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## Iran: Five Journalists Convicted, Another Arrested and One Released

Source: [Reporters Without Borders](#)

A UN general assembly committee has expressed deep concern about "serious ongoing and recurring human rights violations" in Iran, especially in the crackdown following President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed election in June. In a strongly-worded resolution on 20 November, the human rights committee accused the government of stepping up its use of torture, flogging, amputation and other forms of cruel and inhuman punishment.

"Despite such clear condemnation from the United Nations, the Iranian authorities continue to torture journalists and try them without any transparency, behind closed doors," Reporters Without Borders said. "The UN general assembly must follow up this committee's work by adopting a resolution denouncing the lack of transparency in the ongoing political trials and the illegal and arbitrary sentences being passed on opposition activists and journalists."



Sasan Aghaei

The latest journalist to be detained is **Sasan Aghaei** of the daily newspaper *Farhikhteghan*, who was arrested yesterday at his Tehran home by intelligence ministry officials after they had carried out a search. It is not known where he was taken.

Aghaei, who also edits the blog *Azad Tribun*, is the third *Farhikhteghan* journalist to be arrested since the election. The other two, **Masoud Bastani** and **Reza Norbakhsh**, the newspaper's editor, have both been given six-year jail sentences.

**Reza Rafiee Foroshani**, a freelance journalist who works for Iranian and international news media, has meanwhile just been given a seven-year jail sentence, plus a suspended sentence of another five years in prison, on a spying charge.

**Mohammad Ali Abtahi**, a cleric known as "blogging Mullah" who was serving a six-year jail sentence, was freed yesterday on payment of a record bail amount of 700 million toman (520,000 euros). A deputy minister in former President Mohammad Khatami's government and an adviser to opposition candidate Mehdi Karoubi, he was arrested at his Tehran home on 16 June and spent 161 days in detention.

Another journalist, **Ahmad Zeydabadi**, was sentenced today to five years in prison followed by exile on the northeastern city of Gonabad. At the same time, the amount of bail for a provision release was increased to 350 million toman (260,000 euros).

Bastani, Norbakhsh, Foroshani, Abtahi and Zeydabadi were all convicted in the course of the Stalinist-style political trials that have been taking place in Tehran since August. Their lawyers were not allowed to see them or examine the prosecution case files and they were represented in court by lawyers appointed by the prosecutor-general who are linked to the intelligence services. During these sham trials, they were also forced to read out confessions that had been extracted under duress.

The authorities in Tehran's Evin prison have not been providing any information about detainees to their families or lawyers since the 12 June presidential election.



Ahmad Zeydabadi

Journalists continue to be harassed while in prison. They can be interrogated at any time. New charges can be brought against them. They can be denied family visits for no clear reason. They can be put in solitary confinement for one wrong word, and they can be denied medical treatment.

Reporters Without Borders was recently told about the particularly desperate plight of **Mehdi Hossinzadeh**, a detained journalist who, according to his family, has been tortured. The authorities have said nothing about his case since his arrest on 31 July.

Jila Baniyaghoob, a journalist who was held from 20 June to 19 August, says she is very worried about her husband, fellow journalist **Bahaman Ahamadi Amoe**, who was arrested the same day as she was and is still being held.

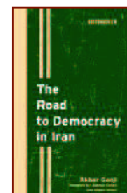
After spending more than 65 days in solitary confinement in Evin prison, he was transferred to a wing with other inmates. But then, after just a week in cell 350, he was put back in solitary confinement, in section 209 of the prison.

"I saw him last Monday," Baniyaghoob told Reporters Without Borders. "He was very ill with fever. We are very worried by the lack of medical care. More than five months have gone by since Bahaman's arrest, and his lawyer has still not been able to see him or have access to his case file."

See a TV interview yesterday with Newsweek correspondent **Maziar Bahari** about the four months he spent in prison in Iran:



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