



**British Institute of  
International and  
Comparative Law**

# **Iran, the Media and Human Rights**

## **A Media-Monitoring Study**

**By Victor Kattan \***



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## 1. Introduction

The aim of the present study is to monitor how the local media in Iran and the international media report human rights stories. The objective is to identify and analyse any disparities in reporting such stories in order to gain an overall picture of the way in which human rights violations are reported in Iran and in the other countries being monitored. In addition, those human rights stories emanating from Iran that were not reported by the international media will also be highlighted.

A number of national rapporteurs (from Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Iran, Italy, Poland, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the USA) monitored the newspapers outlined below from January to April 2007 and wrote monthly reports, which they then analysed over a period of approximately three months (for the summaries of these reports, see Appendix 1, page 54). The participants in the present study include:

Austria—**Lena Kayhan-Rad**  
Canada—**Salman Haq**  
France—**Celia Pascaud**  
Germany—**Anna Milena Jurca**  
Iran—**Kourosh Taheri**  
Italy—**Pejman Abdolmohammadi**  
Poland—**Anna Tomaszewska**  
Russia—**Victoria Rogova**  
United Kingdom—**Victor Kattan**  
USA—**Alasdair Henderson**

The following newspapers were monitored on a daily basis for human rights stories on Iran from 27 January to 27 April 2007 (excluding weekends and public holidays):

Austria: *Die Presse*, *Der Standard*, *Die Neue Krone* and *Österreich*.  
Canada: *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Toronto Star* and *La Presse*.  
France: *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *20 Minutes* and *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France*.  
Germany: *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*.  
Iran: *Jomhuri Eslami*, *Resalaat*, *Etemad*, *Aftab e Yazd*, *IRNA* and websites.  
Italy: *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Giornale*.  
Poland: *Super Express*, *Fakt*, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Dziennik Polska Europa Swiat*.  
Russia: *Izvestiya*, *Kommersant*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* and *Moscow Times*.  
United Kingdom: *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Guardian*, *Sun* and *The Times*.  
USA: *LA Times*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal*.

These newspapers were chosen on the basis of their circulation figures and their accessibility (see Appendix 2, page 58). Most of the papers were monitored online or via LexisNexis®. The Australian and Spanish press will be monitored in the next report (between July and September). In addition to the newspapers mentioned above, the following news outlets were monitored on a daily basis to ascertain which stories were not being picked up by the printed press (this list is, however, not exhaustive):

[Agence France-Presse](#)  
[Amnesty International](#)  
[Associated Press](#)  
[BBC News Online](#) and [BBC Monitoring World Service](#)  
[Human Rights Watch](#)  
[Iran Focus](#)

[Iran Press Service](#)

[Islamic Republic News Agency](#) (IRNA)

[Iran Students News Agency](#) (ISNA)

[Reporters Without Borders](#) (also known as *Reporters Sans Frontiers*)

[UN News Service](#)

**Note on terminology:** The term ‘Western press’ or ‘the West’ is used interchangeably to refer to Australia, Western Europe and North America.

**Disclaimer:** There is a qualitative difference between the way in which human rights stories are reported by the press in Iran compared to the Western media and it may indeed be the case that such a comparison is not fair. The results of the findings of this media-monitoring study (see Tables 1 & 2, pages 35-37) should not be interpreted as implying that Iran is a world leader in reporting on human rights in that country. For the differences in the way human rights stories are reported in Iran see the Iran country report in the Appendix (pages 62–63).

## 2. Summary of Findings

- Human rights stories in Iran are not considered particularly newsworthy by the Western press. During the monitoring period Iran's relations with the West, the nuclear question, the war in Iraq and Israeli–Iranian relations were deemed more newsworthy.
- Usually, there needs to be some *link* between a human rights violation in Iran and a Western country for a story to be deemed newsworthy. For example, if the violation complained of affects either a national of a Western country or a person with dual nationality (ie Iranian and a Western nationality) or if the human rights violation is so serious as to affect diplomatic relations between Iran and the West then there is a higher chance that it will be reported by newspapers in the West.
- A newspaper is more likely to report on the human rights situation in Iran if it has a reporter based there (as opposed to using the newswires or freelance journalists).
- News regarding the women's rights movement in Iran was deemed the most newsworthy during the monitoring period (27 January–27 April 2007), closely followed by the freedom of expression.
- If a human rights violation coincides with a particular event or date which is linked to a human rights violation there is a higher chance of it being reported by a Western newspaper. For example, the demonstrations that took place on International Women's Day were widely reported by the Western media whereas the arrests of teachers and students were almost completely ignored.
- Although certain newspapers in Iran do report stories pertaining to human rights, they are not reported as 'human rights stories', but rather as facts, eg 'x has been executed for killing his wife', or 'y is being prosecuted on charges of libel' etc.
- Of the Western countries whose newspapers were monitored, Canada published the most human rights stories from Iran, followed by France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany and the USA.
- Newspapers from former communist countries (in this case Poland and the Russian Federation) reported very few stories on the human rights situation in Iran.
- Most of the human rights violations reported by the Iranian press concerned women's rights, the right to education and the freedom of expression. Most of the human rights violations reported by the Western press concerned women's rights, the right to liberty and security and the freedom of movement.
- Of the Western newspapers being monitored, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) published the most stories on human rights violations in Iran followed by the **Globe and Mail** (Canada), the **Guardian** (UK), **Der Standard** (Austria), **Le Figaro** (France) and the **National Post** (Canada), **La Presse** (Canada), **Die Presse** (Austria), **Le Monde** (France), **Libération** (France), **20 Minutes** (France), **The New York Times** (US), **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (Germany), **Il Corriere della Sera** (Italy) and the **Los Angeles Times** (US).
- The broadsheets published more stories on the human rights situation in Iran than the tabloids.
- Generally speaking, those newspapers which would be described as politically left, left of centre or liberal, were more likely to report on the human rights situation in Iran.

### 3. The Media Monitoring Study

#### 3.1 Scope of Study

The types of human rights violations in Iran reported by the media in Iran and in the West will be highlighted in this part of the report under the following topics: Right to Life/Enforced Disappearances; Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment; Right to Liberty and Security; Freedom of Movement; Right to Fair Trial; Right to Respect for Private and Family Life; Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Assembly & Association; Right to Adequate Housing; Right to Work and Rights in Work; Cultural Rights; Right to Education (and student life); Women's Rights; Minority Rights; and Children's Rights.

In addition to those human rights stories that were reported, those stories that were not reported are also considered. These include stories which were reported on newswires and websites but which were not picked up by the printed press. Hyperlinks have been provided to the original stories where possible.

There is no hard and fast rule to the categorization of the stories since many of them were relevant to more than one human rights category. In general, if the journalist of a particular story placed emphasis on a specific type of human rights violation then this story was placed under that category. For example, if a story was about a group of women's rights activists being detained at Tehran's Mehrabad airport, this would be placed under the 'Freedom of Movement' category. The reason for this is that although the women in question are human rights activists, the news story concerns their rights to travel freely to and from Iran, which is a violation of their right to free movement.

It should be emphasized that this report only focuses on the internal human rights situation in Iran or news stories that relate to the human rights situation in that country. It does not, for example, cover the question of whether or not Iran is producing enriched uranium for a nuclear weapons programme or the extent of its role in the war in neighbouring Iraq. Nor were the reports on the hostage crisis between Iran and the UK considered because this was not technically a human rights story (although this will be referred to occasionally in the following text and in the country reports).

#### 3.2. The Media in Iran

It is important to note from the outset that there is no freedom of the press—as we would understand this in the West—in Iran. This is because there are a number of laws which regulate what journalists can and cannot do when it comes to disseminating information in print, online, in the broadcast media and on the radio.

Restrictions on the media in Iran are stipulated in the [Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran](#), (see Articles 3, 9, 24, 168 and 175). As is evident from reading the Constitution, the media in Iran (broadcast, print and radio), are not only restricted from reporting on or commenting upon certain events, but they are required to propagate the virtues of Islam and Islamic culture through the 'proper use' of the mass media.

Moreover, there are media restrictions contained in the [Press Law of March 19, 1986](#). This law does not merely prohibit what journalists can write or say, but it actually requires them to undertake their profession in a particular way. Iranian journalists are not merely censored for what

they write, but they are obliged to advance the objectives of the Islamic Constitution and to campaign against 'manifestations of imperialistic culture'. This double obligation (to act in a particular way and to refrain from writing about certain things) is also reflected in the Constitution.

The Press Law also provides, in Article 12, that a 'Supervisory Board' will 'examine press violations directly'. Consequently, self-censorship in Iran is endemic as journalists constantly have to be aware that what they write might fall foul of the censors.

Media restrictions are also contained in a series of internet laws passed in 2001 and subsequently, which put the Government in exclusive charge of supervising all access service providers across the country. For a report on these internet laws, click [here](#).

This legislation provides that all internet service providers must install and use filtering systems to block access to 'forbidden, immoral and political websites and other undesirable sites'.

According to a [report](#) by the [OpenNet Initiative](#), Iran, along with China, is among a small group of States (such as Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, Syria, Tunisia and Uzbekistan) with the most sophisticated State-mandated media-filtering systems in the world. The Iranian Government considers it a crime to publish on the Internet any material in conflict with or insulting Islam, the revolution's values, the thoughts of Imam Khomeini and the Constitution, material that propagates a good image of illegal groups, that is immoral and advertises smoking, or insults State officials.

Radio and television are directly controlled by the Government. The appointment and dismissal of the head of the Radio and Television of the Islamic Republic of Iran rests with the leader, Ayatollah Khamenei.

It is beyond the scope of this study to monitor what is being reported on human rights violations in Iran on the radio and television. Therefore this report will only examine news stories reported by the press as we do not have the facilities, manpower or finances to undertake such a study.

### 3.3 Important Developments

During the first monitoring period (27 January–27 April 2007) the US State Department published their country report on human rights practices in Iran for the year 2006. The report can be accessed [here](#).

On 27 March, **Agence France-Presse** reported that the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva decided to drop its examination of human rights violations in Iran. The move followed a recommendation by most of the five States overseeing the special procedure against Iran and Uzbekistan, which allowed the two countries to be examined confidentially behind closed doors. Council president Luis Alfonso de Alba said the 47-member Council had decided 'not to continue the examination of the situation' in the two countries. Diplomats said the recommendation to drop the probe was headed by Azerbaijan, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, while Argentina and France wanted to pursue it.

On 28 March, a report by the **Associated Press** said that the US State Department criticized the UN Human Rights Council for dropping its special scrutiny of human rights practices in Iran and Uzbekistan. The action involving Iran 'is completely out of step' with a recent UN General Assembly vote condemning the rights situation in Iran, the department's deputy spokesman, Tom Casey, said.

This criticism was reiterated in a press release by [Human Rights Watch](#).

It is also important to be aware of a campaign dubbed 'One Million Signatures', petitioning for an end to the discriminatory laws against Iranian women such as an end to men's uncontested rights to divorce, polygamy and child custody. The campaign is mentioned in the numerous stories on Iran mentioned throughout this report.

For more information on the campaign, [click here](#).



## 4. The Media, Human Rights and Iran

### 4.1 Right to Life/ Enforced Disappearances

On 24 January, [BBC News Online](#), **Agence France-Presse** and **Amnesty International** reported that 'Iran has publicly hanged four men convicted of taking part in deadly bombings in the south-western city of Ahwaz last year'. The following day this was reported by **Le Figaro** (France) and **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran).

On 28 January, **Agence France-Presse** reported that an 'Iranian man convicted of murdering two people has been publicly hanged in Natanz in the centre of the country'. Baqer Sajadi, 36, was executed for shooting dead two people near the town of Natanz with the help of his wife, who was only identified as Anahita.

In a press release which appeared on the **EU website** on 2 February, the German presidency condemned the hanging of four men in Iran for deadly bombings in the oil-rich Khuzestan province last year, which the Islamic republic blamed on Britain.

On 5 February, **Khbar Jonob** (Iran) reported that a young woman killed her mother after she refused to permit her to marry her lover in a secret marriage. She was sentenced to death by a *Qisas* decree of Branch 71 of the Tehran Provincial Court.

On 8 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) reported that the human rights organization WADI (a German–Iraqi NGO) demanded a reversal from the Iranian authorities of the conviction of two Kurdish women who were sentenced to death by an Iranian court. They exhorted the European Union to protest against this judgment. WADI said it condemned the Iranian legal system for its misogyny. According to the Kurdish human rights organization RMMK, a Kurdish woman who was sentenced to death had acted in self-defence when a man tried to rape her.

On 14 February, **Amnesty International** said that it deplored the execution of four Iranian Arabs and expressed its concern that other prisoners were at risk of execution after unfair trials. To date in 2007, (that is, in a 45-day period) Amnesty International said it had recorded no less than 28 executions in Iran, including the four on 14 February. On the same day, **Agence France-Presse** reported that Iran's Supreme Court confirmed the death sentence of a young woman convicted of murdering a relative during a burglary she and a friend allegedly committed.

On 15 February, [Iran Focus](#) reported that three men were executed in a prison in the restive city of Ahwaz in south-western Iran. The unnamed men were accused of involvement in deadly bombings in the oil-rich Khuzestan Province more than a year ago.

On 16 February, [Iran Focus](#) reported that four men were hanged in Evin, the Islamic Republic's 'most notorious' prison. The four men were identified as 24-year-old Najmoddin, Mohammad, 27-year-old Behrouz, and Reza.

An article appeared in the [National Post](#) (Canada) on 17 February which explored America's complex relationship with the death penalty; it briefly noted that only China, Iran and Saudi Arabia conducted more executions than the US in 2005, according to **Amnesty International**.

On 18 February, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that the judges of Branch 74 of the Tehran Criminal Court had charged a woman (Zahra) with murder for allegedly killing her husband with a knife. A

decree of retaliation (*qisas*) by death was issued. The same newspaper also reported that one of five women allegedly charged with killing one of their inmates in prison ‘suspiciously’ died in a female prison.

On 19 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) printed a report which said that Nasrollah Schanbehshahi claimed responsibility for the bomb attack in Zahedan. He was consequently hanged in public at the same place where 11 members of the revolutionary guards had been killed by a car bomb. During the execution, people shouted ‘death to Israel’, ‘death to America’ and ‘death to rebels’.

On 20 February, the **Daily Mail** (UK) published an article entitled ‘Swift and Merciless: Iran’s form of “Justice”’, on public executions in Iran (a different version of the article appears on their website). On the same day, **The New York Times** (US) reported in its World Briefing that: ‘Iran hanged a man convicted of involvement in the bombing of a bus carrying members of the Revolutionary Guards on Wednesday, the **ISNA** news agency reported’. This was also disseminated on the same day by the **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (Germany) and **Dziennik** (Poland). It was reported on the following day by **Le Monde** (France), which reported that the official news agency **IRNA** did not provide any details concerning the circumstances of the trial.

On 25 February, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that five judges were going to reconsider the case of Del Ara, a 19-year-old girl who was originally sentenced to death for murder. She is known in Iran as the ‘painter girl’. The same paper also reported that Branch 71 of Tehran Criminal Court approved the hanging of a young man, Ali, 27, for murder of his fiancé Maryam.

On 27 February, **Jomhuri Islami** (Iran) reported that a man in his twenties was hanged in public in the holy Iranian city of Qom. He was identified as 26-year-old Mohammad Sadeghi, accused of kidnapping and rape.

On 5 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that the judges of Branch 71 of the Tehran Provincial Criminal Court affirmed the death penalty by a retaliation decree (*qisas*) for a young man called Arash who allegedly killed a police officer during a ‘stop and search’ operation.

On 7 March, the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that the authorities hanged five men in a prison in the Iranian capital. The men were hanged at dawn inside Tehran’s Evin prison. They were accused of murder.

On 13 March, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that ‘Reza Alinejad is at risk of imminent execution after being convicted of murder, despite his claims that he acted in self-defence. He was 17 years old at the time of the offence. Iran is a state party to international treaties which prohibit the execution of child offenders—those under the age of 18 at the time of their alleged offence’.

On 14 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that a member of a ‘terrorist group’ was hanged in Zahedan. Ahmad Sarir, nicknamed Esmail, was charged with activities undermining national security by the Zahedan Revolutionary Court. This was reported on the following day by **Kayhan** (Iran). It said Ahmad Sariz had been involved in a number of terrorist operations, such as attacking a police station and killing its commander as well kidnapping Turkish and Iranian citizens. On the same day the same paper also reported that Tehran’s chief prosecutor, Saeed Mortazavi, had demanded death for six members of a gang known by its leader as ‘Ali the Microbe’. The 30-member gang who were between 14 and 21 years of age seduced and forced their victims, mostly school girls, into sexual relationships. They taped their actions on video and later distributed them in the city. Mortazavi said all the accused are the children of wealthy businessmen.

