

## **Chronology of Events in Iran, March 2002\***

### **March 1**

#### **U.N. Special Rapporteur denounces abuses in Iran (Reuters)**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Violations in Iran denounced an increase in public stonings, floggings and executions in the country and a "sweeping suppression" of the press. Special Rapporteur Maurice Copithorne accused the judiciary and its conservative backers of being the principal obstacle to reform. "Among the obstacles has been the continuing, sweeping suppression of the mainly reformist press, including the imprisonment of journalists," Copithorne said. "The treatment of intellectuals and dissidents, particularly by the security forces and the judiciary, reveals a fearful intolerance of alternative views," he added. Copithorne said that mistreatment of political detainees was widespread, trials failed to follow accepted norms, discrimination against women and minorities continued and many punishments constituted gross violations, especially stoning. He declared that the "principal obstacle to reform, to the introduction and nourishment of a culture of human rights, is the judiciary, its patrons and its supporters". "It is a group that bears a heavy responsibility for the ongoing violations of human rights in Iran," he said. Copithorne has not been allowed to visit Iran since 1996.

He said that he had written to the government in September 2001 expressing concern about an "apparent rise in flogging and execution, over the public application of such punishments and over their apparent application in some cases to minors". The prison population has soared to at least 160,000 inmates, a jump of 40 percent from the previous year, he said. This followed a drive begun mid-year by law enforcement agencies against "immoral behaviour", mainly by young people in Tehran accused of drinking alcohol, the investigator said. "The punishment was typically 70 or 80 lashes administered in public," he said. The practice provoked a "major public controversy" with the President eventually joining the Interior Minister in condemning it after the head of the judiciary defended it, he added. "Towards mid-September the use of public floggings in Tehran appeared to die down somewhat but reports of public floggings in the provinces continued at least until the end of October." An unnamed international activist group recorded 270 incidents of floggings through October 2001, some as young as 14, as well as 125 executions, according to his report. Copithorne noted that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged an end to floggings, "a punishment generally recognized to be cruel, inhuman, or degrading."

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\* Disclaimer: Reports contained in this document are selected from publicly available resources and edited by country experts. The information provided here is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country of origin surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim. Further information may be obtained from BO Ankara

### **March 3**

#### **Iran opposition leader released on bail. (Reuters)**

Veteran Iranian opposition leader Ezzatollah Sahabi, imprisoned for plotting to overthrow the Islamic republic, has been released on bail. Sahabi was released after his family paid bail equal to \$250,000. The Intelligence Ministry, Iran's main secret police organisation, has distanced itself from the case, but the judiciary, whose chief is appointed by "Supreme Leader" Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has pressed on with the prosecutions.

### **March 4**

#### **Daily's publisher found guilty of "libel", "insulting officials". (Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)**

Publisher of the Persian *Norooz* daily Mohsen Mirdamadi was found guilty for 22 cases of infraction in his court hearing. Mirdamadi stood trial earlier for a battery of charges raised against him including libel, insulting state officials, publishing lies, attempting to incite the public and violating elections regulations. Mirdamadi, who is also Head of Majlis Foreign Policy and National Security Commission, had in his December 2001 hearing responded to charges lodged by the Islamic Republic of Iran's Broadcasting (IRIB), the Bassij militia, and Iran's Elections Supervisory Board. Mirdamadi was given a notification for 15 other cases of ignoring laws and regulations too.

### **March 5**

#### **Majlis approves the anti-torture bill. (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty RFE/RL Iran Report)**

"All forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confessions or acquiring information are forbidden," according to Article 38 of the Iranian Constitution. In an open session on 5 March, the parliament discussed and approved a bill for enforcing this article of the constitution. An Iranian human rights activist warned that although the legislation could help detainees, it contains some flaws. The bill includes 13 articles on how to deal with prisoners, and it calls for the creation of a council -- with three representatives from the Judiciary, three from the parliament, and three from the executive branch -- to oversee the treatment of prisoners. Paris-based human rights activist Abdolkarim Lahiji said that the law's definition of a "prisoner" does not include those who are kidnapped and interrogated for months without a court order. He added that the councils specified in the bill for reviewing the prisoners' treatment require the Judiciary's cooperation, and this has not been forthcoming in the past. According to the Bill, "Sleep deprivation, psychological pressure, and denial of medical services are identified as forms of torture and are therefore prohibited."

