



Witness Statement of Shadi Sadr

Name: Shadi Sadr
Place of Birth: Tehran, Iran
Date of Birth: 1974
Occupation: Human Rights Lawyer and Women's Rights Activist

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)
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Interviewer: IHRDC Staff
Witnesses: NONE

This statement was prepared pursuant to an in person interview with Shadi Sadr. The statement was approved on December 7, 2010.

Statement

1. My name is Shadi Sadr. I am 36 years old. I worked as a lawyer prior to leaving Iran.
2. The Iranian authorities arrested me twice for my women's rights work, including once in March 2007. The last time I was arrested was in July 2009, about a month following the June 2009 election dispute in Iran while en rout to a protest. Plainclothes men took me to Tehran's Tracking Office, then Evin prison, where they continuously interrogated me and accused me of action against national security through causing unrest. After roughly two weeks in detention, I gave a financial guarantee of 50 million Tomans (approximately US \$50,000) to secure my release.
3. I was released on July 29, 2009. On August 1, 2009, Tehran's general prosecutor issued an indictment on the events following the election. The indictment specifically named me as one of the persons responsible for leading the women's rights subgroup of the opposition movement. Given the serious nature of the allegations levied against me, I decided to leave Iran out of concern for my safety.
4. Two days after the issuance of the indictment, I left Iran and crossed the border into Turkey. In May 2010, Tehran's revolutionary court sentenced me, *in absentia*, to six years in prison and lashes for charges from my March 2007 arrest. I have not returned to Iran since my escape.

Background

5. I am a human rights lawyer, women's rights activist and writer. I am one of the founders of the Stop Stoning Forever campaign. I founded *Zanan-e Iran* (Women of Iran), the first internet resource dedicated to chronicling the work of Iranian women's rights activists.
6. I also founded *Raahi*, a legal advice center for women, and served as the group's director. I remained in that posting until I was arrested in March 2007. Shortly thereafter, the Iranian government shut *Raahi* down.

Arrest Following the Election

7. My last arrest in Iran occurred on July 17, 2009, as I made my way to Friday Prayer to see Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani give a speech.
8. That day I planned to meet my friends at the end of Villa Street¹ in Tehran and walk over to Friday Prayer together. I was just talking and laughing with my friends—it was early morning and the streets were not very crowded.
9. As we approached Vali Asr square, I noticed that the streets were sealed off and no cars were permitted to pass. Curiously however a gray Peugeot² was parked on the street.

¹ Now called Ostad Nejat'ollahi.

10. Then all of a sudden three plainclothes officers headed my way and someone in a car yelled “grab that one.” At first the officers grabbed someone else but then I realized they actually meant to grab me. Initially I was too shocked to protest and just sat down in the car. I heard my friends screaming for them to let me go. Then I came to my senses and realized they had not presented me with a warrant. I jumped out of the car and demanded to see a warrant. The officers refused and barked at me to get back into the car.
11. In the commotion, I tried to give my purse to my friend and the plainclothes men were distracted by this exchange. I took that opportunity – the moment they were distracted – to run away. Unfortunately the empty streets made it difficult to go unnoticed. One of the agents came after me and ripped my headscarf and *manteau*³ off in the chase. He eventually caught up to me and dragged me back to the officer’s car.
12. After he pushed me into the car, the three plainclothes officers forced my head down so I could not see where we were headed. But their chatter into their walkie-talkies tipped me off—they told someone on the other end of the line that they were headed to the Tracking Office (*Daftar-i Paygire*).⁴

