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## Paris calls for 'immediate release' of French lecturer on trial

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France has demanded the "immediate release" of French lecturer Clotilde Reiss and French embassy employee Nazak Afshar, who are standing trial in Tehran with others detained during protests over Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election.

**AFP** - France has demanded the "immediate release" of French lecturer Clotilde Reiss and French embassy employee Nazak Afshar, who were standing trial in Tehran Saturday with others detained during protests over Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election.

Clotilde Reiss, who turned 24 in Tehran's notorious Evin prison on July 31, was arrested on July 1 as she tried to fly home.

Flanked by a policewoman on Saturday, she wore blue jeans, a dark coat and a colourful headscarf as she sat in the front row of defendants.

"She is accused of collecting information and provoking rioters," the official IRNA news agency reported. Fellow defendant Nazak Afshar, from the French embassy's cultural section, was detained on Thursday.

Iran's state television said both played an "active role in the unrest by giving information to foreign embassies."

IRNA said Reiss had reported on post-election protests in the central city of Isfahan to the French embassy.

"I have written a one-page report and submitted it to... the cultural department of the French embassy," it quoted her as telling the judge.

"I was planning to leave Iran, but I took part in rallies of June 15 and 17 in Tehran and took photographs and film. I did this out of curiosity and to be aware of the political situation. I wanted to know of what was happening."

Reiss denied preparing a technical report on Iran's controversial nuclear programme.

Afshar told the court that she and other staffers had been told to shelter protesters if required, IRNA said.

"In the event that confrontations occurred in front of the cultural department of the embassy, we were told to offer refuge to protesters if they asked."

Also in the dock was British embassy local staffer Hossein Rassam who was detained during the post-vote violence in Tehran along with eight embassy colleagues. They were later freed, while he was released on bail.

IRNA said he has been accused of spying.

"Based on the order of British embassy, the local staff were asked to be present in the riots along with Tom Burn and Paul Blemey (eds: spellings as transliterated from Persian)," Rassam said of two British diplomats expelled by Iran in June.

"You along with Arash Momenian were given the duty of meeting representatives of political groups, ethnic and religious minorities, and student groups and to relay the news of Iran's riots to London," IRNA quoted the prosecutor as telling the court.

The judge said the allegation merited a charge of espionage.

"Based on the charges read out by the Tehran prosecution, you are accused of spying for foreigners," the judge was quoted as saying by IRNA, which identified him by only the single name Salavati.

Rassam was quoted as telling the court: "The victory of Mr. Ahmadinejad was shocking for the British embassy, and in our first report to London we stressed claims made by one candidate about fraud" in the election.

He told the court that British diplomats, including the two expelled later, had attended protests in Tehran and that "the ambassador along with the charge d'affaires took part in witnessing a rally of Mousavi supporters."

In London, a Foreign Office spokeswoman slammed Rassam's trial.

"We deplore these trials and the so-called confessions of prisoners who have been denied their basic human rights," she said.

"Our ambassador in Tehran has demanded early clarification of the position from the Iranian authorities. We will then decide on how to respond to this latest outrage."

In France, Reiss's father Remi was taken unawares by her appearance in court. "I had not been told. I was surprised to see her appear at this trial," he said, adding that he believes she is innocent.

More than 10 other defendants detained during the protests that followed Ahmadinejad's hotly disputed June 12 re-election were in court with Reiss and the two embassy staffers.

It was the second hearing in the trial of a number of key reformist politicians and journalists, the ISNA news agency said.

Some 100 defendants were charged with various offences, including rioting, at the first hearing

on August 1. Reiss and the two embassy staffers were not present in court then.

At that hearing, several accused withdrew earlier allegations of fraud in the presidential election, saying that Ahmadinejad's victory was clean.

Another 10 protesters were put in the dock in a separate trial on Sunday.

Both Ahmadinejad's main challenger Mir Hossein Mousavi and reformist former president Mohammad Khatami have denounced the trials.

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