

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iran-press-freedom-violations-recounted-04-01-2013,43862.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Press freedom violations recounted in real time (from 1st January 2013)

9 October 2013

09.10.2013-Two journalists freed, pro-Rouhani journalist arrested

Reporters Without Borders welcomes the recent release of a number of prisoners of conscience, including two journalists, and other signs of a political opening since the moderate conservative Hassan Rouhani became president in August.

But Reporters Without Borders continues to monitor the situation in Iran closely and to demand the immediate and unconditional release of all the other 40 or so journalists and netizens who are still serving unjust prison sentences.

Several prisoners of conscience have been freed or had their sentences considerably reduced since the start of September. Most of them were arrested after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection as president in June 2009 and some were serving their last months in prison.

Reporters Without Borders is particularly relieved to learn of **Issa Saharkhiz's** release on 3 October. The editor of several independent newspapers including the now-closed monthly *Aftab* (Sun), Saharkhiz was arrested on 4 July 2009 and was sentenced two months later by a Tehran revolutionary court to three years in prison on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

In August 2011, Saharkhiz was given an additional two-year jail term in connection with his journalistic activities prior to his arrest. He had serious heart problems while detained in Rajshahar prison and had spent the past 20 months in Tehran's Shariati Hospital. According to Iranian law, he should have been freed in August.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that the journalist **Masa Amrabadi** was officially released on 18 September. Originally arrested on 14 June 2009 and freed on bail of 200 million toman (150,000 euros) on 22 August 2009, she was sentenced to a year in prison by a Tehran revolutionary court on 14 October 2010.

Sentenced to another two years in prison on 9 May 2012, she had been on parole since late June. Her husband Masoud Bastani, a journalist who used to work for the daily Farhikhteghan, is still in Rajshahar prison.

Arrested on 4 July 2009, he was tried along with many other journalists in the Stalinist-style mass trials that the government began holding in Tehran in August 2009 and was given a six-year jail sentence.

Mostafa Faghihi, the pro-Rouhani editor of the Tehran-based news website [Entekhab](#), was meanwhile arrested on 7 October after responding to a court summons.

The summons was issued in connection with a complaint about comments posted on his website referring to the rapprochement between Iran and the United States. He was released on bail of 100 million toman (90,000 euros) yesterday.

16.07.2013-Total of 56 years in prison for seven netizens

Reporters Without Borders roundly condemns the harsh sentences ranging from seven and a half to 10 years in prison that a Tehran revolutionary court passed on seven contributors to the Sufi website [Majzooban Nor](#) on 13 July on charges of anti-government propaganda, insulting the Supreme Leader and endangering national security.

Hamidreza Moradi was sentenced to ten years in prison, **Reza Entesari** was sentenced to eight and a half years, and **Mostafa Daneshjo, Farshid Yadollahi, Amir Islami, Omid Behrouzi** and **Afshin Karampour** were each sentenced to seven and a half years.

The court also banned all of them from practicing any kind of political or journalistic activity during the first five years after their release. The defendants, who have been held in [Tehran's Evin prison since September 2011](#), and their lawyers refused to attend the trial on the grounds that it was unfair

12.07.2013- Freelance journalist Fariba Pajooh arrested at her Tehran home

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arrest of **Fariba Pajooh**, a freelance journalist who works for reformist newspapers and edits a blog (<http://www.after-rain.persianblog.ir>). She was arrested at her Tehran home on 9 July after a search by intelligence ministry officials and was taken to Evin prison.

Pajooh was able to contact her family to say she was "all right" but did not explain the reason for her arrest. She was previously arrested on 22 August 2009 and was released pending trial on 23 December of the same year after 120 days in solitary confinement in Evin's notorious Section 209. When finally tried, she was given a one-year suspended sentence for her journalistic activities.

08.07.2013-Two netizens arrested for insulting officials on Facebook

Reporters Without Borders condemns the arrest of two netizens, a 35-year-old woman and a 45-year-old man, by the Iranian cyber-police, the FTA, in the southern city of Semnan for insulting government officials on their Facebook page. "They confessed to their criminal actions under interrogation," the city's police chief, Ali Mir Ahmadi, told the Mehrnews agency.

Information and communication technology minister Mohammad Hasan Nami has meanwhile announced that all citizens will be assigned an email address along with their postcode. "With the assignment of an email address to every Iranian, government interactions with the people will take place electronically," the Guardian newspaper quoted him as saying. A former PhD student in government strategy at Pyongyang University and supporter of outgoing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Nami is expected to be replaced soon.

The US Internet surveillance company Blue Coat has again been criticized in a report released by Citizen Lab on 9 July. The [Washington Post](#) quotes the report as saying Blue Coat devices used for Internet monitoring have been detected on government and commercial computer networks in Iran, in violation of US regulations banning the sale of such technology to authoritarian regimes.