Interrogation at the Tracking Office

13. I arrived at the Tracking Office at 11:00 a.m.—I was the second person detained that day. By 3:00 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. a large crowd of people – other detainees – filled the office. I was blindfolded. I did not recognize any of the names of the other detainees read out loud. However there were two women names that were announced. One of the women that responded had a young sounding voice, and the other had an older voice.
14. I realized that my arresting officers knew I was headed to Friday Prayer and planned to apprehend me *en route*. I think they tapped my phone and that is how they knew this information. I am convinced that the officers were following my group of friends the whole way until the moment they captured me.
15. At the Tracking Office, the agents took me into another room, separate from the crowd, where they interrogated me in detail for three hours. Two men interrogated me, I do not know their names—I only saw their faces. I remembered one of the men from previous interrogations. He was the one who was responsible for the women’s rights movement case files at the Ministry of Intelligence. He was a tall man and he did not tell me his name.
16. Based on my experiences and those of my women activist friends in interrogation following the elections, it seemed that the team that traditionally interrogated women activists was no longer in charge. The interrogator that used to be in charge of the women’s files and who used to

² Peugeot is a French brand car that is popular in Iran.

³ *Manteau* refers to the overcoat that women in Iran wear to observe proper *hijab*, or Islamic dress.

⁴ The *Daftar-i Paygire* is an office that houses personnel from Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence. It is located on Vali Asr Street in Tehran. Following the election dispute of summer 2009, many women’s rights activists have been taken to that office for interrogation.

interrogate me on previous occasions was no longer there. I do not know if he went to a different branch, or if he was dismissed. The man at the Tracking Office who I recognized as being part of the previous group of interrogators seemed to have taken over for him. In all subsequent interrogations at Evin prison, my interrogators blindfolded me and made me face the wall—so I could not identify them physically. But from the voices of the people in the room, I could tell these were new interrogators, not the ones I had formerly dealt with in connection to my 2007 arrest.

17. I knew the characteristics of the previous group of interrogators well because in 2006 and 2007 I was summoned to interrogation plenty of times. The government viewed the *Raahi* office I founded with suspicion and subjected it to random searches and surveillance in 2006 and 2007. I was brought in for interrogations in connection with these searches until the office was ordered by government officials to permanently close in mid-March 2007.
18. I think that until November 2008, the group of interrogators was the same. The team was led by a man named ‘Mahdavi’ (not his real name), who also went by the alias of ‘Foroutan’ or sometimes ‘Khakzad’ or ‘Khakpour’.
19. My guess is that In November or December 2008, about six months before the presidential election, there was a shift in the security forces who were in charge of women’s movement. When I asked the man I recognized at the Tracking Office about where ‘Foroutan’ was—he replied curtly and said ‘What is it to you? He is not here.’
20. I did not know for certain why the old team left but I found it odd. These people handled the women’s file for 5-6 years and interrogated over a hundred women’s activists and supporters. They knew a lot of details. One time my interrogator Foroutan told me “I know so much about all you ladies that if you were to quiz me and ask when Parvin Ardalan’s her first tooth grow, I would be able to tell you.”
21. Later, when I discussed the change in interrogators with other women activists, we concluded that the team had probably not been as extreme as Ahmadinejad’s cabinet required—and so had been forced to leave. While the old group was focused on security issues, they did not believe that just because someone was an advocate for women’s issues that automatically meant they intended to overthrow the government. In contrast, the new group seemed convinced that all women’s rights activists were active proponents of regime change.
22. I got the sense that my new interrogators did not know much about me and did not have access to my previous interrogation files. For example they did not know basic biographical details about me—that I am part of the Women’s Field Website, that I am an advocate against stoning. Only my first interrogator at Tracking Office, who was part of the ‘Foroutan’ clan, knew. The later interrogators did not. The lack of knowledge starkly contrasted with Foroutan and his clan—they knew which groups we belonged to, what our activities were. The old team even knew about the internal disagreements among the members of the women’s movement.
23. These interrogators told me that the women’s movement did not do anything useful—we only made ‘a lot of pointless noise’. They told me that the women’s movement unjustifiably tried to

take credit for initiatives of the state. They told me that if the Iranian state makes decisions to reform laws, the women's movement has nothing to do with bringing about that change—the state reaches its own decisions. I countered with the argument that obviously the women's movement helps the state get to where it is because otherwise why wouldn't the state undertake these reforms 30 years ago?

