



## **Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding concerns about the harassment and imprisonment of women, including rights defenders and members of minorities, in Iran**

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### **Introduction**

This submission to the Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) is intended to draw the Commission's attention to the continuing pattern of human rights violations experienced by women in Iran in reprisal for their peaceful human rights or political activities on account of their ethnic origin, their faith, the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association, or their relationship to men who have expressed views dissenting from those considered acceptable by the Iranian authorities..

The submission provides case updates to the situation of five women previously raised by Amnesty International in its submission to the Commission in 2011— including of a woman who participated in the 55th session of the Commission – and highlights the cases of five additional women. These cases are accompanied by an appendix (Appendix 1) listing reports, articles and action materials published by Amnesty International since last year's submission, which raise awareness of the plight of women and of individual women activists and others in Iran. Amnesty International believes that all women featured in this submission who are imprisoned are prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.<sup>1</sup>

### **The situation of women's rights in Iran**

As highlighted in Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women in 2010<sup>ii</sup> and 2011<sup>iii</sup>, women in Iran face widespread discrimination under the law. A Family Protection Bill which would increase discrimination against women remains under discussion in parliament. Disappointingly, a new Penal Code, approved by parliament but which has not yet been enacted, would continue to discriminate against women, for example by valuing their testimony at half that of a man's. It would also continue to criminalize consensual sexual relations outside marriage even though stoning has been removed as a specified punishment. Stoning - a penalty which has a discriminatory impact on women<sup>iv</sup> - could still be imposed as Article 167 of Iran's Constitution requires judges to use their knowledge of Islamic law to rule on a case in the absence of codified law. In these ways the Penal Code continues to have a discriminatory impact on women.

This new Penal Code, which had been under discussion by the Iranian Parliament for four years, was approved by the Council of Guardians, which reviews legislation for compatibility with the Constitution and Islamic Law, in January 2012. However, the Iranian authorities did not use the review process as an opportunity to remove all discriminatory laws against women from the Penal Code. Amnesty International understands that the revised penal code is back with the Council of Guardians for a final review following editorial changes made by the Parliament. The revised penal code will come into force once signed by the president<sup>v</sup> following the Council of Guardians' approval, though it is not known when this will happen.

Discrimination against women extends beyond just the Penal Code in Iran and includes other facets of society, including access to higher education and the right of women to choose what they wear in public

as they are subject to a state-imposed dress code.<sup>vi viii</sup> In last year's submission, Amnesty International highlighted concerns about plans by the authorities to implement gender segregation in institutions of higher learning, for which the norm had been to have mixed gender courses. In August 2011, it was reported that 20 universities would be restricting certain courses to one gender of students only<sup>viii</sup>. Amnesty International is concerned that gender segregation in universities raises issues about whether women and men will continue to enjoy equal access to the same quality of higher education. Reports indicate that at the start of the 2011-2012 school year, some universities in Iran had already begun to implement gender segregation. At Tehran's University of Science and Culture (USC), entrances for male and female students were segregated. Female students at USC were reportedly subject to body searches prior to being granted physical admittance to the university. The stated purpose of searches was to inspect female students' clothing and make-up to verify if they conformed to Islamic dress, though male students were not subject to similar inspections.<sup>ix</sup> A number of the female students searched were asked to provide student ID cards, present birth certificates, or driving licenses. Those who did not have student IDs were not permitted to attend classes. In early March 2012, more than ten female students were reported to have been suspended from their classes in the Iran University of Science and Technology in Tehran for "failing to observe the Islamic dress code".<sup>x</sup>

Amnesty International is also concerned that the age at which girls may be married is discriminatory and very low, and that girls entering marriage at such a young age are not capable of giving meaningful informed consent. Under the Civil Code, girls may be married at the age of 13; boys at 15. Unmarried girls and women must have the permission of their father or guardian to marry, and fathers can apply to the courts for permission for their daughters to marry from the age of nine lunar years. In the Iranian year 1389 (March 2010-March 2011), 716 girls under the age of ten are reported to have been married.<sup>xi</sup>

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women recommended that the Iranian authorities should "prevent forced and early marriage" and also should "ensure that women have equal rights to enter into marriage and during the marriage relationship, as well as at its dissolution".

