

Doc_Number: GDE00086



Iran releases some journalists, vilifies foreign press

New York, June 30, 2009--The Committee to Protect Journalists today called on the Iranian authorities to immediately release all jailed journalists and to stop vilifying the foreign press. CPJ also welcomed the release of a number of employees of the reformist newspaper *Kalameh Sabz* who had been held since June 23.

In recent days, the Iranian government has launched a campaign designed to malign the foreign press, blaming demonstrations that followed the contested June 12 presidential elections on foreign news media, particularly British and U.S. news outlets. On June 19, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei blamed foreign media for social unrest, calling it "evil" for allegedly misleading and agitating the Iranian people. According to Iranian news reports, an official also claimed that the BBC, not government gunmen, had shot Neda Agha Soltan, the demonstrator whose death was caught on camera and broadcast across the world, purportedly to agitate the people of Iran against the government.

Fars News agency today posted an [11-page "confession"](http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8804091286) (<http://www.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8804091286>) by Tehran's *Newsweek* correspondent Maziar Bahari, who was detained on June 21, in which he is reported to have said, according to a translation on *The Washington Post's* Web site: "The activities of Western journalists in news gathering and spying and gathering intelligence are undeniable." The document also claims Bahari said: "I, too, as a journalist and a member of this great Western capitalism machine, either blindly or on purpose, participated in projecting doubts and promoting a color revolution."

"The Iranian government invited international media to cover the presidential campaign when they wanted to showcase the elections," said CPJ executive director Joel Simon. "When journalists covered the street protests that erupted in the disputed aftermath, the government turned on the media, essentially blaming journalists for doing their job."

In a separate development, *Ayande News*, a self-described independent news Web site, [reported](http://www.ayandenews.com/fa/pages/?cid=9403) (<http://www.ayandenews.com/fa/pages/?cid=9403>) that 22 of the 25 jailed employees of *Kalameh Sabz*, the reformist newspaper owned by defeated presidential candidate Mir-Hossein Mousavi, were released on Monday. Alireza Hosseini Beheshti, manager of *Kalameh Sabz*, told the site that three editorial staffers remain behind bars. Over the weekend, authorities also released *Life.com* photographer Amir Sadeghi, who was arrested about a week earlier.

"We welcome the news of the release of the *Kalameh Sabz* staffers and Amir Sadeghi," said Mohamed Abdel Dayem, CPJ's program coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa. "The Iranian authorities should now release the rest of *Kalame Sabz's* employees and the many other journalists who are being held."

On June 23, Iranian security agents [arrested](http://cpj.org/2009/06/iranian-newspaper-raided-25-employees-detained.php) (<http://cpj.org/2009/06/iranian-newspaper-raided-25-employees-detained.php>) the *Kalameh Sabz* employees, according to local and international news reports. Editor-in-Chief Alireza Beheshti Shirazi told the Farsi-language service of German broadcaster Deutsche-Welle hours before his arrest that armed plainclothes agents had detained employees who had visited the office to collect their salaries that day.

The government has blocked the paper, [among others](http://cpj.org/2009/06/iran-censors-newspapers-amid-unrest.php) (<http://cpj.org/2009/06/iran-censors-newspapers-amid-unrest.php>), from being published since June 14.

On Saturday, another journalist was arrested. Mujtaba Tehrani, a reporter with *Etemad e Melli*, the newspaper owned by defeated presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, was detained while returning home from his office at reported *Saham News*, a Karroubi affiliated Web site. The site said that on Sunday police searched Tehrani's house and confiscated his computer.

Following the country's June 12 presidential elections, which gave a landslide majority to President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, protests over the results of the elections have been held in cities cross Iran. The government has cracked down on the media and journalists in an attempt to control of the flow of information.

Authorities [have arrested \(http://cpj.org/2009/06/more-journalists-arrested-in-iran-cpj-seeks-their.php\)](http://cpj.org/2009/06/more-journalists-arrested-in-iran-cpj-seeks-their.php) dozens of journalists since June 12. Most of the detained journalists work for the local media, although [two \(http://cpj.org/2009/06/in-iran-massive-media-crackdown-enters-second-week.php\)](http://cpj.org/2009/06/in-iran-massive-media-crackdown-enters-second-week.php) of them work for international news organizations, according to CPJ research.

June 30, 2009 6:27 PM ET | [Permalink \(http://cpj.org/2009/06/iran-releases-some-journalists-vilifies-foreign-pr.php\)](http://cpj.org/2009/06/iran-releases-some-journalists-vilifies-foreign-pr.php)