24. The new team was particularly focused on my alleged activities with political opposition abroad. They asked me where I traveled and about my contacts in other countries.
25. I could not tell whether the new interrogators were assigned solely to women's issues or not. I felt like maybe the women's interrogation group no longer existed or that there was no group with the specific mandate to investigate only the women's movement. My treatment was much worse with this new group than in the past. I started thinking that maybe the rumor that *Sepah Pasdaran*⁵ had infiltrated the judicial system was really true. But they held me in Ward 209, not Ward 305 (the *Sepah* ward) so apparently the agents interrogating me were from the Ministry of Intelligence.
26. Also the different teams of interrogators did not seem to get along at all. They did not share work product and seemed disconnected from one another. Their level of knowledge and skill also ranged widely.
27. At the Tracking Office, I argued with my interrogators a lot—I contested my illegal arrest and debated them on women's issues. In this and subsequent interrogations that took place in ward 209 of Evin prison, they asked why I was headed to Friday Prayer at the time of my arrest. They asked me my opinion on the outcome of the elections and whether I voted.
28. In the later interrogations, they asked a lot of questions related to the women's rights movement and particularly about my trips abroad and the conferences I attended. They asked me who I was with, who invited me to speak and who paid for the trips.
29. A lot of questions pertained specifically to my work with Hivos, a Dutch non-governmental organization. When *Raahi*, the legal advice center I founded, was still in existence, Hivos donated to the group. After I was arrested in March 2007, the revolutionary court and ministry of intelligence closed *Raahi* down. They created a case file charging this group with acting against national security (although that case did not proceed through the courts). They closed our group's bank account and no longer allowed *Raahi* to work with the Hivos group.
30. In all my interrogations there were questions about the Hivos-*Raahi* relationship. My case file from my 2007 arrest contained allegations relating to the money Hivos gave *Raahi*. I told my interrogators that my previous case file contained all this information—but they continued to ask the same questions. How was *Raahi*'s budget decided, how did the money from Hivos get transferred into *Raahi*'s account, how did I use this money and why did not get a permit for the

⁵ *Sepah Pasdaran*, or Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, is a branch of Iran's military, formed after the 1979 Revolution. They control the *Basiji* paramilitary forces in Iran which are responsible for much of the violence following the election unrest of June 2009.

monetary aid. I told my interrogators that I did not remember all the details—this case file was from three years ago.

Transfer to Evin Prison

31. At 10 p.m. of the day I was arrested, the holding authorities escorted me out of the Tracking Office and placed me in a Peugeot car with the two other women who had been held at the Tracking Office. Once again, they forced my head down in the car so that I did not know where we were headed. The officers hanged an electric instrument above our heads to shock us if we so much as moved.
32. Although the officers held our heads down, I knew where we were headed. The next stop for detainees after the Tracking Office was Evin Prison. I knew the drill. I would be taken to Ward 209, the ward that housed political prisoners.
33. When I arrived, the intake officers blindfolded me. They removed my blindfold temporarily to take my photograph. Female guards took me to solitary confinement. The other two women transported with me were taken to a cell with other people—they related this to me later when I saw them again.
34. The guards escorted me to a solitary cell at the end of the hall in Ward 209. They conducted a body search of me and took away all my possessions, including my wrist watch and my glasses, and they gave me a prison outfit to wear.
35. I got into a fight with them about my glasses—I am unable to see anything without the aid of my glasses and cannot function. I told the wardens that during my last time in prison I was permitted to keep my glasses for the duration of my stay. The guards told me that since then a new law had passed that prohibited me from keeping my glasses. I got into an argument with them about this and told them I was almost legally blind without these corrective lenses. They refused to give them to me and said I would not need to see anything in prison anyhow. I told them this was not true—how would I go to the bathroom?
36. By this point, it was already night time. So I went to sleep. I woke up the next morning and at some point that day – I do not remember if it was morning or evening – I was taken to interrogation. They gave me my glasses back for interrogation.
37. I felt weak and hungry in this first interrogation at Evin. I did not eat anything for my first three days at Evin, I only had water and tea. I did not eat out of protest for the fact that the guards refused to return my glasses to me. The guards told me they did not have the power to give me my glasses and that I should ask my interrogator about it.
38. When I saw my interrogator, I demanded to get my glasses back. He told me he could not give them to me because he was bound by the law of the prison that prohibited me from having my glasses.

