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Helping journalists
Safety of journalists

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35958

Iran

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172 out of 178 in the latest worldwide index

Area: 1,648,195 sq. km.
Population: 71,208,000
Language: Persian
Head of state: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, since August 2005 ; Supreme Leader: Ali Khamenei, since 1989

IRAN PRESS FREEDOM BAROMETER 2011
0 Journalists killed
0 media assistants killed
25 journalists imprisoned
1 media assistants imprisoned
10 netizens imprisoned

Iran is now on the threshold of joining the "infernal trio" (Eritrea, North Korea, Turkmenistan), the world's most repressive countries in the domain of freedom of the press. With almost 30 journalists and bloggers in custody, Iran has become the Middle East's biggest and among the five biggest prisons in the world for journalists.

There was a considerable deterioration in the state of press freedom in 2009, with the clampdown on the protest movement that followed the disputed re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as president on 12 June. The year began badly with the death of blogger **Omidreza Mirsayafi** in Tehran's Evin prison followed by the arrest of Iranian-American journalist **Roxana Saberi**.

More than 100 journalists were arrested and around 50 driven into exile following the June election. Twelve newspapers were suspended and thousands of web pages blocked.

Many of the journalists were held in Evin jail and some were forced to make confessions, coming under psychological pressure and suffering maltreatment. A series of show trials opened in the capital in August, during which the defendants' basic rights were trampled on. Several journalists and bloggers faced charges of being "spies in the pay of foreigners". Some were released on payment of extortionate bail, after being sentenced to between five and nine years in prison. A total of 75 years in prison were handed down to journalists and nearly three billion tomans (2,500,000 euros) were paid in bail. Journalist **Ahmad Zeydabadi**, who was arrested on 14 June, was sentenced to five years in prison and a lifetime ban on writing. He was hospitalised on 20 August from the effects of a 17-day hunger strike and 40 days solitary confinement. He is still in custody, despite receiving the Golden Pen press freedom award in 2009.
Fariba Pajooh, a journalist for reformist newspapers, including *Etemad-e Melli*, and contributor to foreign

media such as *Radio France International*, was released on 23 December 2009, after she had spent four months in prison, almost a month of it in solitary confinement.

For the first time since the 1979, the security services have started checking on the content of publications before they come out. Several newspapers have been suspended after publishing articles contradicting the official version of events and more than a score of others – including national dailies – have been suspended.

The list of journalists going into exile lengthens every day. Six months after the start of the crackdown, more than 50 journalists have left the country, the biggest exodus since the 1979 revolution.

The regime has since 12 June begun a process of demonising the foreign and especially western, media and the Internet, accusing them of being the "mouthpiece of rioters". The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Orientation on 16 June banned foreign media by decree from "taking part in or covering demonstrations organised without permission of the Ministry of the Interior". Several foreign journalists have been forced to leave the country. Those who managed to stay come under constant pressure, as evidenced in the most recent demonstrations in December 2009.

The authorities have also attacked new media which have been the engine of protest. Websites seen as likely to dispute the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, including a score of sites close to the opposition, were censored on the eve of the election. The Internet has been hit by draconian censorship ahead of every demonstration to prevent news from circulating and the mobilisation of the regime's opponents. **Mohammed Davari,** editor of the news website *Etemad-e Melli,* was arrested on 8 September in a raid by the authorities on the Tehran offices of the opposition leader Mehdi Karoubi in which computers, documents and film were seized. The website had reported on cases of mistreatment and rape in prisons.

Aided by service providers, the authorities have redirected the home page of some news sites to government propaganda sites. YouTube and Facebook are difficult to access and the use of proxies complicated by slow bandwidth. The mobile phone network has also been jammed. The authorities do their utmost to block the posting online of film recorded on mobile phones.

A draft law on "Internet offences" that will pose a very serious risk to Internet users, was passed at the end of August 2009.

Iran ▼

[Iran](#) - 19 May 2011

[Press freedom violations recounted in real time (from 1st January 2011)](#)

[BahrainIranLibyaOmanSyria](#) - 18 May 2011

[Iran frees Parvaz, Libya frees four other journalists](#)

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[Reporter with US, Canadian and Iranian nationality deported to Iran by Syria](#)

Very serious situation

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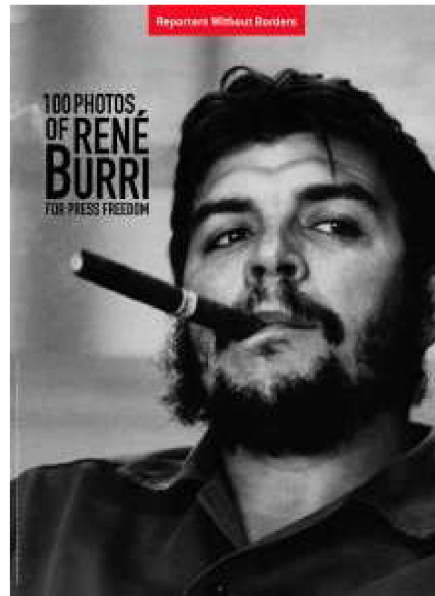
THE ARAB REVOLT
INFORMATION IN DANGER

The enemies of the internet

Check out the new list of the Enemies of the Internet, released every year on World Day Against Cybercensorship.

PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

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