

Iran (27)

299



Africa
Americas
Asia
Middle East
Europe

Internet



Français Español

All the news

Work with us

About us



**Freedom
of the
press
throughout the
world**
2003 Report
North Africa
and the
Middle East



IRAN

Area : 1,648,00 sq. km. Population : 71,369,000 Language : Persian
Type of state : Islamic republic Head of state : Ali Khamenei (Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic) Head of government : President Mohammad Khatami

Iran-2003 Annual Report

Iran remained the biggest prison for journalists in the Middle East, with 10 journalists in jail at the end of 2002. Once again the year was marked by very many suspensions of newspapers, legal summonses, arrests and prison sentences for journalists. The regime's reformist wing protested against these attacks on the media but were unable to restrain a legal system under the control of hardliners.

Press freedom was a centrepiece of President Mohammad Khatami's reform programme when he was elected in 1997. But every year since then, the hardliners who control the judiciary have regarded the media as a threat to the foundations of the country's Islamic system and therefore dangerous.

Fewer journalists were arrested in 2002, but 10 were still in prison at the end of the year serving sentences of between three and eight years. Many others were free but were being prosecuted or had already received sentences of up to 11 years in jail.

The regime's hardliners continued to shut down reformist newspapers temporarily or permanently. The efforts of parliament, which is in the hands of the reformers, to amend the April 2000 press law under which the papers were closed proved fruitless.

A total of 85 papers, including 41 dailies, had been closed since the law was passed, noted Mehrnoosh Jafari, secretary-general of the national press department at the ministry of cultural and Islamic guidance, said in August. A total of 18 were shut down in 2002. The reformist Iran Press Freedom Association said more than 1,800 journalists and photographers had lost their jobs over three years because of the closures and suspensions.

After the shutdown in early May 2002 of two of the best-known reformist dailies, Nowrooz and Bonyan, the main reformist party, the Iran Participation Front, denounced the "illegal and unjustified" actions of the judiciary which was "restricting press freedom and breaking pens." It said "political decisions by some judges continue to violate the national constitution and ignore other rules and regulations."

Several journalists, such as Taghi Rahmani, were released from jail during the year but this was seen as trying to impress the European Union, with whom trade negotiations began in the autumn.

Many subjects remained taboo for the media, such as dissident clerics, sex, religion and the country's relations with the United States. In September, a public opinion poll reported by the official news agency IRNA scandalised the hardliners because it showed 74.4 per cent of Iranians favouring a resumption of ties with the US. The poll was published the day after a fierce anti-American speech by the Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei.

Judge Said Mortazavi, head of Court 1410, known as "the press court," summoned several newspaper publishers and ordered them not to write anything about the poll. The heads of the public opinion firms that did the poll, who were also journalists, were meanwhile arrested and accused of taking money from the US polling firm Gallup. At the end of the year, the authorities said US journalists coming Iran would be fingerprinted.

NORTH AFRICA / MIE

COUNTRIES LIST

- ▲ North Africa and the Introduction - 2003 /
- ▲ Algeria
- ▲ Egypt
- ▲ Iran
- ▲ Iraq
- ▲ Israel and the Occup
- ▲ Jordan
- ▲ Kuwait
- ▲ Lebanon
- ▲ Libya
- ▲ Mauritania
- ▲ Morocco
- ▲ Palestinian Authority
- ▲ Qatar
- ▲ Saudi Arabia
- ▲ Sudan
- ▲ Syria
- ▲ Tunisia
- ▲ United Arab Emirates
- ▲ Yemen

SEE ALSO

- ▲ 2003 Africa Annual
- ▲ 2003 Asia Annual R
- ▲ 2003 Americas Annu
- ▲ 2003 Europe Annu

The 1998 murder of a group of intellectuals, three of them journalists, remained a hot issue with the arrest of Nasser Zarafshan, the lawyer for the victims' families, in August.