39. Because I did not get my glasses back, I refused to eat. The guards told me that they would give me my glasses back for meal times. I still refused to eat—I told them that until I got my glasses back for good I would not eat and that nothing else would be acceptable. Ultimately, they agreed and returned my glasses to me. So I won that small battle.

Interrogation

40. In addition to the team of interrogators that questioned me at the Tracking Office, three additional teams of interrogators questioned me at Evin Prison—so in total four different teams of interrogators asked me questions.
41. During the interrogations, I noticed the repetitive nature of many of the questions. When I told my interrogators I had already answered these questions in a previous interrogation, the interrogators told me they had not seen those files. They said that even though their colleagues interrogated me, they did not have access to those files and that is why they were asking me questions that I answered before.
42. My first interrogation and second interrogation at Evin were the worst of the bunch. In my first interrogation, my questioners asked me the names of all my family members and their contact and address information. They asked me to write down the usernames and passwords to my email accounts and web blog on a piece of paper. I told them I do not have a web blog but they thought I was hiding something. I asked why I had to give my personal information. I told them I could not give them my passwords because I was an attorney and confidential information about my clients was contained in that email correspondence. They told me they needed the information because they needed to know what I was hiding. So I gave them an email and a fake username.
43. In this first interrogation, my interrogators also asked me a lot of personal questions about my family life and relationship with my husband. These questions really bothered me. They asked me what my marriage with my husband was like and if we were happy or if there was marital discord.
44. They momentarily interrupted the personal line of questioning by asking me some things about politics but then once again reverted to the personal line of questioning. They asked me whether I smoked. At this point, I wondered whether they had searched my house. I answered back: What does it have to do with you? Is cigarette smoking a crime? The interrogator answered no—but drinking alcohol is. I said I do not drink. The interrogator said, well if you do not drink, how come we found alcohol at your house then? I said I did not know and that he should have asked whoever was at the house, not me.
45. My next interrogation was on Sunday, around noon, and a different team of two interrogators asked the questions. The guards took me downstairs for interrogation because the cells in Ward 209 are on the top floor. The bottom floor, where the interrogations happen, has a hallway that leads to the outside.

Formal Charges

46. After my third day at Evin, the authorities took me to the office of Prosecutor's representative that is on the first floor of Evin Prison and brought me before an investigator to hear my formal charges. The judge charged me with endangering national security through riots (*iqtishash*). I told him, well if you had actually let me go to Friday Prayer then I would have rioted and then you could charge me with something real. And they said, well you were planning to riot and that was enough for us. This is how I knew they were planning my arrest for a while—it was not a random, spur of the moment thing.
47. They told me that I was listed as a political leader and under investigation by the Ministry of Intelligence. They told me that since I was capable of leading a mutiny against the Supreme Leader, I needed to be apprehended. The judge told me that had I not left the house that day, they would not have needed to arrest me but since I had, they had no choice but to take me into custody or else risk an overthrow of the Supreme Leader. Apparently my arrest was a pre-emptive measure.
48. After I left the courtroom I saw a familiar face—Sobhani, an investigator with the court. I knew him very well. He was the interrogator of my case in 2006 and also, in the past, I dealt with him in connection to Shiva Nazar Ahari's case file.⁶ Sobhani greeted me and asked how I was doing. I told him that obviously I was not doing well since I was arrested for no reason and, as he was aware, the charges against me were untrue. Sobhani told me not to worry and the situation would be straightened out.
49. True to his word, shortly thereafter I was asked to sign a paper confirming that I would pay a 5 million Tomans (approximately US \$5,000) financial guarantee. I asked why the amount was so high, but received no answer. One of my family members acted as the financial guarantor. The guards brought me all my belongings that had been taken from me at the start of my stay at Evin—my clothes and other possessions.
50. This all happened on the Monday after I was originally taken into custody. I thought I was being released, I was so joyful. They took me and a woman who had been arrested with me to a small room downstairs. The room looked like an exercise room for prison authorities. I think we were down there for two or three hours. Someone came and opened the door and said please come—to the old woman to release her. A half hour later, they came for me, and said please follow me. But instead of releasing me, they took me back upstairs.
51. I asked what was going on. They told me your interrogation is not done yet. For five minutes I was just stunned and I let them drag me back to my cell. Then – after the five minutes had passed – I got mad, really mad. The rule of Ward 209 is that prisoners are not supposed to make noise but I disregarded this and started screaming. I was punching the walls and cursing. When the warden told me to stop, I said do whatever you want! I don't care. Everyone else in the ward