In addition to discrimination enshrined in law, a catalogue of repressive measures is also used against women's right defenders who challenge this situation and campaign for women to be able to enjoy all their internationally recognized rights. These repressive measures are also used against other women, particularly those from ethnic or religious minorities, who appear to be targeted either on account of their ethnic origin or faith, or because they stand up for the rights of their communities to be treated equally and in line with Iran's international human rights obligations.

## **The situation of women's rights activists, human rights defenders, political activists, and members of religious minorities in Iran**

Since last year's submission to the Commission, four of the nine women whose cases were highlighted previously – Alieh Aghdam-Doust, Ronak Safazadeh, Mahboubeh Karami and Ma'soumeh Ka'bi –, have been released from prison, though most had served at least half of their sentence. A fifth, Maryam Bahreman, was released on bail, but has a case pending against her. The situation of the remaining four, as well as that of a further five women highlighted in this document, suggest that the persecution continues.

### **1. Zeynab Beyezidi**

Women's rights activist Zeynab Beyezidi, also a member of the Kurdish minority, is continuing to serve her four and a half year prison sentence in exile in Zanjan prison. Held in detention since 9 July 2008, she is a member of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK) and the One Million Signatures Campaign. Four years of her sentence relates to her alleged membership of unauthorized human rights associations, and on account of her activities in support of women's rights. The sentence was imposed in July 2008 and upheld on appeal the following month, after unfair proceedings. A previously suspended six month sentence for "spreading lies and propaganda against the system" was implemented

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around March 2009.

The HROK was founded in 2005 by Kurdish journalist Mohammad Sedigh Kabudvand who was himself arrested on 1 July 2007 and is a prisoner of conscience serving a 10-and-a-half years prison sentence for "acting against state security by establishing the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK)". The HROK, believed to have around 200 members, has never been granted official recognition as an NGO, despite repeated requests.

The One Million Signatures Campaign, also known as the Campaign for Equality, launched in 2006, is a grassroots initiative composed of a network of people committed to ending discrimination against women in Iranian law. The Campaign gives basic legal training to volunteers, who travel around the country promoting the Campaign. They talk with women in their homes, as well as in public places, telling them about their rights and the need for legal reform. The volunteers are also aiming to collect one million signatures of Iranian nationals for a petition demanding an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran. Dozens of the Campaign's activists have been arrested or harassed for their activities for the Campaign, some while collecting signatures for the petition.

In July 2010, Zeynab Beyezidi went on hunger strike to protest the inappropriate behaviour of the head of the Zanzan Central Prison with some of the female prisoners. The hunger strike is reported to have lasted a few days. Amnesty International has no further information about the behavior of the head of Zanzan Central Prison towards female prisoners.

## **2. Behareh Hedayat**

Behareh (or Bahareh) Hedayat, aged 31, a member of the Central Committee of the Office for the Consolidation of Unity (OCU) - a national student body which has been active in calling for political reform and for opposing human rights violations in recent years - was arrested on 31 December 2009. She is serving a lengthy prison sentence in Evin prison imposed after convictions of "insulting the president", "insulting the Leader" and "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security". A two-year suspended prison term previously imposed for her participation in the June 2006 demonstration calling for an end to discrimination against women in law was also implemented after this conviction. She is also the Chair of the Women's Committee of the OCU and is a member of the One Million Signature campaign.

On 30 April 2011, Behareh Hedayat was sentenced to an additional six months in prison in connection with a statement that she jointly wrote (with Majid Tavakkoli and Mehديه Golrou, also student rights activists) on the occasion of 16 Azar, the Student Day anniversary (7 December 2010), in which they praised the efforts of Iranian students abroad, and considered the anniversary a great opportunity to protect and promote the student movement.

