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Iran is world's top jailer of journalists

New York, July 7, 2009--With at least 30 journalists currently in prison, Iran replaces [China \(http://cpj.org/reports/2008/12/cpjs-2008-prison-census-online-and-in-jail.php\)](http://cpj.org/reports/2008/12/cpjs-2008-prison-census-online-and-in-jail.php) as the world's worst jailer of journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists said today. CPJ called on the Iranian authorities to release all journalists who have been detained following the country's disputed June 12 presidential elections.

CPJ research shows that at least 24 detained in the aftermath of the elections remain in custody, in addition to at least [six \(http://cpj.org/imprisoned/2008.php#iran\)](http://cpj.org/imprisoned/2008.php#iran) journalists who were [in detention \(http://cpj.org/2009/04/iranian-blogger-detained.php\)](http://cpj.org/2009/04/iranian-blogger-detained.php) prior to the disputed elections. In the past few days three journalists have been freed, while at least three others have been arrested.

Of the 30 journalists currently behind bars, 13 work primarily for print publications, three work for online publications, two work for television stations, six are primarily bloggers, and an additional six are freelancers or with unknown affiliations.

"The Iranian authorities have orchestrated a campaign against journalists of all types since the June 12 presidential elections," said CPJ Middle East and North Africa Program Coordinator Mohamed Abdel Dayem. "Despite some isolated releases, the number of journalists behind bars is at an all time high. The authorities should immediately release all the detained journalists."

On Sunday, Iranian authorities freed Iason Athanasiadis, a freelance reporter who was detained on June 17. He had traveled to Iran to cover the presidential election and was arrested at the Tehran airport as he was leaving the country. Greek authorities intervened on his behalf and helped secured his release. Iranian authorities also released on Sunday Mustafa Qwanlu Ghajar, a journalist with the monthly magazine *Sepideh Danaei* who also blogs at [Ghajar \(http://www.ghajar.ir\)](http://www.ghajar.ir). He was arrested on June 22, according to local news reports. Mojtaba Pour-Mohssen, editor-in-chief of the daily *Gilan Imrouz* and contributor to Radio Zamaaneh, an Internet radio station, was released last week, according to local news reports. Authorities arrested Pour-Mohssen on June 15 in Rasht, northwest of Tehran.

Meanwhile CPJ has confirmed the arrests of three additional journalists, Massoud Bastani, Issa Sahar-Khiz and Kambiz Nouroozi, who were detained recently.

Below is a list of journalists who remain in custody as of July 7. The names reflect those whose detention could be independently verified by CPJ.

Massoud Bastani, *Jomhoriyat*

DETAINED: July 5, 2009

Bastani, husband of detained journalist Mehamsa Amrabadi, was arrested when he was went to a Tehran court seeking information about his wife's whereabouts, according to [multiple \(http://www.hammihannews.com/news/4944\) local](http://www.hammihannews.com/news/4944)

<http://parlemannews.com/index.aspx?n=1603>) news (<http://www.mirhusein.net/showthread.php?s=96c35d9282f87330a331d1011735c75c&p=2867#post2867>) reports (<http://www.ghatreh.com/news/3616076.html>). He works for *Jomhoriyat*, a news Web site affiliated with the defeated reformist candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi. His wife, Amrabadi, was arrested along with two other journalists on June 15. According to local and international rights groups Amrabadi, who is pregnant, is being held at Evin Prison.

Issa Sahar-Khiz, *freelance*

DETAINED: July 3, 2009

Sahar-Khiz, a freelance journalist and founding member of the Association of Iranian Journalists, was arrested while traveling in north of Iran, the Association [said](http://rooznamenegar.ir/main.php?t=5&id=1075) (<http://rooznamenegar.ir/main.php?t=5&id=1075>) in a statement. It also reported that the family has been informed of the arrest by phone. Sahar-Khiz is the former director of the press department at the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and is a supporter of defeated candidate presidential Mehdi Karroubi, according to [news](http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F7_Saharkhiz_Bastani_RSFI1770589.html) (http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F7_Saharkhiz_Bastani_RSFI1770589.html) reports (<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4456832,00.html>).