For more information, read: [The Enemies of the Internet](#)

04.07.2013- Arrested arbitrarily, held incommunicado

Reporters Without Borders condemns freelance journalist and netizen **Ahmad Asghari's** arbitrary arrest by intelligence ministry officers on 20 June when he tried to interview a political prisoner's brother in a Tehran park.

Asghari, who writes for several Tehran media, was escorted to his home, where the intelligence officers carried out a search and seized personal documents. They then took him away to an unknown place of detention. It is still not known where or why he is being held.

Arbitrary arrest and illegal detention are commonplace in Iran. **Khosro Kourdpour**, a Kurdish journalist who edits the news website *Mokeryan*, and his brother, **Masoud Kourdpour**, who writes for the site, were finally brought before a court in the western city of Mahamabad on 26 June after being held incommunicado by the intelligence services for three and half months.

After being charged with "publishing information on the situation of prisoners and human rights," they were transferred to the city's main prison. They were arrested on 7 and 8 March, respectively.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that **Fatemeh Khardmand**, a journalist who used to work for the monthly *Gozaresh Sanat Chap*, has received a one-year jail sentence from a Tehran revolutionary court.

Arrested by plainclothes men at her Tehran home on 7 January 2012, she was released on bail of 50 million toman (45,000 euros) three weeks later.

27.06.2013 - Blogging cleric released, now faces internal exile

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Ahmad Reza Ahmadpour**, a theologian and editor of the "[Silent Echo](#)" website, was released on 22 June after serving almost two years of a three-year jail sentence.

Known as the "Blogging Mullah," Ahmadpour will now have to serve the second part of his sentence, which is ten years of banishment from his home town, the religious city of Qom.

Arrested on 18 July 2011, he was given the two-part sentence – three years of jail followed by ten years of internal exile – on 26 September 2011 on a charge of spreading false information about the government.

Ahmadpour was previously arrested in December 2009 and was given a one-year sentence on a similar charge. While held, he sent an open letter to UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon to draw attention to his arrest.

24.06.2013-One journalist released, another sentenced to six years in prison

Reporters Without Borders is relieved to learn of journalist **Jila Bani Yaghoob's** announced release after the authorities deemed that she had completed the one-year jail sentence she received from a Tehran court on 22 October 2010.

Bani Yaghoob had been held since 2 September 2012, when she was summoned to Tehran's Evin prison to begin serving the sentence. She is now subject to a 30-year ban on working as a journalist, the second component of the sentence imposed in October 2010.

Bani Yaghoob and her husband, fellow journalist **Bahaman Ahamadi Amoe**, were originally arrested together on 20 June 2009. Yaghoob was released on bail on 24 August 2009 but her husband remained in detention and was given a five-year jail sentence for articles critical of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's administration.

Bani Yaghoob's "*We are journalists*" blog was awarded the "Reporters Without Borders Freedom of Expression" prize in 2010 in the BOBs (Best of Blogs) competition that German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle organizes in Berlin.

In 2009, she won the [International Women's Media Foundation's](#) "Courage in Journalism Award" as well as the International Press Freedom Award from "[Canadian Journalists for Freedom of Expression](#)."

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile learned that **Foad Sadeghi**, the editor of the *Baztab Emrooz* news website, was released provisionally on 16 June, a month after his arrest on 18 May. **Ali Ghazali**, the site's publisher, who was arrested on 4 May, has also been released.

Said Madani, a sociologist who had written dozens of articles for independent media, was sentenced by a Tehran court on 18 June to six years in prison followed by 10 years of internal exile in the southern city of Bandar Abass.

Madani has been held since 7 January 2012, when plainclothes men arrested him at his Tehran home. He spent a year in solitary confinement in Evin prison's notorious Section 209.

22.05.2013-IRAN - Crackdown on news

Websites blocked, journalists and netizens under pressure

Reporters Without Borders condemns a week-old wave of censorship targeting Iranian and international websites in the run-up to the 14 June presidential election. Websites that support various presidential candidates and online services such as *Google* and *Yahoo!* have been blocked.

The site blocking was indicative of the tension among the various conservative factions prior to yesterday's announcement by the Guardian Council of the list of approved candidates. [The regime began reinforcing its system of Internet filtering on 4 May and network cuts have been becoming more and more frequent since then.](#)

Four websites that support outgoing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government and provide information about his top aide and preferred candidate, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei – *Meyarnews* (<http://meyarnews.com/>), *Roshanaee* (<http://roshanaee.ir/>), *Baharana* (<http://www.baharna.ir/>) and *Bahaaronline* (<http://www.bahaaronline.ir/>) – were closed on the orders of the Working Group for Determining Criminal Content.

