

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/iran-press-freedom-violations-recounted-16-04-2012,41718.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Press freedom violations recounted in real time (from 1st January 2012)

16 April 2012

16.04.2012 - Netizen freed on bail

The blogger and human rights activist **Kouhyar Goudarzi**, who kept a blog called [Kouhyar](#), was finally released on bail of 100 million tomans (90,000 euros) on 12 April. Following his arrest on 1 August 2011 in Tehran, he spent several months in Evin prison without the authorities saying where he was being held.

Last month, a Tehran revolutionary court sentenced Goudarzi to five years in jail and internal exile: he is supposed to serve his time in prison in the northeastern city of Zahedan.

On 2 August 2011, his mother, Parvin Mokhtare, was arrested at her home in the eastern city of Kerman and was sentenced by a Kerman revolutionary court to 23 months in prison. She freed on 19 March.

05.04.2012- More journalists and netizens arrested, sentenced to jail terms

Reporters Without Borders is appalled to learn that more journalists and netizens have been arrested or have been given long jail sentences in the past few days.

Mehran Faraji, a journalist with the newspaper *Shargh* and the now-closed newspaper *Etemad Melli*, was arrested on 3 April in order to serve a six-month jail sentence on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

Arrested on 12 December 2010 and then freed on bail on 4 February 2011, Faraji was originally sentenced by a Tehran revolutionary court in October 2011 to a year in prison, but an appeal court later reduced it to six months in prison plus six months suspended. He suffers from severe osteoarthritis and a long spell in jail is likely to exacerbate his condition.

Rihaneh Tabatabai, another *Shargh* journalist, was notified on 2 April that a Tehran revolutionary court has sentenced her to a year in prison. Arrested at her home by intelligence ministry officials on 12 December 2010, she was freed on 16 January 2011 on bail of 10 million tomans (7,500 euros).

The netizen **Mansoureh Behkish** has also just learned that a Tehran revolutionary court has sentenced her to four and half years in prison on charges of anti-government propaganda and creating the "Mothers in Mourning" movement in order to "meet and conspire against national security."

Aged 54, Behkish, has been campaigning for years about the arbitrary execution of political prisoners during the 1980s and has repeatedly been harassed and jailed. She and 33 other

members of "Mothers in Mourning" were arrested while demonstrating in Tehran's Laleh Park on 9 January 2010. Banned from leaving the country when freed on 17 March 2011, she was arrested again in Tehran on 12 June 2011 and spent a month in Section 209 of Evin prison.

Bekhish also belongs to the "Mothers of Khavaran," a movement named after the south Tehran cemetery used as mass grave for political prisoners who were executed en masse in 1988. Its members are harassed by the authorities for demanding justice and for holding ceremonies commemorating the deaths of their loved-ones.

Six of Bekhish's close relatives (four brothers, a sister and a brother-in-law) were executed during the 1980s. She posts articles on various websites about these groups, their ceremonies and the harassment to which they are subjected.

Under Iran's Islamic criminal code, Tabatabai and Behkish have 21 days to appeal against their sentences.

Reporters Without Borders has learned that two journalists, **Ali Mousavi Khalkhali** and **Mehdi Khazali**, and a jailed blogger's mother, Parvin Mokhtare, were released on 19 March.

Khalkhali, who worked for the [Irdiplomacy](#) news website, was held in Tehran's Evin prison after being arrested by intelligence ministry officials at his home on 24 February. He is a nephew of Ayatollah Hakim, a senior Shiite cleric of Iranian origin in Iraq.

The editor of the blog Baran, Khazali was arrested for the third time in less than two years on 9 January and was sentenced on 5 February to four years in jail followed by 10 years of internal exile in the southern city of Borazjan on a charge of insulting government officials. His family said his health deteriorated while detained.

Mokhtare, the mother of the jailed blogger **Kouhyar Goudarzi**, was herself sentenced to 23 months in prison by a revolutionary court in the southeastern city of Kerman.

23.03.2012 -Two freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the release on bail on 10 March of **Rahim Sarkar**, editor of the weekly *Hadiss Qazvin*, after payment of a bond of 50 million tomans (about 45,000 euros).

He was arrested on 8 March after being summoned to the revolutionary court in the city of Qazvin. He had been charged on 27 February with "publishing false information with the aim of disturbing public opinion".

According to the prosecution, "The newspaper published in its latest edition, images of prisons, poverty, executions, etc. in order to paint a bleak picture of the country. The accompanying article forecast a poor turnout at the parliamentary election on 12 March."

The press freedom organization has also been informed of the release on bail on 26 December last year of **Ali Dini Torkamani**, a writer and economist who contributes to the Tehran-based online magazine *Alborznet*. He was arrested on 2 August at his home in the capital.