Behareh Hedayat (along with Majid Tavakkoli and Mehديه Golrou) appeared before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court<sup>xii</sup> in February 2011 in the presence of their lawyers, facing charges of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "acting against national security by conspiring against the system". In April 2011, they were acquitted of the second charge, but sentenced to six months in prison on the second. In early November 2011, Branch 54 of the Tehran Appeals Court upheld the additional six months sentence against Bahareh Hedayat (along with Majid Tavakkoli and Mehديه Golrou). This means that Behareh Hedayat must now serve a total of 10 years in prison.

After four months of denial of family visits or phone calls, Behareh Hedayat was at last permitted a family meeting in a "cabin" (behind a glass screen) on 5 April 2011. She was transferred into solitary confinement in Evin Prison on 10 April 2011. On 24 May 2011, Behareh Hedayat was allowed a half-hour meeting with her relatives in person. This was Behareh Hedayat's first in-person visit with her mother and father in 13 months.

Behareh Hedayat was permitted around eight week's leave from prison in August-September 2011 to

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receive necessary medical treatment. She returned to prison on 6 September 2011. On 29 July 2012 Behareh Hedayat was granted prison leave for the treatment of kidney stones.

On 4 April 2012, for the occasions of her 31st birthday and four-year wedding anniversary to her husband, Amin Ahmadian, on 5 April, Bahareh Hedayat wrote an open letter from prison to her husband. In this letter, Bahareh Hedayat wrote, "Aside from missing everyone (even though it is not possible to put it aside), you can see your life pass you by in front of your eyes. You have no natural environment to think and grow. Even if you try to read books and you are able to get your hands on books that are less censored, you still cannot challenge your thoughts".<sup>xiii</sup>

### **3. Rozita Vaseghi**

Rozita Vaseghi, a member of the Baha'i religious community, was arrested on 15 March 2010 at her home in Mashhad, north-east Iran. She is now known to be serving a five-year prison sentence imposed for "membership of an illegal organization whose aim is to harm the security of the country" and "propaganda against the system". She was also banned from leaving the country for 10 years.

Rozita Vaseghi is held with other Baha'i prisoners in Vakilabad Prison, Mashhad, after spending six months in solitary confinement. Amnesty International understands that Rozita Vaseghi, along with other Baha'i prisoners, are not permitted to communicate with any other prisoners during communal hours.

In October 2010, while still in prison, she was reported to be facing fresh charges of "spreading Baha'i teachings" and "insulting the Islamic sanctities". In July 2011 she was tried on the charge of "spreading Baha'i teachings" and in October 2011 sentenced to an additional five years' imprisonment on this charge. This means that Rozita Vaseghi must now serve a total of 10 years in prison.

In early 2012, Rozita Vaseghi was reportedly pressured to "confess" and sign "confession" documents. She refused to do so stating she had not done anything wrong and was told she would remain in prison "until her hair was the colour of her teeth". Rozita Vaseghi is said to be in poor health, having lost a lot of weight and suffering from gum disease. Repeated requests for prison leave have been denied by the prison authorities.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Baha'i community has been systematically harassed and persecuted. There are over 300,000 Baha'is in Iran, but their religion is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution, which recognizes only Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Baha'is in Iran are subject to discriminatory laws and regulations which violate their right to practise their religion freely, as set out in Article 18(1) and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party. The Iranian authorities also deny Baha'is equal rights to education, to work and to an adequate standard of living by restricting their access to employment and benefits such as pensions. They are not permitted to meet, to hold religious ceremonies or to practise their religion communally. Hundreds of Baha'is, both men and women, have been arrested in recent years.

### **4. Nasrin Sotoudeh**

Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, a mother of two young children, was arrested on 4 September 2010 and is now serving a six-year prison sentence in Evin Prison, reduced from 11 years on appeal. Sentenced on 9 January 2011, she was also banned from practising law and leaving the country for 20 years. On appeal in September 2011 before Branch 54 of the Appeals Court, these bans were reduced to 10 years, respectively.

