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Authorities in Iran Arrest 18 Students

By NAZILA FATHI

Iranian authorities arrested 18 student leaders in Tehran on Friday in a crackdown on demonstrations, which flared up at two universities as classes resumed this week.

The student leaders were arrested at a park in northern Tehran, where they had gathered for a “friendly meeting,” another student, Bahareh Hedayat, said in a telephone interview.

She said they were all members of the Office for Consolidating Unity, a pro-democracy student group that has come under pressure since the first election of President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) in 2005.

The Office for Consolidating Unity issued a statement condemning the arrests and warned that “the hasty action would have severe consequences” that could provoke the students, [Advarnews, a student Web site](#), reported.

Ms. Hedayat said the arrests were likely to backfire. “It will cause more tension at universities, and more protests might follow,” she said.

Universities have been a hotbed for political activities, and the government had warned ahead of the opening of the universities this week that it would confront any protests fiercely.

Earlier in the week, students staged two protests, the first since the start of classes. One demonstration, at Tehran University on Monday, caused Mr. Ahmadinejad to cancel his visit there. Another protest occurred the next day at Sharif University, and the minister of higher education, Kamran Daneshjoo, cut short his visit there.

More than 100 people remain in jail after being arrested by the government in the aftermath of the June election, when some of the largest demonstrations in decades broke out over charges that Mr. Ahmadinejad had won by falsifying votes. These include more than a dozen university professors and student leaders, as well as former government officials.

Also on Friday, the government stationed hundreds of security officers and [Basij](#) militiamen at a Tehran stadium, where some 90,000 spectators gathered to watch a soccer match, the [opposition Web site](#) reported.

The semiofficial ILNA news agency reported that cellphone services in the area were cut off, a step often taken by the authorities to cripple communication in case of protests.

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