28 February 2012 - Journalists arrested in January round-up released, photographer detained

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the release on bail two days ago of **Parastoo Dokoochaki**, a blogger and women's rights activist, and yesterday of **Sahamoldin Borghani**, a journalist who writes for the news website [Irdiplomacy](#) and **Marzieh Rasouli**, who contributes to the arts and culture sections of several newspapers.

They were arrested on 15 and 18 January and held in solitary confinement in Sections 209 and 2A

of Tehran's Evin prison which are run by the intelligence ministry and the Revolutionary Guards.

The journalists were freed after the payment of a bond of 300 million tomans each by Dokoohaki and Rasouli, and of 200 million tomans by Borghani.

The day before their release, the organized crime unit of the Revolutionary Guards in a statement on the website Gerdab.ir, accused them of collaborating with the *BBC*, British intelligence and the foreign-based opposition.

The Revolutionary Guards announced that an operation code-named "eye of the fox" had led to the break-up of a network that gathered information and produced content for the *BBC* in Iran. The British broadcaster denied it employed staff in Iran. In the past, satellite stations such as the *BBC* and *Voice of America*, have been jammed at regular intervals.

The press freedom organization has also been informed of the arrest of photographer **Tahmineh Monzavi** by officials of the intelligence ministry at her workplace on 19 February. Her family does not know the reasons for her arrest or where she is being held.

6 February 2012 - Blogger sentenced to jail, newspaper suspended

The Tehran revolutionary court yesterday sentenced **Mehdi Khazali**, editor of the *Baran* blog, to 14 years' imprisonment, 10 years' internal exile in the south-western city of Borazjan and 70 lashes. He was arrested on 9 January for the third time in less than two years.

Khazali is the son of Ayatollah Abolghasem Khazali, an influential member of the Council of Guardians of the Iranian Constitution for the past three decades. Despite his frequent run-ins with the authorities, Khazali is very scathing about the government's policies and human rights violations in his blog, which has been hacked and is no longer accessible.

According to the Mashregh website, which is close to the intelligence services, **Sharam Golshani**, head of the currency conversion site Mesghal is reported to have been arrested two days ago, at the height of a currency crisis in Iran. The site, which gives exchange rates for the Iranian rial and foreign currencies, was accused of contributing to the fall of the rial against the U.S. dollar.

On 1 January, U.S. President Barack Obama signed into law Washington's toughest sanctions yet against Tehran. Subsequently the value of the rial fell by more than 20 percent, despite the intervention of the Iranian central bank.

The website was unavailable for several days in early January. Golshani was accused of being a member of the Baha'i faith, which is not recognized as a religion by Iran, and of being and of working on behalf of Iran's enemies.

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the release on bail two days ago of **Simien Nematollahi**, a contributor to the website Majzooban, after the payment of a surety of 100 million tomans (about 90,000 euros). She was arrested on 7 January at her Tehran home by officials of the intelligence ministry on a charge of anti-government propaganda.

The newspaper *Roozegar* was closed down two days ago on the orders of the Tehran prosecutor responsible for the print media after it published a front-page interview and photo of the reformist leader, Mohammad Reza Khatami. It was the third time the daily had been banned. It was suspended for two months on 4 September 2011 and had earlier been closed down between 2007 and February 2010.

Reporters Without Borders is seeking the release of **Said Razavi Faghieh**, a journalist and former student leader who has worked for several reformist newspapers. He was detained at Tehran airport on 22 January after arriving in the country from France where he had lived since 2004. He was studying philosophy in Paris.

The publications for which he has worked include the reformist newspaper *Yase No*, which was

closed down in 2009.

On 30 January 2009, officials of the intelligence ministry confiscated his passport and banned him from leaving the country. He was ordered to attend the revolutionary court the next day. He was released a month later, but the ban on leaving Iran remained in force.

Faghih was detained for several months in 2003 with three other journalists from *Yase No* and spent more than 78 days in solitary confinement.

1st February 2012 - Two journalists freed on bail

Reporters Without Borders had learned of the release on bail on 3 January of the documentary film-maker **Hassan Fathi**, arrested on 12 November, and today of **Fatemeh Khardmand**, a journalist for the monthly *Gozarash Sanat Chap*, who was detained on 7 January.

They were released after paying a surety of 50 million tomans (about 45,000 euros) each.

30 January 2012- Four held over Facebook page

Iran's police responsible for Internet security have [announced](#) the arrest of two men and two women accused of creating a network aimed at corrupting Iranian youth by "promoting prostitution and immorality".

The cyber police have taken control of the [Facebook page "Daf & Paf"](#) which the group is alleged to have set up.