On 19 March, **Amnesty International** stated that six Iranian Arab men, most of them students at the University of Damascus, were arrested in the Syrian capital on 5 March. They said they believed that two of them, Ali Bouazar, who faces the death sentence in Iran, and Kamal

Nawaseri, may have been forcibly returned to Iran on the day of their arrest. The remaining four men are reportedly held incommunicado, where they are at risk of torture and of being forcibly extradited to Iran. If this happens, they would face persecution and, in at least one case, the death penalty.

On 26 March, the ***Süddeutsche Zeitung*** (Germany) advertised a documentary shown on TV (channel WDR) about the execution of a 16-year-old girl whose case was reconstructed and analysed by Monica Garnsey. Her conclusion was that her birth certificate was manipulated to obviate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On 29 March, **Agence France-Presse** reported that a UN human rights expert blasted Iran on Thursday over the 'unacceptable' executions of juvenile offenders and called on Tehran to commute all such death sentences. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial and Summary Executions, Philip Alston, stated that four juvenile offenders had been executed in the past two years, while death sentences against five others were on hold.

On 3 April, [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) said that two policemen were executed for corruption in Khorasan Razavi province.

On 4 April, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that Qasem Salamat and Majed Alboghbaish were reportedly executed on 14 February in a prison in Khuzestan province. The two men (and eight others) were convicted of being in *mohareb* (at enmity with God) on account of their alleged involvement in bomb attacks in 2005 in Ahvaz city, Khuzestan province.

On 13 April, [Iran Focus](http://iranfocus.org) reported that the Iranian Government hanged a man in public in the south-eastern Iranian city of Kerman. The man was identified as Ramezan Ebrahimi. He was accused of taking part in armed clashes with State security forces.

On 17 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Mohamad Ibrahim Khani—the head of the Appeal and Criminal Courts—said that two of the eight members of 'Ali Microbe' gang were sentenced to death at Branch 7 of the Tehran Criminal Court, where they were charged with the kidnapping and raping of a girl.

On 22 April, **Kayhan** (Iran) reported that the authorities hanged a man in the volatile province of Sistan-va-Baluchistan, in south-eastern Iran. Ghader Radsar was hanged in a prison in the capital of Zahedan, which is a province in Iran. He had been charged with illegal drug possession. On the same day, the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that Einollah G, Abdolrahman N, and Abol-Hassan Sh—aged 55, 33, and 38 respectively—were all hanged in the port city of Bandar Abbas. They were accused of drug trafficking.

On 23 April, the **Iranian State News Agency** said that the authorities hanged a man in a prison in the town of Ahar, in north-western Iran. The man, only identified as Firouz A, was hanged in the early hours of the day. He was accused of murdering a woman in 2002.

#### **4.2 Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment**

On 28 January, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that the journalist and human rights defender Sherko Jihani had been transferred to Mahabad Central Prison in north-west Iran. Amnesty said that he was in poor health and that they believed he had been tortured by being beaten severely. They said that he might also have been detained for his peaceful activities in defence of the rights of Iran's Kurdish minority, in which case Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience.

On 20 February, the **National Post** (Canada) reported that an Iranian exile's refugee claim was accepted by the Canadian Government after he spent two and a half years living in the sanctuary of a Vancouver church. Amir Kazemian came to Canada on a visitor's visa in 1997. He said he would be tortured and killed if he returned to Iran because his father was an outspoken political activist who had been jailed for seven years.

On 26 February, the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that the authorities had amputated a man's fingers in public for stealing money. The 46-year-old man, identified only as 'F Hosseini', had four of the fingers on his right hand amputated in public in the western city of Kermanshah, according to Daniel Hoderji, an official in the judiciary. On the same day **Der Standard** (Austria) reported that according to the 'Mainz Report' (reported by SWR, South-Western German Radio) German companies export torture instruments to 87 countries and that the customs office in Cologne registered four cases of illegal shipments to Iran and Bangladesh. The Austrian UN Special Representative for Human Rights, Manfred Nowak, explained that electric-shock instruments are common torture instruments because they do not leave marks on the bodies of the victims. He exhorted the German Government to place a ban on exports of electric-shock instruments.

On 10 April, **Amnesty International** issued a press release in which it said that businessperson Shahram Jazayeri-Arab, who had been serving a 27-year prison sentence, escaped on 20 February and fled to Oman. Apparently, he was returned and handed over to the Iranian authorities on 18 March and is now reportedly in solitary confinement at Evin prison where he is reportedly being tortured and ill-treated.

On 12 April, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) reported that author Marina Nemat spoke about her imprisonment and torture in revolutionary Iran at a University of Toronto bookstore reading. Her novel is called *Prisoner of Tehran*. Ten days later on 22 April, the **Toronto Star** reported that her autobiography is being translated into 13 languages and will be sold in 16 countries. Marina Nemat was a teenage political prisoner in Tehran's Evin prison. During her incarceration, she was tortured, sentenced to death, forced to convert to Islam and marry a guard. As a teenager, Nemat was a devout Catholic who was imprisoned at the age of 16. Nemat does not believe that Iranians are ready for democracy, but 'when they are ready, we're going to know'.

#### 4.3 Right to Liberty and Security

On 25 January, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Mr Saif Zadeh, the defence lawyer of the deceased [Zahra Kazemi](#)<sup>1</sup> said that soon the decision of the case will be announced by the judges of Branch 15 of the Iranian Supreme Court. In an interview he acknowledged that the case has been under investigation by the Court for three months.

In a commentary on 27 January in the **National Post** (Canada) the authors called on Canada to take Iran's threat seriously and impose harsh sanctions against it. In terms of human rights, the authors accused Iran of gross violations of civil and political rights, especially of those of women and students, curtailing press freedoms, and blamed the Iranian Government for the murder of Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi. They said Canada should support Iranians who want change, including students, journalists, women and writers who are regularly arrested, tortured, raped and

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<sup>1</sup> Ms Kazemi—who had joint Canadian/Iranian nationality—was arrested on 23 June 2003 when she took photos of Evin prison for a story about some people being detained there for taking part in a demonstration. She was subsequently arrested and killed in mysterious circumstances during her interrogation. An Iranian physician who examined her body, and sought asylum in Canada in 2004, said that he saw evidence of rape and torture, including a skull fracture, broken nose, crushed toe, broken fingers, and severe abdominal bruising. The Canadian Government considers her death a murder.

executed. They said that the victims—including political prisoners—are held in prison under barbaric conditions.

According to a report of 28 January, which appeared on a website belonging to the [Iran Press Service](#), Iran's top dissident cleric, Grand Ayatollah Hosseynali Montazeri, urged Islamic republic officials to release political prisoners and open the political arena to opponents of the regime. This was reported on the following day by *Libération* (France).

On 1 February, **Canada PR Newswire** and the [Toronto Star](#) (Canada) reported that after spending two years in prison, Iranian teen Nazanin Fatehi was released and spared from her original death sentence following an international campaign spearheaded by former Miss World Canada Nazanin Afshin-Jam. Nazanin Fatehi had been sentenced to death after she stabbed, in self-defence, one of three men who attempted to rape her and her 15-year-old niece in a park in Tehran in March 2005.

On 6 February 2007, **Amnesty International** said that Iranian Azerbaijani lawyer and human rights defender Saleh Kamrani was released on 18 September 2006. He had been held at Section 209 of Evin prison since 14 June 2006 and was subjected to psychological torture as well as denied access to his medication for a heart condition. Five days before, on 13 September 2006, he had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment, suspended for five years, under Article 500 of the Islamic Penal Code of Iran which relates to 'propaganda against the system'.

On 16 February, the [Toronto Star](#) (all the newspapers in this paragraph are Canadian) reported that a nine-year-old Canadian boy is in a Texas detention centre after US officials detained him and his family when their flight to Toronto made an unscheduled stop. This story was subsequently picked up by the *Globe and Mail* on 2 March, which reported that the family was trying to flee Iran using fake passports. The parents' first refugee claim in Canada was denied in 2005, and they were deported back to Iran, where the father was taken away from his family to a prison cell. For three months, he was detained, beaten and tortured. On the same day, *La Presse* reported that the Canadian Government had not made a decision as to what to do about the situation. On the following day the *Globe and Mail* reported that opposition parties called for the Canadian Government to pressure the US Government to release the nine-year-old Canadian boy and his Iranian parents. This story was subsequently published in the *Toronto Star* on 5 March, which reported that a Canadian lawyer filed an application with the Canadian immigration authorities for a temporary resident permit to allow the Iranian parents of the Canadian boy to enter Canada. On 6 March, the *Globe and Mail* said that the fate of the boy and his Iranian parents was now in the hands of the Federal Immigration Minister. On the same day *La Presse* reported that an American Civil Liberties Union filed a claim against US National Security for detaining the Canadian boy and his Iranian parents in inhumane conditions in a Texas detention centre (this story was repeated in the *Globe and Mail* on 7 March). On 10 March, the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* reported that a US Government report has agreed with **Amnesty International's** assessment that the Canadian boy and his parents could face persecution and torture if they are not given asylum in Canada. On 12 March, *La Presse* reported that the Canadian Government had agreed to temporarily allow the boy and his Iranian parents to enter Canada. On the following day, the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* reported the same story. The Government said that the case was unique and the decision was made in the best interests of the child, who is Canadian born. Although the family was not allowed to make a second refugee claim in Canada (their first claim was rejected in 2005), they were entitled to file for a pre-removal risk assessment to determine whether their lives were at risk in Iran. On 22 March, the *Toronto Star* reported that the boy and his Iranian parents arrived in Toronto after spending nearly six weeks in the Texas detention centre. This story was also reported by *La Presse* the following day. On 23 March, the *Toronto Star* reported that instead of waking up to the smell of garbage at 5.30 am, the boy slept until noon, watched cartoons and enjoyed a Big Mac.

On 20 February, the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that the Iranian Government announced that any individual arrested during Iran's upcoming fire festivities would languish in jail for the entire Persian New Year (*Norouz*).

On 5 March, the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that Iran's Intelligence Ministry detained several journalists outside of the capital city for allegedly receiving foreign money. The Ministry stated that the journalists, who were arrested in an unspecified province, allegedly confessed that they had received money from abroad to publish materials deemed contrary to national security interests.

Also reported on 7 March by the **Toronto Star** was the news (Canada) that Iranian-born Behzad Pilehvar was a speaker at a Toronto panel sponsored by the United Nations Association in Canada. The forum focused on children and armed conflict. Pilehvar and his anti-war parents were jailed in Iran when he was only two. He hopes to learn to use politics and the media to bring about change in conflict regions.

**Le Monde** (France) reported on 8 March that Ahmad Batebi, the son of Mohammad Bagher, was arrested during the Iranian students' struggle in July 1999, while he tried to help injured students. He was sentenced to death, then to 10 years' imprisonment. Once he obtained the right to leave jail, he started a new 'normal' life. He spoke to the foreign media and exchanged emails on the Internet. But eight months ago, he was again arrested. He had a cerebral attack in jail. His parents fear for his life. Even the doctor who brought him drugs has been arrested.

On 15 March, the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) and the **National Post** (Canada) reported that an Iranian refugee family arrived in Vancouver after spending 10 months living in a Moscow airport terminal. The mother said she and her children were hoping to reach Canada via Russia and Europe after they fled Iran two years ago. An international lobbying effort gradually built up steam, and the International Federation of Iranian Refugees said this week that the Canadian Government had accepted them as legitimate refugees. On 16 March, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) and **La Presse** (Canada) reported on the story of the Iranian family who arrived in Vancouver after spending 10 months living in a Moscow airport terminal.

On 5 April, **Die Presse** (Austria), [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) and **Ressalat** (Iran), reported that on the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of the prophet Mohammed, the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, granted clemency to prisoners or reduced their sentences. On the same day, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that the mother of Fahimeh Ismaili, one of the accused of participating in the Ahvaz bombings, who was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for not giving information about the whereabouts of her husband, wrote a letter to the head of judiciary, requesting that her daughter be pardoned.

#### **4.4 Freedom of Movement**

On 28 January, **Agence France-Presse** reported that 'Iranian officials arrested three women's rights activists as they were about to leave the country to take part in an educational workshop in India'. On the following day, this was reported by **Le Figaro** (France).

On 30 January, **Agence France-Presse** reported that three Iranian women's rights activists had been freed on bail. The women had been arrested at Tehran's Imam Khomeini airport as they were leaving to take part in the educational workshop referred to above. They had been involved in a campaign dubbed 'One Million Signatures', aimed at changing Iran's discriminatory laws for women.

On 31 January, **Agence France-Presse** and the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that three women's rights activists have been accused of acting against Iran's national security and face prosecution. Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi said she would represent them. On the same day **La Presse** (Canada) reported that three Iranian women were arrested at Tehran's airport, accused of participating in the campaign 'One Million Signatures', calling for the end of discriminatory laws against women.

On 4 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) reported that Hashem Aghajari was prevented from flying to the USA on the previous Sunday where he wanted to talk at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on democracy with reference to religion in Iran. In November 2002 he was sentenced to death after he had been found guilty of blasphemy. Aghajari had criticized some leaders of the Iranian Government for realizing a fundamentalist version of Islam.

On 8 February, the **Daily Mirror** (UK) reported that an asylum seeker from Iran sewed up his mouth and his eyes so that he could stay in the UK.

On the same day, **Aftab Yazd** (Iran) reported that Mr Momeni, a speaker for the Organisation for Students and Academia was prohibited from travelling from Tehran's Mehrabad airport.

[Amnesty International](#) condemned the 'rising tide of harassment of journalists and women's rights activists in Iran by security officials' on 8 February. They said that 'one recent incident occurred on 26 January 2007 when 15 female journalists were detained in order to be questioned by Ministry of Intelligence officials as they were about to fly out from Tehran to attend an educational workshop on journalism in India. Twelve of the women were freed after several hours but warned that they should not attend the training workshop or they could face unspecified consequences on their return to Iran'.

On 19 February, the [Globe and Mail](#) (Canada) had a feature on Evin prison and the women who were arrested when they tried to leave Iran to attend a seminar in India.

On 26 February 2007, the **Toronto Star** (Canada), **Le Figaro** (France), **Libération** (France) and **20 Minutes** (France) reported that a French tourist convicted of taking photos of ships in the Persian Gulf was pardoned by Iran's leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. According to the report in **Le Figaro**, the Frenchman had lost 15kg.

In a full-length article, which appeared in **Le Figaro** (France) on 27 February, the newspaper reported that the owner of a small fishing company located in the United Arab Emirates, Stéphane Lherbier, had been arrested along with his German client, while they were fishing in the Strait of Hormuz. Both Iran and the Emirates dispute sovereignty of this particular part of the Gulf. An 18-month sentence was handed down against Lherbier. Apparently, the severity of this sentence remains 'shrouded in mystery'. His German client is still in jail and no ground was given for the judgment. During the arrest their eyes were blindfolded, and their boat and motorcycles were impounded. They could not call their family during the first weeks. However, after their arrest, they were physically well treated according to Lherbier. On 28 February, the same story was reported (9 paragraphs) by **La Presse** (Canada).

On 2 March, **Libération** (France) reported that the Stéphane Lherbier was pardoned by Ayatollah Khamenei. He was freed after 15 months of detention in Iran. He called on the Iranian authorities to release his German companion Donald Klein.

On 5 March, the **LA Times** (US) reported that the Iranian Intelligence Ministry detained several journalists outside Tehran for allegedly making foreign transactions, according to a report which appeared in the official **Islamic Republic News Agency**. The news agency did not say how many journalists were held or where the arrests occurred, but referred to the journalists as

'separatists'. It also accused the United States of being behind plots to 'sow discord among various ethnic groups'.

On 13 March, the **Associated Press**, **Die Welt** (Germany), **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (Germany), **20 Minutes** (France) and **Süddeutsche Zeitung** (Germany) reported that a German tourist (Donald Klein) who was arrested with a Frenchman after their boat allegedly strayed into Iranian waters had been freed from prison in Iran's capital. Donald Klein, a 52-year-old sculptor, was arrested along with Stéphane Lherbier in November 2005 after entering Iran's territorial waters during a sailing trip off the coast of the neighbouring United Arab Emirates. This was reported by **Le Monde** (France) the following day.

