

INTERNATIONAL PEN WRITERS IN PRISON COMMITTEE

IRAN CAMPAIGN MAY 2009

Since President Ahmadinejad came to power in August 2005, there has been a widespread crackdown on peaceful political dissent across many aspects of civil society in Iran. Those to have been targeted include writers and journalists, academics, women's rights activists and human rights defenders. Separatist struggle has placed writers and journalists particularly at risk in Iran's ethnic regions, and International PEN is alarmed at the number of Kurdish, Azeri and Arab journalists targeted for their critical reporting, peaceful activism and writings in support of minority cultural and political rights. In the run-up to the next Presidential election which is due to be held in June this year, International PEN is launching a month-long campaign to highlight these cases, and to call for greater freedom of expression in Iran.

International PEN is currently campaigning on behalf of five writers, journalists and cultural activists from Iran's ethnic regions who are all sentenced for their critical reporting and peaceful activism on minority rights. They are:

Adnan Hassanpour, Iranian-Kurdish journalist, detained in January 2007 and charged with espionage and *Moharehbeh* for expressing his views on the Kurdish issue. He is awaiting a re-trial after his death penalty was overturned.

Kaveh Javanmard, Iranian Kurdish journalist, arrested in December 2006 and serving a three-year sentence for his reporting on the Kurdish issue.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Iranian Kurdish journalist, arrested on 1 July 2007 and sentenced to eleven years in prison for his Kurdish rights activism.

Mohammad Hassan Fallahiya, Iranian Arab journalist, arrested in November 2006 and sentenced to three years in prison for his reporting on the repression of the Arab minority in Khuzestan.

Yousef Azizi Banitorof, Ahwazi writer, translator and human rights defender, sentenced on 20 August 2008 to five years in prison for his reporting on protests by the Arab community in the southwestern region of Khuzestan (known locally as Al-Ahwaz). Fled Iran in November 2008.

Said Matinpour, Azeri journalist, sentenced to eight years in jail, suspended, on 11 June 2008 for 'publicity against the Islamic regime'. He was detained incommunicado for nine months in jail before being released on bail.

In addition to those listed above, PEN is aware of the cases of at least ten other journalists and writers from Iran's ethnic regions who are currently facing charges for their critical writings and political and cultural activism. Most are charged under national security legislation or Iran's Press Law,

which is also widely used to ban publications perceived as critical by the authorities, and to prevent writers from publishing their work.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Join the campaign and write a letter to the Iranian government.
- Lobby your own government
- Use the material provided to publicise the issue of freedom of expression in Iran in your local press.
- Elect an Iranian writer as an honorary member of your centre.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS:

- Expressing serious concern about the large numbers of writers, journalists and publishers to be arbitrarily detained in Iran, many serving lengthy sentences, and the widespread practice of ill-treatment of dissidents in detention;.
- Expressing alarm at the widespread crackdown on peaceful dissent since President Ahmadinejad came to power in 2005, in which a large number Kurdish, Azeri and Arab journalists have been targeted for their legitimate critical reporting, peaceful activism and writings in support of minority cultural and political rights.
- Reminding the Iranian authorities of their obligations to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

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 Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737,
Islamic Republic of Iran

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

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

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

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir

via website: **http://www.president.ir/en/**

Salutation: Your Excellency

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of
Iran Fax: +98 21 3355 6408

Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir (Ask for your message to be passed to
the Article 90 Commission)

Approaches to Iranian Embassies

Centres are encouraged to write to the Iranian ambassador in their own countries asking for his/her comments on your appeal. Other approaches could include:

- Requesting a personal meeting with the ambassador to discuss your concerns in more detail;
- Collect signatures calling for the release of those detained in Iran for peacefully expressing their views.

Information regarding contact details of some Iranian embassies can be found at: **http://www.irangovernment.com/embassies.htm**

Lobbying your own government

You may also find that your own country's diplomatic representative in Iran may be willing to raise these cases in their own discussions with relevant officials.

Visit these links for more information:

Human Rights Watch, *Iran: Freedom of Expression and Association in the Kurdish Regions* (<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/01/08/iran-freedom-expression-and-association-kurdish-regions>)

BBC Country profile on Iran:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/790877.stm

CRS Report for Congress, *Iran: Ethnic and Religious Minorities* (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34021.pdf>)

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