

## WAN-IFRA condemns detention of Iranian journalists

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) has condemned the continued imprisonment of Iranian journalist Emad Baghi and what it deems repressive measure employed by the state to silence critical publications.



Baghi, a human rights activist, writer and journalist, was arrested without charge on 28 December 2009 and is being kept in solitary confinement in a deteriorating physical state and without access to a lawyer, according to WAN-IFRA.

### Arbitrary arrest

In a statement, WAN-IFRA called for the end to the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of journalists in Iran and demanded the immediate release of Baghi and other media professionals incarcerated under President Ahmadinejad's regime. "By jailing journalists and limiting freedom of expression, the state further undermines its own claims to democratic legitimacy," WAN-IFRA said.

Baghi is the founder and president of the Society for the Defense of Prisoners' Rights and a member of the Central Council of the Society for Defending Press Freedom. *Jomhuriyat*, the newspaper he founded in 2005, is banned, as are a number of his books addressing human rights issues in Iran.

He has already spent several years in prison over the past decade for campaigning against the death penalty, and, along with his family, has been subjected to continued harassment by the police and judiciary. Since 1995, Baghi has appeared in court or been summoned by the intelligence ministry 55 times.

### Other cases

In a recent related case, the weekly magazine *Iran Dokht* had its license revoked and saw its editor-in-chief Mohammad Ghojani, Baghi's son-in-law, threatened with arrest and banned from working as a journalist. This instance was followed by the suspension of daily newspaper *Etemad* for publishing an article written pro-reform parliamentarians calling for the release of a full report of investigations into a brutal attack by security forces on students at Tehran University in June 2009.

110 journalists have been imprisoned and at least 20 news media censored by the Iranian regime over the past eight months. According to reports, journalists held by the intelligence ministry are being subjected to intense pressure to publicly ask the pardon of the Revolution's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, with "repentance" seemingly "one of the conditions" for the release of political prisoners.

### Safety worsens for Zeid-Abadi

The situation for WAN-IFRA's 2010 Golden Pen of Freedom laureate, Ahmad Zeid-Abadi, continues to worsen. Latest reports suggest that Zeid-Abadi's safety in prison has further deteriorated. WAN-IFRA

continues to monitor his case.

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