**March 6**

**12 Kurdish and 5 Arab activists sentenced to death. (Amnesty International web site)\***

Seventeen Kurdish and Arab activists, imprisoned for opposing the Iranian government, have all been sentenced to death and are reportedly at risk of imminent execution. One former Kurdish activist and refugee, who was forcibly returned from Turkey in 1998, and five members of Iran's Arab minority, have already been hanged, and it is feared that more executions may soon follow. Five Arab men were hanged in Ahvaz, southwestern Iran, on 27 January. They had been sentenced to death for arms smuggling. According to the Ahwazian Arab People's Democratic and Popular Front, an organization based in Europe, another five Arab men have recently been condemned to death in Ahvaz, apparently for opposing the government's policy of land seizures in the region. They are named as Fadhil Muqaddam, Rahim Sawari, Amir Sa'idi, Hashem Bawi and 'Abbas Sherhani.

A former member of the illegal Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Karim Tuzhali, was reportedly executed on 24 January at Mahabad prison, in western Iran. He had reportedly been held for three years in Orumieh prison, in West Azerbaijan province, before he was executed. According to the KDPI, 10 other prisoners formerly associated with the party are now at risk. Three of them - Muhammad Sharverani, Khaled Faraidouni and Nader Afani - are believed to be detained in Mahabad prison. All three have been sentenced to death, Muhammad Sharverani in 1998 and the others in 2000. Three others are believed to be held in Orumieh. They are 27-year-old Hasan Mahmoudi, who was reportedly arrested in 1997 or 1998; 50-year-old Khaled Shoghi, who was reportedly forcibly returned from Turkey and arrested in 1997, and has reportedly been tortured; and Kheder Viesi, who was sentenced to death in 1998. Saleh Goudarzi, who was sentenced to death in 1999, is reportedly detained in Sanandaj prison. Jalil Zeva'i was 18 when he was arrested in 1993. He has been in prison ever since, and has reportedly been tortured. Rasul Abdollahpour was reportedly arrested in 1994, and Anvar Alizadeh in 1997. Mohammad Esmailzadeh or Esmaili, aged 35, was reportedly arrested in 1996 or 1997. There is an unconfirmed report that he suffered a leg injury some time after he was imprisoned, which still causes him pain, and for which he has been denied any medical treatment. Also at risk is Mohammad Mehdi Zaliye, aged 32, who is reportedly a supporter of the Kurdistan Province section of the Communist Party of Iran (CPI), known as Komala. He was reportedly arrested in 1992, and is alleged to be suffering from "neurological problems caused by brutal mental and physical torture".

**Members of the Nationalist-Religious Alliance issues public letter on their prosecution. (RFE/RL *Iran Report*).**

In a detailed letter addressed to the public, nine members of the Nationalist-Religious alliance who currently are on trial claimed that they were quoted out of context to prove charges of insulting religion. Former Tehran University president Mohammad Maleki, who is out on bail, said that they issued the letter because the revolutionary court refused their requests for public trials. Maleki added that the defendants faced solitary confinement, night-time interrogations, and drug-induced confessions.

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\* Editor's Note: The contents of this report has not been confirmed by other major information sources.

Several of the accused in this case -- such as Mohammad Naimpur, Mohammad Tavassoli, Khosrow Mansurian, Abolfazl Bazargan, and Hashem Sabaghian -- have been released lately, but they are not allowed to speak to the press until a final verdict is handed down. But others have been imprisoned recently. A Hamedan court in early January sentenced local national-religious activist Hadi Ehtezazi to 91 days in prison. He was tried for making a speech that condemned the jailing of Hamedan parliamentarian Hussein Loqmanian. Ehtezazi was previously sentenced to a six-month suspended sentence for his comments during a ceremony commemorating the death of Iranian Freedom Movement (IFM) leader Mehdi Bazargan.

**Siamak Pourzand trial started. (Human Rights Watch website)**

Siamak Pourzand's trial begun in public, and he was reportedly represented by his lawyer. It was also reported that, in the first trial session Pourzand allegedly made a "confession" that prior to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 he had been working for the Iranian secret service (Savak). Pourzand's family have contradicted this information adding that their attempts to present documentation assigning him a lawyer were denied by the authorities. None of the charges against him have been made public.