The page, which has nearly 27,000 members, encouraged male and female participants to take part in an online beauty contest by submitting photographs of themselves.

19 January 2012 - Journalist arrested in late December in Bushehr

Reporters Without Borders has learned of the arrests of two journalists late last month in the southwestern city of Bushehr. One was **Esmail Jafari**, a journalist, human rights activist and editor of the blog [Rah Mardom](#) (Voice of the People), who was arrested on 28 December to serve an eight-month jail sentence in Bushehr prison on a charge of endangering national security.

Originally detained in April 2008 for covering a demonstration outside the Bushehr prefecture by about 20 workers protesting against their dismissal, Jafari was formally arrested on 16 December 2008 and was released on bail on 18 March 2009 after being sentenced. He was arrested yet again on 7 April 2009 and was freed 17 days later on bail of 50 million tomans (45,000 euros). He was finally told on 14 November 2011 that his sentence had been confirmed and that he would have to begin serving it.

18 January 2012 - New wave of arrests in Tehran and provinces

A renewed crackdown on journalists and bloggers is continuing in Iran, with two journalists and a blogger arrested in Tehran and another journalist arrested in the northwestern city of Tabriz in the past five days alone.

Sahamoldin Borghani, a journalist who writes for the news website [Irdiplomacy](#), was arrested at his Tehran home on 18 January. Members of his family, who were absent at the time of his arrest, found a note attached to the door saying: "We have taken Shama and his equipment." They do not know why he was arrested or where he is being held.

Irdiplomacy is headed by Mohammad Sadegh Kharazi, a former Iranian ambassador in France who is close to reformist former president Mohammad Khatami.

Peyman Pakmehr, the editor of the [Tabriz News](#) website, was meanwhile arrested by local intelligence ministry officials in the northwestern city of Tabriz on 17 January on the orders of prosecutors in Tehran and was transferred to Tehran's Evin prison. The reason for his arrest is still not known.

Two women writers were arrested separately by intelligence ministry officials at their Tehran homes on 15 January on charges of anti-government propaganda. They were **Parastoo Dokoochaki**, a blogger and women's rights activist, and **Marzieh Rasouli**, a journalist who writes for the arts and culture sections of several newspapers.

11 January 2012 - New wave of arrests

Arrests of netizens are meanwhile continuing. **Simien Nematollahi**, a contributor to the pro-Sufi website Majzooban (www.majzooban.org), was arrested at her Tehran home by intelligence ministry officials on 11 January on a charge of anti-government propaganda. Several members of the website's staff were arrested on 7 and 8 September and were freed on bail on 4 October pending trial.

Mohammad Solimaninya, the head of [u24](#), a social networking website for Iranian professionals, was arrested on 20 January after being summoned before a revolutionary tribunal in Karaj, a town 20 km north of Tehran, on 10 January. Plainclothes intelligence ministry officials searched his home the same day, confiscating his computer, hard disks and CDs.

His family still does not know why he was arrested or where he is being held. As well as running u24, Solimaninya has created and hosts the websites of many civil society organizations, NGOs and Iranian intellectuals.

Journalists **Fatemeh Khardmand**, **Ehssan Hoshmand** and **Saeed Madani**, were arrested by plainclothes men at their Tehran homes on 7 January. Confirming their arrest the next day, intelligence minister Heydar Moslehi said they had "envisaged carrying out American plans to disrupt the parliamentary elections by using cyber-space and social networks." This is a clearly trumped-up charge by a regime which, without any evidence, systematically accuses dissidents of being spies working for the United States or Israel.

Madani, a sociologist as well as a journalist who has written dozens of articles in the independent media, was previously arrested and sentenced to six years in prison. Hoshmand, who is also a sociologist, has specialized in the history of the Kurdish people.

Khardmand is a journalist with the monthly Gozaresh Sanat Chap. According to her husband, Masoud Lavassani, a journalist and blogger who was released in July after two years in detention, her arrest was carried out by four intelligence ministry officials with a warrant who said she was accused of "being in contact with the families of political prisoners." Her state of health is a source of concern and their four-year-old son, who was already disturbed by his father's long imprisonment, is in state of shock.

Mehdi Khazali, who edits the *Baran* blog and has been arrested several times in the past, was arrested again on 9 January. According to his wife, he was injured in the course of his arrest, which was carried out in a very violent manner. Khazali is the son of Ayatollah Abolghasem Khazali, an influential member of the Council of Guardians of the Iranian Constitution for the past three decades. Despite his frequent run-ins with the authorities, Mehdi Khazali is very scathing about the government's policies and human rights violations in his blog, which has been the victim of a cyber-attack and is no longer accessible.

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2011\)](#)

[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 \(June-December 2009\)](#)
