

# Director of banned magazine jailed in Iran

By The Associated Press and Freedom Forum Online staff

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The director of the banned *Iran-e-Farda* magazine was arrested yesterday on charges of insulting Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The arrest of Ezatollah Sahabi was made on orders of the hard-line Tehran Revolutionary Court. It came three days after the resignation of Ataollah Mohajerani, the Iranian culture minister who was a leading benefactor of Iran's outspoken print media.

More than two dozen newspapers and magazines have been closed in Iran since Khamenei initiated a sweeping crackdown in late April.

Among the publications closed was Sahabi's *Iran-e-Farda*. Sahabi, who also was a member of the dissident Freedom Movement, which opposes Iran's clerical rule, was interrogated and arrested yesterday, said Reza Alijani, an editor of *Iran-e-Farda*.

Iranian television quoted an official at the Tehran Revolutionary Court as confirming Sahabi's arrest, as well as that of Ali Afshari, a leader of Iran's largest reformist student group. The television said Afshari was also charged with insulting Khamenei in public speeches.

Sahabi and Afshari had been jailed earlier this year on charges of endangering Iran's national security after attending a conference in Berlin in April — a gathering that hard-liners have since condemned as an attempt to undermine Iran's Islamic principles. The two were released on bail last month.

More than two dozen reformist journalists and political activists have been arrested since April on vague charges of insulting Islamic sanctities and Khamenei, whom the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists has ranked as one of the 10 leading international enemies of the press.

Meanwhile, the British Broadcasting Corp. over the weekend reported the laudatory comments of several Iranian journalists about Mohajerani, the culture minister who resigned Dec. 14.

"In my view there were no negative points in Mohajerani's performance," Manur Mozaffari, managing director of the daily *Aftab-e Yazd*, was quoted as saying.

Other commentators praised Mohajerani's record not only in promoting a pluralist press but in easing book censorship and backing the Iranian film industry, the BBC reported.



AP Photo

Ezatollah Sahabi