

## PRESS RELEASE

### Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Condemns the Convictions of Shiva Nazar Ahari and Hossein Derakhshan

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) condemns the heavy and disproportionate prison sentences given by the Iranian judiciary in recent weeks to Shiva Nazar Ahari—a leading women’s rights activist and founder of the Committee for Human Rights Reporters—and Hossein Derakhshan—the founder of one of the first internet blogs in the Farsi language. Last week, Nazar Ahari received six years and a fine in lieu of lashes for charges including “propaganda against the system” and *muharibih*, or “waging war against God”. In a judgment handed down by an Iranian court today, Derakhshan received 19 ½ years in prison for political offenses including “spreading propaganda against the Islamic Regime” and “starting and moderating vulgar and obscene websites”. The sentencing of Nazar Ahari and Derakhshan is further evidence of a continuing pattern by the Iranian government to suppress any form of dissent after widespread protests followed Iran’s disputed presidential election of last year.

“The baseless charges and associated punishments meted to Shiva Nazar Ahari and Hossein Derakhshan signal a further intensification of the Iranian government’s crackdown on human rights activists,” said Renee Redman, Executive Director at IHRDC. “While in the past the Iranian government harassed and arrested scores of human rights activists simply for voicing their views on reform, this latest incident shows that the Iranian government wants not only to intimidate, but actually punish those who express any opinion contrary to the government’s views.”

IHRDC’s recently published report entitled “Silencing the Women’s Rights Movement in Iran” documents this negative trend. The report documents the arrests, detentions and convictions of activists following the election. Those sentenced include Hengameh Shahidi—a prominent women’s rights activist and journalist arrested twice after the elections—who is now serving six years at Evin prison for charges including “insulting the president for doing his job”; Bahareh Hedayat—a women’s rights activist and member of student political activism group *Daftar-i Tahkim-i Vahdat* (Office for Fostering Unity)—who was condemned to nine and half years in jail on charges related to her activism; Mahdiyeh Golrou—a university age female activist arrested alongside her husband and sentenced to three years and four months in prison on trumped up charges including fabricated allegations about her involvement with the *Mujahedin-e Khalq*, or

MEK organization—a political opposition group outlawed in Iran for their terrorist activities; and Alieh Eghdam Doust—whose January 2009 incarceration marked the first ever implementation of a prison sentence stemming solely from charges of peaceful women’s rights activism.

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 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 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.