New information on journalists killed before 2002

The murder in late 1998 of a group of intellectuals and regime opponents - among them Daryush and Parvaneh Foroohar, symbolic figures of the liberal opposition, Majid Sharif, a columnist with the monthly Iran-é-Farda and writers and journalists Mohamad Mokhtari and Mohamad Jafar Pouyandeh - deeply shocked Iranians and outraged much of the reformist media. The authorities reacted by opening an investigation and in January 1999 the intelligence ministry officially admitted some its agents had been involved and announced the arrest of dozens of suspects. Pirooz Davani, editor of the newspaper Pirooz who disappeared in late August 1998 and whose body was never found, was also among the victims, according to reformist leaders who added his name to the list in 2002. In January 2001, three intelligence ministry agents were sentenced to death and 12 others to prison terms for murdering the Foroohar couple. Three other people were acquitted. The case was sent to the supreme court, which had not yet ruled by the end of 2002. The victims' families complained that those who ordered the killing were still free. The families' lawyer, Nasser Zarafshan, was arrested on 7 August. A military court had convicted him in March of disclosing details of the case file and sentenced him to five years in prison, which was upheld by an appeals court in July. The families announced to a rally of 5,000 people on 22 November to mark the killings that they would petition the UN Human Rights Commission to investigate the murders.

36 journalists imprisoned

Ten were still in prison at the end of 2002, but as many as 35 spent various lengths of time in jail during the year, often without trial.

Akbar Ganji, of the daily Sobh-é-Emrooz, was arrested on 22 April 2000 after appearing before the press court. He was accused of revealing details of the murder of intellectuals and regime opponents in late 1998 and accusing top politicians at the time, such as Ali Fallahian and Hashemi Rafsanjani, of being involved. He was also accused of writing articles in favour of dissident cleric Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, under house arrest since 1989.

Ganji was also accused of taking part in a Berlin conference in April 2000 to discuss reforms in Iran that was considered anti-Islamic by the authorities. At one hearing, he said he had been tortured in prison. He was sentenced to 10 years in jail on 13 January 2001. In May that year it was reduced on appeal to six months. But on 15 July, the supreme court cancelled the reduction because of supposed technical errors and imposed a six-year jail sentence. Ganji has been allowed out of prison several times for a few days after posting high sums as bail.

Khalil Rostamkhani, of the Daily News and Iran Echo, was arrested on 8 May 2000 and tried by the Teheran revolutionary court on 9 November that year. The prosecutor asked for the death penalty, accusing him of being a "mohareb" ("fighter against God") and of receiving and distributing leaflets and statements by exiled opposition groups and of helping to organise the April 2000 Berlin reform conference, which was considered subversive. He was freed on bail on 16 November and on 13 January 2001 was sentenced to nine years in prison. He remained free until 25 August, when he was sentenced on appeal to a reduced sentence of eight years.

Emadoldin Baghi, of the daily Fath, was arrested on 29 May 2000 after a hearing before the press court. On 17 July that year he was sentenced to five years in prison for "undermining national security" and "spreading false news" in a September 1999 editorial in the daily paper Neshat in which he advocated a modern approach by Islam to the death penalty. The Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) and former intelligence minister Ali Fallahian had filed complaints against him. His sentence was cut to three years by an appeals court on 23 October 2000.

Hassan Yussefi Eshkevari, a theologian and contributor to the monthly Iran-é-Farda, was arrested on 5 August 2000 and sent to Teheran's Evin prison after his home had been searched. He had gone to Europe in April to attend the Berlin conference and get treatment for his diabetes.

At his trial, held in secret before the special religious court from 7 to 15 October that year, he was accused of subverting national security, defaming the authorities, undermining the reputation of the clergy and of being a "mohareb" ("fighter against God"). On 12 October 2002, he was called before the court and told he had been sentenced to seven years in prison - four years for saying that wearing the veil and other Islamic dress codes for women had

cultural and historic roots in Iran and were not a necessity for Islam, one year for attending the Berlin conference and two years for "spreading false news."

Ali Fallah and Babak Ghani-Pour, of the magazine Arman, published at the University of Yazd, were arrested on 25 June 2001 allegedly after "complaints by several cultural and Islamic associations" at the university and sentenced respectively to five and three years in prison.