On 5 April, **Le Monde** (France) and **Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France** (France) both reported that according to a French foreign ministry statement Iran was showing encouraging signs that the case of a French academic prevented from leaving Tehran after his passport was confiscated could be resolved soon. Stéphane Dudoignon, an expert on Islam and Central Asia, was briefly detained by the police who seized his passport on 30 January during a trip to the southeastern Sistan-Baluchestan province. After two months of quiet diplomatic efforts to try to persuade Tehran to allow the academic to go back to his home country, France made a public appeal to Iran to resolve quickly the case, and on Friday reported progress. This was reported by **Agence France-Presse** and **Le Figaro** (France) on the following day.

On 13 April, **Le Figaro** (France) reported that the French researcher detained in Iran for two months got his passport back and could leave the country.

On 15 April, the **Associated Press** reported that the US-funded 'Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty' said that Iranian authorities had prevented one of its journalists from leaving the country. Parnaz Azima, who is based in Prague where she works for Radio Farda—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Persian service operated jointly with the Voice of America radio broadcaster—arrived in the capital, Tehran, on 25 January to visit a sick relative, the broadcaster said in an e-mailed statement. On arrival, authorities seized her Iranian passport and have failed to return it to her, it said. It was not clear what the reason was.

On 16 April, the **Associated Press** and **Dziennik** (Poland) reported that two Swedish construction workers who had been convicted of espionage and imprisoned in Iran for taking photographs of military installations were released after being pardoned. This was reported on the following day by **Le Figaro** (France) and on 17 April by **20 Minutes** (France).

#### 4.5 Right to a Fair Trial

On 25 January, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that the defence lawyer of Dr Hesam Firozi, the GP of Mr Ahmad Batebi (a student activist arrested in 1999), said that his bail amount had increased from five to 25 million rials<sup>2</sup> for his release from prison. Dr Firozi is accused of providing assistance to hide the student activist Mr Batebi.

On 13 March, **Amnesty International** stated that: 'Prisoners of conscience Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh and Shadi Sadr remain detained in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Evin prison in Tehran. Zhila Bani Ya'qoub was released on bail on 9 March. Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh is said to suffer from arthritis and migraine, and Shadi Sadr from chronic stomach pain, possibly an ulcer. It is feared that they are not receiving adequate medical

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<sup>2</sup> An Iranian rial is 100 dinars. 10, 000 rials is 1,000 toman. 25,000,000 Iranian rial = £1,370.73 (source: Iran Currency Calculator, <<http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/asia/iran/currency.htm>>).



treatment. Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh has not been allowed any contact since her arrest, although Shadi Sadr has been allowed to telephone her husband twice’.

On 12 March, one of the lawyers representing the two women, Farideh Gheytrat, told **Agence France-Presse** the two women had received one-month temporary detention orders, saying that they both faced ‘two charges that have not been disclosed to me, in addition to the accusations of disturbing public order faced by all those detained’.

On 16 March, **Amnesty International** stated that the lawyer and human rights defender Nasser Zarafshan was released from Evin prison on 15 March. They said that he had been sentenced to five years’ imprisonment on 19 March 2002 after a secret trial before a military court. He was tried because of his role in representing the families of two political activists murdered in November 1998 during a series of killings which came to be known in Iran as the ‘serial murders’. At least 18 people, including former senior Ministry of Intelligence officials, were tried in connection with the murders in a case which attracted wide publicity and controversy in Iran.

On 21 March, **Amnesty International** said that prisoners of conscience Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh and Shadi Sadr were released from Evin Prison, Tehran, on bail of 200 million Toumans (UK £106, 750; €157, 695) on 19 March. They said that they were likely to face trial in the future, possibly on charges which may include ‘disturbing public order’ and ‘acting against state security’, but Amnesty said that currently it had no information as to whether they had yet been formally charged with any offence. They had been held in solitary confinement between 6 and 15 March.

On 22 March, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that ‘Nasser Kheyrollahi, who attempted to expose official corruption, has been charged with vaguely worded offences which could lead to his detention as a prisoner of conscience. He is now held in Reja’i Shahr prison in Karaj, near Tehran, together with prisoners convicted for violent offences, where he has reportedly been tortured and ill-treated repeatedly and has recently had several bones broken. He reportedly began a hunger strike on 17 January to draw attention to his situation and has been denied access to legal representation. He is known to have been brought before a court. The details of the proceedings are known’.

On 28 March, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that Delara Darabi’s death sentence, handed down at a retrial in June 2006, was reportedly upheld by Branch 33 of the Supreme Court on 16 January 2007. Darabi was initially sentenced to death by Branch 10 of the General Court in the northern city of Rasht. The Supreme Court later found ‘deficiencies’ in her case and sent it for retrial. However, following two trial sessions in January and June 2006, Darabi was sentenced to death for a second time. When the Supreme Court upheld this sentence, Delara Darabi’s lawyer was not immediately informed of its verdict, leading to a delay in his lodging an appeal.

On 19 April, [\*The New York Times\*](#) (US. The hyperlink is to a webpage on the International Herald Tribune’s website) reported that the Iranian Supreme Court had overturned the murder convictions of six members of a prestigious State militia who killed five people they considered ‘morally corrupt’. They said the reversal, in an infamous five-year-old case from Kerman, in central Iran, has produced anger and controversy, with lawyers calling it corrupt and newspapers giving it prominence. ‘The psychological consequences of this case in the city have been great, and a lot of people have lost their confidence in the judicial system’, Nemat Ahmadi, a lawyer associated with the case, said in a telephone interview.

On 24 April, an editorial appeared in the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) criticizing the Iranian Supreme Court for throwing out the murder convictions against six members of a pro-government vigilante group who drowned a young couple because the group thought they were ‘morally corrupt’ by having sex before marriage. The six people that are accused have been implicated in

as many as 18 killings. The Court said that Iran's penal code permitted killing the morally corrupt. The editorial says that in Iran, the law no longer represents the triumph of right over wrong.

#### 4.6 Right to Respect for Private and Family life

On 14 February, an article in the [Guardian](#) (UK) on elopement (couples escaping to get married) in Kurdistan, mentions Iran in passing because of the Kurdish population of Iran. The article is interesting because it discusses cultural issues, 'honour crimes' and the like.

The [Toronto Star](#) (Canada) had a special feature on the Iranian gay community and the gay rights movement in Iran on 16 February 2007.

On 14 April, another article appeared in the [Guardian](#) (UK) which discussed the laws against homosexuality throughout the world. In this regard, it writes of Iran that:

All types of sexual activity outside a heterosexual marriage are forbidden. Homosexual relations between consenting adults in private carry a maximum punishment of death. Articles 108 through 140 in Iran's penal code distinctly talk about homosexuality and its punishments in detail. Teenage boys as young as 15 and girls as young as nine are eligible for the death penalty. More than 4,000 people have been executed under the country's draconian laws since 1979.

On 18 April, the [National Post](#) (Canada) reported that students at a suburban Toronto high school held a 'Day of Silence'—an entire day without speaking—to bring attention to the discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students. A French teacher had brought the issue to the attention of students when he posted a picture of two boys who were executed in Iran because of their homosexuality.

#### 4.7 Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

On 25 January, [Aftab e Yazd](#) (Iran) reported that the Court of Appeal in the province of Qom, decreased the terms of imprisonment of 52 people belonging to the Dervishes of Gonabad.<sup>3</sup> The charges against the Dervishes were shortened from one year's imprisonment and 74 lashes to the payment of a fine. The alleged charges for the 52 Dervishes were breaches of the public peace and order and disobedience of the police.

On 19 February, the [Iranian State News Agency](#) reported that the Deputy Foreign Minister for legal and international affairs, Seyed Abbas Araqchi, said that 'human rights can provide the ground for material and spiritual prosperity of mankind, if it is not tainted by prejudices and interests of some political actors'. The statement was made at the third round of human rights talks between Iran and Switzerland in Tehran.

On 23 February, the [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung](#) (Germany) reported that Mina Ahadi, a women's right activist who emigrated from Iran, has founded the 'Zentralrat der Ex-Muslimen' (Central Council of former Muslims) to protect former Muslims that reject their religion and are threatened with death by the *Sharia* (Islamic law).

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<sup>3</sup> The Dervishes are members of a branch of Sufism that believes in mystical rituals.

#### 4.8 Freedom of Expression

On 25 January, the [Globe and Mail](#) (Canada) reported that the prominent Iranian dissident Akbar Ganji said that the West should stop focusing on the country's nuclear ambitions or President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's outrageous comments. Instead, the West should engage with the many moderate Muslims in Iran and put human rights at the top of the agenda. Mr Ganji was in Toronto to receive the International Press Freedom prize, awarded to him in 2000 by the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression.

On 28 January, a commentary written by Alireza Farkhi of Islamic Association of the Tarbit Modaress University appeared in *Mardom Salari* (Iran). In the article he wrote that the closed environment by which any justification restricts the freedom of expression and the freedom of student's activities will drive the student movement outside of the existing framework of the law.

On 1 February, [Die Presse](#) (Austria) claimed that in China, Vietnam, Syria, Tunisia, Libya and Iran there are at least 60 bloggers imprisoned without access to a lawyer.

On 3 February, *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran) announced that a trial will take place on Saturday against a former newspaper editor for publishing *Yas e Now*, which was banned in Iran. He is accused of 'publication of discrepancies for provocation of the public, publication against the Islamic system, defamation and libel'.

The [Guardian's G2](#) section (UK) published a feature on 5 February by Brian Logan on the state of Iranian theatre and how artists tackle taboos and censorship under the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

**Reporters without Borders** condemned the closure of the conservative daily *Siassat Rouz* (Iran) on 7 February, on the orders of the Press Monitoring Commission because of an article deemed to be an insult to Iran's Sunni minority. 'There was no justification for closing this newspaper', they said, calling for the immediate lifting of the ban. 'In Iran, censorship is regarded as a normal method for managing the press, but each time the courts convict a journalist or the authorities decide to close a newspaper for no good reason, it is the public arena that is being restricted'.

On 8 February, *Aftab Yazd* (Iran) reported that the hearing of four bloggers, Mr Rozbeh Mir-Ebrahimi, Omid Memarian, Shahram Rafizadeh and Javad Golam Tamimi will be held at Branch 1059 of the Tehran Common Court. Nemat Ahmadi, defence lawyer of Mr Javad Gholam Tamimi, told **IRNA** that the case is known as the 'Internet Sites Case'.

An editorial in the [Toronto Star](#) (Canada) on 9 February briefly mentions the case of Fatima Siadat, an Iranian-born woman who fled from Iran 16 years ago after government officials forced her to leave her teaching job and threatened her with death for talking about freedom of expression in the classroom. An Ontario court recently ruled that Siadat's teaching credentials should be recognized.

On 12 February, *Khabar Jonob* (Iran) reported that the Iranian daily newspaper, *Iran e Sapid*, which means 'White Iran', with a circulation of 2,000 copies, is being published on a daily basis to help the blind get access to information and special facilities.

On 19 February, [Reporters without Borders](#) said that regulations adopted on 27 November 2006 with the aim of facilitating control of the Internet have been openly used for the first time by the Iranian authorities to justify blocking access to the conservative online publication [www.baztab.com](#). They also confirmed that the photo-sharing site [www.flickr.com](#) is not accessible in Iran, while several internet service providers are still blocking [www.YouTube.com](#)

and access to the Farsi-language pages of the Reporters without Borders website ([www.rsf.org](http://www.rsf.org)) is being blocked with increasing frequency. On the same day a commentary was published by *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy), which reported that government censorship has increased under the presidency of Ahmadinejad. The author points out that the censorship laws are against the Constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression in respect of Islamic principles and human rights. Also, on the same day, *Aftab Yazd* (Iran) reported that Mir Tajaldini, Vice President of the Parliament's Cultural Commission, said that the way in which the Government imposed restrictions on the **Baztab** Internet site will have a negative impact on society. If there is a need for restriction or closure, they should take legal action as in the case of newspapers. On 20 February, the *Guardian* (UK) reported that 'an Iranian website, fiercely critical of the president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad', has been shut down in an apparent fresh crackdown on anti-government dissent on the Internet: 'Baztab, a fundamentalist site which previously accused Mr Ahmadinejad of betraying the Islamic revolution by attending a female dance show, has been closed for acting against the constitution and undermining national unity'. On the same day *Der Standard* (Austria) said that the Iranian Government blocks websites on a regular basis. Several Iranians have been imprisoned for blogging. Although the number of bloggers is expanding in Iran, only 10 per cent of Iranians have access to the Internet.

On 21 February 2007, *The Times* (UK) published an interesting report on a poll conducted in 10 Muslim countries (including Iran) on their attitudes to the West and democracy.

On 21 February 2007, the **Iranian Mehr News Agency** (courtesy of BBC Monitoring International Reports) reported that the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in The Hague issued a statement condemning 'the malicious and abhorrent remarks' by Geert Wilders, Dutch Member of Parliament on Islam and the sanctities of the Muslims in the Netherlands.<sup>4</sup> The statement described incitement to hatred and religious intolerance as, above all, detrimental to freedom of expression. It said: 'Such remarks constitute a blatant insult to Islamic sanctities and values. They are also contrary to fundamental principles of human values, human rights and freedom of expression'.

A commentary in *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy) of 26 February highlighted the political, cultural, social and economic situation of the youth in Iran and tried to reveal how the population, particularly the young, are far from the Government's hard-line positions and how they seek a prosperous and peaceful life rather than a new violent war.

On the same day, *Le Monde* (France) reported that it is getting increasingly dangerous in Iran to criticize the Government. The online paper **Baztab** has been filtered because of its outspoken criticisms of government policy.

The *Guardian* (UK) reported on 2 March, that Iranian students involved in an angry protest against the president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have been expelled and earmarked for compulsory military service in an apparent act of official retribution.

On 3 March, *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran) reported that the former management director of **IRNA** was cleared of publishing 'an untrue statement in order to provoke public opinion'. Faridoun VerdiNejad was cleared by the Branch 1083 Tehran Common Court. Initially Mr VardiNejad was fined three million rials following the complaint of the western Azerbaijan province information director.

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<sup>4</sup> Referring to the increased presence of Muslims in the Netherlands, Wilders is quoted as saying: 'Take a walk down the street and see where this is going. You no longer feel like you are living in your own country. There is a battle going on and we have to defend ourselves. Before you know it there will be more mosques than churches! Later, he suggested that Muslims should 'tear out half of the Koran if they wished to stay in the Netherlands' because it contained 'terrible things' and that Mohammad would 'in these days be hunted down as a terrorist'.

On 13 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that the editor of the paper, Mansour Mozafari, said that the work of the media in 2006 (1385 in the Iranian calendar) was positive. He said the media had fulfilled the demands of the people and reacted to those demands. However, he said that some publications were closed by the Observation Council on Media (which scrutinizes publications), and there was not any 'good behaviour' by the Government toward the private newspapers. He said they could not bear the slightest criticism and that on the financial aspects, the Government did not offer its advertisements to the private newspapers, which in some cases are the only source of income for papers such as **Aftab e Yazd**. However, despite these problems, their circulation has increased.

On 15 March, the **Guardian** (UK) and the **Daily Mail** (UK) reported that Iran had accused Hollywood and the US Government of 'psychological warfare' because of a new film which they think portrays Iranians in a negative light.

On the same day, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that the head of traffic police, Hashemi said that as of next year, drivers who do not observe Islamic teachings, morality, or who carry dogs, do not observe the Islamic dress code, or show off their tattoos, will be referred to the court with their driving documents attached to their file.

On 16 March, **Die Presse** (Austria) reported that there is an increasing number of people that use web blogs as a means to express their opinion, which are not released to the public media like the newspapers or on the radio. It said Iran is a good example to demonstrate that web blogs are a popular way to communicate in public in authoritarian States, especially for women.

On 21 March, **Reporters Sans Frontiers** said that the Iranian authorities had lifted a ban on the conservative website [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com), one of the most visited sites in Iran. The ban was imposed on 12 February under regulations adopted on 27 November 2006 forbidding the publication of 'false' information, 'violating the Constitution' and attacking 'personal privacy' and 'the country's unity'.

On 22 March, **Reporters Sans Frontiers** reported that Aso Salah, a Kurdish journalist with the weekly *Didgah*, was released on 18 March after paying a bail of €85,000. Intelligence agents arrested him on 8 March in Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan province, because he participated in a demonstration marking International Women's Day.

On the same day, **Le Figaro** (France) reported that Iran has denounced the way in which their ancestors, the Persians, are described in an American movie called *300*.

On 24 March, the **National Post** (Canada) reported that in a review of a new book about blogs, the author of the review notes that in Iran blogs enable people to evade the media and the personal censorship that prevails in 'the hardline Islamic nation'.

On 26 March, **Reporters Sans Frontiers** reported that the Iranian authorities released two female journalists Shadi Sadr and Mahbuheb Abbasgholizadeh on bail, but closed down their NGOs after an order from the Tehran state prosecutor.

