

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/press-freedom-violations-recounted-23-01-2014,45705.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Iran

Continuing crackdown

Press freedom violations recounted in real time January 2014

16 July 2014

16.07.2014- journalist freed on completing four-year jail term

Reporters Without Borders has learned that **Siamak Qaderi**, a journalist who used to work for the government news agency *IRNA*, was released on 13 July on completing a four-year jail sentence.

Arrested on 5 August 2010, Qaderi was convicted on 21 January 2011 of using his blog to disseminate anti-government propaganda and false information "liable to disrupt public order." As well as four years in prison, he was sentenced to 60 lashes and was fired from IRNA.

His arrest was prompted by his blog posts about government repression and, in particular, his interview with gays, which were all the more sensitive since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's claim during a visit to the United States in September 2007 that "there are no homosexuals in Iran."

Qaderi was one of the 100 "[information heroes](#)" that Reporters Without Borders profiled for this year's World Press Freedom Day (on 3 May).

08.07.2014-Another woman journalist imprisoned, third in past month

Reporters Without Borders condemns journalist **Marzieh Rasouli's** reimprisonment today after being summoned by the sentence application court in Tehran's Evin prison and told to begin serving a two-year jail term on charges of "meeting and conspiring against the Islamic Republic" and anti-government propaganda.

The court also ordered implementation of the other part of Rasouli's sentence – 50 lashes.

Rasouli, who writes for the arts and culture sections of several newspapers, said the sentence application court ignored the fact that her appeal against the sentence has yet to be heard.

[Originally detained on 18 January 2012](#) and placed in solitary confinement in Section 2A of Evin prison, a wing managed by the Revolutionary Guards, she had been freed on bail of 300 million toman (350,000 euros).

She is the third woman journalist to be imprisoned in the past month. The first was Mahnaz Mohammadi, a documentary filmmaker who began serving a five-year jail term on 7 June. The second was **Rihaneh Tabatabai**, who used to work for the daily *Shargh* and who began serving a one-year sentence on 21 June.

With a total of 64 journalists and netizens detained, Iran continues to be one of the world's five biggest prisons for media personnel.

10.06.2014-Woman filmmaker begins serving five-year sentence

Reporters Without Borders condemns a court decision ordering documentary filmmaker and women's rights activist **Mahnaz Mohammadi** to return to prison to serve the five-year sentence she received last year on charges of "meeting and conspiring against the Islamic Republic" and "anti-government propaganda."

Mohammadi was summoned to the sentencing court in Tehran's Evin prison on 7 June to begin serving the sentence.

She was previously arrested on 29 July 2009 and 26 June 2011, each time spending a month in Evin prison before being released in return for an exorbitant amount in bail. She was notified of her five-year sentence on 23 October.

Mohammadi is best known for her 2003 film "Women Without Shadows." In a letter read by

filmmaker **Costa-Gavras** at the 2011 Cannes film festival, she wrote: "I am a woman and a filmmaker, two reasons sufficient to be treated like a criminal in this country."

12.05.2014 - Arrest of journalist who used to live in France

Reporters Without Borders condemns journalist **Saraj Mirdamadi**'s arrest on 10 May. A resident in France since 2001, Mirdamadi had returned to Iran in August 2013, in the wake of the moderate conservative Hassan Rouhani's election as president.

Mirdamadi has worked for various media including *Hayat-é-No*, a daily suspended in January 2003, and *Radio Zamaneh*, which is based in the Netherlands. He is sympathetic to Iran's reformists and actively supported the protests that followed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reelection in 2009.

His passport was confiscated at Tehran airport on his return and, a few days later, the prosecutor's office located at Tehran's Evin prison placed him under investigation on suspicion of "activities against national security." A Tehran court sent the case file back to the prosecutor's office on 8 January on the grounds that it was "incomplete."

