

PROTEST LETTERS

IRAN

February 13 – 2001

A new press professional imprisoned

In a letter to the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Shahroudi, Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) protested at the arrest of Mohammad-Bagher Vali-Neik, general manager of the publishing company Jamée-é-Rouz. Robert Ménard, the RSF general secretary, asked Ayatollah Shahroudi to "release this press professional, as well as eleven journalists currently imprisoned". "We are especially concerned because it is not known where Hoda Saber, Ezatollah Sahabi and Ahmad Zeid-Abadi are detained. Not only does the Iranian judiciary arrest journalists who have done nothing but peacefully express their opinions, it also transfers them to unknown places of detention, which puts their families in complete despair", added Robert Ménard. RSF recalled that Iran, in which twelve press professionals are imprisoned - serving sentences of from four months to ten years - is the Middle-East's biggest prison for journalists. For the organisation, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is one of the world's 22 worst enemies of press freedom.

According to the information collected by RSF, Mohammad-Bagher Vali-Neik, manager of the publishing company Jamée-é-Rouz, was arrested and detained on 12 Fébruary 2001 in Tehran by order of the judge Saïd Mortazavi. Jamée-é-Rouz is a major publishing company founded after Mohammad Khatami's election. For three years it published most of reformist newspapers now banned.

Hoda Saber, one of the editors of the banned monthly Iran-é-Farda, was imprisoned on 28 January. The place where he is detained and the reason for his arrest are still unknown. The family of Ezatollah Sahabi, editor of Iran-é-Farda, also claimed not to know where the journalist had been transferred to, in January. The sixty-five year-old journalist was imprisoned in Evine prison in Tehran on 17 December. Charged with taking part in the Berlin conference held on 7 and 8 April, he was sentenced on 13 January to four years' imprisonment.

Ahmad Zeid-Abadi, journalist for the daily Hamchahri, imprisonned since 7 august 2000 in Evine prison, was transferred on 11 February to an unknown.