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<http://www.rsf.org/iran-plight-of-seven-detained-netizens-18-07-2011,40647.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Iran

Sad anniversary

Plight of seven detained netizens still worrying one year after their arrest

18 July 2011

Exactly one year after seven young netizens were arrested in a series of raids by intelligence ministry agents, Reporters Without Borders is reiterating the call for their release that it made in a letter on 23 February to United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay and Ayatollah Sadegh Amoli Larijani, the head of the Iranian judiciary.

Arrested on 17 and 18 July 2010, **Iman Masjedi, Amir Latifi, Mohammad Reza Gholizadeh, Ladan Mostoufi Ma'ab, Hanieh Sate Farshi, Hojat Nikoui** and **Sepehr Ebrahimi**, all students aged from 19 to 28, were unjustly accused of anti-government propaganda, "insulting what is holy," actions against national security "in collaboration with organizations hostile to the Revolution," insulting the Prophet and *Moharebeh* (rebellious against God). Under Iran's criminal code, all these crimes are punishable by death.

A Tehran revolutionary court withdrew the charges of insulting the Prophet and *Moharebeh* on 16 April but heavy sentences were nonetheless handed down. Masjedi and Ebrahimi were sentenced to eight years in prison. Gholizadeh and Farshi were given seven years. Nikoui and Ma'ab got five years. And Latifi was sentenced to seven years in prison and 74 lashes.

The lawyers and families of these detainees were only recently notified of the sentences.

Their situation is now very worrying. After their arrest, they were placed in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison and were pressured to admit to organizing an anti-religious network of blasphemers. They were subjected to long periods in solitary confinement and tortured in order to obtain the confessions that were used against them during their trial. Their defence lawyers were not allowed to meet them or see the prosecution case file.

These netizens are all now ill or suffering serious physical and psychological effects from the treatment they have received. Ma'ab and Farshi are being held in Section 5 of Gohardacht prison for women. Masjedi and Gholizadeh are in Section 350 of Evin prison. Nikoui, Ebrahimi and Latifi are in Rajaishahr prison in Karaj, a town to the northwest of the capital. It is one of Iran's most troubled prisons, with a reputation for torture, rape and murder. Their lives are in danger. Some of them have been injured in knife attacks by fellow inmates.

Prisoner rights are flouted in Iran. No consideration is shown for the health of detainees.

Hossein Ronaghi Maleki, a blogger who was arrested on 13 December 2010 and sentenced to 15 years in prison, is still serving his sentence although he underwent a kidney operation and his state of health is now alarming. He is not getting the treatment he needs and could die in prison. He is also being denied the one day of leave that detainees normally get every month.

The imposition of disproportionate sentences on dissidents is common in Iran. **Saeed Malekpour** and **Vahid Asghari** were sentenced to death last January on charges of anti-government agitation and insulting Islam. Malekpour's sentence was [overturned](#) but he is still in prison. **Navid Khanjani**, a young blogger, was sentenced to 12 years in prison in January 2010.

The case of these seven netizens is not unique. **Sakhi Righi**, the administrator of the [Balochistan-s](#) blog, was arrested on 18 June 2009 in Zahedan, the city where he was born, and received the heaviest jail sentence ever passed on an Iranian blogger, 20 years, on charges of publishing false information and actions against national security.

Because of its repressive legislation and, above all, because it continues to detain 22 journalists and 16 netizens, Iran is ranked 175th out of 178 countries in the latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom [index](#) and is on the Reporters Without Borders list of "[Enemies of the Internet](#)."
