

**Iran: Arbitrary detention of Ms. Maryam Hosseinkhah, women's rights defender**

**URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY**

**IRN 011 / 1107 / OBS 144**

Arbitrary detention / Judicial proceedings

**Iran**

November 20, 2007

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), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Iran**.

**Brief description of the situation:**

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources of the arrest and subsequent detention of Ms. **Maryam Hosseinkhah**, a member of the Women's Cultural Center and women's rights activist involved in the "One Million Signatures" petition campaign as well as editor of the site of the campaign, which seeks to put pressure on the Iranian legislators in order to withdraw provisions that have adverse effects on women's human rights.

According to the information received, on November 17, 2007, Ms. Maryam Hosseinkhah was summoned to the Security Branch of the Revolutionary Courts. This summoning intervened a few days after an order issued by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and the Judiciary shut down the site of Women's Cultural Centre, a leading women's NGO. After having been interrogated for over two hours, Ms. Hosseinkhah was charged with "disruption of public opinion", "propaganda against the state", and "publication of lies" through the publication of untrue new items on the sites of the Women's Cultural Centre and of the "One Million Signatures" petition campaign. Ms. Hosseinkhah was ordered to return to the Revolutionary Courts for further interrogation on the following day at 9.00 am.

On November 18, 2007, when Ms. Hosseinkhah arrived in Court, an arrest order was issued against her and she was immediately arrested and transferred to Evin Prison at 2.00 pm.

The Observatory recalls that 121 women's rights activists have been arrested, interrogated, or sentenced in the past two years and the government has raised over one million euros by imprisoning the activists and releasing them on high bail.

The Observatory expresses its deep concern about the increasing repression of the Iranian authorities against human rights defenders, in particular women's rights activists involved in the "One Million Signatures" Campaign. The Observatory strongly condemns the increasing use of violence by the Iranian authorities over the past months in order to repress peaceful gatherings and to arrest defenders.

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”<sup>1[1]</sup> 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”<sup>2[2]</sup>. In order to ensure the continuation of these efforts, the Observatory urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to conform with international human rights standards.

**Actions requested:**

Please write to the authorities in Iran urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Ms. Maryam Hosseinkhah as well as all activists engaged in the “One Million Signatures” campaign;
- ii. Release Ms. Maryam Hosseinkhah immediately and unconditionally since her detention is arbitrary as it merely aims at sanctioning her activities in favour of women’s human rights;
- iii. Drop all arbitrary charges against all women’s rights defenders involved in the “One million signatures” campaign;
- iv. Put an end to all acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Iranian human rights defenders;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN 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”, Article 6.b, which provides that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others [...] freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and 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”;
- vi. More generally, ensure in all circumstances the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

**Addresses:**

- Leader of the Islamic Republic, His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran,

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<sup>1[1]</sup> In accordance with GA resolution A/RES/60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council.

<sup>2[2]</sup> <http://www.un.org/ga/60/elect/hrc/iran.pdf>

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- President, His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98.21.649.5880, E-mail: [dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir](mailto:dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir);
- Head of the Judiciary, His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi, Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: +98.21.879.6671 / +98 21 3 311 6567 / +98 21 3 390 4986, Email: [Irjpr@iranjudiciary.com](mailto:Irjpr@iranjudiciary.com) / [info@dadgostary-tehran.ir](mailto:info@dadgostary-tehran.ir);
- Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Manuchehr Motaki, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98.21.390.1999, Email: [matbuat@mfa.gov](mailto:matbuat@mfa.gov);
- Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran, His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani, C/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827
- Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: +41 22 7330203, Email: [mission.iran@ties.itu.int](mailto:mission.iran@ties.itu.int);
- Ambassador Mr. Ahani, Embassy of Iran in Brussels, avenue Franklin Roosevelt, 15 A. 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium, Fax: + 32 2 762 39 15. Email: [iran-embassy@yahoo.com](mailto:iran-embassy@yahoo.com).

Please also write to the diplomatic mission or embassy of Iran in your respective country.

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Paris - Geneva, November 20, 2007

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

E-mail: [Appeals@fidh-omct.org](mailto:Appeals@fidh-omct.org)

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