Behrooz Gheranpayeh, head of the National Institute of Public Opinion and a journalist with the daily Nowrooz, was arrested on 16 October 2002 and sent to Evin prison, accused of spying and collaborating with the Mujahideen exiled armed opposition.

Hossein Ghazian, one of the directors of the Ayandeh public opinion institute and a journalist with the daily Nowrooz, was arrested on 31 October and sent to Evin prison.

Abbas Abdi, another Ayandeh director, ex-editor of the daily Salam and former staff member of many reformist newspapers, was arrested at his home on 4 November. Press court Judge Said Mortazavi accused Ayandeh of receiving money from the US polling firm Gallup "or from a foreign embassy."

The three arrests came after the 22 September publication by the official news agency IRNA of a poll by Ayandeh and the National Institute of Public Opinion showing 74.4% of Iranians favouring a resumption of ties with the United States. In October, Judge Mortazavi summoned several newspaper publishers and ordered them not to write about the poll.

Ali-Reza Jabari, a translator and freelance contributor to several independent newspapers, including Adineh, was arrested at his office in Teheran on 28 December by non-uniformed individuals, who took him to his home, searched it and seized videotapes, books and his computer hard-drive. The next day, his wife went to Adareh Amaken, a city police department considered close to the intelligence services and which had summoned many journalists for questioning in previous weeks. She was told nobody by the name of her husband had been arrested. She was given the same answer at the central police station.

An interview with Jabari was published on 25 December in a Persian-language newspaper in Canada, Charvand, in which he said the country's hardline spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic, wanted the crisis in Iran to get worse. Jabari, a member of the Iranian Writers' Association, has translated many Iranian works, some of them banned, into English.

Several journalists were freed during 2002, some after several months in prison and other after more than two years.

Issa Khandan, editor of the social affairs pages in the daily papers Khordad and Fath, were freed on bail on 29 January. He had been arrested on 10 November 2001.

Ezatollah Sahabi, managing editor of the monthly Iran-é-Farda, was freed on bail of two billion rials (about 300,000 euros) on 2 March. He had been arrested on 26 June 2000 by order of the Teheran revolutionary court after taking part in the Berlin conference. He was freed on bail on 21 August but arrested again on 17 December, this time accused of making "propaganda against the regime" in a speech the previous month at Teheran's Amir-Kabir Technical University. He was sentenced to four and half years in prison on 13 January 2001. In December that year, this was cut to six months but he was kept in prison. At the end of 2002, he was waiting for the result of his appeal.

Abbas Dalvand, editor of the magazine Lorestan, was freed on bail on 10 March but in mid-May was given a six-month suspended jail sentence and the magazine was banned for a year for publishing "insults and false statements" about several state institutions. He had been arrested on 6 January 2002.

Hoda Saber, one of the editors of the banned magazine Iran-é-Farda, was freed on bail of 1.3 billion rials (about 195,000 euros) on 12 March. He had been jailed on 28 January 2001 and tried (conducting his own defence) between 4 and 6 March 2002. By the end of the year, the verdict had not been announced.

Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, editor of Hoviat-é-Khish and Peyam-é-Daneshjou and a student leader, was freed on 27 March. He had been arrested on 19 January after appearing before the revolutionary court and had been picked up several times in the

previous three years.

Taghi Rahmani, of the weekly Omid-é-Zangan, was freed on 16 April after more than a year in prison. He had been arrested on 11 March 2001 during a raid on the home of Mohammad Bastehnaghar - a progressive opposition leader and journalist with Asr-é-Azadegan - where about 30 people were meeting.

Fazlollah Salavati, editor of the Ispahan weekly Navid-é-Esfahan, was freed on bail on 17 April. He had been arrested on 7 April 2001 with about 40 other people close to the moderate Islamist party, the Movement for the Liberation of Iran, which had been banned a month earlier, and accused of "collaborating with counter-revolutionary groups."

Ahmad Gabel, of Hayat-é-No, was freed on 6 May. He had been arrested on 31 December 2001 by order of the religious court. He wrote comment articles in many reformist publications and regularly gave interviews to foreign radio stations. He was very critical of the hardliners, especially of Ali Khamenei, Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic.