Abulfazl Abedini, *freelance*

DETAINED: June 30, 2009

Abidini, a freelance journalist and human right activist, was arrested in Ahwaz in southwest Iran on June 30, according to the U.S.-backed Radio Farda. Security agents searched his house before taking him, the radio station reported. Abidini was also arrested last year after he reported on a strike by workers at a factory in Ahwaz.

Kambiz Nouroozi, *Association of Iranian Journalists*

DETAINED: June 28, 2009

Uniformed officers arrested Nouroozi, director of legal affairs at the Association of Iranian Journalists, in Tehran, the Persian service of the BBC [reported](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090629_nm_ir88_brief_norouzi.shtml) (http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090629_nm_ir88_brief_norouzi.shtml). He contacted family members to inform them that his case will be referred to the Revolutionary Court, the BBC [reported](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090629_nm_ir88_brief_norouzi.shtml) (http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090629_nm_ir88_brief_norouzi.shtml).

Mujtaba Tehrani, *Etemad e Melli*

DETAINED: June 27, 2009

Tehrani, a reporter with the newspaper owned by defeated presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, was arrested on his way home, according to *Saham News*, a news Web site affiliated with Karroubi. According to *Saham News*, Tehrani had informed his family that he was returning home from work, but never arrived. The following day police visited his home, searched it, and took his computer, the Web site reported.

Names unknown (3), *Kalameh Sabz***DETAINED: June 22, 2009**

Although 25 staffers of *Kalameh Sabz*, a newspaper owned by defeated presidential contender Mir-Hossein Mousavi, were initially detained, *Ayande News*, a self-described independent news Web site, reported on June 29 that 22 of them had been released.

Alireza Beheshti, *Kalameh Sabz***DETAINED: June 22, 2009**

Beheshti, editor-in-chief of *Kalameh Sabz*, was arrested on June 22 as he was leaving the newspaper, according to several local news reports. His arrest came hours after security agents detained about 25 staffers, local press reported.

Maziar Bahari, *Newsweek***DETAINED: June 20, 2009**

Security agents arrested *Newsweek's* Tehran correspondent, Maziar Bahari, the magazine [reported](#) (<http://www.newsweek.com/id/203036>). The officers, who did not identify themselves, took Bahari's laptop and several videotapes, according to *Newsweek*. On June 30, *Fars News* agency [posted](#) (<http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8804091286>) an 11-page "confession" from Bahari in which he allegedly blames Western media groups for the unrest that followed the contested June 12 presidential elections.

Zhila Bani-Yaghoub, *Iranian Women's Club***Bahman Ahmadi Omavi, Affiliation unknown****DETAINED: June 19, 2009**

Bani-Yaghoub and Omavi, who are married, were arrested by security forces in Tehran, the U.S.-funded Radio Farda [reported](#) (http://www.radiofarda.com/content/F8_JILA_BAHMAN_ARREST/1759040.html). Bani-Yaghoub is the editor-in-chief of the *Iranian Women's Club*, a women's rights [Web site](#) (<http://irwomen.net/>). Ishrat Awliai, Bani-Yaghoub's mother, told the *Iranian Women's Club* on July 1 that since her arrest Bani-Yaghoub has contacted her family just once from Evin Prison. The mother also said that during the raid security agents took two computers and mobile phones.

Rajab-Ali Mazroui, *Association of Iranian Journalists***DETAINED: June 19, 2009**

Mazroui, director of the Association of Iranian Journalists, was arrested on June 19, according to multiple local news reports. The details of his arrest in Tehran remain unknown.

Muhammad Ghouchani, *Etemad e Melli***DETAINED: June 19, 2009**

Ghouchani, editor-in-chief of *Etemad e Melli*, which is owned by defeated presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, was arrested on June 19 by Ettelaat intelligence agents, the BBC Persian service [reported \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/lq/iran/2009/06/090620_ba-ir88-ghouchani.shtml\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/lq/iran/2009/06/090620_ba-ir88-ghouchani.shtml). On June 30, *Javan*, a newspaper aligned with President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, published a "confession" allegedly made by Ghouchani, although the paper only identified him by his initials. The newspaper reported that Ghouchani confessed to having been trained in a Persian Gulf country in preparation for a revolution.

