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Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice

URGENT ACTION FUND
FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS



Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition
Solidarity Statement on the Global Day of Action for Human Rights in Iran
25 July 2009

On the occasion of the Global Day of Action for Human Rights in Iran, members of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD IC) express solidarity with the civil society in Iran in their struggle to demand that the leaders of the regime respect women's rights and uphold their human rights as guaranteed in the Iranian constitution and in international human rights covenants that Iran has signed.

As the protests over the disputed outcome of the presidential elections intensify, the Coalition is deeply concerned about the safety and security of the following women human rights defenders who have been arbitrarily arrested and still remain in detention for their courageous acts of advocating for women's human rights and fundamental freedoms:

- SHADI SADR, a human rights lawyer, journalist and a prominent women's human rights advocate was abducted and violently arrested on 17 July;

- ZHILA BANIYAGHOUB, a women's human rights activist and journalist was arrested with her husband, Bahman Amouiee, also a women's human rights activist and journalist, on 20 June;
- SHIVA NAZARAHARI, also a women's rights and human rights activist and blogger, was arrested on 14 June;
- MAHSA AMRABADI, a journalist and supporter of women's human rights, was arrested in her home on 14 June. She is pregnant and her husband, Masoud Bastani, a journalist, was arrested when he was following up her case in the judiciary on 5 July;
- HENGAMEH SHAHIDI, a journalist and civil rights activist, was arrested on 18 June;
- ZAHRA TOUHIDI, a student activist, was arrested in her home on 18 June. Her husband was arrested as well.
- SOMAYEH TOHIDLOU, PhD student, blogger, member of the Mousavi Campaign, was arrested on 14 June.

The WHRD IC is concerned by the arbitrary arrest and detention of Iranian women human rights defenders, in particular these seven women human rights defenders. The members of the Coalition are further concerned that the arrest and detention of some of them might be related to their participation in campaigns against discriminatory laws and the peaceful defence of women human rights.

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran cited eyewitness accounts of the leading role of women in standing up to government forces to protect those coming under attacks: "What was significant, in contrast to previous protests, was that people would not run away as they came under attack, but held their own. Particularly the women who would respond to the security forces said, 'Why should we run? This is our country, this is our land, and we cannot be pushed out of our land. These sidewalks are ours. Who are you to tell us to go away, we shall not go.'

The WHRD IC applauds and supports the efforts of the 'Mothers of Peace' and 'Mothers Mourning' that have protected activists under attack and organised silent protests for peace every Saturday to honour the activism of their killed, arrested or disappeared children in Iran. In June, several of their members were arrested during one of their protests and were only released 2 or 3 days later.

Women human rights defenders have been at the forefront in the defence of human rights and are entitled to the rights specified under the UN Declaration Human Rights Defenders and guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that Iran signed. The continuing violent repression of internationally guaranteed human rights in Iran and the growing brutality in the hands of state agents of at least 4,000 reported to be detained, hundreds beaten and injured, and an unknown number of killed and those whose whereabouts are unknown, the WHRD IC is gravely concerned that unless the political issues are resolved with full respect for the rights and freedoms of the Iranian peoples, more women human rights defenders and other defenders will be put at risk.

On this Day of Global Action for Human Rights in Iran, the members of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition join the international human rights community to demand:

1. The immediate and unconditional release of Shadi Sadr, Mahsa Amrabadi, Zhila Baniyaghoub, Shiva Nazarahari, Zahra Touhidi, Hengameh Shahidi, Somayeh Tohidlou and other women human rights defenders and all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience including students, journalists and civil society activists;
2. The UN Secretary General to immediately appoint a delegation to travel to Iran to investigate the fate of prisoners as well as many disappeared persons;
3. An end to State-sponsored violence and accountability for crimes committed by the State and its agents;
4. Freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press as guaranteed by the Iranian constitution and Iran's obligations under international covenants it has signed.