Reza Tehrani, editor of the magazine Kian, was freed on bail on 5 July. He had been arrested on 7 April 2001 with some 40 other people close to the moderate Islamist party, the Movement for the Liberation of Iran, which had been banned in March, and accused of "collaborating with counter-revolutionary groups."

Abdollah Noori, managing editor of the daily Khordad, was amnestied on 4 November. He had been arrested on 27 November 1999 and sentenced by the religious court to five years in prison and fined 15 million rials (about 2,250 euros) for 15 offences, including "anti-religious propaganda," "insulting Ayatollah Khomeini," "undermining public opinion" and "having links with the United States." The paper was ordered closed.

Hamid Jafari-Nasrabadi (editor) and Mahmud Mojdayi (reporter) of the student magazine Kavir, were freed in early December. They had been jailed in Teheran on 9 May 2001 after being questioned for several hours by a judge of the press court about an article considered "blasphemous" and written in "an indecent style." The paper had been suspended.

Siamak Pourzand, who was often heard on US-based opposition radio stations, was freed in early December. He was also head of the Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran cultural centre in Teheran where he invited artists, intellectuals and writers. He had been arrested on 24 November 2001. Pourzand, who wrote articles very critical of the Islamist regime, was sentenced to 11 years in prison in early May 2002 for "undermining state security" and "having links with monarchists and counter-revolutionaries." The court said it had taken into account his confession of guilt. He had admitted all the charges and said he did not have to defend himself. His family said they were worried that psychological pressure while in prison had forced him to confess. The daily paper Rissalat reported on 18 June that the Teheran appeals court had upheld his sentence.

Four journalists physically attacked

Three journalists were beaten by Islamic extremists 22 November 2002 while reporting on a rally of 5,000 people marking the killing of a group of intellectuals and regime opponents at the end of 1998. Several hundred extremists punched and hit people with sticks without police intervening.

Latif Safari, managing editor of the banned newspaper Neshat, was injured on 10 June during a fight provoked by Islamic extremists who attacked a meeting of Islamic reformers in a mosque in the western town of Kermanshah. Safari had been due to speak.

Pressure and obstruction

Legal officials suspended the film weekly Cinema Jahan on 24 January 2002 after a complaint from Teheran province legal authorities. Judge Said Mortazavi, head of Court 1410, known as the press court, accused the weekly's editor of "publishing lies that stir up the public and create tension and insecurity in the media," and "violate decorum," as well as "misusing the image of women."

Another film publication, the monthly Gozaresh-é-Film, was suspended on 27 January for printing "untrue articles" and "obscene photos." A few months earlier, the head of the Teheran judiciary, Abassali Alizadeh, publicly accused its publisher, Karim Zargar, of being a "counter-revolutionary." A week before the suspension, its editor, Nushabeh Amiri, received phone threats

from Adareh Amaken, a Teheran police department dealing with "morality" offences and close to the intelligence services. The monthly was indefinitely suspended in June. Legal officials suspended the film monthly Cinema-ta'atre on 29 January for printing articles considered untrue and photos considered obscene.

The suspension of the three film publications was lifted on 30 January after they wrote to the judiciary and deputy culture minister Mohammad Hassan Pezeshk. A group of liberal intellectuals, including several journalists and lawyers of imprisoned journalists, were summoned in mid-February by the Teheran police department Adareh Amaken. Reformist member of parliament Ali-Asghar Hadizadeh said they were "interrogated about their past and their political and religious views and were insulted." Among the journalists were Firooz Guran, publisher of the magazine Jameh-e-Salem, Nushabeh Amiri, Hoshang Asadi and Peyam Afsalinejad, of Gozaresh-e-Film, and Ali Dehbashi, publisher of the newspaper Kilk and publisher of Bokhara.

Press court Judge Said Mortazavi suspended the hardline daily Siyassat-e-Rooz for two months on 24 February. The reason was not clear. The Teheran appeals court confirmed on 6 March the closure of the reformist weekly Asr-e-Ma (which had been suspended in December 2001) and reduced the prison sentence of its publisher, Mohammad Salamati, from 26 to 17 months. He had been convicted of spreading a rumour in December 2000 about a bid to sack President Mohammad Khatami.

