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report

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Latest News on Journalists and Political Prisoners

Arrest, Interrogation and Lashes for Journalists

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The third round of mass arrest of journalists and political activists began in Iran as the first anniversary of last year's June 12 disputed presidential election approaches. After arresting two journalists, Azam Veisameh and Mahboubeh Khansari, security agents failed in their attempt to arrest several other young reformist activities and one political prisoner's wife. Until the time of publication of this report, no information was available of the fate of Saba Vasefi, a human rights activist who was targeted by security agents for arrest. The conviction of filmmaker and journalist Mohammad Nourizad, and his sentencing to 3.5 years imprisonment and 50 lashes was also widely covered in news circles and sparked protests from his family.

Despite the fact that Azam Veisameh and Mahboubeh Khansari were arrested midnight Monday and their families have till now failed to gather any information about their fates or whereabouts, Rajanews website close to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad claimed that the two journalists "communicated with foreign media" and discussed "information about certain issues."

The website accused the two journalists of having cooperated with illegal and filtered media outlets.

Azam Veisameh was a reporter for the website Parleman News – run by the reformist faction in the Majlis assembly. She was recently barred from entering the Majlis premises. Mahboubeh Khansari, who has been inactive as a journalist for the past year, was previously a reporter covering urban affairs, writing for Sarmaye newspaper, Kargozaran newspaper, and other specialized monthlies and weeklies covering urban issues.

Meanwhile, security agents raided Saba Vasefi's house but were unable to arrest her as she was not there. Saba is a human rights activist and no information is available about her whereabouts.

According to a report by the Human Rights Reporters Committee, this was the second time that security agents were raiding Saba Vasefi's house. They confiscated material from her house which included her writings, notebooks, research files, personal pictures, telephone contacts book and a camera.

Saba Vasefi had traveled to the town of Shahriar yesterday to work on a case of a defendant sentenced to death, but had not returned as of the time of this report. Last winter, she was barred from teaching at the Shahid Beheshti University. She is a researcher and activist in human rights and women's rights issues, and began teaching at the Shahid Beheshti University in 2006.

Mohammad Nourizad's prison and lashing sentences were upheld by branch 54 of Tehran's appellate court. Previously, a lower court had sentenced him to 3.5 years imprisonment and 50 lashes for propaganda against the

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