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Last Update 22 July 2013

Paris-Geneva, July 22, 2013. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), condemns the continuing repression of human rights defenders in Iran.

According to information received on July 21, 2013, Branch 2 of the Islamic Revolution Court of Shiraz sentenced four dervishes' rights activists for "establishing the Majzooban Noor illegal group with intent to undermine the national security, and spreading propaganda against the system". Mr. Saleheddin Moradi Sarvestani was thus sentenced to three years' in prison and four years' internal banishment to Hormuzgan province. He had already been sentenced to one year in prison and one year internal banishment by the Kavar General Court on charges of "disturbing the public minds and disrupting the public order" and had been released on bail on June 2, 2013 after 20 months of imprisonment in Shiraz. In addition, Ms. Farzaneh Noori was sentenced to two years prison and three years internal banishment to Khuzestan province, Mr. Behzad Noori to two years prison and three years internal banishment to Bushehr province, and Mr. Farzad Darvish to one year in prison and three years internal banishment to Sistan and Baluchestan province. Their lawyers declared they would appeal the sentences.

Furthermore, according to information received on July 13, 2013, seven other dervishes' rights activists were sentenced to lengthy prison terms by Branch 15 of the Islamic Revolution Court of Tehran for "establishment of the Majzooban Noor illegal group with intent to undermine the national security, spreading propaganda against the system, insulting the Leader, and complicity in disrupting the public order". All seven, who have been in pre-trial detention since September 2011, refused to attend the trial sessions in protest to being deprived of due process, and refused to submit any bill of defence.

At the end of the proceedings, Mr. Hamid Reza Moradi Sarvestani, the administrator of the Majzooban Noor website and dervishes' rights activist, was sentenced to 10 years and six months in prison; Mr. Reza Entessari, photojournalist, website administrator and dervishes' rights activist, to eight years and six months, and Messrs. Mostafa Daneshju, Farshid Yadollahi Farsi, Amir Eslami and Omid Behroozi, lawyers and website administrators, as well as Mr. Afshin Karampour, jurist and website administrator, to seven years and six months each. Although they consider the sentences as unfair, on July 17, 2013 the defendants declared that they would not appeal as they "have lost almost all hope for enjoying fair and legal investigation" after being denied their right to a fair trial on a number of occasions. Three of them are presently in need of medical treatment: Mr. Hamid Reza Moradi Sarvestani has heart problems

and suffers from artery blockage; Mr. Mostafa Daneshju has lung problems, while Mr. Amir Eslami also suffers from a heart condition. Despite the recommendation of Evin prison's doctors to send them to outside hospitals for treatment, Mr. Salavati, the judge of Branch 15, reportedly said "they can be transferred only upon the consent of the Ministry of Intelligence" and that he "cannot order it if they do not consent it".

The Observatory is extremely concerned over this new series of harsh sentences against dervishes' rights activists, as well as with the health status of Messrs. Hamid Reza Moradi Sarvestani, Mostafa Daneshju, and Amir Eslami. The Observatory recalls that dervishes' rights activists had already been sentenced in the past in relation to their activities[1]. Some other persecuted dervishes' rights defenders include Mr. Kasra Noori, who was arrested on March 15, 2012 in Shiraz and spent 14 months in detention before being sentenced to four years and four months in prison. He appealed the sentence but has remained in detention since then. In addition, Mr. Alireza Roshan, journalist and dervishes' rights activist, as well as Mr. Mostafa Abdi, were both arrested in the office of the Majzooban Noor website on September 4, 2011 and were released on bail one month later. Mr. Roshan was then sentenced to one year in prison and is now serving his sentence in Evin prison, while Mr. Abdi saw his bail raised by the judge, and went back to prison after refusing to deposit the bail.

The Observatory urges the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the human rights defenders mentioned above, and more generally all human rights defenders presently detained in the country, to put an end to any kind of harassment against them and to guarantee in all circumstances their physical and psychological integrity, in line with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

[1] See Observatory Press Releases of February 8, 2011 and September 16, 2011.

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