

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST REMAINS JAILED AFTER APPEAL

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (known as Heshmat), a journalist and leader of a banned political party in Iran, has been unsuccessful in his appeal to overturn his nine year prison sentence. He is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi aged 53, leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran, an opposition party, was arrested on 27 December 2009 at his home in Tehran by four individuals claiming to be from the Prosecutor General's Office, who had an invalid arrest warrant. Following his arrest he was held in Evin Prison, before being transferred to Katchoui Prison in Karaj in May 2010. He was later sent to Reja'i Shahr prison, notorious for poor conditions. In his trial he said that he had been beaten and threatened with rape in detention and was placed under great pressure to "confess" to receiving money from abroad. Heshmatollah Tabarzadi's son Mohammad has also spoken about the conditions in the prison: "There [was] no glass in the windows...so they spent days and nights in the cold winter air. They don't take care of the inmates' ailments...The prison food is not healthy...All of these affect their physical conditions. No matter how well they maintain their morale; such difficult conditions will weaken them over time."

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi was initially sentenced in September 2010 to nine years in prison and 74 lashes, after conviction of five charges: "insulting the Leader", "insulting the President", "propaganda against the system", "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security", and "disturbing public order". On appeal, this was reduced to 8 years in prison, and the flogging sentence was overturned, after he was reportedly acquitted of "disturbing public order" and "propaganda against the system". He has also been banned from participating in any social activities for ten years.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to release Heshmatollah Tabarzadi immediately and unconditionally ;
- Calling for an investigation into the reports that he has been beaten and threatened and anyone found responsible for this is brought to justice;
- Expressing concern at reports that he is held in poor prison conditions which which must be brought in line with international standards, as set out in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- Remind the authorities that, as a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is obliged to uphold the rights to freedom of expression and association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 MAY 2011 TO:

Head of the Provincial Judiciary in Tehran
 Ali Reza Avaei
 Karimkhan Zand Avenue
 Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No. 152
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir
Salutation: Dear Mr Avaei

Head of the Judiciary
 Ayatollah Sadeqh Larijani
 Office of the Head of the Judiciary
 Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran, 1316814737
 Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject line: **FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani**)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Secretary General, High Council for Human Rights
 Mohammad Javad Larijani
 Office of the Head of the Judiciary
 Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri
 Tehran 1316814737
 Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)
Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 66/10. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/033/2010/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi is a leader of the banned Democratic Front of Iran party, established around 2000 to promote a secular democratic system of government in Iran. He is also a member of "Solidarity for Democracy and Human Rights in Iran", a coalition of groups and individuals, including lawyers, journalists, human rights, political and civil rights activists who aim to promote and improve democracy and human rights in Iran. It was formed on 25 May 2009. Heshmatollah Tabarzadi was also a former student leader and as a result of this was arrested several times before, spending over eight years in prison.

Two of Heshmatollah Tabarzadi's lawyers are themselves now in prison: acclaimed human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, serving an 11-year sentence, and Mohammad Oliyaeifard, who is ill with leukaemia, serving a one-year sentence. A third, Khalil Bahramian, is also facing imprisonment, after he was sentenced to 18 months in prison and a 10-year ban on practising as a lawyer in February 2011. (For further information, see *Iran: Lawyers' defence work repaid with loss of freedom*, (Index: MDE 13/093/2010), 1 October 2010, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/093/2010/en>).

Since the disputed presidential election of 2009, hundreds, if not thousands, of people opposed to the government's policies have been arrested and imprisoned. Most, if not all, were tried unfairly, and some have even been sentenced to death. They are held in poor conditions in Iran's vastly overcrowded prisons. In October 2010, the Head of the State Prisons and Security and Corrective Measures Organization said that the main problems in Iran's prisons were the enjoyment of citizenship rights, the density of the prison population and the lack of space in prisons. In March 2011, he said that there were now over 220,000 prisoners in Iran, an increase of 55,000 over the past eighteen months, while the prison capacity was only 85,000.

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