On 27 March, [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) reported that journalist Adnan HassanPour, who the media assumes to be an activist, was arrested in Khuzistan for preparing the escape of two charged with the Ahwaz bombing.

On 28 March, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) reported that a new programme called Canadian Journalism for Internationally Trained Workers is giving foreign-schooled reporters and editors a chance to sharpen their skills to seek work in their chosen field in Canada. One of the members of the programme is Morteza Abdolian, who fled Iran in 1984. He was a poet and human rights

activist and authorized pamphlets critical of the Shah of Iran while studying abroad in the late 1970s. He spent two weeks in Tehran's Evin prison in the early 1980s during a visit to Iran.

On 2 April, the Law Section of the **Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA)** reported that the initial court hearing of Mr Mohammad Reza Khatami, coordinator of the banned newspaper, 'Mosharekat' took place. On the same day, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that changing policies of news reporting and the change of management at the **ISNA** has provoked criticism from some MPs.

On 3 April, the **Iranian State News Agency** announced that Gholam Hussein IslamiFard, the coordinator of Iran newspaper was cleared by branch 76 of the Tehran Provincial Criminal Court of publishing discrepancies and untrue statements.

On 4 April, a report appeared in [The Times](#) (UK) on blogging in the Islamic Republic. According to the report: 'The views expressed by many online diarists are in stark contrast to those of hard line students shown protesting violently outside the British Embassy and baying for the British "aggressors" to be executed for spying'.

On the same day, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Jalal Ghavami, Tonia Kaboudvand and Kaveh Hossin Panahi, members of Editorial board of Kurdish banned Weekly 'Pyam Mardom', will appear before court charged with making 'unfounded statements'.

On 5 April, the **Inter Press Service/Global Information Network** reported that the Iranian Government sentenced journalist Ali Farahbakhsh, to three years in jail and burdened him with a huge fine, partly due to a typographical error in the court documents. He was convicted of spying in a trial held behind closed doors on 26 March. Farahbakhsh was first imprisoned five months ago on his return to Iran after participating in a conference on the news media organized by civil society groups in Bangkok, Thailand. His lawyer appealed the sentence. Farahbakhsh was arrested on 26 November and held in solitary confinement for 40 days, until the Association of Iranian Journalists issued a statement publicly revealing the details of his case.

On 9 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported on the trial of Mohammad Reza Khatami, the coordinator of banned newspaper **Mosharekat**, at the Branch 1083 of the Tehran Common Court.

On 10 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Association for Defence of Freedom of Media (ADFM) demanded freedom for Ali Farhbakhsh. Mashala Shamsalvaezin, the spokesman for the ADFM, condemned the arrest of the journalist and stated that, in the absence of a defence lawyer, the closed session of the hearing was in violation of Article 168 of the Constitution. On the same day **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Reza Khatami, the coordinator of 'Mosharekat' newspaper was found guilty of the charges levelled against him regarding the publication of discrepancies and the provocation of public opinion, by a media jury.

On 16 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that after waiting two months from the date of requesting publication licences for two student publications called 'Inequality' and 'Frogh', written by two members of the central Islamic student union at Zanjan University, the supervisory board of student publications at the university refused to respond to the request.

On 19 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that EzatAllah Sahabi, the veteran political and cultural activist, was awarded the Golden Pen Prize by the Association for the Defence of the Freedom of the Press (ADFP) for 2006–07.

On 24 April, [The New York Times](#) (US) reported that Ms Ravanipur, 54, is one of more than 150 writers gathering in New York today for PEN American Center's third annual World Voices Festival of International Literature. Ms Ravanipur, who has written eight books, though is virtually unknown in the United States, was due to speak on a panel with two other Iranian writers. In an interview last week, she said she planned to discuss how, for example, the Government had

recently banned the repeated use of the verb 'to do' because it can have a sexual connotation in Persian.

On 25 April, [Die Neue Krone](#) (Austria) reported that the 'guardians of public morals' in Iran have enforced their actions against fashion-conscious men. Iranian authorities have forbidden barbers to offer Western-style haircuts or to do men's eyebrows. In an official order all Iranian hairdressers have been warned to avoid using hairsprays or make-up.

On 26 March, a report appeared in the *National Post* (Canada) which reported that the Iranian parliament submitted a formal letter to the country's Minister of Culture calling for 'measures to prevent the screening of an anti-Iranian movie [around] the world'. The movie *300* depicts the ancient Persian Empire and the retelling of the Battle of Thermopylae. A spokesman for the country's official news agency denounced the movie as the edge of 'a propaganda front against the ancient and historical roots of Iran'. Iran is also asking UNESCO to issue a statement against *300*.

On 29 April, [BBC Online News](#) reported that Iranian police have warned barbers not to give men Western hairstyles or use make-up on them. They said that the move is part of 'an unusually fierce crackdown' on what is known locally as bad hijab,<sup>5</sup> or un-Islamic clothing, that this year is also targeting men. Hair stylists have been warned that they could lose their licences if they do not comply. Police say that as well as avoiding Western hairstyles and make-up, barbers should not pluck customers' eyebrows. However, the police have denied a report that they have ordered barbers not to serve customers wearing ties.

#### 4.9 Freedom of Assembly & Association

In 25 January, the [Toronto Star](#) (Canada) published a story about an Iranian woman and her two children who have been stranded in Moscow for more than eight months after fleeing Iran in May 2005. Zahra Kamalfar spent a year in prison for her political activism in Iran and tried to make her way to Canada. Kamalfar and her husband were involved in a massive demonstration about democracy in Iran in 1999 and were arrested in 2004 at a gathering commemorating the event.

On 22 February, *Aftab Yazd* (Iran) said that many teachers and academics gathered in front of the parliament to protest against the refusal of the parliamentarians to pass a bylaw regarding National Services Management on 21 February. According to **IRNA**, more than 1,000 protestors gathered and caused a traffic jam, to the extent that the police had to be called to manage the situation.

On 25 February, *Resalat* (Iran) reported that Said Mortazavi, Head of the Tehran Supreme Court announced a plan to restrict the activities he named as 'vandalism' during the Norowz festival (sometimes spelt 'Norouz' or 'Nowrūz'), which is the Iranian New Year. [Author's note: In Iran some people celebrate the New Year by taking part in a fire ceremony which dates back to the times of [Zoroastrianism](#) in Iran]. This warning was also published by *Etemad* (Iran) which reported that those who are arrested for participating in these 'fire ceremonies' will be held in prison until the end of the festive season which can last over two weeks.

On 10 March, the [Guardian](#) (UK) published a report on the arrests in Tehran of trade unionists who were due to assist a protest by teachers against the Government's economic policies. This was reported on the following day by *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran), which said that 3,000 teachers and

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<sup>5</sup> This refers to the way in which Iranian women do not wear the headscarf properly (ie when they do not cover all of the hair on their head). It has become very fashionable for Iranian women, particularly from the upper classes in North Tehran and elsewhere, to where the hijab in such a manner as to show the hair just above the forehead in an act of defiance against the Iranian authorities.

academics gathered in front of the parliament to protest against their low living standards and wages.

On 15 March, **Ressalat** (Iran) reported that Mahmoud Farshidi, the Education Minister said that our 'enemies are now trying to create political tension in the country' in a press conference held under security measures, while some 1,000 protesting teachers had been arrested earlier in the morning.

On 16 March, a report appeared on the [Guardian's](#) website (UK) which said that the Iranian authorities arrested 1,000 teachers after they protested outside parliament:

The clampdown followed a recent series of rallies outside parliament that had been broadly tolerated by the authorities. The gatherings drew up to 10,000 demonstrators, many displaying banners critical of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government, in a campaign calling for teachers' pay to be brought into line with other public sector workers.

On 17 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that many political, social and cultural activists have written an open letter in support of teachers. In the letter they said that they supported the peaceful, legitimate demonstration and gathering of teachers, and confirmed that they understand that the reasons for the gathering are due to low wages, high inflation, job insecurity, and ignorance of the Government about justice regarding the teachers. The letter stated: 'It is your legitimate demand and we condemn the violent action of authorities and their infringement of your rights'.

On 18 March, a report appeared in the **Iranian State News Agency** which said that a group of people with disabilities gathered in front of parliament to protest diverting money allocated to them to the Imam Khomeini Institution. One of the protestors arrested by the police was suffering from multiple sclerosis.

On 24 March, the Iranian website [www.Baztab.com](http://www.Baztab.com) announced that 1,000 people were arrested by the police in the last festive Wednesday of the year. The police said that they were vandals and that their actions undermined the peace of the people.

On 15 April, **Agence France-Presse** reported that the human rights group of Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi condemned the detention of teachers who staged public protests over low wages. The Defenders of Human Rights Centre said that more than a dozen teachers had been arrested in recent days, following an earlier spate of arrests in March after public demonstrations. 'Although most of the March detainees have been released, confronting teachers' unions and arresting other teachers in recent days is a clear sign of human rights being violated', the group said in a statement.

On 17 April, **Deutsche Presse-Agentur** reported that the head of the teachers union in Iran was arrested for his role in union protests that brought schools and universities to a standstill in recent weeks in several Iranian provinces. Ali-Akbar Baghani was arrested by plain-clothes security agents at 9.30 am on Monday as he was teaching in Tehran.

On 18 April, [Iran Focus](#) reported that members of the Iranian parliament protested against widespread arrests of teachers and students in north and north-west Iran. In a letter, 16 MPs called on police and security forces to respect civil rights, especially those of teachers and students.

On 20 April, **Deutsche Presse-Agentur** reported that former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani blamed the Government for the arrests of teachers in north-west Iran. 'Teachers are the backbone for educating future generations and if they are not treated decently, then they



would lose motivation to train our children and that would be quite a dangerous development', Rafsanjani was reported to have said at Friday prayers in Tehran.

Also on 20 April, the [International Trade Union Confederation](#) (ITUC) issued a strong condemnation of the Iranian authorities for their intensified attacks on independent trade unions in the country, with the arrests of hundreds of leaders and members of teachers' organizations and further persecution of bakery workers' leader Mahmoud Salehi from the city of Saqez in Iranian Kurdistan. The crackdown is believed to be closely linked to attempts by the Government to stop Iranian workers participating in upcoming May Day activities. The ITUC is submitting complaints to the International Labour Organization on both cases, documenting violations of fundamental workers' rights.

On 23 April, **Amnesty International** issued a press release in which it called on the Iranian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those detained in connection with recent peaceful demonstrations by teachers, students and others, to halt all trial proceedings that could result in the imprisonment of prisoners of conscience and to cease harassment of those campaigning to uphold human rights, including trade union and political rights. The organization is concerned that such protestors have been increasingly targeted since the Minister of Intelligence Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie publicly accused the women's rights movement and student campaigners of being part of an enemy conspiracy for a 'soft subversion' of the Government of Iran on 10 April 2007.

#### **4.10 Right to Adequate Housing**

On 28 January, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that according to the Mayor of Tehran's advisor, the city's suburbs have grown by 74 per cent. Approximately, 90 per cent of these city-like villages lack municipal organization and the housing standards are poor. Nearly five million people travel to Tehran looking for work. This information was based on a 20-year study from 1986 to 2006.

#### **4.11 Right to Work and Rights in Work**

On 12 February, the [Iran Press Service](#) reported that the office of the former reformist president of Iran, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami had been 'raided' overnight by unidentified people who had taken away all the computers, documents, fax machines and other equipment at the 'Baran' and the International Centre for Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations.

On 27 March, the **Iranian State News Agency** said that according to the Governor of Shoshtar, 150 workers of Karoun Paper Company did not receive their wages for a year. According to the report by the **ISNA** the workers had protested in front of the governance general building of Khuzestan. In addition, Mr Heshmatallah Hidari, a member of the Karoun paper-making company's worker council said that 220 workers work at the factory did not receive their one-year salary and additional packages. He added that it seems that the owner of the company had escaped.

On 17 April, **Etemad** (Iran) said that 70 per cent of workers do not have job security.

#### **4.12 Cultural Rights**

On 7 February, the **Iranian State News Agency**, reported comments by President Ahmadinejad in which he said that it was interesting how 'none of the claimers of human rights and culture said anything against the anti-human and anti-culture activities of the Zionist regime'. While referring

to the recent destruction of al-Aqsa's western wall<sup>6</sup> by what he called 'the Zionist regime',<sup>7</sup> he said 'the entity of the Zionist regime was based on destruction, division and crisis'.

On 21 February, the [Iranian Student's New Agency](#) reported that there would be a demonstration against the diggings at al-Aqsa and bombings at the holy shrines in Iraq organized by the Proximity of Religions University and Tehran's Basij members to condemn the diggings at al-Aqsa, the bombings at holy shrines in Iraq, to support Iran's nuclear programme and to show unity between all Islamic beliefs such as Sunnis and Shiites.

On 23 February, *Il Corriere della Sera* (Italy) published an interview between one of its correspondents and the dissident cleric Ayatollah Montazeri who spoke about freedom, cultural development and human rights.

On 6 March, the [Times](#) (UK) reported that a lawsuit has been brought by the Iranian Government against a London gallery for selling relics looted from the Iranian desert.

On 8 April, *Ressalat* (Iran) reported that nearly 1.2 million drug addicts are being cared for by the support of various institutions throughout the country.

On 20 April, the **Associated Press** said that Iran opened a dam in the country's south which has got archaeologists across the world concerned about the potential harm of flooding to the nearby World Heritage sites of ancient Persia. Iranian intellectuals and activists have condemned the Tehran Government for going ahead with the dam, calling it a 'stupidity'. Others have appealed for worldwide help and threatened to take up the matter with international institutions. Archaeologists say flooding from the dam will threaten the ancient royal road that linked Persepolis to Susa, two capital cities in ancient Persia, as well as 130 ancient sites along the Tang-e-Bolaghi, a mountain path traversed by the Sivand River.

#### 4.13 Right to Education (and Student Life)

On 31 January, [Die Presse](#) (Austria) reported that the Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace analysed 115 Iranian school textbooks and found that they are instilling students with hatred toward the West and urging them to defend their country in a holy war against the 'enemies of Islam'. The centre presented this report to the European Parliament. This was reported by *Le Monde* (France) on the following day and by **Agence France-Presse** the day after. On 5 February, it was picked up by the [Sun](#) (UK) and by the **Associated Press** three days later.

On 4 February, the coordinator of the Organisation of Iranian Teachers, Mr Ali Pour Samaneh, criticized Mr Ahmadinejad's policies on education and in particular discrimination towards teachers in Iran regarding their wages. He asserted that many of Iranian teachers live below the poverty line. This was published in *Etemad* (Iran).

On 22 February, *Aftab Yazd* (Iran) reported that according to the **Iranian State News Agency**, a lecturer at the Tehran University known as Saber, who teaches English Literature on the stairs of his work place was found dead in a suspicious manner.

On 24 February, *Etemad* (Iran) said that Mohammad Ali Dadkhah and Saeid Ghorbanian, two students from Sabzevar Teacher Training University, were summoned to appear before Branch 1

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<sup>6</sup> The Al-Aqsa is one of two mosques (the other being the Dome of the Rock) situated in the 'Haram al-Sherif' or the Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem (which is referred to by its Arabic name, Al-Quds, by Muslims). The sanctuary was the first direction—or *qibla*—to which Muslims prayed to before it was moved to Mecca.

<sup>7</sup> By which he means Israel. Zionism is an international political movement which supports the creation of a Jewish homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel (which was known as Palestine before the State of Israel was created in a war in 1948 which led to the exodus of some 750,000 Palestine Arabs directly contributing to the Arab-Israeli conflict).

of the Revolutionary Tribunal. On the same day and in the same newspaper, it was reported that Mr Mohammad Rahimi-Rad, student of Yazd University, was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and was ordered to pay a fine of 10 million rials. He was tried for activities undermining national security and insulting the authorities. Saied Derakhshandi, Abulfazl Jahandar and Kivan Ansari, also former student activists, were respectively sentenced to terms of three years', five years and two months', and three years and five months' imprisonment. According to a decision of Branch 6 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, these students were charged with activities undermining national security, association, and conspiracy to agitate national security.

On 25 February, *Etemad* (Iran) reported that more than 200 student activists sent an open letter of protest against the charges against students Kivan Ansari, Aboufzali Jahandar and Saied Drakhshandi and demanded their release.

On 2 March, the [Education Guardian Weekly](#) (UK) published a report that Iranian students involved in an angry protest against the president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have been expelled and earmarked for compulsory military service in an apparent act of official retribution.

