



## **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**

MDE 13/071/2011

### **Introduction**

This submission to the Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) is intended to draw the Commission's attention to the continued pattern of human rights violations experienced by women in reprisal for their peaceful political or human rights activities, on account of their ethnic origin, their faith, or their relationship to men who have expressed views dissenting from those considered acceptable by the Iranian authorities or the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association. The submission provides case updates to the situation of nine women previously raised by Amnesty International in its submission to the Commission on the Status of Women in 2010, and highlights the cases of two additional women — including of a woman who participated in the 55th session of the Commission. These cases are accompanied by an appendix (Appendix 1) containing responses from the Iranian authorities about seven of the women featured in this submission, and a second appendix (Appendix 2) 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 eleven women featured in this submission are prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.<sup>i</sup>

As highlighted in Amnesty International's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women in 2010<sup>ii</sup>, women in Iran face widespread discrimination under the law. No law is known to have been passed in the last year to address any of these areas of discrimination. Indeed, the last year has seen proposals by the authorities to implement gender segregation in institutions of higher learning, for which the norm has been until now to have mixed gender courses. The Supreme Leader's representative, Ayatollah Seyyed Ahmad Alamolhoda, stated during a gathering in Mashhad to mark Modesty and Chastity Day on 13 July 2011, that co-educational environments are the "major source for [moral] corruption."<sup>iii</sup> Despite reports stating that President Ahmadinejad has asked the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology (MSRT) to stop current gender segregation plans, it is not clear whether the President has the authority to enforce halting segregation plans as the Supreme Leader is the head of state and appears to be supporting these proposals.<sup>iv</sup>

Gender segregation in universities raises concerns about whether women and men will continue to enjoy equal access to the same quality of higher education. These proposals, coupled with reports of quotas restricting women's admission to specific university programs, and requirements for unmarried women to study as near to their hometowns as possible, appears to indicate that women are facing increasing discrimination in their right to equal access to education.

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 persecution continues. Since last year's submission to the Commission on the Status of Women, none of the nine women whose cases were highlighted previously have had their criminal convictions overturned and most remain in prison.

## **1. Hengameh Shahidi**

Hengameh Shahidi, aged about 36, is a journalist and political activist serving a six-year prison sentence imposed for conviction of "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security", "disturbing the peace", "membership of an illegal organization" and for "propaganda against the system". These charges related to her activities before the disputed 2009 presidential election, when she was an advisor to presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, leader of the National Trust party, of which she is a member. She was held for over four months without charge, during which she was reportedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated. In September 2010 her lawyer Mohammad Mostafaei, said that during interrogations, Hengameh Shahidi was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including a mock trial and execution. Mohammad Mostafaei also stated that on the first day he met his client, which was also the first day of her trial, she was unable to speak or walk such that the judge called in emergency medical services.<sup>v</sup>

After her release on bail, she was tried and convicted, and began serving her prison sentence after her sentence was upheld on appeal. At the time of writing in July 2011 she was free on bail, apparently for much needed medical treatment, including for a pre-existing heart condition.

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Hengameh Shahidi has been targeted for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including her political activities on behalf of Mehdi Karroubi's campaign (see appendix 1).

## **2. Shiva Nazar Ahari**

Shiva Nazar Ahari, a 26-year-old journalist, blogger and member of the Committee of Human Rights Reporters (CHRR), who at the time of the previous submission was detained without charge or trial, was released on bail in September 2010.

Days after her release, following a final trial session which took place on 4 September 2010, Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court sentenced Shiva Nazar Ahari on 18 September 2010 to 74 lashes and a six year prison term. Shiva Nazar Ahari's sentence of 74 lashes for "disturbing public order" was commuted to a fine of four million rials, (equivalent to approximately US\$400). Her sentence of six years' imprisonment consists of three and a half years for "moharebeh" (enmity against God) to be served in internal exile at Izeh Prison, Khuzestan province almost 180 km from her family. She was also sentenced to two years for "gathering and colluding to commit a crime" and six months for "propaganda against the system".

