

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Condemns Arrests of Dual-National Scholars

(New Haven, June 1, 2007) - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) today expressed grave concern regarding the situation of two detained Iranian-American scholars noting alarming similarities between their plight and the circumstances that led to the 2003 detention, rape and murder in custody of Iranian-Canadian photojournalist, Zahra Kazemi.

Haleh Esfandiari of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and social scientist Kian Tajbakhsh are reportedly being held by Iran's Ministry of Intelligence in Ward 209 of Tehran's notorious Evin Prison, where they have been denied access to lawyers or family members. Iran's judiciary has announced that the two have been charged with espionage and endangering national security.

The arrests come as part of a government crackdown on Iranian civil society activists, including journalists, women's rights advocates, and student leaders. Dual nationals appear to be increasingly targeted: another Iranian-American, peace activist Ali Shakeri, is also believed to have been recently arrested, and two dual national journalists have had their passports confiscated, preventing them from leaving Iran.

The IHRDC is particularly concerned given the alarming precedent set by the treatment of Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi who was also held in Evin Prison. As the IHRDC detailed in its 2006 report, *Impunity in Iran: The Death of Photojournalist Zahra Kazemi*, both domestic and international laws protecting the rights of accused persons are routinely disregarded in Iran. These rights, recognized by Iran as a signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, include the right to be free from arbitrary arrest, the right to counsel, and the right to be free from inhumane treatment.

"The tragedy of Zahra Kazemi's death must not be repeated. We call upon the Iranian authorities to ensure that the rights of all persons detained in Iran are respected, and urge the Iranian government to end its politically motivated attacks on scholars and journalists," said Tom Parker, Executive Director of the IHRDC.

The IHRDC report *Impunity in Iran: The Death of Photojournalist Zahra Kazemi* is available on IHRDC's website at <http://www.iranhrdc.org>.

For further information please contact:

Tom Parker, Executive Director
Iran Human Rights Documentation Center
(203) 772-2218
tparker@iranhrdc.org