Nasrin Sotoudeh was initially sentenced by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court to 10 years in prison on the charge of "acting against national security, including membership of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)" and to one year for "propaganda against the system." CHRD is a human rights

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organization co-founded by Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi and others, which was forcibly closed by the authorities in 2008. Nasrin Sotoudeh has denied that she has ever been a member of the CHRD. These charges stem solely from her work as a human rights lawyer. Before her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh had been warned to stop representing Shirin Ebadi or face reprisals.

Amnesty International considers Nasrin Sotoudeh to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of her peaceful human rights activities, including her work as a defence lawyer.

Since her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh has been held in Evin Prison, including for a lengthy period spent in solitary confinement. Her health was weakened by three hunger strikes in protest at her arrest and at the conditions of her detention. Her hunger strikes included three days in which she drank no water (a "dry" hunger strike). Initially allowed very infrequent contact with her family and lawyer, she is now permitted visitors behind a glass screen (a "cabin").

Nasrin Sotoudeh's own lawyer, Nasim Ghanavi, has faced pressure from the authorities, including threats of arrest, apparently on account of her representation of Nasrin Sotoudeh. Since Nasrin Sotoudeh's prison sentence was issued, both Nasim Ghanavi and Reza Khandan, Nasrin Sotoudeh's husband, have been summoned to Branch One of the Revolutionary Court for interrogation. In July 2011, her husband reported that their children had been blocked from an in-person visitation with their mother and again in February 2012, apparently because prison guards considered Mehroo Khandan's school uniform did not fully comply with the state-imposed dress code. Mehroo Khandan is Nasrin Sotoudeh and Reza Khandan's daughter who was 12 years old at the time of this submission.

In July 2012, the Iranian authorities imposed a foreign travel ban on Reza Khandan and on Mehroo Khandan. Reza Khandan has stated that he believes the Judiciary may be pursuing criminal action against himself and his daughter. Amnesty International is concerned that the Iranian authorities are harassing the family of Nasrin Sotoudeh in order to stop them from campaigning on her behalf.

*"My dear Mehroo and Nima, my beloved children . . . I am declaring loud and clear: 'I am a mother', and I do not want my children to see me in a forced, coerced, and humiliating form. I do not want my children to think that others can subject them to an illegal act by abusing power. I know that you require water, food, housing, a family, parents, love, and visits with your mother. However, just as much, you need freedom, social security, the rule of law, and justice. Please be aware that these concepts have not been easily achieved anywhere in the world. Nowhere in the world was the "law" upheld when written on torn sheets of paper. Our insistence on the rule of law is what brings the law to its existence. Thus, you should know that "you" and "I" are forming and building the law together. I kiss you thousands of times. I suffer from not having held you in months, and I hope that the suffering is not in vain".*  
Nasrin Sotoudeh, October 2011

Prior to her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh's assets were frozen and she was summoned to the tax office. Afterwards, she said she had seen that 30 other lawyers had cases of tax irregularities being prepared against them, in what would appear to be a concerted effort by the authorities to prevent these lawyers from continuing their work.

Amnesty International believes that Nasrin Sotoudeh's arrest is part of a concerted effort by the Iranian authorities who have implemented a series of measures intended to prevent Iranians – particularly those critical of the authorities – from being able to access appropriate, competent legal representation, a basic right and important fair trial guarantee.

In concert with this, the authorities have for years been attempting to limit the independence of the Iranian Bar Association by barring candidates from standing for election to senior positions on discriminatory grounds, including their imputed political opinions and their peaceful human rights activities. For example, in 2008, female lawyer Fatemeh Gheyrat was one of several lawyers – all members of the CHRD – who were disqualified from standing for the Central Board of the Bar Association because of their activities as human rights defenders.

