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[« Previous](#) | [Main](#) | [Next »](#)

Obama Administration Targets Two More Iranian Officials for Sanctions, Including Prosecutor of US Hikers

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Last September, President Obama signed an Executive Order imposing sanctions on eight Iranian officials responsible for serious human rights abuses.

Today the Obama administration added two to that list: Tehran Prosecutor General Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi and the commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' notorious Basij Forces, Mohammed Reza Naqdi.

Appointed Tehran Prosecutor General in August 2009, Dolatabadi and those under him have charged Iranian protesters with the capital offense of "Muharebeh" – literally "fighting," in Arabic, but [according to the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran](#) muharebeh is "the term used in Iran's Sharia law to describe a major crime committed against Islam and the state. It carries a punishment ranging from imprisonment to death."

According to the Obama administration, Dolatabadi's office has denied due process to those facing the death sentence, arrested human rights activists, reporters, and demonstrators. Dolatabadi's predecessor in the position, Saeed Mortazavi, was targeted by President Obama for sanctions last September.

Dolatabadi is the lead prosecutor in a regime that is significantly increasing its executions. Human rights groups say that at least 83 Iranians were executed by the Iranian regime in January alone. One of them was 45-year-old Zahra Bahrami, a citizen of both Iran and the Netherlands, arrested in the round-ups of anti-government demonstrators and hanged for the crime of drug possession.

Last week, after anti-government protests in Tehran resulted in the arrest and detention of dozens of Iranian activists, reporters, and political figures, Dolatabadi, justified the arrests as having been carried out for "security reasons."

Dolatabadi is also leading the prosecution for espionage of American hikers Joshua Felix Fattal, 28, and Shane Michael Bauer, 28.

[According to the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#), Naqdi is known as the "Tyrant of the Campus" and in the late 90s was "allegedly involved in the imprisonment and torture of Tehran mayor Qolam-Hossein Karbaschi as well as other prominent city officials." He is said to have played a critical role in the formation of Ansar-i-Hezbollah, involved in the 1999 attacks on Tehran University students.

More recently, Naqdi was present during the Summer 2009 torture of protesters at Kahrizak prison, according to journalist and former Basiji Amir Farshad Ebrahimi.

The Obama administration says Naqdi is responsible for or complicit in human rights abuses committed by the Basij Forces, including the response to the December 2009 Ashura Day protests.

In a statement, the Director of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, Adam J. Szubin, said that the "designations highlight the complicity of two Iranian officials in significant human right abuses against the Iranian people. Dolatabadi and Naqdi have no place in the international financial system."

Michael Posner, the State Department's Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, said that today's action underscores our enduring commitment to support Iranians seeking to exercise their universal rights and expresses our solidarity with victims of torture, persecution, and arbitrary detention."

-Jake Tapper