

PUBLIC

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27 March 2009

UA 86/09 Arbitrary arrest/prisoners of conscience

IRAN	Delaram Ali (f)]	
	Leila Nazari (f)]	
	Khadijeh Moghaddam (f)]	
	Farkhondeh Ehtesabian (f)]	
	Mahboubeh Karami (f)]	members of the One Million Signatures Campaign
	Baharah Behravan (f)]	
	Ali Abdi (m)]	
	Amir Rashidi (m)]	
	Mohammad Shourab (m)]	
	Arash Nasiri Eghbali (m)]	
	Soraya Yousefi (f), member of Mothers for Peace		
	Shahla Forouzanfar (f), member of Mothers for Peace		

The 12 people named above were arrested in the capital, Tehran, on 26 March, and held in police stations until that evening, when they were taken to Evin prison. Amnesty International considers all 12 to be prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their internationally recognized right to freedom of assembly.

They were arrested as they prepared to make visits marking the Iranian New Year to families of detained activists, including students and trade unionists, and also the family of Dr Zahra Bani Yaghoub, who died in detention in suspicious circumstances in 2007.

According to the website of the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality) (<http://www.campaignforequality.info/english/spip.php?article489>), the 12 detainees' relatives have said they have been accused of "creating unease in the public mind" and "disrupting public order", which are offences under Articles 618 and 698 of the Penal Code, and which carry sentences of imprisonment and/or flogging.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Campaign for Equality, launched in 2006, is a grassroots initiative composed of a network of people committed to ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. The Campaign gives basic legal training to volunteers, who travel around the country promoting the Campaign. They talk with women in their homes, as well as in public places, telling them about their rights and the need for legal reform. The volunteers are also aiming at collecting one million signatures of Iranian nationals for a petition demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran.

Dozens of activists have been arrested for their activities for the Campaign for Equality, some while collecting signatures for the petition. The authorities have blocked the Campaign's website at least 19 times. The Campaign has frequently been denied official permission to hold public meetings, and Campaign activists usually hold their meetings in the homes of sympathizers, some of whom have then received threatening phone calls apparently from security forces officials, or been summoned by them for interrogation. At least one such meeting was broken up by police, who arrested those present and beat some of them. Some members have been banned from travelling abroad.

At least two other women associated with the Campaign for Equality are also in custody: Ronak Safarzadeh has been held since October 2007, and Zeynab Beyezidi is serving a four-year prison sentence. The Campaign for Equality is also calling for the release of Alieh Aghdam-Doust, who is serving a three-year sentence imposed for her participation in a peaceful demonstration against legalized discrimination against women, which was held in June 2006, before the Campaign for Equality was launched. Amnesty International considers all to be prisoners of conscience.

Mothers for Peace was launched in 2007 by a group of Iranian women to campaign against possible military intervention in Iran over its nuclear programme, and to seek "viable solutions" to the region's instability (see <http://www.motherspeace.com/spip.php?article84>).

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

- calling on the authorities to release the 12 (naming them), as they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their internationally recognized right to freedom of assembly;
- in the meantime, urging the authorities to grant them immediate and unconditional access to their families, lawyers of their choice and any medical treatment they may require.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
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: info@dadiran.ir, shahroudi@dadgostary-tehran.ir

(In the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
End of Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Islamic Republic Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: via website: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

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

Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)

Email: info@dadiran.ir (In the subject line: FAO Director, Human Rights Headquarters)

Salutation: Dear Sir

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 8 May 2009.