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Iran editor gets 9-year jail term over vote unrest



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TEHRAN (Reuters) - A newspaper editor and well-known critic of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been sentenced to nine years in jail for fomenting unrest after June's disputed elections, his lawyer said on Wednesday.

Saeed Laylaz, whose daily paper Sarmayeh was banned last month, was found guilty of taking part in illegal gatherings and holding classified information, Mahmoud Alizadeh-Tabatabaie was quoted on the semi-official Fars news agency as saying.

"I was informed about the verdict verbally, but as soon as I receive the formal written verdict we will have 20 days to appeal," Alizadeh-Tabatabaie said.

Iran, locked in dispute with world powers over its nuclear energy programme, has staged several trials over protests after the June presidential election that returned Ahmadinejad to power. Five people have been sentenced to death.

The poll plunged Iran into its most serious internal crisis since the 1979 Islamic revolution, exposing deep divisions in its ruling elite and further straining ties with the West.

Another journalist, Hengameh Shahidi, who is also an adviser to defeated presidential candidate Mehdi Karoubi, has been sentenced to 6 years and 3 months in jail, Karoubi's website Tagheer said on Monday.

She was found guilty of acting against national security, disturbing public order, creating and leading street riots and doing interviews with "anti-revolution" British news outlet the BBC, the website said.

Shahpour Kazemi, brother-in-law of another defeated presidential candidate and opposition leader Mirhossein Mousavi, was sentenced to one year in jail, opposition websites reported this week.

Both verdicts are subject to appeal.

Analysts regard the trials as an attempt by the authorities to uproot the moderate opposition and put an end to mass protests such as those that erupted after the election.

(Reporting by Reza Derakhshi; Writing by Andrew Hammond)

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