In June 2009, less than a week after the disputed presidential election, new by-laws to the 1955 law establishing the independence of the Iranian Bar Association were adopted which would give the Judiciary the power to approve membership of the Bar and lawyers' licensing applications, thereby undermining the independence of the Bar. Following opposition by the Bar and individual lawyers, in

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July 2009, it was reported that implementation of the by-laws had been suspended for six months. They are believed to remain suspended, but could be implemented at any time.

## **5. Maryam Bahreman**

Women's rights activist Maryam Bahreman, who spoke about "Information and Communications Technologies in Iran from a gender perspective" at the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, was arrested on 11 May 2011 by security officials, believed to be from the Ministry of Intelligence. Security officials searched Maryam Bahreman's home for three hours and then took her away along with some of her personal possessions. The officials who arrested her had an arrest warrant issued by the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz, which apparently accused her of "acting against state security".

Maryam Bahreman was held in solitary confinement until 5 July 2011 in Detention Centre No. 100 in Shiraz, which is controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence. According to reports, the focus of her interrogations was her participation in the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission. Her family was able to visit her there several times. Late at night on 5 July she was transferred to a women's section in a Shiraz prison.

On 4 and 5 July 2011 Maryam Bahreman was questioned by officials in the Prosecutor's Office in the presence of her lawyers. Her interrogation concerned an alleged "offence" of "acting against state security", as well as new "offences" including "propaganda against the system", "dissemination of false information", "participating in protests" and "insulting the Supreme Leader". Shortly before her arrest, she had written a letter addressed to opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, and his wife, political activist Zahra Rahnevar, on her blog which condemned their continuing house arrest.

Maryam Bahreman was released on bail in September 2011 after 126 days in detention and now faces five charges, including "propaganda against the system through relationships abroad" which Amnesty International fears appears to be linked to her participation in the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission; "insulting the Supreme Leader", "insulting the Revolutionary Guard and Basij", and "insulting the holy value of the country and Islam" – all three charges are believed to stem from writings on her weblog; and "causing unease in the public mind" for signing public statements advocating women's rights in Iran.

Maryam Bahreman is a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, in the city of Shiraz, and was also General Secretary of Pars Women's Organization (*Sazman-e Zanan Pars*), which was closed in 2007.

## **6. Narges Mohammadi**

Human rights defender Narges Mohammadi is serving a six year prison sentence in Zanjan Prison, north-east Iran. She is the Executive Chairperson of the CHRDI, which was forcibly closed by the Iranian authorities in December 2008. Narges Mohammadi was originally sentenced by Tehran's Revolutionary Court to 11 years' imprisonment in September 2011. Her sentence consisted of two five-year prison terms on separate counts of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and a further year in prison for "spreading propaganda against the system". She appealed this ruling and on 4 March 2012 her lawyer was informed that a 15 January 2012 ruling of Branch 54 of the Appeal Court had reduced her sentence to six years. Her lawyer, Mohammad Sharif, had successfully argued that two separate "gathering and colluding" charges would be unfair and she was acquitted of one count, reducing her sentence to six years.

Narges Mohammadi has been banned from travelling abroad since 2009, when the Iranian authorities confiscated her passport.

Narges Mohammadi had been free pending her appeal, but on 22 April 2012, two individuals, a man and a woman, possibly from the Ministry of Intelligence, went to Narges Mohammadi's mother's home in Zanjan, north-east Iran, where Narges Mohammadi was staying and told her to come with them. The man and woman ignored repeated requests to show identification. They threatened to go into the home, and

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Narges Mohammadi did what they asked, to avoid frightening her five-year-old twins. Two days later, on 24 April, Narges Mohammadi was able to call her children and speak briefly with her mother-in-law. She said that after one day in the Women's Ward of Evin Prison, she had been transferred to the prison's Section 209, which is believed to be under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence. Until Narges Mohammadi was permitted to phone her children, her whereabouts were unknown to her family despite their repeated attempts to find out where she was taken.