On 5 March, *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran) reported that the mothers of students who are prohibited from studying (because their children have been given 'stars' for their political activities) wrote to President Ahmadinejad complaining about the situation and of the refusal of the authorities to cooperate on the issue. They said that paying for the right to education is not difficult for the Government and that studying is not against the interests of the State.

A statement appeared in the 6 March edition of *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran). The statement simply said: 'Research Centre of Parliament: universities should be free to choose their teaching staff and scientific board'. No further explanation was provided.

On 29 March, [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) published a story on its website which said that those who were charged with defamatory questions in the teacher-training exam were freed on bail of 50 and 80 million tomans.<sup>8</sup> According to the **Islamic Republic News Agency**, the test for the Greater Tehran Province teacher training was based on *Sonan Al Nabi*, a book on the Prophet Mohammad, which contained some inappropriate questions. Five people were arrested in relation to the event, of which two were released instantly and the other two are on bail. The main suspect was released on bail for 80 million rials.

*Etemad* (Iran) reported on 4 April that one of the members of the Islamic Student Union (of the Khjeh Nasir University) said that 2006 was not a good year for the student movement and student activists. Millad Assadi told **ISNA** that unfortunately during the last year, students were called to the disciplinary committees, courts, etc, which was not fair. He said that the student union organization's activities are more restricted than in previous years.

On 5 April, *Etemad* (Iran) reported that Syead Hossin Rahimi, a student activist and the coordinator of the student publication *Byan Azad* ('Freedom of Expression'), was suspended for a term from studying at university by the 'disciplinary committee'. The initial charge was brought against the student because of his participation in the protest over the 'poisonous food' provided at the university.

On 7 April, *Etemad* (Iran) said that according to a new bylaw published at the end of last year (2 months ago), and with the start of the new semester at Shahroud University, students have to review their dress code and observe the Islamic dress code. It is clearly stated that girls and boys should not mix, and that short dress, transparent cloths and the use of beauty products are

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<sup>8</sup> For explanations on Iranian currency, see above, note 2.

prohibited.

On 9 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that 45 teachers in the Hamadan province were arrested. No reason was given in the paper for why they were arrested.

On 10 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that four students from Malayer University were summoned to appear before the disciplinary committee. The four students are Ms Najmeh Nourbakhsh, Mr Mohsen Ibrahimy, Mr Vahab Nadimi and Ms Zahra Safari. No explanation was given as to why they were summoned. The same newspaper also reported that of the 45 teachers arrested in Hamadan, only six were released. The other 39 remain in prison. In response, 600 teachers gathered in front of the education organization of the Hamadan city to protest.

On 11 April, a report appeared in **Etemad** (Iran) which said that seven students (Arash Pakzad, Hadis Zaher, Nima Batebi, Millad Moinei, Hamed Mohammadi, Sadegh HakimZadeh and Sara Khademi) of Mazandaran University were summoned to appear before disciplinary committee because of their participation in the student day sitting protest and their refusal to attend classes.

On 16 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that many primary schools teachers from all over the country went to school but refused to teach, creating the first silent protest of the New Year.

On 17 April, **Etemad** (Iran) said that more than 15 students were arrested at Mazandaran University. Some, including Movid Yaghoobi-Nejad, Amid Moshref Zadeh, Syed Mehdi Sharif Nasabi, Syed Zia Nabavi, Ali Taghipour, Alireza Kalavetagh-Nejad, Javad Amir Shafiei, Homan Sharifi, Ramin Ajourlo, SiavashSalimi, Ali Kianie and Nejatalla Afshar were student activists who protested against the arrest of one of their compatriots. Authorities at the university said that they do not know who arrested them.

On 24 April, the [Education Guardian Weekly](#) (UK) reported that Iran's 'starred' students (politically active university students barred from continuing with their studies) are desperately trying to obtain the right to go on with their education. Undergraduates who have criticized the Government are given 1–3 penalty points, according to the possible threat they are said to pose. About 150 students are currently starred. Those who have been registered for master's courses have been forced to do so under preset conditions. These conditions allow university officials to expel the students at any time. 'Three-starred' students are not allowed to register.

#### **4.14 Women's Rights**

On 31 January, **Aftab Yazd** (Iran) reported that 'gender quotas', part of a plan being formulated by parliament to reduce the number of female entrants to universities, have provoked different views in Iran. Some believe that they are discriminatory towards women and others favour them as justifiable by religious teachings. On the same day **Etemad** (Iran) reported that a spokesman for the Health Commission of Iran's parliament, Mr Hidarpour said that women should learn something valuable for their duties at home. He added that his view was based on religious principles. However, another member of parliament, Mrs Ajerloo, said that the gender quotas will reduce the number of women by 15 per cent of the 65 per cent of women entrants to Iranian universities for the benefit of young men who are currently unable to get into university.

On 2 February, the [Guardian](#) (UK) published a report about a Mrs Shariati, 48, who has become 'one of Iran's first female taxi drivers in a pioneering scheme allowing women entry to an exclusively male preserve'.

On the same day the **Toronto Star** (Canada) reported that Jafar Panahi's Iranian film *Offside* aired at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival in Toronto. The film reveals gender inequalities in Iran by following a group of female soccer fans trying to get into a Tehran World Cup qualifying match. On 2 March, the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) reported that the Iranian docudrama will screen at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival in Toronto on 6 March 2007. On 23 March, **The New York Times** (US) reviewed the film as did the **National Post** (Canada) on 5 April and the **Toronto Star** (Canada) and the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) on the following day.

On 5 February, **Khbar Jonob** (Iran) said that the Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi said that the dominance of girls at universities in Iran is based on their ability, merit and efforts. Women occupy 65 per cent of places at Iranian Universities. The justification of those who plan a quota on women attending universities is that due to women obtaining a higher education, the marriage age has gone up and hence the women are not at home looking after their husbands and bringing up their children.

On 9 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) reported that Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Peace Nobel Winner, said that the human rights situation in Iran has changed for the worse since the election of president Ahmadinejad. She complained about Internet censorship, which she said increased under the new president. 'All internet pages where the terms woman, gender or sex are found, are not accessible'. Shirin Ebadi also thinks that it is not Islam which abuses women rights, but patriarchy which is deeply rooted in Islamic societies.

On 16 February, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) reported that a refugee claimant who argued against the introduction of Sharia law in Ontario has been allowed to stay in Canada after the Government decided her life would be in danger in Iran. The woman fled in 2002 after her divorce from her abusive husband.

On 21 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) published a report which said that an island in the Oroumiyeh Lake in the northwest of Iran was to be exclusively reserved for women by the Iranian Government so they can enjoy a little more freedom. All restaurants, public transportation and other facilities are to be run by females. Men are prohibited on the island. This was reported on the following day by **La Presse** (Canada) and **Le Figaro** (France). On 23 February the same story was reported in **Die Welt** (Germany) and **Libération** (France). On 28 February, this was reported by the **Daily Mirror** (UK).

On 3 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Canada) reported that the head of the Iranian Business Women's Council said that although some women will create jobs, and establish a business, they will, in 'an Islamic good will', hand them over to the men in their families. Then they will stay at home or seek another job.

On 5 March, **Amnesty International** called for the immediate and unconditional release of over 30 women activists who were arrested on Sunday 4 March while staging a peaceful demonstration in Tehran. Amnesty said that it believed the arrests may be intended to deter activists from organizing events to mark International Women's Day on 8 March. This arrest of the female human rights activists was reported on the same day in **Il Corriere della Sera** which reported that at least 32 women had been arrested with the charge of participating in an illegal demonstration. On the same day, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that according to a study undertaken by the Ministry of Health, of the 175 'escaped girls', most of whom were under 18 years of age, the Police had gathered (and arrested) on average, 2,500 girls each year between the years 2002–2004. And according to a report in the same newspaper, Fatemeh Rakei, head of the Women's Commission of the Islamic Moshrekat (Participation) Front said that they have gathered and studied some of the discriminatory laws against women which are not envisaged in the Qurān and therefore they will consult with the clergy for possible changes to the law.

On 6 March, [The New York Times](#) (US) and *20 Minutes* (France) reported that the Iranian authorities arrested 33 women after protests outside a court where five of them were being tried for leading a campaign to gain more legal rights for women. This was reported by *Le Monde* (France) and *Libération* (France) on the following day. Iran's *Aftab e Yazd* newspaper reported that Narges Mohammadi of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights condemned the arrest of the women activists and announced that it was illegal, as Article 27 of the Iranian Constitution permits any social gathering on condition that it does not contravene Islamic norms and that no armed activities take place. She said that as the gathering did not breach the conditions stipulated in Article 27, their gathering was peaceful and their arrest illegal.

On the same day, *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran) claimed that 50,000 young women abandoned their studies at university due to their inability to pay for tuition fees, which varies between 5,000 and 10,000 tomans.<sup>9</sup>

On 7 March, the *Guardian's* (UK) website [Comment is Free](#) published a commentary by Peter Tatchell on the plight of women in Iran. On the same day, [Die Presse](#) (Austria) reported that after the Islamic Revolution of Iran the age of marriage for girls was lowered by the new government. Girls are allowed to get married at the age of nine. The article said that Ayatollah Khomeini had married a 10-year-old girl when he was 28 years old and compared this to the prophet who married Aisha when she was only six years old.

On 8 March, the *LA Times* (US) and [BBC News Online](#) reported that in the days preceding International Women's Day, 33 women were arrested in Tehran for peacefully protesting outside a court building. Thirty were subsequently released, but warned not to mark the day with protests. Those detained include many of the big names in Iran's women's rights movement, who are calling for an end to discriminatory laws against women. On the same day, [Reporters Sans Frontiers](#) (RSF) reported that the Iranian authorities released 22 of the 25 women journalists and women's rights activists held in Evin prison north of Tehran. However, RSF said that journalist Jila Bani Yaghub, journalist and blogger Mahbubeh Abbasgholizadeh and journalist and lawyer Shadi Sadr are still being held and are continuing a hunger strike protesting against their continued detention. Also on the same day, [Shahrazad News](#) reported that female students in Iran are being subjected to increasingly restrictive regulations regarding their appearance. Recently Alameh-Tabatabayee University in Tehran announced a list of new regulations, including dress and behavioural codes. Special guards have been posted at the university to enforce the implementation of the new codes.

On 9 March, the *LA Times* (US), the *Toronto Star* (Canada), *Libération* (France), the **Associated Press** and **Amnesty International** reported that Iranian police clashed with scores of women's rights activists who gathered in front of parliament to celebrate International Women's Day.

On 10 March, the *Toronto Star* (Canada) said that three female journalists are being held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. The three were among a group of 33 that were demonstrating to protest the legal proceedings against five members of Iranian women's organizations arrested in earlier demonstrations. The group Canadian Journalists for Free Expression called for the Iranian Government to immediately release the journalists, all of whom are very critical of President Ahmadinejad. **Human Rights Watch** says that repression, torture and detention have increased in Iran during the past four years.

On 11 March, *Aftab e Yazd* (Iran) reported that Nastaran Sotodeh, the defence lawyer for the women arrested said that Shadi Sadr and Mahbobeh Abbasgholizadeh who were arrested during International Women's Day, still remain in prison.

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<sup>9</sup> For Iranian currency, see above, note 2.

On 13 March, **Agence France-Presse** published a report on the trial of two prominent Iranian women's rights activists. 'Shadi Sadr and Mahboubeh Abbas Gholizadeh were given a one month temporary detention order', Farideh Gheyrat said of the two, who were arrested with 31 other activists on 4 March for demonstrating outside a court. The activists on trial have also been involved in a petition campaign dubbed 'One Million Signatures', which seeks to change Iran's unfair laws against women by collecting signatures online and in person.

On 15 March, **[Der Standard](#)** (Austria) reported that before International Women's Rights Day on the 8 March, 50 women who demonstrated peacefully to claim their rights were imprisoned. Many of them were accompanied by their husbands to display symbolic support. In front of the Revolutionary Court in Teheran, they demanded the acknowledgement and the implementation in court of women's rights which are defined in the Iranian Constitution. In addition, they called for equal rights in family matters and in the law of succession. The demonstrators were imprisoned in Evin prison, and were not allowed to contact their families and all requests of family members were ignored.

On 17 March, ***Aftab e Yazd*** (Iran) reported that Emad Baghi said that several human and women's rights activists who tried to support the release of those who were arrested held a seminar in the Association for Defence of Human Rights.

On 20 March, **Agence France-Presse** and the **Iranian State News Agency** reported that two prominent Iranian women's rights activists, detained for demonstrating outside a Tehran court, were released on Monday on bail for more than \$200,000. Their lawyers said: 'Shadi Sadr and Mahboubeh Abbas Gholizadeh were released today on bail', Farideh Gheyrat told Agence France-Presse of the two, who were arrested with 31 other activists on 4 March for demonstrating outside a revolutionary court.

On 27 March, ***Hamshahri*** (Iran) reported that 6 per cent of drug addicts in Iran are women. The director general of the study, research and education centre of the Headquarters of the Campaign against Drug Abuse said: 'More than 100,000 women are addicted to narcotics'.

On 4 April, ***Die Welt*** (Germany) said that four women's rights activists were arrested in Tehran yesterday for collecting signatures for a campaign demanding equal legal rights for women. The **Islamic Republic News Agency** said the women were collecting names for a so-called 'One Million Signatures' campaign, demanding changes in what activists say are discriminatory laws against women in the Islamic republic. A website, [www.nobelwomeninitiative.org](http://www.nobelwomeninitiative.org), reported that the Iranian women activists launched the campaign in August 2006.

On 5 April, ***Etemad*** (Iran) reported that the defence lawyer of Nahid Keshavarz, a women's rights activist who was arrested on 2 April at Laleh Park in Tehran, said that she was being detained with another activist, Mahbobeh Hossin Zadeh, at Evin prison.

On 7 April, ***Etemad*** (Iran) reported that more than a thousand political activists have protested against the arrest of the two women's rights activists. In a collective statement they have said that although three of the arrested (Sara Imanian, Homaun Nami and Saideh Amin) were released on bail by the Revolutionary Court, two (Nahid Keshavarz and Mahbobeh HossinZadeh), have been transferred to Evin prison.

On 9 April, ***Ressalat*** (Iran) reported that 86 per cent of the Iranian people are demanding police intervention to deal with 'bad-hijab' (that is, women who do not wear the hijab properly). The new policy is based on a scientific survey conducted by the police (NAJA) and Tehran University. Apparently 86 per cent of the people surveyed believed that an un-Islamic dress code would undermine their moral security. Additionally, 93 per cent demanded that the police intervene to stop 'un-Islamic behaviour'. Sahand Tabriz Polytechnic (university) immediately announced that it would implement the restrictions on its campus.

In a 19-paragraph commentary published by [Die Presse](#) (Austria) on 11 April, the author questioned why Europeans talk about the Iranian nuclear programme when nobody discussed violations of human rights in Iran. She wrote that artists, human rights activists, feminists and intellectuals have fought for social liberties in Iran for quite a long time. There have been many vital movements, represented by women journalists like Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh or Nahid Keshavarz, who were arrested for collecting signatures for the campaign 'One Million Signatures' on 1 April. A month before, a group of female activists were arrested for taking part in a peaceful demonstration. On the same day, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that the Minister of Information (who basically represents the security services) said that the 'enemy' is conspiring to prepare a 'colour revolution' through various means, such as the 'women's movement' and 'students' movement'.

On 13 April, the **Guardian** (UK) and [The Times](#) (UK) published obituaries on the death of Mandana Alijani who died of cancer at the age of 33. They said she was a member of the people's mojahedin organization of Iran and was a skilled surgeon. Her death sparked a flurry of letters regarding the denial of women's rights in Iran.

On 17 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that the two women arrested in Laleh Park (reported on 5 April above) were released on bail for the amount of 20 million tomans each.

On 18 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that Branch 8 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran is hearing the charges against Bahareh Hedayat, coordinator of the Women's Commission of Unity Student Union, for her participation in a rally for women's rights.

On 19 April, the **National Post** (Canada) reported that Iran was scheduled to launch its annual summer crackdown in the following week on men and women whose clothing is deemed contrary to Iranian law. Women in Iran are required by law to cover their head with the hijab and a full-length outer garment that covers all bodily contours.

The weekly supplement **Wysokie Obcasy** (Poland) contained a special nine-page report on Iranian women published on 21 April. The report was about their dreams and everyday life. The report included a photograph of an Iranian woman on the front cover of the magazine:



The title: 'Iranian women. Freedom does not mean wearing a mini skirt'

On 22 April, **Ressalat** (Iran) said that a member of the social commission of the Iranian parliament told Ressalat that the crackdown on 'bad hijab' should be continued and that it should not have any expiry date. He also added that the Government could not achieve anything by physical force and that it should work on the culture. On the following day, the same newspaper



reported that the crackdown on 'bad hijab' was supported by the powerful Bazaaris (the powerful merchant class).