His arrest on 10 May followed a summons to report to the prosecutor's office in Evin prison. His brother, Sadra Mirdamadi, told [Radio Farda \(Radio Free Europe\)](#) that he is accused of "anti-regime propaganda" in connection with his journalistic activities and the interviews he has given to news media, and "conspiring during meetings against national security" in connection with this political activities.

According to the information obtained by Reporters Without Borders, the Revolutionary Guards were responsible for his arrest.

07.05.2014- Another reformist daily suspended

Reporters Without Borders condemns today's suspension of the reformist daily *Ghanon* (Law) by the Tehran media court in response to a complaint presented by the Tehran state prosecutor.

Alireza Nikoui, a member of the newspaper's staff, said the court found *Ghanon* guilty of "publishing false information contrary to Islamic values and likely to disturb public opinion." *Ghanon* editor **Masoud Kazemi** said "the prosecutor's office told us by phone this morning that the complaint refers to a report in yesterday's issue about Mohamed Royanian's release."

Royanian is a former Revolutionary Guard commander and former head of a Tehran soccer club who was arrested on 5 May in connection with several corruption allegations. Reports of his release on bail of 1 billion toman were also posted on several news websites.

Pro-reform media and journalists count among the leading victims of the judicial system established by conservatives allied with the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei.

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile learned that the suspension imposed on the reformist daily *Ebtekar* on 26 April was rescinded later the same day. The suspension of the conservative daily *9 day*, imposed on 17 March, was also lifted on 26 April.

28.04.2014 - Newspaper suspended, threats against families of prisoners

Reporters Without Borders condemns the pro-reform newspaper *Ebtekar*'s suspension by the Tehran prosecutor's office for media and culture on 26 April, two days after it reported that the head of the Iranian prison system, Golamhossien Esmaili, had been fired.

Ebtekar editor Mohamad Ali Vakili said that "according to the letter from the prosecutor's office, the newspaper has been suspended under article 6 of the press law for publishing false information."

Judicial authority chief Sadegh Amoli Larijani relieved Esmaili of his position and appointed him head of the Tehran provincial department of justice on 23 April, a week after at least 50 detainees, including prisoners of conscience, were injured during a violent operation by security forces in Tehran's Evin prison.

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile learned that the families of some prisoners have been threatened. Families received a text message on 24 April warning that they could be arrested "in the event of any illegal demonstration." A demonstration had been planned for 26 April.

Kaveh Darolshafa, the brother of jailed netizen **Yashar Darolshafa**, was arrested at his Tehran home following a search by plainclothes intelligence ministry officers on 25 April. His family still does not know why he was arrested or where he is being held.

More information about the 17 April raid by security forces on Section 350 of Evin prison:

- [Many detainees beaten during police search of Evin prison](#) (posted on 18 April)
 - [RWB calls for independent inquiry into police search of Evin prison](#) (posted on 24 April)
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19.03.2014-Censors close hardline conservative weekly

Reporters Without Borders condemns the hardline conservative weekly **9-Day** closure by the Commission for Press Licensing and Surveillance, the censorship arm of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. 9-Day is the mouthpiece of a radical faction that supports Supreme Guide Ali Khamenei. The commission closed the weekly on 17 March under articles 6 and 12 of the press code for alleged "insults and defamation" and "publication of false information."

Ever since moderate conservative President Hassan Rouhani's administration began negotiating with western countries about Iran's nuclear programme, it has been the target of fierce criticism from regime hardliners.

The media and journalists are among the leading victims of the in-fighting between the rival factions within the Iranian ruling elite. Independent media have been particularly affected.

18.02.2014-Website blocked, netizen gets eight years for Facebook content

Reporters Without Borders condemns the government's crackdown on netizens and independent news websites. Another site has been rendered inaccessible in the past few days, while a netizen has been sentenced to eight years in prison for what he posted on Facebook.

At the behest of the Working Group for Identifying Criminal Content, the [IbnaNews](#) site was blocked on 9 February for posting reports about protests in three western and southwestern provinces (Lorestan, Khuzestan and Bakhtiari). The site's director, **Mohessin Heidari** also received a court summons.