On 8 January 2011, Branch 36 of the Appeal Court in Tehran acquitted Shiva Nazar Ahari of "gathering and colluding to commit a crime against national security" and changed her internal exile location from Izeh Prison in Khuzestan Province to a prison in Karaj, near Tehran, hereby reducing her prison sentence to four years. She may still face flogging as it remains unclear whether this part of her original sentence, subsequently converted to a cash fine, has been reinstated. At the time, her lawyer, Mohammad Sharif, had not yet received official notification of the original verdict although the news was carried in the media. Shiva Nazar Ahari remains at liberty awaiting a summons to start serving her sentence.

In January 2011, her lawyer was said not to be planning to seek a judicial review of the case, for fear such a request could lead to the imposition of a harsher and longer sentence.

*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*

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Shiva Nazar Ahari has been targeted for her peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in the course of her human rights activities for the CHRR (see appendix 1).

At least eight other members of the CHRR have been arbitrarily arrested since the end of November 2009. Others have fled the country for their own safety.

The CHRR was founded in 2006 and campaigns against a wide range of human rights violations, including those affecting women, children, prisoners and workers. It came under particular attack since the June 2009 election. In January 2010, the Tehran Prosecutor accused the group of having links to the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI - a banned group), and said that "any collaboration with the [CHRR] is a crime". The CHRR vehemently denies having such links.

### **3. Alieh Aghdam-Doust**

Women's rights activist Alieh Aghdam-Doust, aged 58, continues to serve a three-year prison sentence at Evin Prison, Tehran, after conviction of "acting against national security by participating in an illegal gathering" in January 2007, which she began serving in January 2009. Her conviction relates to a peaceful demonstration calling for an end to discrimination against women in which she participated in June 2006, which was violently broken up by security forces. Alieh Aghdam-Doust, is a prisoner of conscience, who is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her internationally recognized rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Alieh Aghdam-Doust was placed in solitary confinement in March 2010 after a speech she gave to other women prisoners on International Women's Day, 8 March 2010. She was later brought to court without the presence of her lawyer, and charged with new offences relating to the speech, including "propaganda against the system", "insulting the Leader and the President" and "spreading socialism". Amnesty International is not aware of her having been tried on these charges.

Alieh Aghdam-Doust was a teacher at the time of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and was later forced out of her job. She spent six years in prison between 1983 and 1989 in connection with her political beliefs and activities. She underwent a painful divorce and has no surviving children. The youngest of 10 children, she has no close relatives in Tehran and is very isolated.

### **4. Ronak Safazadeh**

Ronak Safazadeh<sup>vi</sup>, a 25-year old member of Iran's Kurdish minority, is currently detained in the women's section of Sanandaj Prison, Kordestan Province, north-west Iran, where she is serving a six-year prison term imposed after she was convicted in April 2009 of "membership of an illegal organization (PJAK - The Party For Free Life of Kurdistan)" and "propaganda against the system". Arrested in October 2007, she is a member of two non-governmental organizations that promote women's rights in Iran: the One Million Signatures Campaign (also known as the Campaign for Equality) and the Azar Mehr Women's Organization of Sanandaj (which is affiliated to the Campaign for Equality).

With regard to the charge of membership of PJAK, her lawyer stated that "the activities of my client were limited to activities within the Azar Mehr Women's NGO, and so her activities in PJAK were carried out toward this end as well. My client aimed to research 'the reasons for women's participation in PJAK under difficult conditions'." In a separate trial which had concluded earlier, she had been sentenced to nine months in prison and a fine for leaving the country illegally and possessing a satellite dish.

Ronak Safazadeh has been suffering from dental problems in prison, for which she appears not to have had adequate medical treatment. She passed a university entrance exam in 2010 and is trying to

continue her education inside prison.

Amnesty International has seen no evidence that Ronak Safarzadeh has personally used or advocated violence and therefore considers her to be a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

## **5. 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 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 year 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 Zanjan Central Prison with some of the female prisoners. The hunger strike is reported to have lasted a few days.

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Zeynab Beyezidi has been targeted for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in the course of her human and women's rights activities (see appendix 1).