The Working Group also ordered the closure of two websites – *Aftabnews* (<http://aftabnews.ir/>) and *Ayandenews* (<http://www.ayandenews.com/>) – which support former reformist president and current Expediency Council chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, another would-be candidate. The daily newspaper Bar's website (<http://www.baharnews.ir/>) has also been inaccessible since yesterday.

At the same time, many journalists based in both Tehran and the provinces have been summoned for questioning by the Revolutionary Guards or the intelligence ministry. Most of them support either Mashaei or Rafsanjani, the two most prominent figures whose candidacies were blocked by the Guardian Council yesterday.

Journalists who support other independent candidates or government opponents were also summoned and questioned for several hours. During interrogation, they were asked to stop supporting "candidates who do not follow Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's line."

Other journalists – mostly former political prisoners – were summoned by the intelligence ministry and told to "choose between prison or taking a vacation until the elections are over."

Foad Sadeghi, the editor of the news *Baztab Emrooz*, was arrested on 18 May after being summoned by the Tehran prosecutor's officer. [Ali Ghazali, the site's manager, was already arrested on 4 May.](#)



Detainees who had been let out of prison on various grounds have been told to report back to prison. They include the following journalists and netizens: **Bahaman Ahamadi Amoei, Masoud Bastani, Shiva Nazar Ahari and Hossein Ronaghi Maleki**. All of them have been told to return to prison by today at the latest.

Most of these prisoners had been given medical leave. Maleki, a human rights activist who was arrested on 13 December 2010 and was given a 17-year jail sentence, has undergone several kidney operations and is in extremely poor health. Nonetheless, he has been ordered to return to Tehran's Evin prison today.

A court in Tabriz, the capital of the northwestern province of East Azerbaijan, sentenced Maleki to an additional five months in prison and a fine of 50,000 toman (32 euros) on 29 April on a charge of "endangering public health" for something he did while on medical leave.

On 11 August 2012, Maleki participated in an initiative by civil society activists and Internet users aimed at helping the victims of an earthquake in East Azerbaijan, after the authorities blocked the circulation of any information about the disaster for several days. Ten of them were arrested a week later.

10.04.2013 – Two bloggers arrested

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the arrests of two bloggers in the past two weeks.

Mojtaba Daneshtalab, a blogger [Daneshtalab](#), who supports President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was arrested yesterday to begin serving a six-month sentence on a charge of insulting regime officials and the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Daneshtalab was originally summoned and tried by a Tehran revolutionary court on 10 May 2012, but the prosecutor objected to the outcome. It was when he was tried again in January

2013 that he given the six-month jail term and was fined 100,000 toman (70 euros).

He is one several pro-Ahmadinejad journalists and bloggers who have been questioned or prosecuted at the behest of the Tehran state prosecutor for criticizing Ayatollah Khamenei's allies or taking controversial positions as part of their support for the president. More and more conservative news providers are falling victim to the rivalry between Khamenei and Ahmadinejad factions.

Reza Akvanian, a blogger based in the southwestern city of Yasoj who edits the [Good Dog Years](#) blog , was arrested on 29 March. After visiting him on 6 April, his family reported that he was in a "deplorable state" and that "his body bears the marks of blows."

It seems he has been mistreated since his arrest with the aim of extracting a confession. He was previous arrested in February 2010 and was given a six-year sentence on a charge of insulting senior government officials.

11.03.2013 - Paper closed, journalist arrested, another freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders condemns the closure of the daily *Maghreb* today, one day after it published an open letter to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, protesting against "illegal and arbitrary newspaper censors."

The closure was ordered by the Press Authorization and Surveillance Commission, an offshoot of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance.

It came five days after *Maghreb* managing editor, **Mohammad Mehdi Emami Naseri**, and its political editor, **Alireza Aghairad**, were arrested at the newspaper by officials from the Tehran prosecutor's officer, who released them on bail the next day pending trial.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Masoud Kurdpour**, a contributor to the *Mokeryan* news website, was arrested on 8 March after being summoned for interrogation by the intelligence ministry in the northwestern city of Mahabad.

This was one day after his brother, *Mokeryan* editor Khosro Kurdpour, was arrested at his home in Mahabad for still unknown reasons and was taken to a still unknown place of detention.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that *Etemad* journalist **Ehssan Mazandarani**, who was arrested at his Tehran home by intelligence ministry officials on 20 February, was released on bail yesterday pending trial.

08.03.2013 - Kurdish journalist arrested, newspaper editor and netizen released

Reporters Without Borders condemns yesterday's arrest of Kurdish journalist **Khosro Kurdpour**, the editor of the *Mokeryan* news website. His family said intelligence ministry plainclothes men with a court warrant arrested him at his home in the northwestern city of Mahabad after carrying out a search.

Kurdpour is accused of "publishing reports about the situation of prisoners and human rights."

