

INTERNATIONAL PEN

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RAPID ACTION NETWORK

11 May 2009

RAN 15/09 – Update #2

IRAN: American-Iranian journalist released

The Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of International PEN welcomes the release on 11 May 2009 of Iranian-American journalist and writer Roxana Saberi, who has been held since January 2009. She had been sentenced to eight-years in prison on charges of ‘espionage’.

According to press reports, Roxana Saberi, aged 31, was released today from Tehran’s Evin prison a few hours after the appeal hearing, in which the charge of espionage was dropped to the lesser charge of ‘having access to classified information’ and the eight-year prison sentence reduced to a two-year suspended sentence. Her father met her as she left prison, and the family are understood to be leaving Iran soon. Saberi has also been banned from working as a journalist in Iran for five years.

Background

Roxana Saberi was arrested in late January 2009 for buying alcohol, which is prohibited in Iran. In early March it was reported that her detention was linked to her allegedly ‘illegal’ and ‘unauthorised’ activities as a journalist in Iran since 2006, when her press credentials were revoked. However, on 18 April 2009 she was sentenced behind closed doors by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran to eight years in prison for ‘espionage’, at a one-hour trial which did not conform to international standard’s of fairness. According to Roxana Saberi’s father, she had made confessions under pressure during her pre-trial detention which were used against her in court. In contrast, the appeal hearing is said to have been conducted in a fair and open manner, although details of the charges against her have not been made public.

More information:

BBC report: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8044193.stm

For the previous WiPC alert see: <http://www.internationalpen.org.uk/go/news/iran-american-iranian-journalist-sentenced>

Free Roxana Saberi’s website: <http://freeroxana.net/>

*****Thank you to all who took action on this case.*****

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