Said Afzar, of the reformist daily Iran, was summoned by the press court on 16 April in relation to an article considered "insulting to religion." He was freed a few hours later.

Also on 16 April, the court in the northwestern city of Tabriz banned the regional weekly Chams-e-Tabriz and sentenced its publisher Ali-Hamed Iman to seven months in prison and 74 lashes for "insulting religion." He remained free however. He was accused of printing "false news," "trying to stir up inter-ethnic discord" and "insulting religion, the leaders of the regime and the Prophet."

Ahmad Zeid-Abadi, of the reformist daily Hamshahri and the monthly Iran-e-Farda, was sentenced by the press court on 17 April to 23 months in prison and banned from social and public activity for five years for "propaganda against the Islamic regime and its institutions." It accused him of making "provocative statements that threaten national security." He had gone against official government policy and defended President Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority and condemned Palestinian suicide bombers. He appealed against the verdict and remained free. The film magazine Honar-e-Haftom was suspended by a committee of the Islamic guidance ministry on 22 April for publishing articles and photos that did not meet with approval.

Mostafa Kavakebian, managing editor of the reformist daily Mardomashari, was summoned by legal officials on 27 April.

Jalal Jalali, of the weekly Sirvan, in the Kurdistan town of Sanandaj, was summoned by the revolutionary court on 28 April. Several mullahs in the holy city of Qom called on 29 April for the punishment of Abdollah Nasser Taheri, managing editor of the newspaper Iran, the organ of President Khatami's government. They urged that the "verdict of God" be applied, which could be interpreted as the death penalty.

The court in Qom sentenced Hojat Heydari, of the weekly Payam-e-Qom, to four months in prison and a six-month ban on working as a journalist on 1 May for allegedly insulting the ideals of the Islamic revolution and putting out "false news." The sentence was suspended for two years on condition that he was not convicted again of such offences during the period. The court said the offending articles, about corruption in Qom, intended to promote "immorality and corruption" in a city whose inhabitants were "fervent believers well-known for their devotion to religious values." Heydari appealed against the verdict.

The independent daily Bonyan was suspended "until further notice" on 4 May for "many repeated offences" and for using the title and logo of a weekly of the same name. Many banned journalists, including Ahmad Zeid-Abadi, had written for the paper, which was popular among university students and a place of discussion for reformers because of its criticism of the regime's hardliners.

Also on 4 May, the daily paper Iran was suspended for "insulting the sacred values of Islam" and "putting out false news" in an article about a book by Tuka Maleki about Iranian women musicians, which said the Prophet Mohammed used to enjoy listening to music sung and played by women. The article outraged the clergy. Its author, Banafsheh Samgis, had appeared before a court on 1 May. The day after the suspension, in response to much

criticism, the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmud Sharudi, cancelled it. But the paper was still facing prosecution in connection with nearly 100 formal complaints.

Mohsen Mirdamadi, managing editor of the reformist daily Nowrooz, was sentenced by the press court in Teheran on 8 May to six months in prison, banned for four years from publishing anything or "holding a management position in the press" and fined two billion rials (about 300,000 euros). Mirdamadi, who is also chairman of parliament's national security committee, was convicted on the basis of 200 formal complaints that included "insulting senior figures," "publishing lies" and "undermining national security." He appealed against the verdict and remained free. Nowrooz, organ of the country's main reformist party, was also suspended for six months but appeared normally the next day. The sentences were confirmed on 24 July and the paper was then closed.

Issa Sahakhis, publisher of the monthly Aftab, was summoned by the press court on 23 May.

On 25 May, legal officials banned publication of articles about relations between Iran and the United States after Nowrooz said informal contacts had been made between top Iranian and US officials in Nicosia or Ankara in previous months. The question of relations with the US had split the Iranian regime, against a backdrop of the US fight against terrorism in the region, but the authorities decreed that simply mentioning the subject was an "offence" and "against national interests." Some reformers were indignant about the illegality of the ban. Mirdamadi said any talks going on between Iran and the US should be held "in the open" and not secretly.

