

# INTERNATIONAL PEN

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## RAPID ACTION NETWORK

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24 March 2009

RAN 17/09

### **IRAN: Detained internet writer dies in suspicious circumstances**

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**The Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN is shocked by the death of Internet writer Omidreza Mirsayafi while in detention in Evin prison, Tehran. He was facing charges of insult and propaganda against the regime, in writings posted on his blog. Prison authorities claim that Mirsayafi committed suicide by taking an overdose; however this is questioned by the family and a prison inmate. International PEN calls on the Iranian authorities to carry out a full and impartial investigation into Mirsayafi's death and for the findings to be made public.**

According to International PEN, Omidreza Mirsayafi, who was in his mid twenties, died on 18 March 2009 after being taken ill in detention. He had been sentenced to two and a half years imprisonment on charges of insulting Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khamanei, and propaganda against the regime. He had been free on bail pending appeal until 7 February 2009 when he was summoned again for questioning. Since then, he had remained in Evin prison. Mirsayafi was reportedly suffering from depression and was taking medication. Prison authorities claim that Mirsayafi committed suicide by taking an overdose; but his family maintains that he would not have had enough medication in his possession to kill himself.

Mirsayafi's health is said to have significantly deteriorated since his recent imprisonment. Prior to his death, Mirsayafi was reportedly in need of medical attention but this was not provided by the prison authorities.

Omidreza Mirsayafi was originally arrested on 22 April 2008, his home was searched and his computer seized. He spent forty days in detention and was released on bail. He was tried on 2 November 2008.

Mirsayafi denied the charges, and in a letter sent to Reporters Sans Frontiers, he stated the following:

*"I am a cultural and not a political blogger. Of all the articles I have posted online, only two or three were satirical. I did not mean to insult anyone."*

### **Useful links:**

Reporters Sans Frontiers: [http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id\\_article=30622](http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=30622)

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty:

[http://www.rferl.org/content/Suspicion\\_Cast\\_On\\_Iranian\\_Bloggers\\_Death/1513351.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Suspicion_Cast_On_Iranian_Bloggers_Death/1513351.html)

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Please send appeals:

- Expressing shock at the death of internet writer Omidreza Mirsayafi;
- Calling the Iranian authorities to carry out a full and impartial investigation into Mirsayafi's death and for the findings to be made public.

**APPEALS TO:**

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,  
The Office of the Supreme Leader  
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran  
Email: [info@leader.ir](mailto:info@leader.ir) or [istiftaa@wilayah.org](mailto:istiftaa@wilayah.org)

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency  
Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi  
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
Email: via Judiciary website: [Iranjudiciary.org/feedback\\_en.html](http://Iranjudiciary.org/feedback_en.html)  
Salutation: Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

President:

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad  
The Presidency,  
Palestine Avenue,  
Azerbaijan Intersection,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
Fax: Via Foreign Ministry: +98 21 6 674 790  
(mark: "Please forward to H.E. President Ahmadinejad")  
Email: [dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir](mailto:dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir)  
via website: [www.president.ir/email](http://www.president.ir/email)

If possible please send appeals c/o the Ambassador for Afghanistan in your country, asking for their comments.

**\*\*Please check with this office if sending appeals after 23 April 2009\*\***

*For further information please contact Cathy McCann at International PEN Writers in Prison Committee, Brownlow House, 50/51 High Holborn, London WC1V 6ER, Tel.+ 44 (0) 20 7405 0338, Fax: +44 (0) 20 7405 0339, email: [cathy.mccann@internationalpen.org.uk](mailto:cathy.mccann@internationalpen.org.uk)*