

Iran frees two Karoubi allies on bail: media



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TEHRAN (Reuters) – Iran has freed two prominent allies of pro-reform cleric Mehdi Karoubi on bail, Iranian media said on Sunday, including a female journalist who reportedly went on hunger strike last week.

Hengameh Shahidi, who worked for Karoubi's Etemad-e Melli newspaper, was released on bail of around \$90,000, ISNA news agency reported.

Last week, reformist website Norouz said she went on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin prison and that she suffered from heart disease and depression.

Shahidi, a women's rights activist who advised Karoubi in Iran's disputed June election, was detained for several months. Etemad-e Melli was shut down by the authorities in August.

Karoubi came fourth in the presidential poll, which the opposition says was rigged in favor of hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and which triggered huge opposition protests.

Thousands of people were detained after the vote, though most have since been released.

Earlier on Sunday, Iranian newspapers said senior Karoubi adviser Morteza Alviri was released almost eight weeks after he was detained, without giving details on the bail amount.

A reformist website reported on Sept 8 that agents raided and searched the home of Alviri, a former Tehran mayor and ambassador to Spain, and took him away.

More than 100 senior reformers, activists, journalists and others detained after the election remain in jail and have been put on trial, accused of fomenting street unrest. The opposition has denounced the court sessions as "show trials."

Several of the accused have received jail sentences and three have been sentenced to death, according to Iranian media. Under Iranian law, the verdicts can be appealed.

The authorities have portrayed the post-election street demonstrations as a foreign-backed bid to undermine the Islamic Republic. They reject charges of vote-rigging, describing the election as the country's "healthiest" for three decades.

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