On 23 April, [Der Standard](#) (Austria) and **20 Minutes** (France) reported that Iranian police have started a crackdown on women violating the Islamic dress code. Within two days 1,347 women have been giving warnings, 170 have been arrested and 58 of them were released after promising they would dress adequately in public. On the same day and in another article in the [Der Standard](#), it was reported that two journalists (Mahboubeh Hosseinzadeh and Nahid Keshavarz) were arrested and held for 14 days in Evin prison because they reported a demonstration which was supportive of the campaign 'One Million Signatures' which is demanding changes to Iran's discriminatory laws against women.

On 24 April, [Izvestiya](#) (Russian Federation) reported that the Iranian authorities have started a hunt for women who wear clothing which does not comply with strict religious norms. The Russian newspaper reported that over a period of two days, the police stopped over 3,500 women on the streets of Teheran and gave them a verbal warning. Over 100 women were taken into one of the four specialized centres for counselling where they were asked to sign a note confirming that they would never wear inappropriate clothing again. And about 60 cases went to the courts. If convicted, these women may be fined and given a police record. In the most severe cases, caning may be in order. Apparently, these 'modesty hunts' are an annual occurrence, carried out by the authorities in the beginning of summer. This year in addition to improperly dressed women, the police were instructed to arrest men who wear provocative clothing. Ninety-one men were stopped, 12 arrested and six were sent to court.

On 25 April, **Le Figaro** (France) reported that Chief Justice Ayatollah Mahmoud Hachemi Shahroudi has denounced the 'morality campaign'. However, on the same day, **Ressalat** (Iran) reported that the Public Prosecutor of the Tehran Common and Revolutionary Courts, Mr Mortazavi, said that those women who appear like 'mannequins' in the streets threaten the moral security of men. He said that according to Article 638 of the Islamic Punishment Law, the action of these women injures public morals and that the culprits will be imprisoned or fined. He added that if these actions are repeated, then according to Article 19 of the aforesaid law, he will recommend as a final punishment a five-year exile from Tehran or compulsory residence in another district. He said that the Tehran courts take this issue seriously and strongly support the implementation of this policy.

#### 4.15 Minority Rights<sup>10</sup>

On 27 January, **Ressalat** (Iran) reported that in Zahedan, which has a population of 800,000 mainly Sunni Muslims, there are no cinemas even though 50 per cent of the population is between the age of 15 and 30.

On 31 January, the **BBC Monitoring Trans Caucus Unit** reported that the ethnic Azerbaijani Abbas Lisani, a prisoner of conscience, was continuing his hunger strike in an Ardabil prison. They said that Lisani was arrested in June 2006 and sentenced to 30 months in prison and three years of exile from the country for his activities to protect the rights of Iranian Azerbaijanis and his anti-government propaganda.

On 1 February, **Agence France-Presse** reported that the United States accused Iran of the 'systematic oppression' of its people and called for the immediate release of political prisoners and jailed minority-rights activists. 'We are deeply concerned by the regime's continuing

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<sup>10</sup> Author's note: Iran only recognizes certain religious minorities (such as Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians but not Bahai's). It does not recognize *ethnic* minorities (such as Arabs, Kurds, Baluchis etc).

repression of Iran's minority ethnic and religious groups, including Azeris, Kurds, Baha'i, ethnic Arabs and others', state department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

On 19 February, **Der Standard** (Austria) said that 11 members of Iran's Revolutionary Guards were killed and another 31 were injured after a car bomb hit their bus in Zahedan. The radical Sunni group 'Jund Allah' claimed responsibility for the attack. Five people were arrested. Walter Posch, an expert on Iranian issues at the European Institute of Security Studies said that whenever the Sunni population becomes turbulent it is a sign that something is wrong between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

On 22 February, **Etemad** (Iran) newspaper reported that Jafar Aeinparast, a Member of Parliament for Mahabad in Kurdistan province, wrote to the Minister of Home Affairs and the Defence Minister, demanding an explanation regarding the shooting of a Mahabadi youth by armed forces in Mahabad.

On 5 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) said that according to the Ministry of Information, several journalists 'in one of the provinces' who were allegedly supported by 'foreigners' to propagate for separatist activities and plans were arrested. They confessed to the financial support of aliens and activities against the national security.<sup>11</sup> The same paper also reported that Mr Akbar Alaami, the Tabriz reformist member of parliament was summoned to appear before Civil Servant Special Tribunal. He was charged with making a defamatory statement and libel. He had questioned the Minister of Defence on the logic of using armed force on the issue of Basij actions in the Azerbaijan province. Mr Alaami had criticized the intervention of some members of the armed forces in political affairs.

On 7 March, **BBC Trans-Caucus Monitoring** reported that a group of AMIP (Azerbaijan Milli Istiqlal Party) activists attempted to picket the Iranian embassy in Baku in Azerbaijan to protest against the violation of the ethnic Azerbaijanis' rights in the country. They carried posters calling for the unification of southern Azerbaijan (northwestern Iran) and northern Azerbaijan (the Azerbaijani Republic), and the release of political prisoners in Iran.

On 12 March, the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) reported that Iranian Kurds in exile in northern Iraq are convinced that the downfall of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is not far off. The leader of the Iranian-Kurdish guerrilla movement, Komala, said that people in Iran are 'counting on it' and many are 'waiting for the explosion, for a chance to act'. On the same day, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that nine MPs from the Khuzestan province questioned the Home Minister on the conflict in Andimeshk regarding his department's failure on the events.

On 15 March, [Reporters Sans Frontiers](#) called for the release of a total of four journalists held in Iran's Kurdish northwest after the arrests of Kia Jahani on 24 February in Marivan and Aso Salah on 8 March in Sanandaj.

On 16 March, the **Globe and Mail** (Canada) reported that the Iranian refugee family which had arrived in Vancouver after spending 10 months living in a Moscow airport terminal were Dervishes.<sup>12</sup> The Shah of Iran had granted them land, but after the Shah was overthrown in 1979, the Iranian family's politics and religion became unpopular. The two were arrested for handing out leaflets calling for the return of the Shah, and Ms Kamalfar was violently interrogated for 'collaborating' with anti-government activities. Mr Kamalfar was apparently killed while in police custody. This same story was reported in **La Repubblica** (Italy) on 20 March 2007. The Italian paper reported that:

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<sup>11</sup> **Author's note:** Although no name of the journalists or the province is given, it is likely to be either Azerbaijan or Kurdistan.

<sup>12</sup> See above, note 3.

This is the story of an Iranian family which is very similar to the one of the Viktor Navorski in the film *The Terminal*, where this imaginary citizen of Krakozhia will be blocked in the transit area of the International airport of New York, without the possibility to get inside of U.S. In the reality, as in the film, Zahra Maghamfar and her daughter Anna 17 and her son, Davood 12, have lived almost one year in the Moscow's airport waiting to get the Canadian refugee status for reaching their relatives in Vancouver.

On 23 March, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that seven people—all members of Iran's Baluchi minority—are at risk of imminent execution. Amnesty said it fears that at least five of the group may have been tortured and force to 'confess' to involvement in a number of violent crimes carried out in the town of Tasuki, in Sistan-Baluchistan province, southern Iran, in March 2006.

On 27 March, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that Mostafa Evezpoor and his 15-year-old brother Mohammad Reza Evezpoor, both members of the Iranian Azerbaijani community, were released on or around 12 October 2006. They had been detained incommunicado since 21 September. Mostafa Evezpoor remains at liberty despite being convicted of 'membership and co-operation with "pan-Turkic" groups', and spreading 'propaganda against the system'.

On 3 April, **Amnesty International** stated in a press release that Risan Sawari, a member of Iran's Arab minority, was reportedly executed on 14 February at an unknown location in Khuzestan province. According to reports, Risan Sawari's mother, brother and sister were allowed to visit him on the night before his execution, and they claimed that he was aware that his death sentence was about to be carried out. Following the execution, Risan Sawari's body was not handed over to his relatives, but was buried by the authorities.

On 4 April, [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) reported that according to the commander of the NAJA (Police) in the Western Azerbaijan Province, 10 people from the Pejak (Kurdish Fighters close to the PKK) who were planning to use bombs in the Piranshahr (Piran City) were arrested in Naghadeh City. This story was reported on the following day by the **Ressalat** (Iran) newspaper.

On 7 April, **Etemad** (Iran) reported that an MP from Saghez and Baneh protested to the rationing of the bread and fuel and the long queues in the Kurdish Province. Fakhrodin Hidari told **ILNA** that the per capita of flour in the province is below that of all-national provinces and that due to the low purchasing power in the region bread is the only valuable and main item for his constituency.

On 8 April, the **Toronto Star** (Canada) reported that an Iranian-born man who was arrested for drug trafficking in Toronto was to have been deported in 1999. Omar Badanyi claimed he was a victim of Stateless religious persecution. He said his father was murdered by Iranian fundamentalists for following the Baha'i faith. Badanyi fled to Canada as a refugee in 1991 with his mother and sister.

On 11 April, **Der Standard** (Canada) reported that the persecution of Baha'i members is escalating in Iran and even children are affected by the persecution since they are forced by their teachers to divulge their belief to them. They are insulted, debased and pushed to convert to Islam. Furthermore, the children are threatened with expulsion from school. Also Baha'i university students are affected by those measures. In the current semester 94 students have been expelled from university after their Baha'i belief was made public.

On 13 April, **BBC Monitoring Trans-Caucus Unit** reported that the Musavat Party condemned the Azerbaijani authorities for deporting an activist of the movement to protect the rights of the population of southern Azerbaijan (northwestern Iran), Hadi Musavi. Musavi arrived in Baku in an

attempt to avoid being tortured by the Tehran regime and hoping to find political asylum. However, Baku officials decided to hand over the opposition figure to the Iranian regime.

On 15 April, **Ressalat** (Iran) reported that the weekly publication **Pyam Kurdistan** (Message from Kurdistan) that was published in Kurdish and Farsi was banned after its 47th issue. The publication licence has been revoked on a permanent basis (according to Article 11 of the Press Law) by the observatory board for publications.

On 24 April, **Ressalat** (Iran) reported that 5,108 people were arrested in a 48-hour period in the Sistan and Baluchestan province following a new policy to deport illegal Afghanis in the country.

#### **4.16 Children's Rights**

On 25 February, **Etemad** (Iran) published a report which said that although the cases of the suspects in the sale of 145 babies are under investigation and open in the court proceedings, the court is having difficulty determining the faith of these babies.

On 6 March, **Aftab e Yazd** (Iran) reported that a shepherd girl in the village of Zolfaghar was killed by a land mine left over from the Iran–Iraq war.

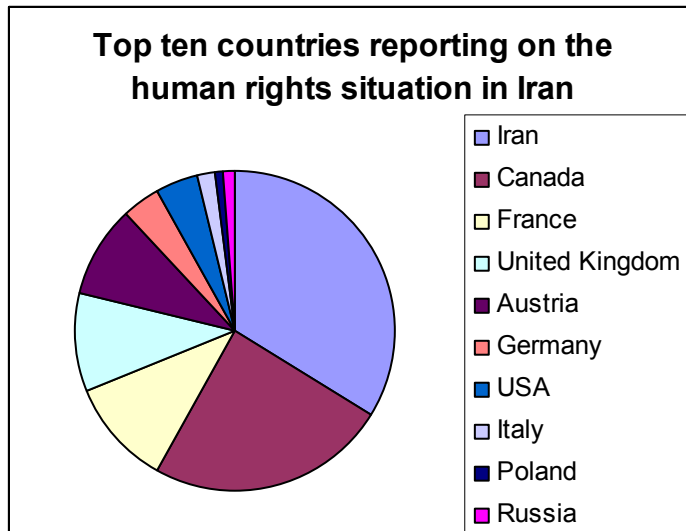
## 5. Results of Findings

Table 1

### Top Ten Ranking Countries Reporting on the Human Rights Violations in Iran

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1. **Iran** (75) = 34 per cent
2. **Canada** (52) = 24 per cent
3. **France** (25) = 11 per cent
4. **United Kingdom** (21) = 10 per cent
5. **Austria** (19) = 9 per cent
6. **Germany** (8) = 4 per cent
7. **USA** (8) = 4 per cent
8. **Italy** (5) = 2 per cent
9. **Poland** (3) = 1 per cent
10. **Russia** (1) = >1 per cent



It may come as a surprise to some that Iran is first, with the most number of reported stories on human rights in Iran. The explanation for this is that these violations do occur within Iran and therefore it is only natural that these stories are reported there. However, one should bear in mind that there is a fundamental difference in the way human rights stories are reported by the newspapers in Iran and by the Western press.

Whereas newspapers in the West report such stories as 'human rights violations', within Iran such violations are merely reported as facts. In other words they are not actually reported as human rights violations. Instead, these violations are gleaned from the newspaper's reports of court proceedings, where they list the charges (see the Iran report in the appendix by Kourosh Taheri, page 57).

For example, while a typical story in a Western newspaper will condemn Iran's recourse to corporal punishment as barbaric (implied by various Western newspapers throughout the monitoring period, such as the *Daily Mail's* 20 February headline 'Swift and Merciless: Iran's form of "Justice"'), within Iran it is in all seriousness portrayed as a question of law and Islamic justice (where the victims get to decide on the form of punishment, which is usually meted out on the spot where the crime took place). Having said this, there are serious questions—especially in cases involving terrorism—about the fairness of the trials, especially when it involves minorities.

Other examples involve restrictions placed on women's clothing. Although in the West this issue is perceived as an unwarranted interference in the rights of women to choose what to wear,<sup>13</sup> in Iran the restrictions are perceived as complying with Islamic teachings.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, according to a poll conducted by an Iranian university, the vast majority of Iranians including the powerful *Bazaari* community, who basically control the Iranian economy, support these restrictions (*Ressalat*, 22 April).

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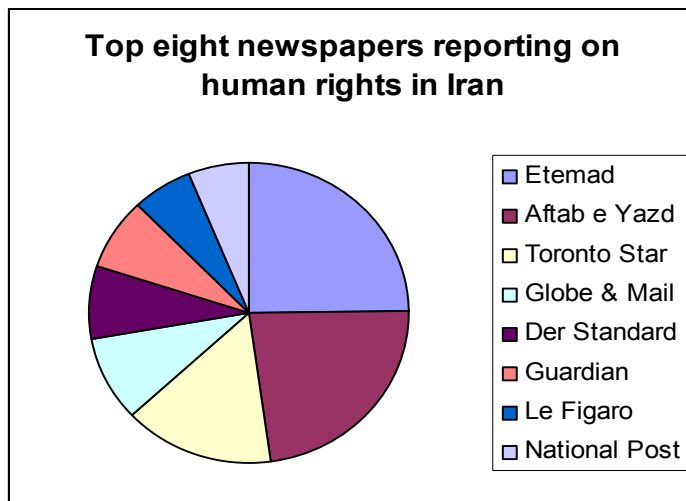
<sup>13</sup> This was reported by various newspapers, including *Izvestiya* on 24 April which was the only time a Russian newspaper reported on anything regarding the state of human rights in Iran.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that the Holy Qurān does not actually specify how women should dress; it only says that they should dress modestly, and this is a point which many women's rights activists are attempting to raise with the Iranian Government.

Table 2

Top Ten Ranking Newspapers Reporting on the Human Rights Violations in Iran

1. **Etemad** (35) = 16 per cent
2. **Aftab e Yazd** (32) = 15 per cent
3. **Toronto Star** (23) = 10 per cent
4. **Globe & Mail** (14) = 6 per cent
5. **Guardian** (13) = 5.5 per cent
6. **Der Standard** (12) = 5 per cent
7. **Le Figaro** and the **National Post** (8 each) = 4 per cent
8. **La Presse** (7) = 3 per cent
9. **Die Presse** and **Le Monde** (6 each) = 3 per cent
10. **Libération**, **20 Minutes** and **The New York Times** (5 each) = 2 per cent

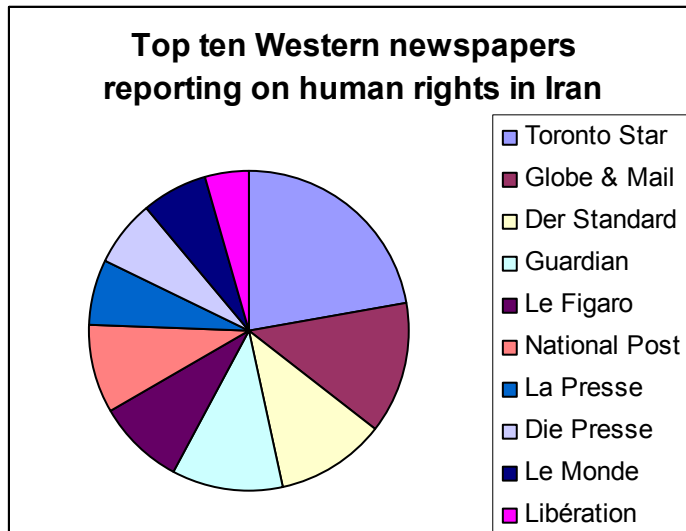


Again it is hardly surprising that the top two newspapers reporting on human rights violations in Iran are Iranian. However, the same caveat (that there is a fundamental difference in the way such stories are reported) mentioned earlier continues to apply.

