

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Calls for the Unconditional Release of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) condemns the continued unwarranted detention of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in Iran and calls for her unconditional release. “The Iranian authorities should immediately release Mohammadi Ashtiani,” said Renee Redman, Executive Director of IHRDC. “The handling of her case file has lacked fundamental guarantees of due process and transparency from the beginning. It is particularly alarming that while the Iranian government plays with Mohammadi Ashtiani’s life, it is making a bid for a position on the board of the newly-created UN Women agency that was created to promote women’s equality.”

Mohammadi Ashtiani, a widow and mother of two, was initially sentenced to execution by stoning for a conviction for adultery. Following international condemnation, her execution was suspended in July, pending review by the Iranian judiciary. While in detention, Mohammadi Ashtiani has reportedly been subjected to torture and mistreatment, and forced to falsely confess.

Mohammadi Ashtiani’s family and close associates have also been harassed and targeted by government authorities. Mohammadi Ashtiani’s lawyer Mohammad Mostafaei, a prominent criminal defense attorney and a human rights activist, was threatened with arrest by Iranian authorities in retaliation for comments he made to the international media in support of his client. He was forced to flee the country. On October 10, 2010, Mohammadi Ashtiani’s other lawyer, Houtan Kian, and her son, Sajjad Ghaderzadeh, were reportedly arrested in Kian’s law office in Tabriz, Iran for speaking with two German journalists about Mohammadi Ashtiani’s case. Kian, Ghaderzadeh and the foreign journalists remain in detention.

On November 1, the International Campaign Against Stoning reported that Mohammadi Ashtiani would be executed by hanging yesterday. While her execution appears to have been delayed, reports indicate that the implementation of the sentence is imminent.

Under Article 83 of Iran's Islamic penal code, individuals found guilty of adultery may be sentenced to death by stoning—this punishment falls disproportionately on women. Currently at least ten people—including both women and men—are awaiting execution by stoning for adultery convictions in Iran.

IHRDC's recently published report entitled *Silencing the Women's Rights Movement in Iran* documents the arrests and detentions of women's rights activists and lawyers who defend women's rights, following the disputed presidential election of last year. The harassment of Mohammadi Ashtiani's former lawyer, Mohammad Mostafaei, by Iranian authorities is also chronicled in the report.

The report is available in English on IHRDC's website at:

<http://www.iranhrdc.org/httpdocs/English/pdfs/Reports/Women's%20Rights.pdf>.

The Persian translation of the report is available here:

<http://iranhrdc.org/httpdocs/Persian/pdfs/Reports/Silencing%20the%20Women%27s%20Right%20Movement%20-%20PERSIAN%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

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 publish comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran. The reports and database of documents relating to human rights in Iran are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website at www.iranhrdc.org.