The demonstrations were staged by members of the Bakhtiari and Lur peoples in protest against a state TV series with comments that were seen as having insulted Sardar Assad Bakhtiari, one of the leaders and national heroes of the Constitutional Revolution of the 1906-1909.

Reporters Without Borders learned on 16 February that a Tehran revolutionary court sentenced **Arash Moghadam Aslani** to eight years in prison on charges of anti-government propaganda and "insulting Islam's sacred values" in connection with the content he posted on Facebook.

Arrested at his Tehran home by plainclothesmen last August, Aslani has been detained ever since in Section 350 of Tehran's Evin prison.

Said Jalali Far, a netizen who had been serving a three-year jail sentence, was released on 8 February as a result of a pardon by the Supreme Leader for several dozen prisoners of conscience on the Islamic Revolution's 34th anniversary.

Like some of the other beneficiaries, Jalali Far had only a few more months of his sentence left to serve. Convicted on 30 July 2011, he had been back in prison since 8 September 2012.

06.02.2014- Website blocked for publishing letter criticizing nuclear policy

The website [Entekhab](#) (The Choice) has been inaccessible since 1 February as a result of a complaint by the Tehran public prosecutor and a closure order issued by the Tehran media court.

Entekhab editor Mstafa Faghihi told the government [news agency Irna](#) that the site was blocked for publishing a letter in which a university academic, Sadeq Zibakalam, criticized Iran's nuclear policy as well as other sensitive issues such as public health and education.

Zibakalam wrote: "Even if the United States and 199 other countries reach agreement on our nuclear policy (...) this policy is economically not beneficial for Iran. It is a complete mistake. We have lost millions of dollars for nothing."

During a court appearance yesterday, Zibakalam was charged with anti-government propaganda, circulating false information designed to disturb public opinion, insulting the justice system and defamation. He was released on bail of 50 million toman (about 50,000 euros) pending trial.

23.01.2014- Newspaper owners held arbitrarily since 2011

Mehdi Karoubi, a 77-year-old newspaper owner who has been under house arrest since February 2011, was taken to an unknown place of detention of 17 January after undergoing two back operations – a laminectomy and discectomy – at Tehran’s Arad Hospital.

A dissident theologian, former parliamentary speaker and owner of the closed newspaper *Etemad Melli*, Karoubi has been hospitalized a total of five times since mid-2013 for various ailments including a heart condition, according to his wife, Fatemeh Karoubi. He underwent an angioplasty on 31 July.

Mir Hossein Mousavi, the owner of the closed newspaper *Kalameh Sabaz*, and Mousavi’s wife, the writer **Zahra Rahnavard**, who were placed under house arrest at the same time as Karoubi, continue to be held at their home on the intelligence ministry’s order.

Mousavi and Rahnavard have also been hospitalized several times in Tehran – in August 2012, September 2013 and most recently October 2013 – for heart problems. Karoubi, Mousavi and Rahnavard are being held arbitrarily. There is no legal basis for their detention under either Iranian or international law. Depriving them of their freedom and denying them the right to a fair trial is a flagrant violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

08.01.2014 -Government closes ultra-conservative weekly

Reporters Without Borders condemns the suspension of *Yalasarat Hossien*, a weekly published by the radical Islamist group Hezbollah in Iran, following articles in recent weeks that were very critical of moderate conservative President Hassan Rouhani’s government, especially its nuclear accords.

It was suspended on 6 January by the Press Licensing and Surveillance Commission – an offshoot of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance – under article 12 of the press code for “insults and defamation” and “publishing false information.”

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile also learned that **Ali Asghar Gharavi**, a journalist arrested on 10 November in connection with an article in the 23 October issue of [the reformist daily Bahar](#), was released on bail yesterday pending trial.

The Press Licensing and Surveillance Commission suspended Bahar on 28 October for publishing the article .

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time \(January-December 2013\)](#)

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