⁶ Until she left Iran, Shadi Sadr served as the lawyer for Shiva Nazar Ahari—a well known women's rights activist and founder of the human rights monitoring group Committee for Human Rights Reporters (CHRR). Nazar Ahari has been locked up in Ward 209 of Evin prison since December 20, 2009.

looked shocked that I had been brought back because this does not normally happen. I felt this was meant to be a form of psychological torture.

Return to Interrogation

52. After bringing me back to my cell, they took me to another interrogation. I screamed: Why did you keep me here?! On what basis are you continuing to detain me? I said this is not allowed—you are not allowed to keep me here when I have paid off my financial guarantee. He addressed me in a disrespectful tone and screamed at me to shut up and just answer the questions I was asked. He said: I am the one who asks the questions here, not you—you know why you are here. You gave us the wrong password to your email account. I guess they finally checked the information I had given them and realized it was not accurate.
53. Then the questions started again. They asked me who I knew in the women's rights movement—what their names were, who I associated with and where they were located. They wanted to know who I knew outside of the country, opposition and otherwise. When I asked them what they meant by this, they asked if I knew Fariba Davoodi Mohajer or Ali Afshari. When I said I knew Fariba, my interrogator got visibly excited. I said I only knew her through her activities in the women's right movement but that since she left Iran I had not spoken to her and had only watched her interviews on Voice of America.⁷
54. Then he began focusing on my trips abroad again. I realized he did not have my new passport, only my old passport with the stamps of travel to countries they already knew I went to. He told me he could not find my passport and I said listen my house is a mess so I do not know where it is. I said let me go search my house myself and I can find it for you.
55. He asked me about trips I took to Pakistan and Malaysia. These were Muslim countries so I did not think the authorities would have any problem in my visits there, unlike if I had visited Western secular nations.
56. At this point they halted the interrogation. During my questioning, the interrogators took breaks and reviewed their notes to assess what they should ask me about next. This time, when they returned, they asked me to explain more about Pakistan and Malaysia. I wondered why they wanted to know more—these countries were not in Europe, I did not think there would be any problem. So I answered their questions.
57. The interrogator also asked a series of questions about “workshops”—he was very concerned with what I had participated in.
58. At the end of the session, he told me that all the work I did on women's rights in Muslim countries was for the purpose of overthrowing the government. My interrogator told me that “rule of law” conferences were intended to foment government overthrow.

⁷ Voice of America (VOA) is an American-government backed television and radio broadcasting channel. VOA Persian has Farsi language programming and focuses on Iran issues.

