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BBC NEWS

Long sentence for Iran-US scholar

An Iranian-American academic has been sentenced to more than 12 years in prison for his role in protests following a disputed election in June.

Kian Tajbakhsh was among thousands of people detained in the aftermath of the presidential election and had appeared at a mass trial in Tehran.

Charges against him reportedly included espionage, contacting foreign elements and acting against national security.

The United States had repeatedly demanded the release of Mr Tajbakhsh.

His lawyer told a state news agency that the law prohibited him from giving more information than the approximate duration of the sentence.

Critics have dismissed the trials that followed the Iranian demonstrations as show trials, arguing that any confessions that followed are without value.

Mr Tajbakhsh had previously spent four months in Iranian prison in 2007 on charges of endangering national security.

The news of the sentence comes days after Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian journalist working for the US magazine Newsweek, was released on bail after allegedly being arrested during an opposition protest.

Massive street demonstrations followed the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in which at least 30 protesters were killed in clashes and thousands were arrested.

Protesters believe that the election result was rigged.

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