Davud Allah-Verdinik, publisher of the daily paper Ruzdara, in the southeastern region of Zahedan, was sentenced on appeal on 6 June to three months in prison for libel and the suspension of the paper was confirmed. He remained free. Nushabeh Amiri and Hoshang Asadi, of Gozaresh-e-Film, were interrogated for more than eight hours on 26 June, mainly about imprisoned journalist Siamak Pourzand. The publishers of Hemat, the local council's magazine in the northwestern town of Mashhad, appeared before the local court on 6 July accused of publishing "untrue articles" and a photo of Reza Shah, father of the last Shah.

The press court suspended the daily Azad on 11 July as it was about to print a report about the resignation of Ayatollah Jalaleddin Taheri, prayer-leader of Isfahan. The move came a day after the country's Supreme National Security Council had forbidden the media to publish anything either favourable or hostile to the ayatollah, hours after publication in the reformist press of an open letter from him which caused uproar amongst conservatives.

In the letter, he announced his resignation in protest against what he called the "chaotic situation" in Iran, marked by "disappointment, unemployment, inflation, daily price rises, a terrible gap between rich and poor, a sick economy, corrupt bureaucracy, bribery, embezzlement, growing drug use, official incompetence and weak political structures."

Deputy culture minister Shahan Shahidi-Moadab called on other publications to obey the censorship order. However, several conservative papers that commented on Taheri's resignation were not suspended. The 12 July issue of Nowruz, which had intended to comment on the letter, published censored articles. Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, spokesman for Iran's Press Freedom Association, said the announcements of the Supreme National Security Council's secretariat were "illegal."

In mid-July, Alireza Farahmand, of Neshat and Toos, Iraj Jamshidi, editor of Eghtesad-e-Asia, Esmail Jamshidi, publisher of the magazine Gardon, Nushabeh Amiri and Hoshang Asadi, of Gozaresh-e-Film, were interrogated by the Adareh Amaken police section about their supposed ties with what the regime called "the subversive cultural front" that imprisoned journalist Siamak Pourzand was accused of belonging to.

Mah-Jabin Abutorabi, publisher of the weekly Aref, decided on 4 August to close after receiving warnings from officials not to write any more about the suspension of Nowrooz. "I closed down to avoid going to prison," she said, adding that she feared prosecution.

Legal officials issued an arrest warrant on 5 August for pro-reform journalist Massood Behnood, a contributor to Adineh, Neshat and Asr-e-Azadegan, who had been imprisoned between August and December 2000 for "undermining national security," "helping foreign media" and "insulting the supreme Guide," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. On 10 September 2001, the appeals court upheld his sentence of 19 months in prison. Behnood was in exile abroad.

The Teheran revolutionary court filed a complaint on 7 August against the official news agency IRNA for "illegally" publishing a statement by the opposition Movement for the Liberation of Iran which it said should never have been printed because the sentences passed on the party and its members were not definitive. The court had banned the party at the end of July and sentenced 33 of its members to prison terms. On 3 August, the party called the convictions "unexpected and extraordinary."

The press court suspended the reformist daily Ayineh-é-Jonub on 8 August, a week after it had first appeared. Its publisher, Mohammad Dadfar, had just been sentenced to three months in prison for making "propaganda against the regime." Also on 8 August, legal officials ordered the suspension of the reformist daily Rooz-é-No because it had a similar name to Nowrooz, which had been closed the previous month. However the paper had obtained permission to publish and was about to do so the following week. Press court president Judge Said Mortazavi said publication could not be allowed until the six-month suspension of Nowrooz had ended.

Legal officials shut down the reformist daily Bamdad-é-No (which had been suspended in April 2000) indefinitely on 15 August.

The weekly Hadis-é-Gazvin was suspended on 21 August after a complaint filed by the prosecutor in the northern province of Gazvin. Publisher Naghi Afshari had been arrested and jailed in January 2001 for "criticising the judiciary" and publishing an "insulting" cartoon about it.

The reformist daily Gozarech-é-Rooz (suspended in April 2000) was closed indefinitely on 26 August and publisher Mohammed Mahdavi was sentenced to 25 months in prison, though he remained free.