## **6. Mahboubeh Karami**

Women's rights activist Mahboubeh Karami began serving a three-year sentence in Tehran's Evin Prison on 15 May 2011, imposed for her peaceful activities in support of greater rights for women. She was detained without charge or trial in Evin Prison in Tehran from her arrest on 2 March 2010 until 18 August 2010, at which time she was released on bail equivalent to US\$500,000. She was sentenced to four years' imprisonment by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court after being convicted of "membership of an illegal organization (the Human Rights Association of Iran)", "gathering and colluding with intent to harm state security and for spreading propaganda against the system". She was acquitted of the charge of "spreading lies". On appeal in February 2011, her sentence was reduced to three years.

She has been a member of the One Million Signature Campaign since its foundation in 2006. She is also a former director of the Women's Unit of the independent human rights organization, Human Rights

*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*

Activists in Iran (HRAI)<sup>vii</sup>.

Mahboubeh Karami has health problems which her family and friends fear will worsen in prison. She was suffering from depression at the time of her arrest in March 2010 which became more severe while she was in detention. She is also said to suffer from insomnia and respiratory problems. She was in

detention at the time of her mother's death in 2009 and she was not allowed prison leave to attend the one-year anniversary of her mother's death.

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Mahboubeh Karami has been targeted for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association in the course of her human rights activities (see appendix 1).

## **7. Behareh Hedayat**

Behareh Hedayat, aged about 30, 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, bringing the total to nine and a half years in prison. 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, 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. This means that Behareh Hedayat must now serve a total of 10 years in prison.

Behareh Hedayat, Majid Tavakkoli and Mehديه Golrou appeared before Branch 28 of the Revolutionary Court in February 2011 in presence of their lawyers, facing charges of "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.

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, 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 for 13 months.

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Behareh Hedayat has been targeted for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression, association and assembly in the course of her activities as a student and women's rights activist (see appendix 1).

## **8. Ma'soumeh Ka'bi**

Ma'soumeh Ka'bi is a member of the Ahwazi Arab minority in Iran, and the wife of Habib Nabgan, a prominent member of the *Lejnat al-Wafaq* (Reconciliation Committee), a banned political party which promotes the rights of Iran's Arab minority. He is now a refugee in Denmark. She is continuing to serve a

four and a half year prison sentence in Sepidar Prison, in Ahvaz City, Khuzestan province apparently in connection with her husband's political activities or to force him to return to Iran. The sentence was imposed after she was forcibly returned in September 2008 to Iran from Syria, where she was about to be resettled in Denmark along with her five children.

Ma'soumeh Ka'bi suffers from hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis) and pain in her left foot, and has lost most of her teeth since her arrest. She is also reported to be suffering from severe depression.

Amnesty International fears that Ma'soumeh Ka'bi is being denied adequate medical treatment while held, possibly to place further pressure on her, and possibly to try to induce her husband to return to Iran, where he would be at risk of serious human rights violations. In March 2011, it was reported that her family has not been allowed to visit her for about two months. Her children have now left Iran and have been reunited with their father.

## **9. Rozita Vaseghi**

Rozita Vaseghi, a member of the Baha'i religious community, was arrested on 15 March 2010 at her home in Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan province. 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 now held with other Baha'i prisoners in Vakilabad Prison, Mashhad, after spending six months in solitary confinement. 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 sentenced on the charge of "spreading Baha'i teachings". The length of this additional sentence is not known. She is said to be in poor health, having lost a lot of weight and suffering from low blood pressure.

A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's belief that Rozita Vaseghi has been targeted for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of belief and expression (see appendix 1).

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) 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.

## **10. Nasrin Sotoudeh**

Human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, a mother of two young children, was arrested on 4 September 2010 and is now serving an 11-year prison sentence in Evin Prison. Sentenced on 9 January 2011, she has also been banned from practising law and leaving the country for 20 years.

Nasrin Sotoudeh was sentenced 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 organization 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. A response from the Iranian authorities to Amnesty International dated 4 July 2011 has done nothing to allay the organization's concerns in this regard (see appendix 1).

Since her arrest, Nasrin Sotoudeh has been held in Evin Prison, including for a lengthy period spent in solitary confinement. Her health has been weakened by three hunger strikes in protest at her arrest and at the conditions of her detention. Initially allowed very infrequent contact with her family and lawyer, she is now allowed to call her family once a week. Nasrin Sotoudeh's two children have been allowed to visit her on only two occasions, both times behind a glass screen (a "cabin"). Her husband, Reza Khandan, is now permitted to visit her once a fortnight.

