



IRAN HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION CENTER NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2009

VOL. 2 No. 6

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Suppression of Protests Continues

The Iranian opposition revived its demonstrations several times in the last two months to coincide with state and religious holidays. On November 4, 2009, the thirtieth anniversary of the 1979 take-over of the US embassy by Iranian students, protestors gathered in large numbers in Tehran, Arak, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Rasht, Shiraz, and Tabriz, and chanted slogans challenging the legitimacy of the Leader. Unofficial reports suggest that over 400 people were arrested many of whom were released soon after. Having anticipated the protests, the police warned protestors in advance against using the holiday for anything other than the usual state sponsored rallies. Revolutionary Guards and Basij militia were present in the streets in overwhelming numbers and, wielding teargas and batons, were well prepared to crush any dissent. Opposition leaders Mehdi Karrubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi both encouraged their supporters to take to the streets; Karrubi joined them temporarily, but Mousavi was prevented from leaving his home.

Demonstrations revived again on December 7, an official state holiday marking the murder of three students in 1953 on Tehran University campus. Despite official warnings from police Chief Esmail Ahmadi-Moghadam against using the day for opposition demonstrations, thousands of protestors took to the streets and



Heavy presence of police at November 4th demonstration
(Source Time Magazine)

university campuses, where Basij militia aggressively attempted to disperse the crowds. Iranian officials restricted reporters, reduced internet accessibility, and cut mobile phone networks in time with the protests. Although official news sources played down the opposition protests and instead reported on the number of pro-government supporters present at the state rallies, thousands of opposition supporters attended the state-sponsored rallies, producing chants or altering state slogans to express their disapproval of the current government and the June 12th election. Official news reports the

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arrest of over 200 people in connection to demonstrations, including prominent student leaders and journalists.

Finally, the month ended with large protests on December 27, 2009, the religious holiday of Ashurah, a major Shi'a Muslim celebration marking the death of Imam Hossein. Coincidentally, the day also marked the seventh day since the passing of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a highly respected cleric who was also one of the few outspoken dissidents in the establishment. Heavy clashes between the security forces and the protestors resulted in over 1100 arrests and at least eight deaths, including the death of opposition leader Mousavi's nephew, Seyyed Ali Mousavi Habibi.

UN Approves Resolution

On November 20, 2009, the United Nations' third committee approved "Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran," a draft resolution criticizing the state of human rights in Iran. Approved by 74 countries, the draft focuses on the events following Iran's June 12th presidential elections and expresses the United Nations' "deep concern at serious ongoing and recurring human rights violations in the Islamic Republic of Iran." Furthermore, the draft resolution recommends that the Islamic Republic eliminates its harsh practices such as torture, public executions, stoning, discrimination against women, and harassment and persecution of political activists, university professors,

Kurdish Man Executed

On November 11, 2009, Ehsan Fattahian, a twenty-eight year old Kurdish man was executed for, "armed struggle against the regime." Fattahian who was arrested a year ago admitted to membership in a banned, militant, Kurdish opposition group, *Komeleh*, but his lawyer states there was no evidence present to convict him of any acts of violence. He had initially been sentenced to ten years in prison, but upon appeal he was surprisingly sentenced to death. He was not allowed to appeal the death sentence. In a letter written from prison, Fattahian claims that after he refused to provide a video confession admitting to offenses he did not commit, he was told his sentence would be changed to execution. He also described torture and terrible living conditions he had to endure while in prison.



students, human rights defenders, and journalists, as well as free prisoners who have been detained "arbitrarily or on the basis of their political views," including those who have been imprisoned since the June 12th election. The situation will be reviewed at the next UN session (the 65th).

Kahrizak Scandal

Doctor found Dead

On November 10, 2009, Dr. Ramin Pourandarjani, Kahrizak detention centre's doctor, was found dead. Initially reported as a result of a car accident and then of a heart attack, his death was finally attributed to a poisoned salad. Officials claim his death was a suicide and that a note was found with his body. However, opposition groups, as well as his father, found his death shrouded in suspicion. His father reported that on November 9th when he spoke with his son, there were no signs of depression.

