists were previously held.

Maryam Hosseinkhah was among 33 women arrested on 4 March 2007 while protesting at the trial of five women's rights activists. She was released four days later (see UA 52/07, MDE 13/021/2007, 5 March 2007, and follow-ups).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Repression of activists associated with the Campaign for Equality, and of other members of Iranian civil society, has intensified in recent weeks. In September, at least 25 people (including five members of the Campaign for Equality's education committee who had travelled from Tehran) were arrested during an educational workshop held by the Campaign in a private house in Lorestan province, western Iran. Of these, 22 were released later that night, after being questioned about the Campaign's activities. The other three, Reza Dolatshah, Bahman Azadi, and Khosrow Nasimpour, released the following day, beaten in custody. Two women, Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi, are detained in the city of Sanandaj, Kordestan province, and have not been permitted access to families or lawyers (See UA 297/07, MDE 13/130/2007, 7 November 2007). Dr Sohrab Razzaghi, the Director of the Iranian Civil Society Organizations Training and Research Center (ICTRC) has been detained since 24 October, apparently for interrogation about the activities of his organization, including the financial assistance it receives from international donors, like the Dutch non-governmental organization Hivos.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the arrest of Maryam Hosseinkhah in connection with her peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran;
- urging the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally since she is a prisoner of conscience;
- asking the authorities to ensure that while in detention she is granted immediate and regular access to her family and lawyer of her choice and that she is protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Panzdah Khordad (Ark) Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)

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Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying, if the called is answered, say "fax please")

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader

Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

The Presidency

Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 6 649 5880

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir

E-mail: via website: <http://www.president.ir/email/>

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani

C/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs

Ministry of Justice,

Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 December 2007.