**Shoe Factory workers protest in Tehran. (Students Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran / SMCCDI)\***

Hundreds of employees of the "Shadan Poor" Shoe Factory gathered in the "Shir Pastorize" square of the Greater Tehran to protest against their conditions. The workers joined by hundreds of supporters set fire to old tires, in order to block the "Old Tehran-Karadj road", and shouted slogans against the official corruption by naming officials. The Security forces and plainclothes men intervened with clubs and chains to break the demonstration and restore the circulation flow. Several demonstrators were seen beaten and captured by these forces who have transferred them to a Pasdaran Corp. facility located near the Airport.

**Student Associations appeal for the release of two students. (Iranian newspaper *Tose'eh*)**

In an open letter to Mohammad Hoseyn Zia'ifar, secretary-general of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, Islamic associations of the students of the country's 42 universities have appealed to him to make efforts for the release from detention of two jailed students, namely Javad Rahimpur and Arman Rezapur. Rahimpur is one of the members of the Islamic Association of the Students of Allameh Tabataba'i University while Rezapur is an activist student at the Free Islamic University. The former had gone missing on 1 of Bahman [21 January 2002] while the latter has been missing since 8 Bahman [28 January 2002]. However, several days after the unexplained disappearance of the two students, the [Islamic] Revolution Court accepted responsibility for their detention. The authors of the said letter [to Islamic Human Rights Commission] have stressed that during the 45 days since their disappearance only one of the two jailed students had been able to make contact, by telephone, with his family.

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\* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.

**Textile workers stage protest gathering over wage arrears. (Iranian newspaper *Resalat*)**

The workers of Jahan Chit [textile] factory in Karaj staged a protest gathering and blocked the main street of Karaj. The representative of the protesting workers, who numbered around 900, stated: "Since Azar [November-December 2001], the Jahan Chit factory workers have not received their wages, even though the factory's output is the same as last year's." The majority of the Jahan Chit workers are war-disabled people.

**Weekly banned. (Agence France Press / AFP)**

A Tehran appeal court upheld a ban on a pro-reform weekly, *Asr-e-Ma* (our epoch) [close to Islamic Revolution's Mojahedin Organization], but reduced a jail sentence on its director, a prominent ally of President Mohammad Khatami, from 26 months to 17. Mohammad Salamati, head of *Asr-e-Ma*, is an advisor to the Labour Ministry and secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Revolution's Mujahedin, a member of Khatami's governing coalition. Salamati had been prosecuted by the conservative-dominated judiciary for alleging in December 2000 that conservatives were trying to secure the dismissal of Khatami on the grounds of "incompetence" to do his job. The "rumour" was officially denied and sparked anger among leading conservatives.

**March 7****Two students convicted in murder case released. (Iranian newspaper *Entekhab*)**

It was reported in the Majlis that two people who had been found guilty in the Tehran University dormitory case, which resulted in bloody violence in Tir 1378 [month beginning 22 June 1999 - the actual incidents occurred between 9 and 12 July 1999], have been recently released. The names of the two people were given as Mohammad Reza Kasra'i and Mir Abdolbaqi, who had reportedly been sentenced to death. They were released after being pardoned by [Ayatollah Khamene'i], following a request from the head of the Judiciary. Ayatollah Hashemi-Shahrudi, the head of the Judiciary, announced the news of the pardon of the students convicted in the case at a question and answer meeting with students at Tehran University two weeks ago, but he did not give any names.

**Members of Iranian Freedom Movement bailed out. (BBC)**

The Iranian authorities have reportedly released from jail four members of the banned liberal opposition group, the Iran Freedom Movement. The Islamic Revolutionary Court said the four have been freed on bail of 2bn rials (\$250,000) each. They were among around 60 members of the Iran Freedom Movement (IFM) and another liberal group - the Religious Nationalist Alliance - who were detained in March 2001 in a wave of arrests ordered by the conservative judiciary. All the accused IFM members have now been released on bail although a few people close to the organisation remain in prison. The four released in the last two days are former Interior Minister Mohammed Tavassoli, Hashem Sabaghian, Khosrau Mansorian and Abolfazl Bazargan, the son of the movement's founder. A fifth member of the group, Mahmoud

Naimpur, had been released earlier. Correspondents say another leading member of the group, Ezatollah Sahabi, was also freed on bail.

