

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: MDE 13/117/2009

05 November 2009

IRAN: RENEWED WAVE OF INTIMIDATION AND HARRASSMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS MUST END

In recent days, at least 10 members of the Campaign for Equality – a grassroots women's rights initiative - have been summoned to appear before a branch of the Revolutionary Court in connection with their peaceful activities on behalf of women's rights in Iran. Some have been banned from travel abroad.

Amnesty International condemns such harassment and restrictions on the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression. The organization is urging the Iranian authorities to end such practices, including by overturning the convictions of women's rights defenders imposed solely in connection with their efforts to improve women's access to their internationally recognized rights, lifting travel bans which contravene their right to freely leave and enter their country, and by permitting Campaign members to meet peacefully without hindrance.

Maryam Malek, Jelveh Javaheri, Kaveh Mozzafari, Parisa Kakaei, and Khadijeh Moghaddam, who are all members of the Campaign, were the first to receive written summons to appear in court within three days of receipt. The summonses were issued on October 21, 2009. Aida Saadat and Elnaz Ansari have also received written summons. Following receipt of her written summons, Aida Saadat was threatened in a telephone call that if she did not appear in court on 4 November, she should "face the consequences". Several other members of the Campaign have also been contacted by telephone by officials. They are believed to have said that they will not appear at court without receiving a written summons as is required by law. It is likely that they too will receive written summons.

Khadijeh Moghaddam appeared in court on 1 November in a separate case in which she was charged with participating in a peaceful protest on 11 January 2009 in support of civilians in Gaza, which was then under attack by Israeli military forces. The protest was held in front of the Palestinian Embassy in Tehran. She was also charged with refusing to obey the orders of the police and has been banned from travelling abroad. She told *Change for Equality*, the Campaign's website, that during her court hearing, she was informed that she had been banned from such travel for the past six months.

Hayedeh Tabesh a member of the Campaign in Esfahan, has also been banned from travel abroad. She told *Change for Equality*, the Campaign's website, in October 2009 that she had been called to the local Ministry of Intelligence office in May 2009, but had refused to go unless issued with a written summons. In July 2009, when she tried to renew her passport, she was told that she must go to the local office of the President, where she was informed that she was banned from travel, but given no reason, and that she could challenge the ban in the Revolutionary Courts if she wished. Revolutionary Court officials told her that she should go to the local office of the Ministry of Intelligence and she eventually received a written but undated summons and did so. She was interrogated about her activities in the Campaign for Equality and about women's rights issues,

and was told that she had been banned from travelling abroad because she had been invited to a training event in South Africa, even though in the end she did not participate in the event..

Jelveh Javaheri was sentenced to a six-month prison term in October 2009 after Branch 30 of the Revolutionary Court convicted her of disobeying a police order “with the intent of disrupting national security” and of “membership of the One Million Signatures Campaign” She was arrested on 12 June 2008 with eight other women in front of the Silk Road Gallery, where they were planning to attend a seminar marking the national day of solidarity of Iranian women. Others arrested with her have been acquitted, such as Nafiseh Azad, who was acquitted on appeal in September 2009 of “disobeying police orders”. Jelveh Javaheri also faces a suspended six-month prison term imposed in another case after she was convicted of “propaganda against the system” in connection with her writing for *Change for Equality* and *Zanestan*, the website of the Women’s Cultural Centre.

Fereshteh Shirazi, a member of the Campaign in the northern town of Amol was summoned for interrogation by the Ministry of Intelligence in September 2009 after officials searched her home and workplace in August. She was accused of “acting against state security, publishing lies, disturbing public opinion and contact with foreign web sites and media” and questioned about her activities in the Campaign and her writings but, Amnesty International believes she has not yet been formally charged.

Background information

The Campaign for Equality, also known as the One Million Signatures Campaign, is a grassroots women’s rights initiative, aimed at ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. It was launched in August 2006 with the aim of collecting a million signatures of Iranians calling for the reform of legislation which discriminates against women. Over 50 Campaign members have been detained for their activities on behalf of the Campaign. Alieh Eghdam-Doust is currently serving a three-year prison sentence for her peaceful participation in a 2006 demonstration demanding equal rights for women. *Change for Equality*, the website of the Campaign, has been filtered by the Iranian authorities at least 21 times.

Public Document

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