On 16 May 2012, Narges Mohammadi was transferred from Tehran's Evin Prison to Zanjan Prison. In an open letter addressed to the Tehran Prosecutor dated 24 June 2012, Narges Mohammadi said that "on May 16 at 6 am agents woke me up, blindfolded and handcuffed me, and placed me in a car. I was unaware of what was going on during the long distance travel".<sup>xiv</sup>

Narges Mohammadi, who suffered from poor health during previous detentions, was transferred to a hospital outside of the prison on 9 July 2012 and was described as being in "serious condition" upon being admitted. She was transferred back to Zanjan Prison on 22 July 2012. Amnesty International understands that during the time she was hospitalized, Narges Mohammadi was not permitted outside contact, including with her young children and family, who were prevented from visiting her in hospital, though Narges Mohammadi had previously been permitted weekly visitation while held in Zanjan Prison. Upon her return to Zanjan Prison, Narges Mohammadi was able to place a phone call to her children.

## **7. Fereshteh Shirazi**

Fereshteh Shirazi, a women's rights activist and a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, and a mother of two, was arrested on 4 September 2011 after being summoned to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol, northern Iran. In October 2011, she was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "causing unease in the public mind by spreading lies" and "insulting the authorities" on her weblog, and a further year for "spreading propaganda against the system". She was also banned from leaving the country for seven years. The sentence was upheld on appeal by the Mazandaran Appeal Court in January 2012. She is reportedly held in poor prison conditions in Amol Prison.

In February 2012, Fereshteh Shirazi was granted a five-day prison leave to obtain medical care for her back and neck outside of the prison.

Prior to this current detention, Fereshteh Shirazi was summoned to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol and interrogated about the One Million Signatures Campaign, her friends in Amol, as well as her writings in connection with the campaign on her personal weblog. Between August and September 2009, Fereshteh Shirazi was summoned on several occasions to the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Amol and interrogated about her women's rights activities and writings. On 12 and 13 August 2009 her house and workplace were searched by five security officials and her computer, notebooks and telephone book were confiscated. She was asked to sign a paper summoning her to the Ministry of Intelligence office the next day. When she refused to do so, she was shown the contents of the paper which contained an official stamp and listed accusations of "acting against state security", "publishing lies" and "causing unease in the public mind" by communicating with foreign websites and media.

Amnesty International considers her a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression

## **8. Nazanin Khosravani**

Journalist Nazanin Khosravani was summoned to Tehran's Evin Prison in March 2012 to begin serving a six-year prison sentence on charges of "spreading propaganda against the system" and "assembly and collusion against national security" in connection to work as a journalist.

Nazanin Khosravani was arrested in her father's home on 3 November 2010 and initially held in solitary

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confinement in Evin Prison. During her arrest, her laptop was confiscated by the authorities and two days later, on 5 November 2010, the authorities returned to search her home. At that time her family had no information about her whereabouts and authorities refused to provide them with information on where she was being held as the search of the home took place. Nazanin Khosravani was later transferred to Section 209 of the prison, believed to be under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, where she was held until her release following bail payment of 6 billion rials (about US\$490,000) on 15 March 2011. Her six-year sentence was handed down following a trial that took place in Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran on 8 February 2011.

Prior to her arrest in November 2010, Nazanin Khosravani had worked at the political desks of reformist newspapers, including *Norooz*, *Kargozaran* and *Sarmayeh*. After she was arrested, her mother, Aazam Afsharian, was publicly criticized by the Tehran Prosecutor for granting interviews with foreign media about her daughter's arrest.

On 2 July 2012 Nazanin Khosravani was granted prison leave for an unspecified length of time.

## **9. Zahra Rahnavard**

Political activist, academic and artist Zahra Rahnavard, a former Chancellor of Al-Zahra University in Tehran, has been under house arrest without an arrest warrant, charge or trial since 10 February 2011 when her husband Mir Hossein Mousavi, along with Mehdi Karroubi, called for demonstrations in support of the people of Tunisia and Egypt to be held on 14 February 2011. Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi are opposition leaders in Iran who both ran for the presidency during the contested 2009 elections.