Nasrin Sotoudeh has defended many high profile human rights campaigners and political activists, as well as juvenile offenders on death row. Her clients include Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi. Her hunger strikes included three days in which she drank no water (a "dry" hunger strike).

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 11-year 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 the children had been blocked from an in-person visitation with their mother.

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.

*"I, who have defended many prisoners of conscience such as the seven imprisoned Baha'i leaders and others, would face unacceptable restrictions on my human rights work if I returned to Iran, if I were not arrested ... Now my own lawyer – who also represents many other activists – is detained, and her lawyer has been threatened with arrest for defending her. Where is the justice if your lawyer is arrested for defending you?"*

Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi,  
October 2010

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

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.

## **11. 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. At the time of writing, Maryam Bahreman remains held in detention in a Shiraz prison despite an order from the Prosecutor's office in Shiraz to release her on bail at the beginning of July

2011. Amnesty International considers her to be a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally.

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 Intelligence Ministry. 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. Since the transfer, she has been able to phone her family.

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.

Following this session, an order was made to release her on bail, but for unknown reasons, this has not yet been implemented. Amnesty International fears that the Iranian authorities may be considering bringing fresh charges against Maryam Bahreman in order to offset widespread international criticism over her arrest which appeared to be mainly linked to her participation in the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission.

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.

## **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



*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*

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 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- end the practice of arresting and detaining women in relation to the political or other activities of their husbands or other family members, as a means of putting pressure on them to surrender themselves to the authorities;
- 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 Appendix 1 demonstrates, the Iranian authorities have been aware of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in the past.

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.

*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**

<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> ISNA 13 July 2011

<sup>iv</sup> [http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu\\_no=2&item\\_no=445332&version=1&template\\_id=37](http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=445332&version=1&template_id=37)

<sup>v</sup> Further details in Persian at <http://www.modafe.com/NewsDetail.aspx?Id=454>

<sup>vi</sup> Ronak Safazadeh's name was incorrectly spelt Safarzadeh in the previous submission

<sup>vii</sup> Human Rights Activists in Iran has described itself as:

“a human rights organization working within the legal framework in Iran. HRA is a non-political, non-religious organization focused on the protection, maintenance and promotion of human rights in Iranian society.

HRA was established on March 20, 2006. In the four years since its inception, the organization's activities have been primarily focused on five principles: “reporting human rights violations, legal actions, capacity building and education, organizing relevant protests and international affairs.”

The organization's activities include: the publication and presentation of thousands of reports and documentaries on human rights violations to public opinion and relevant domestic and international organizations, provision of free legal services, publication and distribution of thousands of books, brochures and other educational materials, targeted research on Iranian law and publication of research results, support of prisoners and victims of human rights violations, organization of numerous gatherings and programs in support of victims of human rights violations, production of audio visual pieces dealing with human rights and collaboration and presence in the most prestigious human rights institutions around the world.”

## APPENDIX 1

Responses from the Iranian authorities on cases featured in this submission extracted from a letter sent to Amnesty International Spain, dated 4 July 2011

### **1. Ms. Mahboubeh Karami:**

“According to the information received from Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution, Ms. Mahboubeh Karami, daughter of Gholam Hossein, born in 1968, was charged with membership in the illegal alleged organization of human rights activists and her position in the set up as the responsible person for the committee of women, with the intention of disturbing security of the country, propagating against the state, assembly, conspiracy with the intention of perpetrating crimes against security of the country and distribution of false and baseless information aiming at misleading public opinion. She was arrested on the basis of the court’s writ of temporary detention, on 11/12/1388 and she was in a short time released on bail, until the scheduled time of her court meeting. Subsequently, Branch 26 of Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution investigated and examined the case and after exhaustion of the legal procedure and hearing the defense presented by her lawyers, by the name of Ms. Zhinous Sharif Razi, Ms. Mina Jafari and Mr. Houshang Babaeipour, the Court, on the basis of Articles 499, 500 and 610 of the Islamic Penal Code and through Verdict No. 268 of 23/5/1389, rejected the charge of “distribution of false and baseless information aiming at misleading public opinion” laid against Ms. Karami and sentenced her to two years of *Ta’ziri* imprisonment (in Islamic Jurisprudence-Fegh’h : the punishment having maximum and minimum limits, determined by law and judge respectively), including the days of her earlier detention, for membership in the illegal alleged organization of human rights activists, and two years of *Ta’ziri* imprisonment for assembly and conspiracy with the intention of disturbing security of the country.