### **Student activist allegedly committed suicide. (SMCCDI)\***

A student and political activist named Negar Jalili reportedly committed suicide. Jalili, who was an active member of the Religious and Political Student association affiliated to Ghazvin University, was known to have cut her ties with that entity. She was known for having criticized, at several occasions, the "reforms", as well as the so-called "Office for the Consolidation of Unity" (OCU or OFU)". Local authorities stated that she died weeks ago due to absorption of pills. Jalili's death follows the murder of Akram Hassan-Zadeh, another student activist and member of SMCCDI, who was killed in the Tehran University Dorms in February 2001.

## **March 9**

### **Teachers protest in Tehran and Kermanshah. (SMCCDI)\*\***

It is reported that the security forces attacked hundreds of protesters composed of teachers and students who gathered near the Tehran University and Enghelab (former 24 Esfand) square of Tehran. Clubs and chains were used against protesters who came to support the Iranian teachers in their demands. Several demonstrators were injured and those arrested were brought to the Law Enforcement Force center located in Zandjan avenue. Sporadic clashes take place in the Enghelab square

Hundreds of Kermanshahi teachers refused to attend their classes. The teachers of Kermanshah started their action following partial strikes that they made on [4-5 March]. The calls made by teachers organizations and the Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran (SMCCDI) calling for demonstration and strike were largely distributed and broadcasted by most Iranian opposition radio and TV networks.

## **March 12**

### **Student protest in Shiraz. (SMCCDI)\*\*\***

Medical and Dentology students of the Shiraz University staged a protest gathering in front of the university's administration as well as in front of the Shiraz Governor's office. The students, who have started an unlimited strike since last month, request the ban of all Intelligence members from the Shiraz University, the resignation of several officials and better conditions and allowances. The Security forces, present in the area, didn't intervene but films and pictures were taken by several plainclothes men.

### **Majlis member sentenced. (AFP)**

Reformist deputy Shahrbanoo Amani was sentenced to four months in jail for "insulting" a conservative parliamentarian. The court has sentenced Amani, deputy from Urumieh, to four months in jail for insulting conservative deputy Mohammad

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Abbaspour in an interview with a local publication. The court ruled that her jail term be suspended for four years due to her "social status".

### March 13

#### **Commander says three million women currently in Basij. (Iranian newspaper *Iran*)**

Some three million girls and women are currently members of basiji paramilitary forces, deputy commander of Women Brigade of Basij said.

#### **Suppression of "un-Islamic" public festivities. (RFE/RL Iran Report)**

The police chief in Mashhad canceled the "Let's Be Happy Again" comedy festival because he feared a public disturbance. Local prayer leader and Supreme Leader's Representative Ayatollah Mohammad-Baqer Shirazi had issued a religious decree or fatwa which declared that it is a religious duty to disrupt such an event. In Tehran, the authorities detained dozens of young people who were participating in traditional Chaharshanbeh Suri events. These precede the Iranian New Year and are marked with fireworks and jumping over bonfires. The events were staged early this year to avoid clashing with Muharram, a Shia mourning month.

**Reuters report on a similar incident:** Iranian police detained dozens of youngsters in the capital Tehran overnight in rowdy new year celebrations, held a week early to avoid coinciding with the Muslim Shi'ite month of mourning. With holiday revelry and Muslim mourning falling at the same time this year, many analysts predict more clashes between frustrated youth wanting to let off steam and hardliners seeking to enforce respect for Islamic tradition. Despite the early start, police rounded up dozens of youths who lit fires in the middle of streets and threw large home-made firecrackers, often at passing cars. "It was like a scene from a war," one witness said. "Then the police came in large numbers and arrested those who were throwing firecrackers." Worried relatives gathered outside police stations into the night, awaiting news. It was unclear whether Iranians would attempt to celebrate Chaharshanbeh Suri next week, when observers say there is likely to be a large police presence on the streets. Bearded bassij militiamen, armed with clubs and thick lengths of electric cable, are already patrolling some streets in Tehran in a move seen by many as aiming to deter un-Islamic Norouz festivities.