The provincial weekly Nameh Gazvin was suspended by the Gazvin court on 28 August for publishing "insults and false statements." Leila Farhatpour, head of the literary and arts section of the publications Toos and Asr-é-Azadegan, was summoned on 2 and 5 September by the Adareh Amaken police department.

The reformist daily Golestan-é-Iran was suspended on 15 September for publishing articles that were "false and opposed to the Islamic regime" and the reformist weekly Vagat was suspended for publishing "depraved" pictures and "morally offensive" articles. Absali Alizadeh, the head of the judiciary in Teheran, had filed a complaint against Vagat.

Fatemeh Govaraj, of Omid-é-Zangan and Peyam Ajar, was summoned on 29 September by section 26 of the revolutionary court for "undermining national security."

Abdollah Nasser, head of the official news agency IRNA, was summoned by legal officials on 30 September after the agency published the results of a public opinion poll showing strong support for a resumption of talks between Iran and the US. The poll outraged regime hardliners.

On 8 October, CNN journalist Christiane Amanpour was refused a visa to enter the country while accompanying British foreign secretary Jack Straw on a tour of the region. On her last visit to Iran in February 2000, she had done a report about Iranian youth which had displeased the regime, which sometimes refuses visas to foreign journalists on such grounds. CNN is received in Iran by satellite dishes. Issa Khandan, editor of the social affairs pages on the daily papers Khordad and Fath, was summoned by the revolutionary court on 10 October for questioning about "subversive activities."

Fatemeh Kamali, publisher of the weekly Jamee-é-No and wife of journalist Emadoldin Baghi (imprisoned since May 2000), was interrogated on 21 October by the press court, along with Ezatollah Sahabi, publisher of the newspaper Iran-é-Farda.

Also on 21 October, Reza Alijani, editor of the monthly Iran-é-Farda and winner of the 2001 Reporters Without Borders - Fondation de France Prize, was summoned by the Teheran revolutionary court, the first time he had been questioned since being released from prison on bail on 16 December 2001. He had been arrested by security agents on 24 February 2001. His trial for "collaborating with counter-revolutionaries from abroad" ended on 2 November 2002, but by the end of the year, the verdict had not been announced.

The twice-weekly paper Velayat-é-Gazvin was suspended on 27 October. Narghues Mohamadi, of Peyam Ajar, was summoned by the Teheran revolutionary court on 4 November accused of

"disturbing public order." The minister of culture and Islamic guidance banned the media on 6 November from publishing any advertisements for American products.

Mohammad Hossein Khoshvaght, head of the press and foreign journalists department at the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance, said on 11 November that US journalists would henceforth be fingerprinted when they entered the country, in reprisal for "American ill-treatment of Iranian citizens."

Legal officials in Gazvin suspended the weekly Nameh Gazvin for three months on 21 November "for inciting young people to immorality and indecency." It was also found guilty of "undermining revolutionary spirit" and fined three million rials (about 450 euros).

Amin Bozorgian, editor of Golestan-é-Iran, was kidnapped by strangers on 26 November. He was freed on 1 December.

The weekly Hadis-é-Gazvin was banned for five months at the end of November (though it had not appeared for a year) and fined 7 million rials (about 1,050 euros).

Legal officials confirmed on 24 December the suspension of the reformist daily Aftab-é-Emrooz (suspended in April 2000). The reformist weekly Shams-é-Tabriz, in the northwestern city of Tabriz, was shut down indefinitely and its publisher, Ali-Hamed Iman, given on appeal a suspended two-year prison sentence and ordered to receive 74 lashes. He remained free.



Print this article

WORK

**Become a MEMBER
SIGN the petitions
BUY the album**

Reporters Without Borders defends imprisoned journalists and press freedom throughout the world, as well as the right to inform the public and to be informed, in accordance with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Reporters Without Borders has nine national sections (in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom), representatives in Abidjan, Bangkok, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Montreal, Moscow, Nairobi, New York, Tokyo and Washington and more than a hundred correspondents worldwide.



Cont@ct

Reporters without borders