While serving at Kahrizak as part of his military service, Dr. Pourandarjani examined many of the post-election detainees, including Mohsen Ruh'olamini, son of an advisor to candidate Mohsen Rezae whose death while in custody sparked a national controversy that led to the closure of Kahrizak. Dr. Pourandarjani reportedly concluded that Ruh'olamini's death was the result of severe beating but was threatened into reporting it as meningitis. He testified before a parliamentary committee that prisoners had suffered from torture and rape, and mentioned one patient who died from severe torture but whose cause of death he reported as meningitis. Pourandarjani's body was prepared by authorities before being handed over to his family for burial and his funeral was held under surveillance.

Prison Officials Indicted

In related news, following an investigation into the treatment of prisoners at the detention center, a group of prison officials were indicted in December. Reports of sub-standard treatment, torture and rape at Kahrizak were widespread. Twelve of the prison officials will reportedly be prosecuted. Three will be

prosecuted on charges of premeditated murder for the deaths of three prisoners at Kahrizak that resulted from severe beatings. In conjunction with these proceedings, Iranian officials admitted for the first time that the deaths of Mohsen Ruh'olamini, Amir Javadifar, and Mohammad Kamrani were the result of severe beatings while in detention and not meningitis as had been initially reported.

Post-election Arrestees Sentenced

In November, the Iranian Judiciary announced the sentencing of eighty-one dissenters to prison terms and five to execution. Reza Khademi joined Mohammad Reza Ali-Zamani, Arash Rahmanipour, Hamed Rouhinejad, and Naser Abd'ulhusseini and was sentenced to execution for involvement in the post-election protests. On November 23, Ahmad Zeidabadi, a prominent journalist, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, Abdullah Momeni, civil and political activist, received an eight year sentence, six of which were for "participating in post-election gatherings," and Ali Behzadiyan Nejad, nephew of one of Mousavi's campaign managers, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for his political activism.

In December, Saeed Laylaz, former editor of the economic newspaper *Sarmayeh* and a prominent economist was sentenced to nine years, and journalist and advisor to Mehdi Karroubi, Hengameh Shahidi, received a sentence of six years and nine months. Former minister Behzad Nabavi received a six year sentence and Abdullah Ramezanzadeh, speaker of Khatami's government and supporter of Mousavi, was sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

ABOUT IHRDC

IHRDC Annual Report

In December 2009, IHRDC published its Annual Report for fiscal year July 2008– June 2009. The report is the first published by the Center and is printed in both Persian and English. It is available on IHRDC's Website, www.iranhrdc.org.

Post-Election Investigation and Report

IHRDC is preparing a report on the human rights violations committed by the Iranian government following the June 12 presidential elections. The announcement that the incumbent had won generated suspicions of rigging and widespread protests throughout the country

In Memoriam: Ayatollah Montazeri

On December 20, Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri died at the age of 87. The most famous Khomeini protégé who was once on track to become the next Supreme Leader, Montazeri was one of the leading authorities involved in developing and executing the 1979 revolution. However, he fell out of favor with the religious establishment after he expressed his disapproval of the 1988 prison massacres of political prisoners ordered by Ayatollah Khomeini and spent several years under house arrest. Copies of letters he wrote to Khomeini objecting to the massacre can be found in IHRDC's recent report, *Deadly Fatwa: Iran's 1988 Prison Massacre*.

Montazeri had recently become one of the most outspoken religious critics of June 12th election and the government's subsequent attempts to quell the protests. Protestors demonstrated on the day of his funeral, despite government restrictions against memorials in his honor.

that are still ongoing. The government used the law enforcement, Sepah and the paramilitary forces to brutally crush demonstrations. Tens of people died and hundreds of demonstrators were arrested and spent months in sub-standard prisons where they were subjected to mistreatment and torture. Demonstrators and others continue to be arrested and held without charge.

IHRDC hopes that this initial report will help shed light on the complex and tragic events currently transpiring in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

What is New at IHRDC?

In November 2009, IHRDC released a report entitled *Speaking for the Dead: Survivor Accounts of Iran's 1988 Massacre*. The report compiles witness statements of five female prisoners who survived the Islamic Republic's summary execution of thousands of prisoners during the summer of 1988. These witnesses recount, in vivid detail, the climate of fear, chaos and utter confusion that took hold of the prisons immediately before the executions began in July 1988. The witness statements are the results of interviews conducted by IHRDC staff in 2008 and 2009.

Many families were never informed about the executions and many of the victims were buried in unmarked mass graves. The Iranian government has never issued an explanation for this crime.