**Student Movement Coordination Committee for Democracy in Iran comment on the same news:**\* The most violent clashes happened in the Narmak and Majidie areas. Unconfirmed reports mention the deaths of two young celebrators in the city of Ahwaz, and the injury of tens of others following the attack of [the Bassij]. In Bushehr, 2 militants have been reported as injured by celebrators who retaliated to their intervention.

**Agence France Press comment on the same news:** Three people were killed and 22 seriously hurt in Tehran during celebration of the "Festival of Fire" ahead of the Iranian new year on the night of [March 12]. It was reported that two teenagers, aged 16 and 17, who set fire to their house in the eastern Haftoz district when a huge

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\* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.

firework they were handling exploded had died of their injuries. Another young male from the southern part of the city was also killed and 22 were still hospitalised, some in a critical condition. The celebrations gave a new opportunity for young Iranians, to let off steam under the Islamic regime, and dozens of arrests were made.

**Jailed Iranian dissident freed on bail. (Associated Press / AP)**

Hoda Saber, 41, a pro-democracy journalist who was the editor of the now-banned *Iran-e-Farda* magazine, was released on bail of 1.3 billion rials (dlrs 162,500) Saber is also a member of the Nationalist-Religious Alliance.

**Caspian sea fishermen set Law Enforcement Force center on fire after murder of their colleague. (SMCCDI)\***

Reports from the town of Kian-Shahr, by the Caspian sea, mention the existence of a very tense situation following the alleged killing of a fisherman by the security forces and the burning of the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF) center by angry mobs. Tens of Militia have been sent to the town in order to avoid any more riot to take place, especially, with the approach of the New Iranian Year festivities. The killing of the fisherman took place on [March 11], when the security forces shot him as he tried to escape following being caught in a no-fishing zone. The spread of the news resulted in a riot during which the angry mob attacked the local LEF center by setting it on fire and destroying the Patrol vehicles. The degree of anger and popular participation in this riot was to the point that the local Security forces preferred avoiding more bloodshed.

**Two political prisoners bailed out. (IRNA)**

Two more members of the nationalist-religious coalition were freed on bail recently. The 68-year-old Reza Rais-Tusi was released on 13 March on 580 million rials bail (about \$331,429 at the official rate, or \$72,500 at the unofficial rate), and Said Madani was released the next day after paying 1 billion rials bail (\$571,000 or \$125,000). Both men had spent one year in prison, and Rais-Tusi told reporters that he spent 186 days in solitary confinement.

**March 17**

**Lawyer sentenced to prison and lashes. (Human Rights Watch).**

Attorney Nasser Zarafshan, who represented the families of Jafar Puyandeh and Mohammad Mokhtari during the trial of Ministry of Intelligence and Security officials who murdered them, stated that the Military Tribunal's 2001 verdict in the serial murders case had been overruled by the Supreme Court and returned to the same tribunal for an explanation regarding errors and for further investigation. Zarafshan was sentenced on March 19 to five years of imprisonment and seventy lashes on charges of "disseminating confidential information." The Judicial Organization of Armed Forces brought the original complaint against Zarafshan and arrested him in October 2000. He was released after a month pending trial. In February 2002, he was tried behind closed doors with his lawyer present. The presiding judge was also a prosecutor with the Judicial Organization of Armed Forces.

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\* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.



**Reuters comment on the same news (on March 26):** Norooz daily said lawyer Naser Zarafshan, who was acting for families of the victims, was given two years for publicising state information, three years for weapons possession and 70 lashes for illicitly possessing alcohol. Zarafshan, who has 20 days to appeal against the March 19 military court ruling, denies the charges. The 18 agents are charged with killing four opposition intellectuals four years ago. Almost all the accused have admitted the charges in the ongoing trial. But Zarafshan and other reformist activists say dozens more may have been murdered over a period of 10 years by state-sponsored death squads. Responsibility, they say, goes much higher than those agents. When the case first came to light it was hailed as a victory for the moderate Khatami but as it progressed many in his camp began to suspect a cover-up. Zarafshan said: "I only criticized shortcomings in the official investigation which has nothing to do with the contents of the files... The weapons and alcohol were put in my office while I was in custody." His office had been searched while he was in detention and without the presence of his lawyer.

