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Public Statement

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Iran: Arrests of peaceful demonstrators and activists continue

Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those detained in connection with recent peaceful demonstrations by teachers, students and others, to halt all trial proceedings that could result in the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience and to cease harassment of those campaigning to uphold human rights, including trade union and political rights. The organization is concerned that such protestors have been increasingly targeted since Minister of Intelligence Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie publicly accused the womens' movement and student campaigners of being part of an enemy conspiracy for a "soft subversion" of the government in Iran on 10 April 2007.

Teachers

Dozens of teachers, mostly members of local Teachers' Associations or the National Council of Teachers' Associations, have been detained in recent weeks in connection with demonstrations which began in March 2007 by teachers demanding higher pay and working conditions. Hundreds of teachers were arrested; all were later released, but since then many more teachers have been arrested across the country after plans were announced for strikes on 15 and 16 April, and on 2 May, which is Iran's National Teachers' Day.

On 7 April, 45 teachers were arrested in Hamedan, including the entire board of the Hamedan Teachers' Association, which was subsequently banned by the authorities. Most were released shortly afterwards, but at least four are reported to remain in detention, whose surnames are **Zare'i, Ghadimi, Refahiat and Gholami**.

On 12 April, three teachers in Tehran, **Ali Safar Montajabi, Mohammad Taghi Fallahi and Mahmoud Bagheri** were summoned to the Revolutionary Court and afterwards were transferred to Evin Prison. Three others were detained on 14 April and also taken to Evin Prison: **Hamid Pourvosouq**, the Deputy Head of the Iranian Teachers' Association, **Alireza Akbari Nabi** and **Mohammad Reza Reza'i Gorgani**, members of the senior editorial committee of the weekly "Teachers' Pen". On the same day, four teachers, **Mojtaba Abtahi, Abdolrasoul Emadi, Nourollah Barkhordar** and **Hamid Majiri (or Mojizi)** were reportedly arrested in Homayoun Shahr; three other teachers were reportedly arrested in Kerman. On 16 April, **Ali Akbar Baghani**, the Head of the Iranian Teachers' Association, was detained by three plain clothes officials in his classroom in a school in Tehran. He had previously been detained without charge or trial between 3 and 28 March 2007.

Students

Bizhan Sabagh, an engineering student at Mazandaran University who had previously been suspended

by the university disciplinary committee for one term in connection with his student activities, was arrested on 14 April 2007 by security officials in front of the university. Some 14 students who began a sit-in protest at Bizhan Sabagh's arrest were also detained later the same day. All, with the exception of **Sayed Ziya'addin (Ziya) Nabavi**, have since been released on bail or on written guarantees.

Womens' rights activists

On 18 April, two women on trial for participating in a peaceful demonstration on 12 June 2006 demanding equal rights for women were sentenced to prison terms. **Fariba Davoudi Mohajer** was sentenced to four years' imprisonment, of which three years were suspended, and **Sussan Tahmasebi** was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, of which 18 months were suspended. The women, currently free, are expected to appeal against their sentences. Also on 18 April, **Behareh Hedayat**, a university student, was tried, without the presence of her lawyer, on charges of "acting against state security", "participating in an illegal demonstration on 12 June 2006" and "disturbing public order". Earlier, on 11 April, **Azadeh Forghani**, a university student, was given a two-year suspended sentence in connection with the same demonstration. Several days later, she was summoned to court where she was questioned and informed that she was facing new charges in connection with a peaceful gathering on 4 March 2007 held to protest against the prosecution of five other activists in connection with the demonstration in June 2006. On 18 April six other women reportedly attended a court session in which they were interrogated about the 4 March gathering. **Parvin Ardalan, Zara Amjadian, Elnaz Ansari, Nasrin Afzali, Niloufar Golkar and Marzieh (Minoo) Mortazi Langaroudi** were reportedly charged with "gathering and colluding to disturb national security", "disturbing public order" and "disobeying the orders of officials".

Five women active in the "Million Signatures Campaign" were arrested on 2 April 2007 while collecting signatures in support of an end to discriminatory legislation against women in Iran. Three were released after one day in detention, but **Mahboubeh Hossein Zadeh and Nahid Keshavarz** were taken to Evin Prison and were released on bail on 15 April 2007. They were reportedly accused of "acting against state security through propaganda against the system".