59. I asked what he meant by this—I was so confused about what exactly he was trying to accuse me of. The interrogator told me—don't you get it? He told me that when I go to other countries – regardless if Muslim or not – and lecture about women's rights in Iran, those countries get the idea that Iran has a problem with its legal system and this creates instability among the domestic population and incites people to action.
60. The interrogator told me that this was a major project of the United States in the Middle East. I was genuinely shocked by this allegation. Sensing my surprise, the interrogator turned to me and said—what Ms. Sadr, you did not know about this?
61. I said no I have never heard of this. He said yes, America has had a project like this for years. This is the project to get rid of Islam in society—and one of the focal points was changing the law in respect to women under Islam.
62. Then the questions reverted back to *Raahi* and Hivos. I clarified that Hivos' money was not from the American government but the interrogator told me that I was wrong, that he had specific information that indicated it was and was intended for overthrowing governments. He believed it was part of the MEPI project. He thought Hivos and my organization had received part of the 75 million budget of the MEPI project. I explained that these groups were started prior to MEPI even coming into existence, prior to the US Congress approving the money but he would not accept this. This went on for half an hour.
63. I asked him if he knew what the money for Hivos was from the American government (banned sources) from the beginning, why didn't they stop our work right then and there? Why did they wait 6 years to now bring this up and accuse me of overthrow?
64. He paused at this point. He could not really say anything. He turned to me and said you know what—I cannot believe that you were not aware that this was an American project. You must have known the conferences you attended were held on behalf of America. You must have known that you were acting as an agent of America intending to overthrow the Iranian government.
65. The interrogator told me that there were many women in Iran who were more educated than me but no one pays attention to them but all tribunes are facing my direction and that is because I say things that the westerners like. He said that I won international prizes, not based on merit, but because I complied with whatever Western powers wanted to hear. He told me I was a tool of foreign powers and that they only awarded me prizes so that I would spy for them.
66. Then he said—listen, even if you are telling the truth that you are unaware that you are conducting these activities on behalf of the Americans, well now you do know. You know because I have informed you, so there can be no doubt about that. So I will let you go right now but just be aware that if you continue your activities, you will be in trouble with us because you know you are spying.

67. I asked him—what exactly can I do when I get out of prison? Can I write for example in *Etemad Melli* about topics relating to women? My interrogator said—no, anything you do is illegal. Even if you write in *Kayhan*⁸ you will still be writing the West's ideas. You are tainted by them.
68. He then said – how come you don't write about violence against women in countries like Germany and USA? I said—I am an expert on Iranian women's issues. Those countries have their own experts.
69. At this point I realized that he was just telling me what I should write, it was not about what limits I had. He said that if I planned on leaving the country, I should check with them first to get permission.
70. I then asked if I was being freed. He told me that he was giving the case file over to the judge and that he would no longer be dealing with it. This team of interrogators did not interrogate me again.

Final Interrogation

71. Towards the end of my time at Evin, about three or four days until my release, my guard came to me and said let's go to interrogation. I saw she was taking me down to the lower level. I asked—why are you taking me down here? Didn't you tell me we were going to interrogation? She said yes, and then I answered but there are no interrogation rooms down here. She said do not say anything, just follow me. I went down there and saw a bunch of young male prisoners standing there in the hallway. When I arrived, the authorities said 'let's go'. They put all of us in a van. They blindfolded me and sat me in the front next to the driver. They put the men in the back.
72. They drove us to a building that looked like a school. I do not think we left the Evin Prison premises. The building had a long hallway, with classrooms along both sides and benches pushed up against the wall of the hallway.
73. The guards took me to the last bench, all the way down the hall. I remember that two agents passed near me and said 'who is this? I think they could not identify me easily because I was blindfolded and had a chador on. Also, I think I was the only woman there so I probably stuck out in the crowd. One of the agents said 'that is Shadi Sadr' in a low voice.
74. After 10-15 minutes passed, I heard the sounds of men being whipped. It sounded like there were 15-20 men in the room, and they were being whipped with sticks and punched and kicked.
75. I heard the interrogators beating these men and simultaneously asking questions. I realized from the content of the questions that these people were all rounded up on the day of Friday Prayer, just like I was. The interrogators cursed at them a lot. After ten minutes of this, I could no longer make out what was happening—it all just sounded like loud noise and painful bullets going on in my head.

⁸ A conservative, hardliner newspaper in Iran that often functions as informal mouthpiece for Iranian government.