## **March 19**

### **Jailed presidential campaigner released on bail. (Iranian newspaper *Norooz*)**

Arman Rezapur, one of the activists of Seyyed Mohammad Khatami's election team, was released on bail for 50m tumans on 28 Esfand [19 March]. Arman Rezapur is a 20-year-old, second-year mechanical engineering student at the Shahr-e Rey unit of Open "Azad" Islamic University. He was the secretary of the Mard-e Kavir election team in last year's presidential election. Faramarz Rezapur, his father, added: He was released after suffering 50 days of solitary confinement. He left home on 8 Bahman 1380 [28 January 2002] and did not return. Following inquiries by his family it came to light that he had been detained at Bench 26 of the Revolutionary Court since 10 Bahman [30 January].

### **Nowroz tension and arrests in several cities. (SMCCDI)\***

Reports from the city of Astara mention sporadic clashes that took place between young Fire Festival celebrators and the security forces. Several celebrators have been arrested for having defied the regime by violating the official ban on the celebration of Chaharshanbe Suri. Clashes intensified in the city of Boekan, where several celebrators and militia were injured. Earlier, a militia patrol was destroyed by Molotov cocktail and its driver was burned partially. Reports from Abadan mention sporadic clashes and chase-and-run between hundreds of young celebrators and the security forces. Reports from several western cities, such as, Boekan, Mahabad, Sannandaj and Saghez mention violent clashes taking place.

### **Two journalists bailed out. (AFP)**

Two outspoken and pro-reform journalists were released from prison for one week as part of an amnesty for traditional New Year celebrations. The dissident journalists, Akbar Ganji and Emadeddin Baghi, were released "to enjoy a one-week permission" of freedom from the city's notorious Evin prison. Their colleague Sahar-Khiz posted their bail of 700 million rials (87,000 dollars). Ganji, 45, once worked for newspapers

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\* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.

which have now been suspended by authorities and is serving a six-year sentence for "threatening state security" in connection with articles which linked the entourage of former president Ali Akbar Rafsandjani with murders of opposition activists and intellectuals in 1998. Baghi is serving a three-year term for "propaganda against the regime."

**Norooz comment on the same news:** Emadeddin Baqi and Akbar Ganji, who were to begin their leave on 27 Esfand [March 18], were released on the morning of 28 Esfand. Hojjat ol-Eslam Abdollah Nuri and Hojjat ol-Eslam Hoseyn Yusefi Eshkevari have been granted leave for five days as of 29 Esfand. Nuri's leave has been extended until 13 Farvardin [2 April]. Apparently, it is likely that the other detainees will also have their leave extended [until the end of the New Year holidays].

## **March 21**

### **Nowroz celebrities, tension and clashes. (SMCCDI)\***

In several western, southern and northern cities such as Baneh and Sardasht clashes happened between the local residents and the security forces as the residents gathered after the "Equinox" in several areas of these towns in order to make a traditional popular gathering. Clubs, chains and tear-gas were used against the population, resulting in several injuries and arrests. In Tehran, celebrators exploded, simultaneously, tens of powerful hand-made sound grenades at the precise time of the Equinox. The devices were activated with timers, permitting these celebrators to escape before the explosion and the intervention of the security forces.

## **March 25**

### **Internet access restricted. (RFE/RL Iran Report)**

The Telecommunications Company of Iran (which is part of the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone) cut the phone lines of scores of Internet Service Providers (ISP). Mohammad-Amir Forughi, a Tehran-based expert on the Internet, stated that the ISPs would not be able to question the legality of this action because the courts will not be in session during the holiday period.

In August 2001, Iran's Supreme Cultural Revolution Council decided that the government would control Internet access and it made the Telecommunications Company and Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting the main Internet distribution centers. A December 2001 article in *Aftab-i Yazd* expressed regret that President Khatami had signed the act restricting Internet usage by people under the age of 18. The act also restricts public access to some political websites, according to the article. Khatami was also silent on the banning of satellite reception equipment.

### **Leader of People's Democratic Front released temporarily. (SMCCDI)\*\***

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, head of the banned Iran's People Democratic Front, has returned to his family based on an undetermined holiday leave. Tabarzadi, arrested

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over 2 months ago, passed 70 days in solitary confinement and was pressured to take back some of his words condemning the Clerical Leadership and preaching for a referendum on the choice of the future secular Iranian regime.

