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Iran shuts down journalists' association

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TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iranian authorities have shut down a leading journalists' organization, members of the group said on Thursday, a move condemned by international press groups.

Armed men raided and sealed the Tehran offices of the Association of Iranian Journalists late on Wednesday, said the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) which also called for Iran to free up to 42 reporters currently jailed.

"It is true, it has been closed down," said a member of the Iranian association who declined to be named.

"Government actions against media and journalists erode further the credibility and standing of the Government in national and the world opinion," the IFJ said in a statement.

Iran has arrested dozens of leading pro-reform politicians, journalists, lawyers and campaigners since the June 12 presidential election which reformists say was rigged in favor of hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

A court opened the mass trial of more than 100 reformists on Saturday on charges of inciting the unrest that followed the election; the biggest anti-government protests since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"Iran must not make journalists scapegoats for its political troubles," the IFJ said.

Iran accuses the West of fomenting protests against the election which officials say was the healthiest in the history of the Islamic Republic.

(Writing by Jon Hemming)

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