



June 27, 2008

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi
Head of the Judiciary
Ministry of Justice,
Park-e Shahr,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Your Excellency:

We, the below-signed 1,389 individuals, join Human Rights First in writing to express our concern about the continued persecution of women's rights activists in Iran.

It has been two years since June 12, 2006, when women's rights activists attempted to hold a peaceful demonstration to ask for equality. Although the 70 individuals arrested on that date were released, several activists continue to be harassed and face prosecution in Iran. A number of activists have been convicted of "endangering national security," for doing nothing more than participating in a peaceful rally or collecting signatures for a petition to reform discriminatory laws. On June 12, security forces detained eight women who were planning to participate in an event commemorating the second anniversary of the protests.

Human rights defenders in Iran should be allowed to engage in activities to advocate for their basic rights. The activists involved in the One Million Signatures Campaign, in particular, deserve recognition and protection for the efforts to promote gender equality and to make Iranian laws more compliant with international human rights standards.

The rights to peaceful assembly and free expression are enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was endorsed by all U.N. member states, as well as the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory and which is binding on the Iranian government. Therefore, these prosecutions (including the latest sentencing of Amir Yaghoub Ali on May 25, 2008) are violations of Iran's obligations under international law.

We ask that the government of Iran comply with its obligations to protect citizens exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly, to release those still in detention, and to drop all remaining charges against the activists.

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Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

CC.

His Excellency Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,
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H.E. Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
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Sincerely,

The names of the 1,389 signatories have been removed for privacy reasons.