

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Releases Witness Statements by Bloggers and Cyber-Journalists

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) today published witness statements by three Iranian bloggers and cyber-journalists who were arrested and detained by the Iranian government in 2004 and 2005. The witness statements are the results of interviews conducted by IHRDC staff in 2008 and 2009.

Two of the journalists—Roozbeh Mirebrahimi and Omid Memarian—were active cyber-journalists residing in and around Tehran at the time of their arrests. The third witness—Arash Sigarchi—was the Editor-in-Chief of *Gilan-e Emrooz* in the northern Iranian city of Rasht. They were charged with (and convicted of) moral, press, and national security crimes. The statements, published under the title, *Forced Confessions: Targeting Iran's Cyber-Journalists*, describe, in detail, the journalists' arrests, detention, torture, forced confessions and eventual convictions.

The experiences of these journalists are not unique. In conjunction with the IHRDC reports *Ctrl+Alt+Delete: Iran's Response to the Internet* (May 2009) and *Covert Terror: Iran's Parallel Intelligence Apparatus* (April 2009), these statements expose a network of Iranian government actors—including members of the security and parallel intelligence forces, the Judiciary, and state-run media outlets such as *Kayhan* newspaper and the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting—responsible for silencing voices of dissent in cyberspace.

Their experiences are also particularly relevant at this time. In an apparent effort to crush any expression of dissent or even disagreement following the disputed presidential election on June 12, the Islamic Republic continues to shut down newspapers, arrest, detain and torture editors and journalists, and arrest and charge Iranian bloggers with crimes such as using the internet to organize demonstrations.

IHRDC continues to call on the United Nations to investigate these and other human rights violations committed by the Iranian government.

Forced Confessions: Targeting Iran's Cyber-Journalists is available in English on IHRDC's website www.iranhrdc.org. A Persian translation of the report will be available soon.

IHRDC is a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that was founded in 2004 by a group of human rights scholars, activists, and historians. Its staff of human rights lawyers and researchers produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and an archive of documents are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website.

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