76. I felt horrible. I pulled my chador over my face so no one could see me trembling. I shivered from fear. After 40 minutes of the sounds of beating and torture, the hallway went silent. I think they took the men into the room to continue the interrogations there so I no longer heard the sounds.
77. Then they took me into a room for interrogation. I felt so awful—like I could not even stand on my legs anymore. I did not want them to know how I was feeling so I put my hands on the bench and kept myself supported with the strength of my hands. They took me into a room and interrogated me for three hours.
78. This was the last interrogation I endured before my release from Evin. They asked me why I was headed to Friday Prayer on the day I was arrested and what I thought about the Islamic state. It was very difficult to answer these questions because I did not want to lie, but at the same time I did not want to give them the impression that I don't accept the rule of the Supreme Leader. My interrogator asked me to describe how I went to Friday Prayer—step by step.
79. I wrote out the story in great detail on the paper the interrogator gave me. After I finished, the interrogator told me he wanted to verify my story with my husband. I agreed and gave him my husband's number.
80. When my interrogator left the room to call my husband, I seized the opportunity to look into my case file he had left behind. This was risky because I did not know when he was coming back or if there was a security camera in the room, taping me. Nonetheless, I went ahead and looked through the file. There was a CD with a label indicating that it contained all my mobile phone and computer records. Also in the file was an article from *Etemad-e Melli*⁹ newspaper written by one of my journalist friends that discussed my arrest and detention. When I saw this story, I felt relieved. A lot of people had been arrested after the election and I was worried that maybe I had been forgotten. It is important to not be forgotten when you are in prison.
81. After I saw the article I put all the materials in the file back in its place and then my interrogator returned to the room. He told me that my husband's account of the morning of my arrest accorded with mine. I said what difference does it make? Who cares about these minute details? My interrogator told me, this is just to know if you are a truth telling person or not.
82. The questions continued. He asked me what my ideology was and who I voted for in the elections.
83. I told my interrogator again that I was illegally being held there—I gave my financial guarantee and should already have been released. He said alright, we will release you.

Release and First Indictment

⁹ *Etemad-e Melli* was a reformist leaning newspaper that was shut down on the evening of August 16, 2009. It was the official newspaper for the *Etemad-e Melli* political party headed by 2009 reformist presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi.

84. After this last interrogation, another four days went by until my possessions were returned to me. Still I did not believe I was being released until it actually happened. Any time the door opened to my cell, I still thought they might take me away for another interrogation.
85. I was finally released in the early morning of Wednesday, July 29, 2009. At the time I was released I had no intention of leaving Iran. However the following Sunday I woke up to the sound of my telephone ringing. My friend was on the line—she read the *Kayhan* newspaper and saw that an indictment for events following the election had been issued. My name was listed as one of the leaders of the women’s movement subgroup in an alleged ‘velvet revolution’ to overthrow the Iranian state.
86. The interesting thing about the indictment was that although I was named in connection with causing the post-election unrest, in my interrogations there was no major focus on my having ties to the ‘green movement’. The primary focus of all my interrogations seemed to be that I was an agent of the women’s movement that was trying to overthrow the Iranian government.
87. The charge of overthrow of the government was very serious. That night, I was watching television and there was a news report about the indictment. I saw that they were playing Mohammad-Ali Abtahi’s confession and the confession of several others. At that point, it clicked. There was no doubt in my mind that the state authorities wanted to charge me with the same things and bring me back to prison to give a forced confession under pressure and torture and make admissions against myself and the women’s movement. I did not want this to happen. I decided to leave Iran. 48 hours later I was on Turkish soil.

Escape from Iran

88. Since no travel ban had been placed on me, I could leave Turkey legally. The authorities continued to call my house even after I had left Iran.
89. In April 2010, I received a sentence *in absentia* of imprisonment and lashes in connection to my March 2007 arrest. I still have not received a court date for the crimes for which I was charged in connection to my last arrest.