According to the existing legal regulations, the Verdict may be appealed by the convict or her legal counsel./”

### **2. Ms. Bahareh Hedayatzadeh Roudsari:**

“By virtue of the information received from Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution, Ms. Bahareh Hedayatzadeh Roudsari, daughter of Kiyoumars, born in 1981, was charged with assembly, conspiracy and insult against the Late Imam Khomeini and the President of the Islamic Republic. Branch 28 of Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution through Verdict No. 113 of 29/2/1389 and on the basis of Article 514 of the Islamic Penal Code, sentenced her to two years of imprisonment, on the basis of Article 609 of IPC to six months imprisonment and by the virtue of Article 610 of IPC to five years of imprisonment, including the earlier days of detention.

Following the objection and appeal made by the accused and her defense lawyer, Mr. Seyed Mehdi Hojjati, Branch 54 of Tehran Province Court of Appeal re-investigated and examined the case and after exhaustion of the legal procedure issued its judgment through Verdict No. 360 of 23/4/1389 on the basis of Para A of Article 257 of Rules of Procedure of Public and Revolutionary Courts on Penal Crimes (while correcting part of the legal basis referred to in Article 514 of IPC) rejected the appeal and upheld the earlier judgment./”

### **5. Ms. Hengameh Shahidi :**

“On the declaration made by Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution, Ms. Hengameh Shahidi, born in 1975, was charged with assembly and conspiracy with the intention of disturbing security of the country, propaganda activities against the State, disruption in public peace and order and insult against the President of the Republic. The information continues that pursuant to completion of the required judicial procedure i.e. hearing the defense made by the accused and her lawyer, Mr. Mohammad Mostafayi, and in accordance with all judicial protocols, Branch 26 of Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution, through Verdict No. 56 of 24/8/1388, and on the basis of Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code, sentenced Ms. Shahidi to one year of imprisonment by the virtue of Articles 499, 618 and 610 and regarding Article 47 of IPC to five years of imprisonment and on the basis of Article 609 of the same Code, to 91 days of imprisonment.

Branch 54 of the Court of Appeal of Tehran Province, upon objection and appeal made by the accused and her defence lawyer, reopened the dossier and re-examined the case; and following exhaustion of

relevant legal instruments, on the basis of Article 248 as well as Para A of Article 257 of the Rule of Procedure of public and Revolutionary Courts in Penal Offences (while correcting the earlier judgment and reversing the punishment relevant to Article 499 of IPC due to forgiveness rendered by the President, declared through letter No. 224189, dated 13/11/1388 from the Deputy-President’s office for legal affairs), commuted the punishment, subject of IPC Article 609, to 50 thousand Tomans of pecuniary fine and further upheld the earlier judgment./”

**17.** “In reply to the communication No. .... dated .... of the ..... in connection with the conviction of Ms. **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, the High Council of Human Rights of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran has approached all the pertinent Judicial authorities and courts. According to the existing information, On the basis of the information provided by Tehran Court of the Islamic Revolution, Ms. Nasrin Sotoudeh, lawyer, daughter of Aghajan, was charged with : 1. assembly and conspiracy with the intention of