Table 3

Top Ten Ranking Western Newspapers Reporting on Iranian Human Rights Violations

1. **Toronto Star** (23) = 10 per cent
2. **Globe & Mail** (14) = 6 per cent
3. **Guardian** (13) = 5.5 per cent
4. **Der Standard** (12) = 5 per cent
5. **Le Figaro** and the **National Post** (8 each) = 4 per cent
6. **La Presse** (7) = 3 per cent
7. **Die Presse** and **Le Monde** (6 each) = 3 per cent
8. **Libération**, **20 Minutes** and **The New York Times** (5 each) = 2 per cent
9. **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** and **Il Corriere della Sera** (4 each) = 2 per cent
10. **Los Angeles Times** (3) = 1 per cent



As is evident from the tables, the Canadian media has the highest number of reports on human rights violations in Iran. There are two explanations for this result. First, there was the story (reported by all the Canadian newspapers between 16 February and 23 March) about an Iranian family and their nine-year-old son who were detained by US authorities when their plane made an unscheduled stop in Puerto Rico, after which they were transferred to a US detention centre in Texas. Canada denied the parents' first refugee claim in 2005, and deported them back to Iran where the father was taken away from his family to a prison cell and was tortured. Secondly, there is the ongoing saga about the Canadian photo-journalist Zahra Kazemi who was brutally beaten to death in Iranian custody in 2003. That story caused an international outcry, particularly in Canada, after Iran refused to return her body upon Canadian request. This story had a massive impact in Canada and since then the human rights situation in Iran has been of particular interest to Canadians, perhaps more so than in any other Western country.

High too on the list were the Austrian and French newspapers (particularly, **Der Standard** and **Le Figaro**). This was probably because during the monitoring period (26 February–5 April), a French



and a German national were released from prison. They were detained by the Iranian authorities for taking photographs of passing ships in the Gulf near the Hormuz Strait.<sup>15</sup> Also, in another unrelated story, a French academic was released after he was pardoned by Ayatollah Khomeini (this was reported by *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* and *Le Figaro* between 5 and 13 April). Two Swedish construction workers were also released after being imprisoned on allegations of espionage (reported by two French newspapers, *Le Figaro* and *20 Minutes*, and a Polish newspaper, *Dziennik*, on 16 April).

Amongst the British newspapers, the *Guardian* appeared in third place, well above the other newspapers from Britain. This is probably because the *Guardian* has a correspondent (Robert Tait) based in Tehran whereas the other papers do not. This can make all the difference, as the other papers will have to rely on news agencies for their stories or send special correspondents to Iran when a major story breaks, while the *Guardian* has local access to the news. Moreover, having a correspondent actually living in Iran on a semi-permanent basis gives a reporter the freedom to seek out and find new stories, which are being missed by the newswires. For example, Robert Tait was the only person to report on the [rise of female taxi drivers](#) in Tehran and on the Iranian students involved [in protests against the government](#) who were expelled from universities and earmarked for compulsory military service. The *Guardian* also published reports written by Iranians from Tehran (in this regard, it was the only paper during the monitoring period to report on Iran's starred university students, see Saeed Kamali Dehghan's [article](#)). In contrast to the *Guardian's* attention to the smaller stories, the other British newspapers were more interested in reporting on the big international issues regarding Iran's uranium enrichment, Israel–Iranian relations and the war in Iraq.

Interestingly, the only story to be picked up by the tabloids and the broadsheets concerned the creation of a women's-only holiday island in Oroumiyeh Lake in northwest Iran (this was reported by *Der Standard*, *La Presse*, *Le Figaro*, *Die Welt*, *Libération* and the *Daily Mirror* between 21 and 28 February). It was probably the nature of the story, in that there would be no men around to look at the women in their bathing costumes, that caught the eyes of newspaper editors in the West.

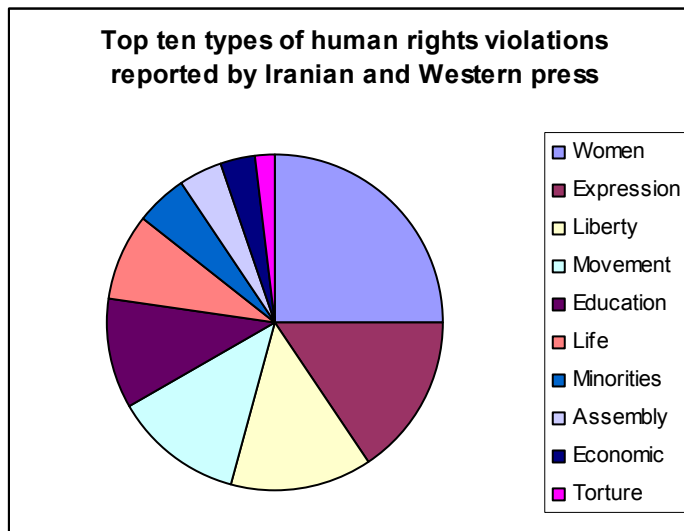
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<sup>15</sup> The straits which are situated between Iran and Oman are vitally important, strategically and military, because approximately 40 per cent of the world's oil supplies pass through it.

Table 4

Top Ten Types of Human Rights Violations Reported by Iranian and Western Press

1. **Women's rights** (54) = 24 per cent
2. **Freedom of Expression** (35) = 15 per cent
3. **Right to Liberty** (29) = 13 per cent
4. **Freedom of Movement** (27) = 12 per cent
5. **Right to Education** (23) = 10 per cent
6. **Right to Life** (19) = 8 per cent
7. **Minority Rights** (12) = 5 per cent
8. **Freedom of Assembly & Association** (9) = 4 per cent
9. **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (3) = 2 per cent
10. **Torture, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment & Right to Respect for Private and Family Life** (4 each) = 2 per cent



News stories regarding the women's rights movement in Iran were deemed the most newsworthy during the monitoring period. One explanation for this is that the monitoring coincided with [International Women's Day](#) on 8 March 2007. On that day, many women's rights activists were arrested by the Iranian authorities as well as in the days preceding it (which was reported by *Il Corriere della Sera*, *New York Times*, *20 Minutes*, *Le Monde*, *Libération*, *Aftab e Yazd*, *Guardian*, *Die Presse*, *LA Times*, *Toronto Star* and *Der Standard* between 5 and 17 March). Usually, journalists like to have what they called a 'peg' for their story, which literally refers to the

way in which they can 'hang' it on a specific event so as to sell it to a newspaper editor. In this particular case, the peg was International Women's Day and the story was the arrest and detention of women's rights activists in Iran. It might be surmised that had the arrests taken place at a less opportune moment, or during a major international crisis, they may not have been reported at all.

The second major news story recorded during the monitoring period concerned stories relating to the freedom of expression, or more accurately, the lack of expressing one's opinion freely in Iran. There were four major stories recorded during the monitoring period. These related to the following:

Closing Internet sites: Between 19 and 20 February, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Le Monde*, the *Guardian* and *Der Standard*, reported that the conservative Iranian website [www.baztab.com](http://www.baztab.com) was shut down by the Iranian Government after it criticized president Ahmadinejad.

Hollywood movie: The release of the Hollywood blockbuster *300*, which depicts the ancient Persian Empire and retells the Battle of Thermopylae, was reported as being banned in Iran.<sup>16</sup> The Iranian Government denounced the film as 'a propaganda front against the ancient and historical roots of Iran'. This story was reported by the *Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, *Le Figaro* and the *National Post* between 15 and 26 March.

Blogging: Throughout the monitoring period, there were a number of stories about blogging in Iran (such stories were reported by *Die Presse*, the *Guardian*, *Der Standard*, the *National Post* and *The Times*).

Men's grooming: The restrictions imposed on fashion-conscious men (ie those with 'unusual' hairstyles, such as spiky-gelled or coloured hair, who have tattoos, or who pluck their eyebrows) were threatened with arrest and Iranian barbers were warned not to use hairsprays or use make-up. This story was reported by *Die Neu Krone* and *Izvestiya* (the latter mentioned it in passing when discussing the restrictions on women's clothing).

The third and fourth major human rights topics reported during the monitoring period were the right to liberty and security, and the freedom of movement. Most of the stories regarding liberty and security were influenced by the stories reported in the Canadian press about the Iranian family and their nine-year-old son detained in Texas. With regards to the stories on the freedom of movement, the reports on the French, German and Swedish nationals who were released from Iranian captivity were substantial.

Education was another important topic. The Iranian media, in comparison with the Western newspapers, discussed this issue the most, especially the *Etemad* newspaper. The only time the Western press (with the exception of the *Guardian*) showed any interest in the Iranian educational system was when the Israeli NGO, the [Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace](#), submitted their report on Iranian textbooks to the European Parliament. According to the report, Iran's educational system is instilling Iranian students with hatred towards the West (this was reported by *Die Presse*, *Le Monde* and the *Sun*, from 31 January to 5 February). On the other hand, the Western press showed little interest in reporting the crisis facing the Iranian educational system when teachers were striking over low pay, students were demonstrating, teachers were being arrested, students were being abducted from their classrooms or 'disappearing' in mysterious circumstances, and 'starred students' were being dismissed from university (with the

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<sup>16</sup> **Author's note**: Hollywood movies are already banned in Iran but this was how some newspapers reported it in any event. Suffice to say that the Iranian Government condemned it anyway.

exception of the **Guardian**, which was the only Western paper to report on the starred<sup>17</sup> university system).

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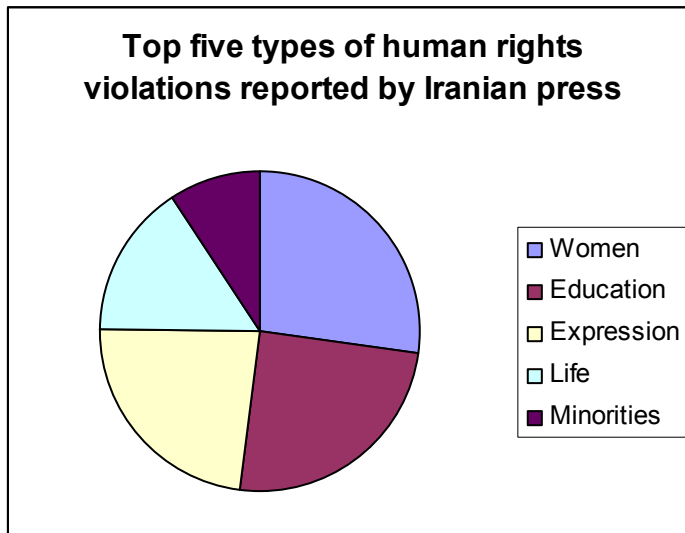
<sup>17</sup> Undergraduates who have criticized the Government are given one to three penalty points or 'stars', according to the 'threat' they are said to pose. Three-starred students are not allowed to register.

**Table 5**

**a. Top Five Types of Human Rights Violations Reported by Iranian Press**

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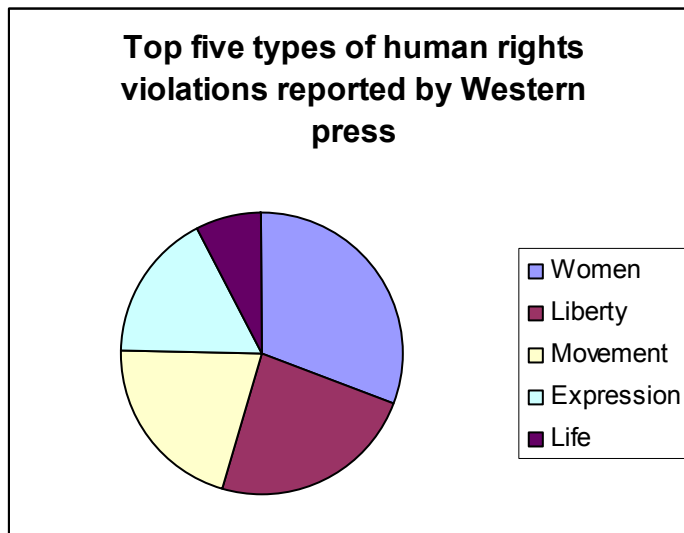
1. **Women's Rights** (18) = 21 per cent
2. **Right to Education** (16) = 19 per cent
3. **Freedom of Expression** (15) = 18 per cent
4. **Right to Life** (10) = 12 per cent
5. **Minority Rights** (6) = 7 per cent



## b. Top Five Types of Human Rights Violations Reported by Western Press

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1. **Women's Rights** (36) = 25 per cent
2. **Right to Liberty & Security** (27) = 19 per cent
3. **Freedom of Movement** (25) = 17 per cent
4. **Freedom of Expression** (20) = 14 per cent
5. **Right to Life** (9) = 6 per cent



Issues relating to women's rights were the most reported human rights violations in both the Iranian and Western media during the monitoring period. Although the reason why the tables show that the Western press reported twice as many stories on women's rights is because more Western papers were monitored than Iranian ones.

The right to education and the freedom of expression were the major stories for the press within Iran. However, they were not deemed particularly newsworthy by the Western press except when an Israeli NGO published a report on the Iranian educational system. This was despite the fact that serious infringements of the rights of students, teachers and lecturers to an adequate education occurred during the monitoring period.

The Western press, and this may reflect to some extent the way in which the media works, was naturally more concerned with their own nationals. This explains why stories relating to the right to freedom of movement and liberty and security were deemed more newsworthy, because they involved Western nationals. A particular example of this, although outside the ambit of the monitoring study, was the Iran–UK hostage crisis which saturated the news on Iran for several days. This was despite the fact that there were serious violations of human rights occurring within Iran at the time.

Regarding the right to life, it is interesting to see that this particular issue is regarded with almost equal importance by both the Western and Iranian press (although as already mentioned, there is a difference in the way these stories are reported).

## 6. Conclusions

These were the principal conclusions of the media monitoring study:

- **Human rights stories in Iran are not considered particularly newsworthy by the Western press. Iran's relations with the West, the nuclear question, the war in Iraq and Israeli-Iranian relations were deemed more newsworthy.**

For example, the Russian media only reported one story during the entire monitoring period on the human rights situation in Iran ([Izvestiya](#), 24 April) and the Polish media only published three stories (*Dziennik*, 20 March and 16 April, and *Wysokie Obcasy*, 21 April). In Italy, *Il Corriere della Serra* published five stories (19, 23 and 26 February, 5 and 8 March) and *La Repubblica* only one story (20 March). The US papers that were monitored only reported eight stories, with *The New York Times* publishing five (20 February, 6 and 23 March, 19 and 24 April) and the *Los Angeles Times* publishing three (5, 8 and 9 March). Coverage in the German media was equally as sparse with *Die Welt*, publishing only two stories (23 February and 13 March), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* four (20 and 23 February and 4 and 13 March) and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* two (13 and 26 March). Although the Austrian, French, Canadian and UK papers published more stories, there were exceptions. For example, in Austria *Die Neue Krone* only published one story (25 April) as did *Le Parisien-Aujord'hui en France* in France (5 April). In the UK, the *Sun* published only one story (5 February), the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* two respectively (on 20 February and 15 March and 8 February and 28 February), and the *Times* four (21 February, 4 April, 6 March and 13 April). In contrast most of these newspapers published stories on Iran's confrontation with the West on a daily basis.

- **There usually needs to be some link between a human rights violation in Iran and a Western country for a story to be deemed newsworthy. For example, if the violation complained of affects either a national of a Western country or a person with dual nationality (ie Iranian and a Western nationality), or if the human rights violation is so serious as to affect diplomatic relations between Iran and the West, then there is a higher chance that it will be reported by newspapers in the West.**

Throughout the monitoring period there were numerous cases where individuals of Iranian origin had their human rights violated in Iran. However, most of these stories were ignored by the Western press. They only became an issue if there was some connection between Iran and a particular Western country. For example, the story about the Iranian family imprisoned in a Texas Detention Centre was widely reported in the Canadian press (reported by the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *National Post* and *La Presse* from 16 February to 23 March). This was probably because the family's young child was a Canadian national and the family had spent some time residing in Canada. Similarly, the story of the French, German and Swedish nationals who were released from Iranian captivity was widely reported by the Western media (reported by *Der Standard*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien-Aujord'hui en France*, *20 Minutes* and *Dziennik*, from 26 February to 16 April), whereas cases in which Iranian nationals had suffered grosser forms of punishment at the hands of the Iranian Government were almost completely ignored.

