



sydney
PEN

freedom to write...
freedom to read

c/ Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences, UTS
PO Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007
Australia

t: + 61 2 9514 2738
f: + 61 2 9514 2778
ABN: 51 796 241 535

www.pen.org.au
sydney@pen.org.au

Leader of the Islamic Republic
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khameni
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

17 November 2004

Your Excellency,

Sydney PEN, part of International PEN, the association of writers with members in over 100 countries, is seriously concerned with news of the detention of seven journalists during what is reported to have been a crackdown on dissenting writers who publish their work online.

We have learnt that since 7 September this year the following writers have been arrested and are believed to remain in detention:

Shahram RAFIHZADEH: Cultural editor of the reformist daily Etemad.
Hanif MAZROI: reformist journalist
Rozbeh EBRAHIMI: former political editor of Etemad.
Omid MEMARIAN: reformist journalist and weblogger.
Javad Gholam TAMAYOMI: journalist with the daily Mardomsalari.
Fershteh GHAZI: correspondent for the daily Etemad.
Mahboudeh ABBASGHOLIZADEH: Editor-in-chief of the women's magazine Ferzaneh.

The five men are reported to have been charged with "spreading propaganda against the regime, threatening national security, incitement to rebellion and insulting leading figures in the regime" for posting articles on several reformist websites and are said to be held incommunicado since their arrests.

Fershteh Ghazi was apparently arrested by the Tehran morality police on 28 October 2004 and is said to be accused of "immoral behaviour". It is alleged that several of the above-named male journalists have been forced to sign confessions admitting having sexual relations with Ghazi.

President
Nicholas Jose

Hon. Secretary
Denise Leith

Management Committee
Tom Keneally AO
Caroline Lurie
Gwenda Matthews
Chip Rolley
Anne Summers AO
Hsu-Ming Teo
Daniela Torsh

Writers in Prison Committee
Chip Rolley, Chair
John Durack
Denise Leith
Caroline Lurie
Hsu-Ming Teo

Writers in Detention Committee
Rosie Scott, Chair
Tom Keneally AO

Quarterly Editor
James Bradley

Life Members
Mona Brand
Ruby Langford Ginibi
Deirdre Hill
Mabel Lee
David Malouf AO

Frank Moorhouse AM
Vincent Serventy AM
Roberta Sykes
Stella Wilkes MBE

Vice-Presidents
Mary Cunnane
Rosie Scott

Hon. Treasurer
Meredith Curnow

Abbasgholizadeh was arrested on 1 November 2004 on her return from London, where she had been taking part in the European Social Forum. We are unaware of any charges having been brought against her.

We believe that the above journalists may be detained in violation of their right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory.

Sydney PEN, which represents over 250 writers in Sydney, Australia and is part of International PEN, the world's largest association of writers, a strictly non-political non-governmental organization in formal consultative relations with UNESCO, calls for their immediate and unconditional release if detained in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Iran is a signatory and on humanitarian grounds.

We also seek immediate assurances that all are being treated humanely in prison and granted access to their families, legal representation and any necessary medical care.

We welcome your comments in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

Denise Leith
Hon. Secretary, Sydney PEN

Cc
President
His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Sayed Mohammad Khatami

Head of Judiciary
His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi