

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST HELD WITHOUT CHARGE IN IRAN

Hengameh Shahidi, a female journalist arrested on 30 June, is being held without charge in Evin prison, in Iran's capital, Tehran, where she is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. She is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association.

Hengameh Shahidi, aged about 34, is a member of the National Trust Party, an opposition political party headed by reformist cleric Mehdi Karroubi. Amnesty International believes that her arrest is connected to Iran's disputed presidential election, which took place on 12 June. However, it is not clear if she is detained because of her work as a journalist, or because of her political activities.

Hengameh Shahidi suffers from a heart condition, for which she requires regular medication. It is not clear whether she is receiving adequate medication in custody. She has not been granted access to her lawyer, and has only been allowed to meet her family once since her arrest. When she was first detained, she was held for around 50 days in solitary confinement in section 209 of Evin Prison, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence. According to a report sent to Amnesty International, she phoned her family on 22 August and told them that she had been transferred to a cell holding another woman, but that she was still being interrogated.

According to news reports, on 25 August Hengameh Shahidi went on hunger strike to protest against the conduct of her interrogators. She is said to be facing pressure to admit to "immoral relations" with men.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French, or your own language:

- √ Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Hengameh Shahidi, as she is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association;
- √ Calling for her to be protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention;
- √ Calling for her to be granted immediate access to her lawyer, family, and to any medical attention she may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 OCTOBER 2009 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of
Iran

Email: via website:
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

(put given name in first starred box,
family name in second starred box,
and email address in third. Paste
appeal in large box)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of Special Parliamentary
Committee to review post-election
arrests
Parviz Sorouri
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Baharestan Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 9821 33440 309
Email: sorouri@majlis.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary-General of National Trust
Party

Mehdi Karroubi

Email: via website

<http://www.etemademelli.ir/contactus/>

(put name in first box, subject in
fifth box and text in large box)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the days following the 13 June 2009 announcement that incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the presidential election, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took part in mass and generally peaceful demonstrations throughout the country, disputing the election results. The authorities quickly imposed sweeping restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly and telecommunication and internet systems were severely disrupted. Iranian publications were banned from publishing information about the nationwide unrest and foreign journalists were banned from the streets, their visas not renewed and others arrested or expelled from the country.

In response to the mass protests, security forces, notably the paramilitary Basij, were widely deployed. At least 4,000 were arrested in the three to four weeks following the 12 June 2009 election, including prominent political figures close to either presidential candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, or former President Khatami, who supported Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign. Some human rights defenders and journalists were also detained. They have been denied access to legal representation, but have generally been able to meet family members.

Security forces used excessive and lethal force against demonstrators, killing dozens of protestors and injuring hundreds more. Some died later of their injuries. Others have been killed and injured as a result of being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in detention.

Mass trial sessions of hundreds starting on 4 August 2009 were grossly unfair, including one held on 25 August. Detainees "confessed" to vaguely worded charges, which are often not recognizably criminal offences. These "confessions", apparently obtained under duress, were accepted by the court. Some of those on trial were filmed making similar "confessions", which were aired on TV before their trials took place. Some of those on trial could face the death penalty.

Iranian officials have confirmed that at least some of those detained after the post-election protests have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and that abuses took place in at least one detention centre, Kahrizak, a centre outside of Tehran. On 29 July, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered its closure and the head of a detention facility and three guards, thought to have worked at the Kahrizak detention centre, were reportedly dismissed and possibly detained. On 15 August, Parviz Sorouri, the Head of the Special Parliamentary Committee to review post-election arrests, told the Islamic Labour News Agency that 12 police officials and a judge who had been involved in transferring detainees to Kahrizak would be arrested and tried for their role, "as the detention centre was intended for drug dealers".

Amnesty International has received reports consistent with a statement made by Mehdi Karroubi that both women and male detainees have been subjected to torture, including rape, by security officials. His allegations were initially denied by Farhad Tajari, a member of the Special Parliamentary Committee, but, on 26 August 2009, another of the Committee's members told the website Parleman News on condition of anonymity, "It has definitely become evident to us that some of the post-election detainees have been raped with batons and bottles."

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