

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: Stop the harassment of Ms. Shirin Ebadi

Paris - Geneva, December 30, 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), denounces the continued harassment faced by Ms. Shirin Ebadi, lawyer, Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights lawyer.*

On December 29, 2008, at 5.30 pm., five finance inspectors raided Ms. **Shirin Ebadi**'s law firm in Tehran. Following a five-hour search through her clients' files, her accounts, other personal documents and files, and computers, the inspectors left with 70 boxes filled with professional and personal files and documents and two central processing units.

Ms. Ebadi, who was in her office at the time, opposed to these measures, arguing that according to the principle of confidentiality her firm was inviolable, in particular her clients' files. But this was to no avail.

Before the inspectors' departure, two official press agencies, Mehr and Tabnak, published dispatches claiming that this seizure was based on irregularities in Ms. Ebadi's financial accounts, accused of having failed to pay her taxes.

This search and seizure follows the unlawful search and closure by the police on December 21, 2008 of the headquarters of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC) in Tehran, FIDH member organisation in Iran which provides free legal advice and support to human rights defenders. Ms. Shirin Ebadi is one of the Centre's founding members.

"We are very concerned about the intensifying harassment faced by Ms. Shirin Ebadi and we fear that these latest events announce the opening of legal proceedings against Ms. Ebadi in an attempt to silence her legitimate work for the defence of human rights in Iran", declares Karim Lahidji, FIDH Vice-President.

More generally, the Observatory calls upon the Iranian authorities to immediately put an end to all kind of repression against human rights defenders, and to conform with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as regional and international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

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