International PEN

Writers in Prison Committee

15 November 2008 – Day of the Imprisoned Writer

Iran

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Journalist

On 22 June 2008 Kurdish journalist and activist Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand was sentenced to eleven-years in prison on charges of "acting against national security" for his Kurdish rights activism. There are serious concerns for his health, which is said to have deteriorated in prison as a result of ill-treatment and lack of adequate medical care. PEN seeks assurances of his well-being as a matter of urgency. International PEN considers Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand to be detained in violation of his right to freedom of expression, and calls for his immediate and unconditional release in accordance with Article 19 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory, and on humanitarian grounds.

According to PEN's information, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, editor of the banned weekly *Payam-e mardom-e Kurdestan* and Chair of the Tehran-based Kurdish Human Rights Organization (RMMK), was arrested on 1 July 2007 at his place of work in Tehran by plain-clothed security officers. Following his arrest, Kabudvand was initially taken to his house in Tehran, where security officers confiscated three computers, books, photographs and personal documents, before taking him away to the Intelligence Ministry's Section 209 of Evin Prison. He spent the first five months of his detention in solitary confinement, and was reportedly ill-treated. His family was unable to raise the bail that could have enabled him to be freed pending trial. Kabudvand's trial began on 25 May 2008, and he was sentenced at a closed trial on 22 June 2008 to eleven years in prison by the Tehran Revolutionary Court for forming a human rights organisation in Iran's Kurdish region. On 23 October 2008 the Tehran Appeal Court upheld the eleven-year prison sentence handed down to Kurdish journalist Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand.

Kabudvand has previously been targeted by the authorities for his critical writings and activism. The weekly newspaper which he edited, *Payam-e mardom-e Kurdestan* (*Kurdistan*

People's Message), published in Kurdish and Farsi, was banned on 27 June 2004 after just thirteen issues for 'disseminating separatist ideas and publishing false reports'. On 18 August 2005 Kabudvand was convicted of 'disseminating tribal issues and publishing provocative articles' and 'spreading lies with the intention of upsetting public opinion' by a revolutionary court in Sanandaj and handed down an eighteen-month suspended sentence and a five-year ban on working as a journalist. Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand has reportedly written two books on democracy and a third on the women's movement in Iran, which were not given publishing licences.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand suffers from a number of health complaints, including high blood pressure and kidney disease, and his health is said to have deteriorated as a result of ill-treatment in prison. On 19 May 2008 Kabudvand reportedly suffered a stroke in Evin prison and has been denied access to adequate medical care.

International PEN is deeply concerned about an apparent pattern of repression against journalists and human rights activists in Iranian Kurdistan, which has been ongoing since unrest broke out in the Kurdish areas of Iran in July 2005, and was violently suppressed by the authorities. Several other Iranian-Kurdish journalists are currently detained, including Kaveh Javanmard, Adnan Hassanpour and Ejlal Qavami

What you can do:
Letters of appeal calling for the release of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand may be sent 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 or 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
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
via website: www.president.ir/email

Please copy appeals to the diplomatic representative for Iran in your country if possible.

Please send copies of any replies you may receive from the authorities to Cathy McCann at the International PEN head office in London:

Writers in Prison Committee London Office: Brownlow House, 50/51 High Holborn, London WC1V 6ER UK Tel: + 44 (0) 20 7405 0338 Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7405 0339 e-mail: cathy.mccann@internationalpen.org.uk