

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 312/07 (MDE 13/137/2007 19 November 2007) Arbitrary arrest/prisoner of conscience

IRAN Maryam Hosseinkhah (f), journalist and women's rights defender

Journalist and women's rights defender Maryam Hosseinkhah was released at 7pm on 2 January 2008, from Evin prison where she had been detained since 18 November 2007. She was reportedly accused of "spreading lies" and "propaganda against the system" in connection with articles posted on websites she edits, but she has not yet been formally charged.

Maryam Hosseinkhah is a journalist and web blogger and an active member of the Campaign for Equality, which aims to collect a million signatures of Iranians in support of an end to legislation which discriminates against women, and is one of the editors of the campaign's website (<http://www.we4change.info/>). She is also a member of the Women's Cultural Centre, a women's organization founded in 2001 to promote women's human and political rights in Iran.

Maryam Hosseinkhah was unable to meet an initial bail demand of \$108,377 and remained in prison, until this amount was reduced to \$5,420"

Following media reports in December alleging that Maryam Hosseinkhah may have been involved in contacts with opposition groups such as PJAK (a Kurdish armed opposition group), her lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh commented: "certain publications have published false reports on the charges against Maryam Hosseinkhah. As such I asked the courts to divulge to me the official charges against my client. But this request too was denied. It is surprising that as the lawyer representing Ms. Hosseinkhah I am not provided with information about the charges against her, but news agencies such as IRNA have been provided with this information. Unfortunately some news agencies which should be engaged in the accurate information sharing choose to print misinformation and lies about the charges against my client. Access to such information by news agencies, when the information has not been made available to me as the lawyer of Hosseinkhah, is indeed surprising and leaves many questions unanswered. Certainly my client reserves the right to lodge a complaint against these news outlets."

While detained, Maryam Hosseinkhah continued with her activism, focusing on female prisoners in Evin. She managed, with the help of fellow detainee Jelveh Javaheri and colleagues outside prison, to collect and contribute 60 books to the women's library at Evin prison and to set up a fund in support of female prisoners. She also wrote articles about the condition of female prisoners and the impact of discriminatory laws and their contribution to women's criminality and incarceration which were published on the internet. The Campaign for Equality reported that the inspector of the female ward of Evin prison had declared that the presence of women's rights activists like Maryam at Evin prison was a blessing for female prisoners and asked her to convey recommendations for improving the condition of prisoners at Evin.

No further action is required at present. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.