**Prison term for student leader extended. (Russian newspaper *The Express Chronicle*)**

The 28th branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Court has prolonged student leader Manouchehr Mohammadi's prison term to 13 years. Before the arrest Manouchehr Mohammadi was the head of the Nationalist Association of Iranian Students. He was arrested in July 1999 in the aftermath of the crackdown on a student uprising against the closure of the *Salam* newspaper and the July 8 violent attack on the Tehran University dormitory by fundamentalist armed groups. On July 19, 1999, Iranian television showed a footage, in which Mohammadi admitted being an agent of "Zionists and foreign spies." In November 2001, he was sentenced to 13 years on charges of "voicing incendiary slogans" and "receiving \$3000 for the aims of toppling the Islamic order in Iran." His brother, Akbar Mohammadi, received at that time the death penalty, which, however, was later commuted to 15-year imprisonment. Manouchehr Mohammadi repeatedly sent out written messages from Evin prison in Tehran, claiming that he had been convicted on the basis of confessions made under torture and demanding that his investigators be called to account. In October 2000, authorities reduced his term to 6.5 years in an effort to make him give up his claims against the investigation. Now Manouchehr Mohammadi's term has been again extended to originally imposed 13 years.

**March 26**

**20.000 prisoners will be released by 20 April. (Iranian newspaper *Etelaat*)**

The director of the prisons of the country said that 20.000 prisoners will be gradually released till 20 April 2002, benefiting from the amnesty by Iranian Supreme Leader. The amnesty also covers punishment reduction for other 20.000 prisoners, Morteza Bakhtiyari stated during his visit to Mashhad Central Prison. He included that some of these prisoners will benefit from the amnesty due to 22 Bahman (11 February) and religious feasts. He mentioned that with the emancipation of these prisoners, the number of prisoners will decrease from 177.000 to 157.000. He stated that technical and medical training camps will be established and drug addicted prisoners will be replaced to these camps.

**March 27**

**Demonstrations and arrests in religious towns. (SMCCDI)\***

Tense situation has been reported from several religious cities, such as Mashad and Qom, where sporadic clashes took place at the occasion of the Shia Mourning ritual of Ashura but also during the tribute paid to the sister of Ayatollah Montazeri who passed away last week. Several people have been arrested including the sons of ayatollahs Mohsen Vahid-Khorassani and Mohamad Shahroodi for having qualified

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\* Editor's Note: This report has not been confirmed by major information sources.

the Islamic Republic as a blasphemy and continuation of the rule of Mo-Avia (a hated Arab ruler opponent to Ali the 1st Shia imam).

**Disappearance and detention of Jews in Iran. (Israeli newspaper *Jerusalem Post*)**

In a list compiled by the Families of Iranian Jewish Prisoners (FIPJ), a Los Angeles-based group founded by Ramin a few months ago, the missing Jews, their ages at the time of arrest and their place of arrest, are: Babak Shaoulia Tehran, 17, and Shaheen Nikkhoo, 18, arrested on June 8, 1994 in Zahedan, Baluchistan; Kamaran Salary, 21 and Farhad Ezzati, 21, arrested on September 21, 1994 in Baluchistan province; Omid Solouki, 15, Ebrahim Kohen-Maslikh, 16, Reuben Kohen-Maslikh, 17, and Homayoon Balazadeh, 41, arrested on December 8, 1994 in Baluchistan province; Cyrus Achremany, 42, and Ibrahim Achremany, 47, were arrested in Baluchistan province on February 12, 1997, followed by Es-Haagh Hassid, 59, three days later in Khorramabad. According to the group, Norallah Rabi-Zadeh, now 57, is also missing. Iran has never admitted to having the 11 in custody, and the Iranian mission to the United Nations did not return calls seeking comment.

**March 28**

**Turkey defines PMOI as “terrorist”. (AFP)**

Iran and Turkey have agreed to recognise each other's opposition groups as "terrorist" organisations, in a move set to open a new chapter in their relations, Iran's ambassador to Turkey said. Mohammed-Hossein Lavasani said that the decision applies to Iran's main armed opposition, the PMOI, and Turkey's outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

*UNHCR Ankara  
Country of Origin Information Team  
Revised September 2004*