

Statement of more than Four Hundreds of Iranian Scholars, Cultural and Literary Personalities and Political Activists in Iran concerning Mr. Hassan Yusefi Eshkevari's Situation

“Is Yusefi Eshkevari a Political Pledge?”

A Prisoner of conscience, Mr. Hassan Yusefi Eshkevari, an independent writer and scholar, a political and nationalist-religious activist promoting freedom, justice and spirituality, the director of Shariati's Cultural Research Institute and a journalist and a member of the editorial board of the Iran Farda magazine, was arrested six months ago, and he is still in detention. He was charged by the Special Court of the Clergy (SCC) with offences including “apostasy” and “being at war with God”, and was tried in a closed-door court without a jury, which is against the constitution that guarantees presence of jury in all political and press trials. His trial was behind the closed doors and every attempt was made to conceal the details of the charges. However, the details of the illegal trial were gradually revealed to the public in Iran and abroad.

Eshkevari's charges were so harsh that his family, friends, sympathizers and all political activists for freedom and democracy expressed a great deal of concern about his situation, even some high rank members of the Special Court of the Clergy formally announced on the Iran's state-run TV and radio their objection to some of the accusations and the procedures taken in this matter. Though the public has anticipated the correction of the proceedings by the authorities, pending situation and the continuation of his imprisonment still generates more concerns. And now it is feared that in the political power struggle and the time near the presidential elections in Iran, conservatives will benefit from Eshkevari's condition as a political pledge against the democratization of Iran and the reforms led by President Khatami and his political affiliates.

We condemn once again the arrest, detention and trial of all writers, political activists and independent thinkers for only expressing their views and beliefs, and also announce our

deep concern over the continuation of the Eshkevari's imprisonment. We call on all humanitarians, defenders of freedom of expression in Iran and the elected representatives, both in executive and legislature bodies who vowed to implement the reform programs, as well as international community, independent and freedom-loving individuals of the world to voice their concerns and objections to Eshkevari's conditions and call for his release.

We believe it is the humanitarian as well as the legal obligations of President Khatami and the reformist members of the parliament to take immediate actions to prevent the wilful, illegal and oppressive conducts of the Judiciary power and particularly the Special Court of the Clergy against Iranian thinkers, Journalists, and independent religious scholar and clerics such as Mr. Yusefi Eshkevari. We hold the authorities, with regard to their responsibilities, accountable for the safety and health of Mr. Yusefi Eshkevari and all other prisoners of conscience including students, journalists and political activists.

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[List of Signatories]:

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