committing offences against security of the State through continued and object oriented conspiracy and cooperation with foreign and hostile media as well as instrumental use of her occupation in direction of providing propagation food for domestic and foreign elements and centres, 2. propaganda activities against the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 3. membership in the illegal organization known as centre for human rights defenders. Pursuant to investigations and examination of the case, hearing of defense presented by her lawyers, namely namely Mr. Abdolfattah Soltani, Ms. Mina Jafari, Ms. Nasim Ghanavi, Ms. Mahnaz Parakanda and Ms. Giti Pourfazel, and execution of the relevant legal procedure, the Tehran Province Court of the Islamic Revolution, through its Verdict No. 391 dated 7/9/1389 and on the basis of Articles 499, 500 and 610 of the Islamic Penal Code sentenced her to five years of *Ta'ziri* imprisonment (in Islamic Jurisprudence-Fegh`h : the punishment having maximum and minimum limits, determined by law and judge respectively) ,taking into account his earlier days of detention, for assembly and conspiracy with the intention of committing offences against security of the State; to one year of *Ta'ziri* imprisonment for propagation activities against the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to five years of *Ta'ziri* imprisonment for membership in the illegal organization known as centre for human rights defenders ; and also by the virtue of Articles 19 and 62 of the Islamic Penal Code, as well as Para 3, Article 16 of Passport Law, and as a complementary punishment she was sentenced to twenty years of deprivation of her occupation and leaving of the country. The judgment is not final and could be objected and appealed by the accused or her defense lawyers.”

19. “In reply to the communication No. .... dated ..... of the Working group of the Commission on Women Status, with regard to the situation of Ms. **Shiva Nazar Ahari**, the High Council of Human Rights of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran has approached all the pertinent Judicial authorities and courts. According to the existing information, Ms. Nazar Ahari, was charged with action against security of the country, support of the terrorist group of MKO as well as disruption in public order and she was arrested in May, 2009 and exhausting the relevant legal procedure, she was later released, in September, 2009 on bail.

She was arrested on 29/9/1388 under the above mentioned charges and was released on bail, after a short while. Subsequently, on 12/6/1389, branch 26 of Tehran Province Court of Revolution, through verdict No. 288 of 13/6/1389, and following hearing the defense presented by lawyers of Ms. Nazar Ahari, Mr. Mohammad Sharif and Ms. Afrouz Moghzi, and on the virtue of Para 5 of Article 22 and Articles 46, 47, 186, 190, 191, 193, 194, 610 and 618 of the Islamic Penal Code, issued the verdict as follows: 1. Two years of *Ta'ziri* ( in Islamic Jurisprudence-Fegh`h: the punishment having maximum and minimum limits, determined by law and judge respectively) imprisonment for association and conspiracy against security of the country; 2. Six months of *Ta'ziri* imprisonment and pecuniary fine of 400 thousand Tomans (substitute for 74 *Ta'ziri* slashes) for disruption of public order; 3. Three and a half years of imprisonment for “*Muharebeh*” (enmity to God), in the city of Eizeh of Khouzestan Province. The verdict was objected and appealed by the accused and her defense lawyers and subsequently, Branch 36 of Tehran Province Court of Appeal re-examined the judgment and acquitted her from the charge of “association and conspiracy against the system”, reduced her imprisonment to four years and changed her place of imprisonment from Eized [sic] prison to Karaj prison. Meanwhile, records show that Ms. Nazar Ahari was sentenced to two years of suspended imprisonment in 2003 for propagation against the State. All this background is an indicative of her intention for continuation of illegal activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Meanwhile she has been enjoying all facilities, welfare and medical care of the Organization of Prisons, similar to any other prisoner. She has also have access to her defense counsel and has received visits from her family.”

38. “In reply to the allegation made in relation with the situation of Ms. **Zeinab Bayazidi**, the High Council of Human Rights of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran has approached all the pertinent Judicial authorities and courts and it has received the following information in connection with the above mentioned individual:

According to the existing information received from Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ms. Zeinab Bayazidi, daughter of Rahim, was charged with membership in the terrorist group of PEJAK and propagation against the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Branch 1 of Mahabad Court of the Islamic Revolution investigated and examined the case and after exhaustion of the legal procedures and hearing the defense, on the basis of Articles 499 and 17 of the Islamic Penal Code and Article 230 of Rules of Procedures of Prisons Organization, and through Verdict No. 353 of 13/5/1387, sentence Ms. Bayazidi to four years of *Ta'ziri* imprisonment ( in Islamic Jurisprudence-Fegh`h : the punishment having maximum and minimum limits, determined by law and judge respectively) in the central prison of Zanzan city, including the period of her earlier detention.

