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NEWS

Iran Arrests Student Activists Ahead Of Student Day



Student leader Abdullah Momeni was given an eight-year sentence

November 20, 2009
By Golnaz Esfandiari (RFE/RL) – Iran has increased its pressure on student activists ahead of the national Student Day on December 7.

Throughout Iran a dozen students are reported to have been jailed this week, including eight student activists arrested in Tehran on November 19.

Those arrested include a senior member of Iran's largest reformist student group, Abbas Hakimzadeh, who had been released from jail recently after spending 120 days in solitary confinement.

Hakimzadeh was reportedly arrested at his home in the early hours of November 19. His personal items, including his computer, were confiscated.

Seven other student activists were arrested a few hours later during a raid by security forces at the home of one of the students. The detained students are members of the Liberal Students of Iran's Universities, a group which campaigned for reformist cleric Mehdi Karubi during Iran's presidential campaign.

The Paris-based spokesman of the group, Saeed Ghaseminejad, told RFE/RL the arrests are a move by the authorities to prevent students from protesting against the government on December 7.

He said he expects the authorities to increase pressure on student activists ahead of December 7. Ghaseminejad, however, predicted that the protest will go on despite the pressure and arrests.

He said the opposition against President Mahmud Ahmadinejad goes beyond a few students and is widespread among the students and Iran's population.

"It won't have any impact, students will protest on December 7 anyway," Ghaseminejad said.

A Tehran-based student activist who did not want to be named for security concerns told RFE/RL that authorities are turning Tehran's notorious Evin prison into a university ahead of the national Student Day.

On November 19 two more students were reportedly arrested in Tabriz. At least one student is reported to have been arrested in Shiraz earlier this week. Another student activist, Salman Sima, was arrested on November 14 in Tehran.

The arrests come as a prominent figure in Iran's student movement, Abdollah Momeni, was given an eight-year prison term in connection with the protests that shook Iran following the disputed June 12 presidential vote.

A colleague of Momeni's in the policymaking committee of the Graduates Association of Iran, Mostafa Khosravi, told RFE/RL's Radio Farda the heavy sentence against Momeni is a warning to any students planning to join an anti-Ahmadinejad protest set for December 7.

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