Saeed Laylaz, *Sarmaia***DETAINED: June 17, 2009**

Lilaz, a journalist for the daily business journal *Sarmaia* and a vocal critic of President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad's economic policy, was arrested in his home on June 17, his wife, Sepharnaz Panahi, told the [BBC Persian service \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090617_op_ir88_arrests_continue.shtml\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090617_op_ir88_arrests_continue.shtml). She said that officers searched their home and confiscated videotapes, hard disks, and letters. The family doesn't know where Lilaz is being held, the BBC reported. *Sarmaia* also [reported \(http://www.sarmayeh.net/PDF/88-03-28/P2.pdf\)](http://www.sarmayeh.net/PDF/88-03-28/P2.pdf) the arrest.

Karim Arghandehpour, *blogger***DETAINED: June 17, 2009**

Arghandehpour, a journalist who blogs at [Futurama \(http://futurama.ir/\)](http://futurama.ir/), was arrested on June 17, according to news reports. Arghandehpour wrote for the now-defunct reformist newspapers *Salaam* and *Vaghaa-ye-Ettefaaghyeh*, according to the *Tehran Bureau*, a news Web site.

Mohammad Ali Abtahi, *blogger***DETAINED: June 16, 2009**

The well-known blogger [Abtahi \(http://www.webneveshteha.com/\)](http://www.webneveshteha.com/), who is an advisor to the defeated presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi and was vice president during Mohammad Khatami's presidency, was arrested on June 16, the BBC Persian service [reported \(http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090616_he_ir88_abtahi-arrest.shtml\)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/2009/06/090616_he_ir88_abtahi-arrest.shtml). A blog [entry \(http://www.webneveshteha.com/en/\)](http://www.webneveshteha.com/en/) on his site states that he will resume writing as soon as he is released. His wife, Fatima Abtahi, told the BBC that three men in plainclothes visited their home in Tehran and took him away.

Sumaia Tawhidlu, *blogger***DETAINED: Mid-June**

Tawhidlu, who blogs at [Sahel e Salamat \(http://www.smta.ir/\)](http://www.smta.ir/) and is a supporter of defeated reformist candidate Mir-Hosseini Mousavi, was arrested in mid-June in Tehran, according to local news reports. The precise date of her

arrest is unknown.

Ahmad Zaid-Abadi, *Rooz Online*

DETAINED: Mid-June

Zaid-Abadi, a well-known journalist who writes a weekly column for *Rooz Online*, a Farsi and English reformist news Web site, was arrested in mid-June in Tehran. Zaid-Abadi is also the director of the Organization of University Alumni of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a supporter of the defeated candidate Mehdi Karroubi. The details of his arrest remain unknown.

Mehamsa Amrabadi, *Etemad e Melli*

Behzad Bashbo, date unknown

Khalil Mir-Ashrafi, date unknown

DETAINED: June 15, 2009

Amrabadi, a reporter for *Etemad e Melli* newspaper, was arrested on June 15, her mother, Maryam Naqi, [told](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/lq/iran/2009/06/090620_ba-ir88-ghouchani.shtml) (http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/lq/iran/2009/06/090620_ba-ir88-ghouchani.shtml) the BBC Persian service. Naqi told the BBC that the Ministry of Justice informed her on June 18 that her daughter was being held at Evin Prison. On June 17, *Ham Mihan*, a news Web site, reported that the cartoonist Bashbo and television producer Mir-Ashrafi were guests at Amrabadi's home in Tehran when all the three were detained.

Shiwa Nazar-Ahari, *blogger*

DETAINED: June 14, 2009

Nazar-Ahari, a [blogger](http://azadieznan.mihanblog.com/) (<http://azadieznan.mihanblog.com/>) and a member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters, a local watchdog group, was arrested by Ettelaat intelligence agents in her Tehran office on June 14, the committee [reported](http://chrr.us/spip.php?article4306) (<http://chrr.us/spip.php?article4306>).

Kayvan Samimi, *Nama*

DETAINED: June 14, 2009

Samimi, manager of the now-defunct monthly magazine *Nama*, was arrested on June 14 in Tehran, according to multiple online articles.

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