

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Calls on Iran to Release Women's Rights Activist Shiva Nazar Ahari

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) calls on Iran to release Shiva Nazar Ahari, a women's rights activist and human rights defender who has been imprisoned since December 20, 2009 on charges stemming from her non-violent activism.

Nazar Ahari, a founder of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR) and a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign to Reform Discriminatory Laws against Women, was arrested without a warrant on June 14, 2009, two days after the disputed presidential elections. Her interrogators reportedly forced her to call members of the CHRR and instruct them to shut down the organization's website. She was released in September after posting bail. Nazar Ahari was arrested again with two other women activists on December 20, while boarding a bus headed for the funeral in Qom of respected cleric Ayatollah Montazeri. She has been detained in Evin prison ever since where she has spent long periods in solitary confinement, and been allowed only very limited contact with her family and lawyer.

Nazar Ahari has been charged with "action against national security" for allegedly participating in demonstrations in the fall and winter of 2009, and "propaganda against the regime" for her activist work. Her interrogators and the government press have accused her of membership in the Mujahedin-e Khalq, a crime that is considered "*muharib*" (waging war against God), and is therefore punishable by death. Her trial was postponed in May, but is currently scheduled to take place on September 4.

Nazar Ahari was arrested as part the Iranian government's efforts to silence activists and defenders. Following the election, the authorities arrested activists during demonstrations, and continue to arrest them in their homes and in public, often without warrants. They have searched activists' homes and seized their belongings, and detained activists and their defenders without charge, denying them access to their lawyers or families. Prison authorities have subjected activists to lengthy periods of solitary confinement, and lengthy and often violent interrogations.

IHRDC's recent report on the Iranian government's targeting of women's rights activists and defenders, *Silencing the Women's Rights Movement in Iran*, 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 will be available in September.

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 produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and a database of documents relating to human rights in Iran are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website.