Following the request of appeal filed by Ms. Bayazidi and her defence lawyer, Mr. Hamid Charehsaz, the verdict was taken into consideration in Branch 10 of W. Azerbaijan Province Court of Appeal and following further investigation, the Court, on the basis of Para A of Article 257 of Penal Rules of Procedure, upheld the

judgment through verdict No. 1063 dated 31/5/1387.

Any allegation/s stating otherwise, including.....are unfounded and fabrication of lies for deviating public opinion from the existing facts and realities. /”

40. “In reply to the communication No. .... dated ..... of .....on the situation of Ms. **Rozita Vaseghi**, the High Council of Human Rights of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran approached all the pertinent Judicial authorities and courts. According to the existing information, Ms. Rozita Vaseghi, daughter of Hedayatollah, was charged with propaganda activities against the system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and act against security of the country through membership, committing of illegal actions in the outlawed association affiliated to Baha’is, connection with leaders of the association on her visit to a foreign country (Turkey), absorption of new members into the illegal group, holding of illegal gatherings and distribution of books and written materials and CDs on deviating corrupt ideas. His [sic] dossier was raised in Branch 4 of Mashad Court of Revolution and upon the hearing sessions afforded to the accused and his defense, and following exhaustion of all the domestic legal laws and regulations and on the basis of Articles 19, 47, 499 and 500 of the Islamic Penal Code, the accused was found guilty and sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment and 10 years of prohibition to leave the country. Presently he [sic] is passing his term of conviction in the prison of the city of Mashad. The verdict was objected and appealed by the accused and her defense lawyer Mr. Mohammad Dolatkah, and subsequently, Branch 20 of Khorasan Razavi Provincial Court of Appeal re-examined the judgment and following exhaustion of the relevant legal instruments and rules of procedure, and through Verdict No. 8909975134000050 of 16/1/1389 upheld the earlier judgment on the basis of Article 257 of the penal rule of procedure and unacceptability of the causes for appeal. Any allegation made otherwise, including any sort of mistreatment, lack of access to legal counselling, poor health services and so on are mere fabrication of lies and diversion of truth./”

## APPENDIX 2

- *New Iran Public Execution Video Highlights 'Brutal' Death Penalty* (Index: PRE 01/356/2011), 21 July 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/new-iran-public-execution-video-highlights-%E2%80%98brutal%E2%80%99-death-penalty-2011-07-2>
- *Iran: Further Information: Activist Held Despite Order for Release* (MDE 13/068/2011), 14 July 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/068/2011/en>
- *Iran: Further Information: Iranian Human Rights Activist Released* (MDE 13/067/2011), 12 July 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/067/2011/en>
- *Iran: The Life of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani remains in the balance* (MDE 13/066/2011), 8 July 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/066/2011/en>
- *Iran: Woman detained for human rights activism* (MDE 13/063/2011), 23 June 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/063/2011/en>
- *Iran: Second anniversary of Neda Agha Soltan's killing highlights near-total impunity for officials* (MDE 13/061/2011), 20 June 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/061/2011/en>
- *Iran: Three mothers sentenced to death in Iran* (MDE 13/059/2011), 16 June 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/059/2011/en>
- *Iran: Dire human rights situation persists two years after disputed election* (MDE 13/057/2011), 9 June 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/057/2011/en>
- *Iran: Investigate death of women's rights and peace activist at father's funeral* (MDE 13/054/2011), 3 June 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/054/2011/en>
- *Iran: Detained human rights activist risks torture* (MDE 13/049/2011), 19 May 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/049/2011/en>

- *Amnesty International Report 2011: Iran Entry* (MDE 13/058/2011), 13 May 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/058/2011/en>
- *Iran: Further Information: Adoption of restrictive NGO law postponed* (MDE 13/045/2011), 15 April 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/045/2011/en>.
- *Iran: Further Information: Fear of torture of detained Iranian lawyer: Javid Houtan Kiyani* (MDE 13/040/2011), 7 April 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/040/2011/en>
- *Iran: International Women's Day celebration marred by continued detention of dozens of women* (MDE 13/028/2011) 8 March 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/028/2011/en>