Zahra Rahnavard and Mir Hossein Mousavi have not been seen in public since early February 2011. All three continue to have limited access to family members and no legal representation. In March 2012, Zahra Rahnavard, along with her husband, was permitted to visit with their daughters on the occasion of Nowrouz, the Iranian New Year, for approximately four hours; the authorities reportedly required a meeting place outside of Tehran for the visit. In May 2012, Zahra Rahnavard and her husband were taken to the home of Zahra Rahnavard's mother, Navab Safavi, for a short visit.

## **10. Nooshin Khadem**

Nooshin Khadem, aged 48 and a member of the Baha'i religious minority, is serving a four-year prison sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison on the charge of "membership of an illegal group with intent to commit crimes against national security". Nooshin Khadem worked as an administrator with the Baha'i Institute of Higher Education (BIHE) at the time of her arrest in May 2011. BIHE is an online correspondence university created in 1987 for members of the Baha'i community who have been denied access to higher education in Iran.

Nooshin Khadem was arrested following raids on the homes of 38 other individuals affiliated with the BIHE, including professors and students. In addition to Nooshin Khadem, the authorities also arrested and tried six men affiliated with the BIHE: Mahmoud Badavam, Vahid Mahmoudi, Kamran Mortezaie, Farhad Sedghi, Ramin Zibaie, and Riaz Sobhani – all sentenced to prison terms between four and five years in October 2011.

Imprisoned since her arrest, Nooshin Khadem was sentenced to four years imprisonment in October 2011 by Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court. Her sentence was confirmed on appeal on 19 January 2012.

## **Amnesty International's recommendations**

Amnesty International supports the courageous efforts of women in Iran who are standing up for their human rights in a wide variety of fields. As such, Amnesty International wishes to bring to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women a number of recommendations it has made to the Iranian authorities in recent years. In these recommendations, Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to:

- release immediately and unconditionally any woman who has not used or advocated violence or hatred who is detained, imprisoned or placed under other physical restriction (for example, house arrest) solely because of her political, religious or other conscientiously held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, sexual orientation or other status;
- investigate promptly and impartially all reports of torture and other ill-treatment of women and bring to justice anyone found responsible for such abuses;
- ensure that detainees and prisoners are granted access to relatives, lawyers of their own choosing and adequate medical care
- ratify promptly and without reservation the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol;
- review as a matter of urgency all legislation in Iran in order to identify and remedy all laws that discriminate directly against women or have a discriminatory impact on women, including the new Penal Code;
- review all legislation with a view to removing all provisions that discriminate against or have a discriminatory impact on ethnic, religious and other minority communities;
- issue directives and take effective measures to counter the discriminatory application of laws in order to ensure that all Iran's minority communities enjoy their full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights of minority women;
- end all forms of intimidation and harassment of women's rights defenders such as dismissal from employment, threatening phone calls and raids on peaceful meetings in private houses;
- permit the holding of peaceful demonstrations calling for legislative change, as provided for under the Constitution of Iran;
- uphold the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and lift all obstacles to the registration of independent human rights organizations;
- ensure that everyone in Iran has the right to freely practise their religion in full conformity with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

Amnesty International urges the Commission on the Status of Women's Working Group on Communications to consider the information contained in the present submission with a view to its inclusion in the Commission's report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), along with recommendations to the Iranian authorities and the international community that reflect the recommendations listed above.

As a global policy-making body dedicated to gender equality and advancement of women's rights, the Commission on the Status of Women should:

- make recommendations to the ECOSOC to take steps to address the persistent multi-layered human rights violations against women human rights defenders worldwide;
- make recommendations to the ECOSOC to consider all possible ways to protect the rights of women human rights defenders in Iran, including towards ensuring the safety of those who wish to participate in forthcoming sessions of the Commission.

