

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1011
Land:	Iran
Kilde:	Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
Titel:	Iranian Blogger Arrested For Protest Content On Instagram Account
Udgivet:	10. marts 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. maj 2023

Iranian Blogger Arrested For Protest Content On Instagram Account

A blogger in the northwestern Iranian city of Urmia has been arrested for publishing content on his Instagram account about a wave of suspected poisonings across the country that has hospitalized scores of students, mainly schoolgirls.

The Hamshahri newspaper, affiliated with the Tehran municipality, reported on March 9 that a blogger was arrested by order of the judiciary and the Ministry of Information.

Hamshahri did not publish the name of the blogger, but Iranian social-media users have identified him as Reza Purjafar, an artist and actor living in Urmia.

Purjafar recently wrote in a story on his Instagram page that "our children have not seen war, but they have tasted chemicals."

The reference is to a wave of suspected poisonings that has affected more than 5,000 pupils, mainly girls, in the past four months.

Hundreds have been hospitalized after complaining of symptoms that included nausea, headaches, coughing, breathing difficulties, heart palpitations, and numbness and hand or leg pain.

It remains unclear what might be causing the illnesses, though some of those affected have said they smelled chlorine or cleaning agents, while others said they thought they smelled tangerines in the air.

No one has claimed responsibility for the wave of illnesses that some officials -- including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei -- have characterized as "poisonings."

An unspecified number of arrests had been made in five provinces in connection with the incidents, but few details have been made public.

Earlier this week the Tehran prosecutor announced that he had filed a case against the editorial directors of the HamMihan, Roydad24, and Sharq newspapers, as well as against political activists Azar Mansouri, prominent actor Reza Kianian, and university professor Sadegh Zibakalam for their statements on the situation.

Journalist Ali Purtabatabaei, who covered the poisonings for the Qom News website as well as on social media and was critical of the response to the crisis by authorities in the holy city of Qom, was also arrested on March 5.

Iran has been roiled by unrest since the September 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in police custody for allegedly wearing a hijab, or head scarf, improperly.

Universities and schools have become leading venues for clashes between protesters and the authorities, prompting security forces to launch a series of raids on schools across the country, violently arresting students, especially female students, who have defiantly taken off their hijabs in protest.

The government's slow response to the crisis over the illnesses has fueled speculation that the poisonings are intentional and a scare tactic being used to intimidate females who have protested over Amini's death.

