

PROTEST LETTER

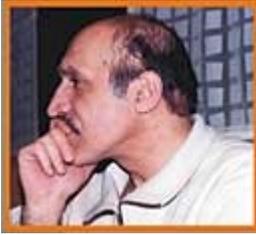
IRAN

UPDATE : April 24 - 2001

On 21 April 2001, Mohammad Javad Akbarian, journalist with the daily Sobh-é-Emrouz, was arrested after the Appeal court confirmed his sentence. He was sentenced, in December 2000, after a trial held in camera, to one year imprisonment for publishing "insulting islam" and "propaganda against the Islamic Republic".

April 23 - 2001

A new journalist behind bars



Amid Naini

In a letter to the head of the magistracy, Ayatollah Shahroudi, RSF protested at the arrest of **Amid Naini**, editor-in-chief of the monthly Peyam-é-Emrouz. Robert Ménard, the organisation's general secretary, asked Mr Shahroudi "to order the release of these journalists, as well as 18 others currently imprisoned". Moreover, the organisation expressed its concern about **Hassan Youssefi Echkevari**, journalist and theologian, arrested in August 2000 and now facing the death penalty. For RSF, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is one of the world's 22 worst enemies of press freedom, making Iran the largest prison for journalists in the world. The organisation recalled that on 20 April 2001, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution condemning Iran for its violation of human rights.

According to the information collected by RSF, on 21 April 2001, Amid Naini, editor-in-chief of the monthly Peyam-é-Emrouz, was arrested and jailed by the judge of the press court of Tehran after seven hours of interrogations. The court accused the journalist, in particular, of publishing an article denouncing the recital of verses from the Koran as a "superstitious practice" and another article describing the angel Gabriel - who, according to Islam, dictated the Koran to prophet Mahomed - as an "imaginary creature". On 18 March 2001, the judiciary banned the monthly Peyam-é-Emrouz like three other reformist publications: the two weeklies Mobine and Jamée-Madani, and the daily Dorran-é-Emrouz.

Between 11 March 2001 and 17 April 2001, ten journalists were arrested :

Reza Tehrani, editor-in-chief of the suspended magazine Kian, **Fazlollah Salavati**, editor-in-chief of the suspended Ispahan weekly Navid-é-Esfahan, **Hossin Rafai** and **Saïde Madani** of the suspended bimonthly Iran-é-Farda, **Taghi Rahmani** of the suspended weekly Omid-é-Zangan, **Ali-Reza Redjaï** and **Mohammad Bastehnaghar** of the suspended daily Asr-é-Azadegan, **Morteza Khazemian** and **Reza Raïs-Toussi** of the suspended daily Fath and **Hechmatollah Tabarzadi** of the daily Hoviat-é-Khich. Their fate is unknown at present. On 17 April 2001, Fazlollah Salavati was released on bail.

Hassan Youssefi Echkevari, theologian and contributor to newspapers now banned, like Adineh, Neshat and Iran-é-farda, has been in jail since 5 August 2000. He was prosecuted, like many journalists and intellectuals for his participation in a conference in Berlin in April 2000, on the subject "Iran after the elections". Because of this he was accused of being a "threat to national security". The verdict of his trial, held in camera between 7 and 15 October 2000, was never made known to the public. Accused of being a "mohareb" (fighter against God), Hassan Youssefi Echkevari is liable to the death penalty.