

Arrests of journalists since disputed June election now top 100

Reporters Without Borders continues to be very worried about the worsening press freedom situation and treatment of detained journalists in Iran after developments in the past few days.

Agence France-Presse correspondent **Farhad Pouladi** and **Nafiseh Zareh Kohan**, a journalist who writes for various pro-reform newspapers, were arrested yesterday in Tehran during demonstrations marking the 30th anniversary of the US embassy's seizure. **Hassin Assadi Zidabadi**, a blogger who heads a student human rights committee, was arrested the day before.

"Journalists are still being kidnapped or arrested illegally in Iran," Reporters Without Borders said. "At least 100 journalists and cyber-dissidents have been arrested in the past 145 days (since the 12 June presidential election) and 23 three of them are still being held. More than 50 journalists have left the country and those who have stayed are subject to constant harassment."

The press freedom organisation added: "Meanwhile, verdicts are beginning to be issued in the Stalinist-style show trials and it is no surprise that journalists have been given harsh sentences of five or six years in prison without any possibility of appeal. This situation is intolerable. The international community must come to the aid of Iran's journalists."

Pouladi was arrested in Tehran by three men, one of them uniformed, although his news agency, *AFP*, which is one of the few agencies still operating in Iran, had been given permission to cover the demonstrations taking place in the capital and various other cities.

After the ministry of culture and Islamic orientation issued an order on 16 June banning "foreign news media from participating in or covering demonstrations organised without interior ministry permission," many foreign reporters were forced to leave Iran.

Pouladi's relatives and colleagues have received no word of him since his arrest, nor do they know why he was arrested or where he is now being held.

Kohan, who keeps a blog called *Rozmargiha* (<http://roozmaregiha2.blogfa.com/>) as well as writing for reformist publications, was arrested together with her husband, who is a student leader. It is not known where they are being held either.

Zidabadi, who edits the blog "Avaez no" (<http://www.avazeno.blogfa.com/>) as well as heading a student committee that defends human rights, was arrested at his home on 3 November and is now also being held at an unknown location.

Reporters Without Borders has meanwhile been told that **Negar Sayeh**, who works for various news media, was arrested a week or so ago. Her husband, **Hadi Heidari**, a well-known cartoonist who edits the Persian cartoon (<http://www.haditoons.com>) website, had been arrested in Tehran on 22 October while attending a religious tribute to political prisoner at the home of Shehaboldin Tabatabai, a leading supporter of the reformist party Participation, who was also arrested.

Reporters Without Borders defends imprisoned journalists and press freedom throughout the world. It has nine national sections (Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland). It has representatives in Bangkok, New York, Tokyo and Washington. And it has more than 120 correspondents worldwide.