Mohammad Mehdi Emami Naseri, the editor of the daily *Maghreb*, was meanwhile released on bail yesterday in Tehran pending trial.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that **Hanieh Sate Farshi**, a netizen detained since July 2010 and sentenced to seven years in prison on 16 April 2011, was released on 24 February because she is very ill.

28.02.2013- One journalist arrested, ten "Black Sunday" detainees freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Ehssan Mazandarani**, a journalist with the newspaper *Etemad*, was arrested at his Tehran home on 20 February by intelligence ministry officials, who searched his home and confiscated his computer, hard disks and CDs. Mazandarani was taken to Evin prison.

At the same, Reporters Without Borders is relieved that 10 of the "[Black Sunday](#)" detainees have been released during the past 12 days pending trial. They are:

- **Fatemeh Sagharchi**, a journalist with the *Jamaran* website, freed on 16 February

- **Javad Daliri**, the editor of *Etemad*, freed on 18 February
- **Hossein Yaghchi**, a journalist with the weekly *Aseman*, freed on 20 February
- **Kivan Mehregan**, a contributor to various reformist newspapers, freed on 23 February
- **Emily Amrai** and **Nargus Jodaki** of the newspaper *Arman*, freed on 25 February
- **Akbar Montajabi** of the weekly *Aseman* and **Rihaneh Tabtabai** of the newspaper *Bahar*, freed on 26 February
- **Milad Fadaei Asl** of the news agency *ILNA* and **Porya Alami** of the daily *Shargh*, freed on 27 February.

They were released on bail, which in most cases was set at 200 million toman (about 250,000 euros). Five other victims of the latest wave of arrests are still held. They are Sasan Aghai, Nasrin Takhayori, Saba Azarpik, Pejman Mousavi and Soliman Mohammadi.

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all the journalists and netizens detained in Iran. Help us to achieve this demand by signing [our petition](#).

13.02.2013- Recently arrested journalist freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Ali Dehghan**, a journalist with the daily *Bahar* who was arrested at his home on 30 January in a new crackdown on media personnel, was released on bail on 6 February.

At least 17 journalists have been arrested since 26 January and warrants have been issued for the arrests of others. Only one other is so far known to have been released. It is **Motahareh Shafie** of the newspaper *Arman*, who was freed the day after his arrest on 27 January.

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the conditions in which the [15 other journalists](#) are being held in Evin prison's Section 209, which is controlled by the intelligence ministry. They are still in solitary confinement and are being denied all their rights, including family visits and access to a lawyer.

22.01.2013-Two journalists get provisional release

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Rahim Sarkar**, the editor of the weekly *Hadiss Ghazvin*, was released provisionally on 11 January pending trial after being held since 25 December. And **Mohammad Kimyai**, one of the weekly's reporters, was released on bail of 100 million toman (100,000 euros) on 14 January [after being held for two weeks](#).

11.01.2013-Six-month jail sentence for talking to foreign media

Reporters Without Borders has learned that, **Hossein Karoubi**, executive director of the banned daily *Etemad Meli* and son of its owner, **Mehdi Karoubi**, was sentenced to six months in prison in July 2012 for talking to foreign media about the mistreatment of prisoners in Kahrizak prison.

He was convicted on a charge of "disseminating false information designed to upset public opinion."

Normally reserved for non-political prisoners, Kahrizak was used to hold government opponents after the disputed June 2009 presidential elections and several young detainees reportedly died of their injuries after being mistreated.

Etemad Meli was banned on 17 August 2009 for publishing articles about torture and rape in Iranian prisons. Three weeks earlier, on 29 July 2009, Mehdi Karoubi had released an open letter in which he said young detainees were being subjected to grave forms of mistreatment including rape.

04.01.2013- Netizen begins serving two-year jail term, journalist freed

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Sayeed Haeri**, a netizen and member of the Human Rights Reporters Committee, was arrested on 12 December after responding to a

summons to Tehran's Evin prison and has begun serving a two-year jail sentence on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

Originally arrested on 20 December 2009, he was released conditionally on 11 March 2010 on bail of 500 million toman (500,000 euros). In September 2010, a Tehran revolutionary court sentenced him to two and a half years in prison and 74 lashes. An appeal court reduced the sentence to two years in prison six months later.

Two other members of the Human Rights Reporters Committee are already in prison. They are **Shiva Nazar Ahari**, who was arrested on 8 September 2012, and **Sayeed Jalali Far**, who was arrested on 30 July 2011. Ahari is serving a four-year sentence while Far is serving a three-year sentence.

Reporters Without Borders has also learned that **Reza Ansari Rad**, a journalist who worked for several reformist news outlets, was released on 15 December after being deemed to have completed a one-year sentence on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

Imposed in 2010, the sentence was upheld by a Tehran appeal court in March 2012 and Rad began serving it on 4 May.

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2012\)](#)

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[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(July-December 2010\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-July 2010\)](#)

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(June-December 2009\)](#)
