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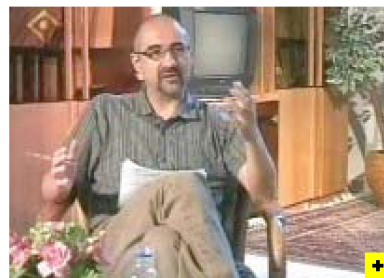
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IRAN MUST OVERTURN SENTENCES ISSUED BY POST-ELECTION 'SHOW TRIAL'

21 October 2009

Amnesty International has urged the Iranian authorities to overturn a 15-year prison sentence imposed on an Iranian-American academic for his alleged part in the protests following the June presidential election.

Kian Tajbakhsh, a social scientist and urban planner, was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on Tuesday following a mass trial of more than 100 people accused of organizing the protests.



Iranian-American academic Kian Tajbakhsh, on Iranian state television in 2007

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"The 'show trial' that has so far led to the imprisonment of Kian Tajbakhsh and a number of other reformist politicians and journalists, as well as the imposition of at least four death sentences, was grossly unfair and a travesty of justice," said Malcolm Smart, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

Media reports say that the charges against Tajbakhsh included espionage, co-operation with an enemy government, and acting against national security.

Similar charges were brought against US-Iranian journalist Roxana Saberi, who was originally sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in April. She was released in May following international and domestic protests at her detention.

Tajbakhsh was detained for several months in 2007. He was formally charged with "acting against state security by engaging in propaganda and espionage for foreigners". He was released in September 2007.

"The authorities should welcome the part that intellectuals can play towards developing the political and social life of their country, instead of locking them up on spurious charges," said Malcolm Smart.

"It appears that Kian Tajbakhsh has been targetted on account of his dual nationality and his academic work, and we consider him a prisoner of conscience."

Amnesty International has called on the Iranian authorities to overturn immediately all sentences passed following the mass trial and to release all those detained in connection with it unless they are to be tried fairly on recognizably criminal charges.

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