

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Releases Report on Iran's Suppression and Persecution of Cyber-Journalists and Bloggers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) today released a report documenting and analyzing the suppression of bloggers, journalists and other Internet users by the Islamic Republic of Iran. Much of the material presented in the report, *Ctrl+Alt+Delete: Iran's Response to the Internet*, is the result of interviews conducted by IHRDC with bloggers and journalists who were forced to flee Iran.

In the early 1990s, Iranian journalists migrated to the Internet in reaction to a severe crackdown by conservative elements on traditional media outlets – newspapers, radio and television. Although Iranians have been fighting for the right to free expression for over a century, the period following the election of reformist President Khatami in 1997 was one of relatively free and open expression. In reaction, conservative elements aligned with the Supreme Leader began to exert greater control over traditional media. Unable to reach their audiences, journalists created websites and blogs.

The regime responded with a multi-prong strategy meant to increase the price of expression in general and internet expression in particular. It continues to apply to internet expression, laws that already severely regulated traditional expressive activity. It is also developing internet-specific laws and creating multiple regulatory bodies charged with internet oversight. Thus, simply to access the Internet, Iranians must often navigate through a legal and administrative maze.

The regime is also experimenting with electronic methods of control. These include shutting down of websites at their sources, blocking websites, filtering out large parts of the Web, restricting internet speeds, and flooding the Web with the regime's ideas and opinions. At the same time, Iran has continued to employ some of the more traditional means of repression: cyber-journalists and bloggers have been arrested, detained and tortured. Faced with threats against their lives and the safety of their families, many engaged in self-censorship and/or fled Iran. Some paid with their lives.

Ctrl+Alt+Delete: Iran's Response to the Internet, is available in English on IHRDC's website www.iranhrdc.org. A Persian translation of the report will be available this summer.

IHRDC is a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that was founded in 2004 by a group of human rights scholars, activists, and historians. Its staff of human rights lawyers and researchers produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and an archive of documents are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website.

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