

THE OBSERVATORY

for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

L'OBSERVATOIRE
pour la Protection des
Défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme

EL OBSERVATORIO
para la Protección
de los Defensores de Derechos Humanos

PRESS RELEASE

IRAN: Kurdish Human Rights Defenders pursue their hunger strike

Paris - Geneva, September 4, 2008. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), expresses its deepest concern over the hunger strike started on August 25, 2008 by several Kurdish prisoners, including human rights defenders, detained in Iran in order to protest against their detention and the conditions in which they are being detained.*

The prisoners concerned by this hunger strike are all Kurdish, many of them being human rights defenders :

- Messrs. **Adnan Hassanpour** and **Abdolvahid** (also known as Hiwa) **Boutimar**, two Kurdish journalists and active members of Iranian civil society, sentenced to death on July 16, 2007¹;
- Mr. **Mohammad Sadigh Kaboudvand**, a journalist and the President of the Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Kurdistan (RMMK), sentenced to ten years imprisonment at the end of May 2008²;
- Ms. **Hanna Abdi**, a member of the women's rights NGO *Azar Mehr* and an active member of the One Million Signatures Petition Campaign, sentenced to five years' imprisonment on June 18, 2008³;
- Ms. **Ronak Safarzadeh**, also a member of the One Million Signatures Petition Campaign, detained since October 9, 2007⁴;
- Mr. **Massoud Kordpour**, one of the founding members of the Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights in Iranian Kurdistan, and a civil society activist working on human rights and environmental issues, detained since August 25, 2008⁵;
- Mr. **Yasser Goli**, a student and Kurdish rights activist detained since October 9, 2007⁶, and his mother, Ms. **Fatemeh Goftari**, a member of *Azar Mehr*, was arrested for the first time on January 14, 2008. Forty days after her arrest, her bail was set at 15 million tomans. She was arraigned and sentenced to eight months' imprisonment about six months later. The sentence was subsequently reduced to three months by the Court of Appeals of Kurdistan. She began serving her prison sentence on August 22, 2008;
- Ms. **Zeynab Bayazidi**, a member of the One Million Signatures Petition Campaign, arrested on July 7, 2008 and sentenced on August 10, 2008 to four years' imprisonment⁷;
- Messrs. Farzad Kamangar and Ali Heydarian, both condemned to death after having been accused of collaboration with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)⁸.

¹ See Observatory Annual Report 2007.

² See Observatory Annual Report 2007 and Urgent Appeal IRN 003/0707/ OBS 072.1.

³ See Observatory Annual Report 2007 and Urgent Appeal IRN 013/1107/154.1.

⁴ See Observatory Annual Report 2007.

⁵ See Observatory Urgent Appeal IRN 009/0808/OBS 138.

⁶ Mr. Goli suffers from a heart ailment and has been admitted to the hospital numerous times for treatment. After being in prison for three months, Mr. Goli was transferred to the Central Prison of Sanandaj on January 16, 2008. Until then, he was not allowed to meet with his family. His whole family has fought on his behalf to shed light on his condition and plight. His father, Mr. Saleh Goli, was arrested on October 31, 2007 in connection with his son's case. His bail was set at 10 million tomans but he was subsequently released.

⁷ According to Iranian law, a defendant must submit an appeal within 20 days of being sentenced, and a judgment cannot be issued in a case until those 20 days have passed. Ms. Bayazidi attempted to protest and appeal her sentence but a sentence by the Courts was issued on August 21, 2008, only 11 days after her sentencing. Her lawyer went to the Appeals Court on behalf of the defendant but was told that Ms. Bayazidi had already appeared in person and a decision had been reached.

⁸ See the Joint Press Release of FIDH and the Iranian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LDDHI), March 4, 2008.

Although detained in different prisons, they are all submitted to particular harsh treatments in detention: they are not allowed to see their lawyers and families like the other prisoners and they are isolated from other detainees. These Kurdish prisoners also wanted to protest against the unlawful trials they were subjected to.

The Observatory expresses its deep concern about the ongoing hunger strike of these human rights defenders, which is evidence of their harsh conditions of detention, and calls upon the Iranian authorities to guarantee to these prisoners conditions of detention that are in conformity with international standards.

Moreover, the Observatory urges the Iranian authorities to guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of all above-mentioned defenders, to release them immediately and unconditionally as their sentencing and detention are arbitrary as they only aim at sanctioning their human rights activities, and to guarantee unconditional access to their lawyers, families and any medical treatment they may require .

The Observatory further calls upon the Iranian authorities to put an end to any acts of harassment against all Iranian human rights defenders and to conform with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, especially its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” and its Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”.

The Observatory further wishes to insist on the fact that Iran had committed to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights” by presenting its candidacy to the Human Rights Council 2006 election and had insisted in this regard on the fact that the country had “continuously put great efforts into safeguarding the status and inherent dignity of the human person as well as the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. In order to ensure the continuation of these efforts, the Observatory urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to conform with international human rights standards.

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