Appendix 1

- *Iran must end harassment of imprisoned lawyer's family*, 13 July 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/iran-must-end-odious-harassment-prisoner-s-family-2012-07-12>
- *Iran: Joint statement on the right to education and academic freedom in Iran* (Index: MDE 13/033/2012), 31 May 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/033/2012/en>
- *Iran: Further information: Human rights defender imprisoned: Narges Mohammadi* (Index: MDE 13/026/2012), 30 April 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/026/2012/en>
- *Iran: Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Index: MDE 13/019/2012), 30 March 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/019/2012/en>
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- *Iran: New report finds surge in repression of dissent*, 28 February 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/iran-new-report-finds-surge-repression-dissent-2012-02-28>
- *Iranian women fight controversial 'polygamy' bill*, 30 November 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/iranian-women-fight-controversial-polygamy-bill-2011-11-30>

*Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding concerns about the harassment and imprisonment of women, including rights defenders and members of minorities, in Iran*

## END NOTES

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<sup>i</sup> Amnesty International defines a prisoner of conscience as someone who has been jailed because of his or her political, religious or other conscientiously-held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, color, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, sexual orientation or other status and who has not used or advocated violence

<sup>ii</sup> *Iran: Amnesty International's Submission to the Commission on the Status Of Women Regarding Concerns About the Harassment and Imprisonment Of Women, Including Rights Defenders And Members Of Minorities, in Iran* (Index: MDE 13/027/2011), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/027/2011/en>

<sup>iii</sup> *Iran: Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women regarding concerns about the harassment and imprisonment of women, including rights defenders and members of minorities, in Iran* (Index: MDE 13/071/2011), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/071/2011/en>

<sup>iv</sup> *Iran: Executions by stoning* (Index: MDE 13/095/2010), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/095/2010/en>

<sup>v</sup> Legislation can also be enacted by the Speaker of Parliament if the President fails to sign approved legislation in to law within a specified time frame.

<sup>vi</sup> *Women's right to choose their dress, free of coercion: Statement submitted by Amnesty International to the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (New York, 22 February - 4 March 2011)* (Index: IOR 40/022/2010), <http://www-secure.amnesty.org/en/library/info/IOR40/022/2010/en>

<sup>vii</sup> *Iran: Submission to the Human Rights Committee for the 103rd session of the Human Rights Committee, 17 October – 4 November 2011* (Index: MDE 13/081/2011), <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/081/2011/en>

<sup>viii</sup> See "Gender segregation underway in 20 Iranian universities", Radio Zamaneh, 8 July 2011, <http://radiozamaneh.com/english/content/gender-segregation-underway-20-iranian-universities>.

<sup>ix</sup> See "Bodily Search of Female Students at University of Science & Culture", Human Rights Activists News Agency, 27 Sept 2011, [http://www.enhrana.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=528:bodily-search-of-female-students-atuniversity-of-science-a-culture&catid=11:students&Itemid=14](http://www.enhrana.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=528:bodily-search-of-female-students-atuniversity-of-science-a-culture&catid=11:students&Itemid=14)

<sup>x</sup> See "Female students suspended over hijab violations," Radio Zamaneh, 5 March 2012, <http://www.radiozamaneh.com/english/content/female-students-suspended-over-hijab-violations>

<sup>xi</sup> See, "At least 716 girls under the age of ten married off in Iran since 2009", Persian2English, 14 March 2012, <http://persian2english.com/?p=23753>

<sup>xii</sup> Trials held in Revolutionary Courts fail to adhere to international standards for fair trials. See pg. 42 *Iran: Submission to the Human Rights Committee for the 103rd session of the Human Rights Committee, 17 October – 4 November 2011* (AI Index MDE 13/081/2011), 21 September 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/081/2011/en>

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://persian2english.com/?p=23773>

<sup>xiv</sup> <http://melimazhabi.com/?p=13833> (in Persian) and <http://persian2english.com/?p=23958> (in English)