- **A newspaper is more likely to report on the human rights situation in Iran if they have a reporter based there (as opposed to using the newswires or freelance journalists).**



This conclusion was drawn from comparing the *Guardian's* reporting from Iran with those of the other British newspapers. For example, the *Guardian* published more than four times as many stories on the human rights situation in Iran than any of the other newspapers (*The Times*, *Daily Mail*, the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*) combined (the other papers reported nine stories, to the *Guardian's* 13 stories). One possible explanation for this gap in reporting is that the *Guardian* is the only major British newspaper to have a British correspondent reporting directly from Iran on a semi-permanent basis.

• **News regarding the women's rights movement in Iran was deemed the most newsworthy during the monitoring period (27 January–27 April), closely followed by the freedom of expression.**

This applied to both the Iranian and Western press, as is evident from comparing Tables 4, 5a and 5b. This seems to show there is a direct correlation between the types of human rights stories being reported by the Western papers and human rights violations taking place in Iran. However, this also might have had something to do with the fact that the monitoring period happened to coincide with International Women's Day. It will be interesting to see if women's rights remain as newsworthy in the next monitoring period (July–September 2007).

• **If a human rights violation coincides with a particular event or date which is linked to a human rights violation there is a higher chance of it being reported by a Western newspaper.**

For example, the demonstrations that took place on International Women's Day were widely reported by the Western media whereas the arrests of teachers and students were almost completely ignored. One possible explanation for this is that such a story is easier for a journalist to successfully pitch to a newspaper editor.

• **Although certain newspapers in Iran do report stories pertaining to human rights, they are not reported as 'human rights stories', but rather as facts, eg 'x has been executed for killing his wife', or 'y is being prosecuted on charges of libel' etc.**

This was evident from our Iranian rapporteur's reports (see the Appendix at pages 57–58). He wrote:

When Iranian newspapers mention court cases, they merely list their activities briefly, which are normally followed by the charges. *It is this part of the newspaper where one can extract the news regarding the activities of students, journalists, NGO's and determine a particular publication's stance towards democracy and the promotion of human rights within Iran.* These newspapers also publish statements from members of the parliament, in particular those of the minority reformist or independent factions (emphasis added).

In other words, human rights violations in Iran are not reported as human rights stories, but merely as factual occurrences.

- Of the Western countries whose newspapers were monitored, Canada published the most human rights stories from Iran followed by France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Germany and the USA.

See Table 1 (page 39).

- Newspapers from former communist countries (in this case Poland and the Russian Federation) reported very few stories on the human rights situation in Iran.

During the monitoring period only two stories were published on human rights in Iran by the Polish newspapers (*Dziennik*, 20 March and 16 April, and *Wysokie Obcasy*, 21 April) and one by a Russian newspaper ([Izvestiya](#), 24 April).

- Most of the human rights violations reported by the Iranian press concerned women's rights, the right to education and the freedom of expression. Most of the human rights violations reported by the Western press concerned women's rights, the right to liberty and security and the freedom of movement.

See Tables 5a and b (pages 47 and 48).

- Of the Western newspapers being monitored, the *Toronto Star* published the most stories on human rights violations in Iran followed by the *Globe & Mail*, the *Guardian*, *Der Standard*, *Le Figaro* and the *National Post*, *La Presse*, *Die Presse*, *Le Monde*, *Libération*, *20 Minutes*, *The New York Times*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

See Table 3 (page 42).

- The broadsheets published more stories on the human rights situation in Iran than the tabloids.

With the exception of *20 Minutes* (France), no other tabloid made the list of the top ten ranking newspapers reporting on human rights violations in Iran (see Table 3, page 42).

- Generally speaking, those newspapers which would be described as politically left, left-of-centre or liberal, were more likely to report on the human rights situation in Iran.

Although most newspapers purport to be independent, those generally associated with liberal values, such as the *Guardian*, the *Toronto Star*, *Der Standard* and *Libération* made the list of top-ten-ranking newspapers reporting on Iranian human rights violations. However, there were exceptions: *Le Figaro* and the *National Post*, which are generally seen as conservative newspapers, also ranked highly.

## Appendix 1: Summaries of Country Reports

**Author's note:** These country reports have all been written by different national rapporteurs, hence the style of writing varies from country to country.

### **Austria** (Lena Kayhan-Rad)

The focus of the Austrian print media was Iran's uranium enrichment programme and the British marine hostage drama, which was mentioned by all the papers monitored in Austria. Some Austrian journalists tried to shine some light on the discussions about the hostage drama from different angles. In this context, **Die Presse** published a story, under the topic 'Media Coverage of Iran'. The article was about the difficulties that Western reporters face with the Iranian authorities.

Another story concerned the planned multi-million-euro deal between Austria's energy company OMV and Iran. The discussions which took place regarding the business deal between the two countries were reported from a political standpoint. All the major government politicians in Austria sided with OMV and most of the articles in the newspapers supported the Government. **Die Presse** made an exception with its article 'Responsibility for Austria', discussing the human rights situation in Iran.

Most of the articles on Iran were published by **Der Standard**, followed by **Die Presse**. Only one article appeared in **Die Neue Krone** ('Iran's Government Prohibits Western Haircuts'). Many of the articles regarding the freedom of expression were based on reports from **Reporters Without Borders**. These reports concerned prosecutions against bloggers. Iran was introduced as a classic example of a country practising internet censorship. Stories relating to human rights in Iran were only sufficiently explored in the two quality papers, **Der Standard** and **Die Presse**, and were ignored by the two national tabloids **Die Neue Krone** and **Österreich**.

### **France** (Celia Pascaud)

Most of the stories reported by the French media concerned the financial sanctions imposed against Iran and the question of whether or not that country wants to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes or whether it wants to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Having said this, there were several articles on human rights.

For example, an article in **Le Figaro** reported that three women's rights activists were arrested in Tehran in January. In February, **Le Figaro** and **Libération** both mentioned an island which would be exclusively allocated for women.

**Le Figaro** published a short article reporting that four men implicated in several bomb attacks were executed in public. In this regard, **Le Monde** reported that no details of the trial were given by the official agency **IRNA**, even though there were less than seven days between the perpetration of the attack by these men and their execution.

An article in **Le Monde** also stressed that an increasing number of Iranian people (including some deputies and Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri) disapprove of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's internal and external politics. A couple of days later **Libération** reported this as well.

Two articles related to women's rights were published in April by *20 Minutes* and *Le Figaro*, regarding the morality campaign, which began as the weather got better. Many men and women were taken to police stations for bad hijab.

*Le Figaro*, *Aujourd'hui en France*, *20 Minutes* and *Le Monde* reported that a French researcher, Stéphane Dudoignon, was given a compulsory order of residence in Tehran. The police took from him his passport, camera and computer. He was detained in Iran for two months because of the subject-matter of his research—the Sunni minority in Iran—which is a controversial issue in Iran. *Le Figaro* and *20 Minutes* reported that two Swedes were detained in Iranian jails for over a year.

### **Canada** (Salman Haq)

During the monitoring period, two major international stories highlighted the increasing vulnerability of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at home. First, the ongoing confrontation between Iran and the West over the former's nuclear ambitions; and secondly, the capture and release of 15 British sailors and marines. Coverage of both incidents revealed increasing unhappiness with the regime from both ordinary people and senior members of Iran's political and religious elite.

An article in the *Globe and Mail* quoted the leader of the Iranian–Kurdish guerrilla movement as saying that the people in Iran are 'counting on' the fall of Ahmadinejad and many are 'waiting for the explosion, for a chance to act'. In Canada, supporters of a banned organization demonstrated and demanded for it to be removed from Canada's terrorist organization list. Canada lists the Mujaheddin-e-Khalq (MEK) as aspiring to overthrow the current Iranian regime and create a democratic, socialist, and Islamic republic. An opinion piece called for Canada to take Iran's threat to the West seriously, impose harsh sanctions and support Iranians who want change, including students, journalists, women and writers.

The British sailors' capture also brought coverage of the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, who are increasingly powerful. They control the Basiji, the 'morality police' who monitor people's activities, enforce *Sharia* law, harass women who wear too much make-up and report families who watch satellite television.

In April, an article reported that Iran was launching its annual summer crackdown on men and women whose dress is deemed out of line with the country's Islamic laws. An editorial criticized the Iranian Supreme Court for throwing out the murder convictions against six members of a pro-government vigilante group who drowned a young couple because the group thought they were 'morally corrupt' by having sex before marriage. The Court said that Iran's penal code permitted killing the morally corrupt.

There were a number of human rights stories and articles reporting that within Iran there are increasing numbers of scholars, activists, journalists and students being jailed or tortured for expressing beliefs or ideas that are contrary to the Government's views. In the context of the British sailors' capture, one article discussed the ability of ordinary people in Iran to speak out about their Government's actions. The article noted that public opinion can be hard to gauge because there are few independent polls. Also, although people feel free to discuss social and political issues among friends, most are less willing to express outright dissent with the Government.

There were also a few stories highlighting the refugee claims made by Iranian exiles in Canada and overseas, who claimed they would be harassed, tortured or killed if they were sent back to Iran. Two particular stories dominated press coverage. The first story, involved a nine-year-old

Canadian boy and his Iranian parents, which received considerable media coverage—and probably had a major impact on the decision of the Canadian Government. The second story involved a mother and her two children stuck in international limbo in a Moscow airport terminal.

A series of articles in the *Globe and Mail* delved more deeply into Iranian society; for example, one article explored the idea that the huge younger generation has no appetite for a new Islamic revolution, and prefers the separation of church and State. Another article (not included in this study) cited a University of Tehran study that found that a large majority of Iranian youths said they see religion as a strictly private matter without any political behaviour, with no desire to be reflected in law or public behaviour.

Iran's most secular philosopher, Daryush Shayegan, was reported as being optimistic about Iran in the long term. Shayegan, now retired from academia, still writes, but the Government's aggressive crackdowns on intellectual, artistic and political work have made publishing almost impossible. He believes that Iran is in the midst of change, and is actually ahead of other Muslim countries. He noted that the younger generation does not believe in the Islamic revolution, and free elections would result in someone 'quite different' from Ahmadinejad.

### **Germany** (Anna Milena Jurca)

During the first month, most of the articles dealing with Iran focused on the conflict between Iran and the United Nations with regard to Iran's alleged nuclear weapons programme and the UN resolutions imposing economic sanctions. There were also discussions about how to deal with Iran on the international plane. Iran was mentioned in articles about the war against terrorism and to what extent Iran supports terrorists groups in Lebanon and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The German newspapers paid more attention to security issues and gave almost no attention to human rights issues.

In the second month, the German media that was monitored did not deal at length with specific human rights issues, focusing more on the relations between Iran and the United Nations, Iran's nuclear programme and economic and diplomatic relations between Europe/Germany and Iran. The three topics that briefly touched upon human rights questions were: (1) the tensions between Sunni and Shiites that are manipulated by both the US and Iran; (2) corruption in Iran by the head of *Total*, Christophe de Margerie; and (3) the release of the detained German citizen Klein.

Between March and April, there were very few articles published that focused on human rights issues in Iran. Most of the articles about Iran dealt with international relations problems, especially regarding Iran's ambition for nuclear power and Western reactions (the US mentioning attacking Iran as well as resolutions by the UN). The other big topic was the kidnapping of 15 British marine soldiers that were accused of violating Iranian territory. This incident heated up diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Iran for about 10 days, during which this was the main topic in regard to Iran in the monitored newspapers. *Die Welt* was the only newspaper that mentioned the arrest of four women's rights activists and demonstrations against the movie *300*.

### **Iran** (Kourosh Taheri)

Only the reformist newspapers, *Aftab e Yazd* and *Etemad*, covered stories relating to the student movement and, in particular, student unions, including human rights and women issues. The reformist newspapers, especially *Aftab e Yazd*, published the news with a view to being perceived as 'balanced', presumably to avoid criticism in an act of self-censorship attributed to all publications in Iran.

The conservative, hard-line newspapers such as *Jomhori Islami* and *Kayhan* continued to cover ideological matters, such as the war in Iraq and the problems in the Middle East with their 'special and unique' view of the world. These two newspapers did not cover stories related to human rights, women issues, students, democracy or any kind of activity towards an open society. There was only one exception in regards to those stories which are regarded as acts of 'terrorism', such as the hangings after the Ahvaz bombings, the troubles in Zahedan (Sistan Province) or Kurdish rebel activity.

When Iranian newspapers mention court cases, they merely list their activities briefly, which are normally followed by the charges. It is this part of the newspaper where one can extract the news regarding the activities of students, journalists and NGOs and determine a particular publication's stance towards democracy and the promotion of human rights within Iran. These newspapers also publish statements from members of the parliament, in particular those of the minority reformist or independent factions.

In the days preceding the Iranian New Year, the newspapers in both camps focused on the 1389 (2007) budget, questioning the president on his foreign policy and his irresponsible statements internationally and within Iran. The other issue of concern was the single payment policy for workers who believe that it is discriminatory towards workers with temporary contracts. The current system is a double payment system with different wage rates for the two categories.

Teachers are demanding better standards of living and an increase in their wages and have taken to the streets in protest. Although the reformist newspapers did report the teacher's demonstration, they did not give an exact number of those teachers who were arrested. For example, the Student Committee of Human Rights Reporters, a weblog, reported that only 10 teachers are known to be in Cell 209 of Evin prison, which is related to the information and security services, and that 44 Teachers who the authorities promised to release before the New Year are still being held in detention. The same weblog reported that the demonstration attracted approximately 10,000 people whereas the newspapers estimated it at 3,000. The women's rights activists who protested against the arrests of their colleagues were also mentioned in the news but only under the court process and listings in the various papers. The hard-line newspapers, including *Kayhan* and *Ressalat*, did not report a single news story on the teachers' demonstration or on the women and students' rights movements. These papers only mentioned them in passing in editorial columns worrying about the political side of teachers' demonstration, although they concluded that unlike the women and students' rights movements, the teachers' strike was not political but concerned their low salaries and poor living conditions.

The moderate newspapers such as *Etemad* and *Aftab e Yazd*, which both covered the same events, covered these stories in positive terms within the Islamic system. Their coverage of the news relating to the demands of the people for change can only be found in the sections related to the court reports where they normally stipulate the charges levelled against those persons accused of supporting the women's and students' rights movements. So, their reporting in most cases is not direct news reporting but is mentioned merely as court reporting. The court reports and disciplinary committee's decisions are the most informative sections of these papers, reflecting the developments in Iran relating to the build up of attempts for human rights and democracy.

Apart from the above news coverage, all the newspapers covered the question of nuclear energy and the problems with the Russians regarding the Bushehr atomic reactor project, UN sanctions and the possibility of a new American 'adventure' in the Gulf. It seems that the Government's foreign policy problems, such as pressure from the US and others, are having the effect of increasing pressure on civil activists inside the country. One example of such a restriction is the naming of the New Year as 'National Unity and Islamic Solidarity', which is gradually taking shape as a new offence equivalent to espionage. On the other hand, the recent crackdown on the so-

called un-Islamic dress code, ('bad-hijab'), in the streets and at the universities is another step towards containing the people as the political and economic pressures mount against the system.

### **Italy** (Pejman Abdolmohammadi)

In the first month of the monitoring period the Italian papers published different articles about Iran. These included Bush's State of the Union Address on Iran, the terrorist attack of *Jondollah* against the *Pasdaran* in Ahwaz province and the declaration of Condoleeza Rice about Ahmadinejad. The Italian media also reported on the meeting between President Romano Prodi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Massimo D'Alema, with Ali Larijani in Rome on the eve of the deadline of the UN's ultimatum to Iran.

The UN sanctions and the reaction of Ahmadinejad and his declarations about his aim to continue in his own way dominated the news from Iran during the second month of the monitoring period. The capture of the 15 British marines and the diplomatic tensions between Iran and the UK were also covered extensively. The provocative declarations, the scandal of the videos of the British marines and a report of the letter from Faye Turney that was published in the UK's *Independent* were also reported.

In the last month of the monitoring period there were no articles about the human rights situation in Iran in the Italian newspapers. This was probably because there were other stories of international concern in Afghanistan and when the Russian civil demonstrations against Putin's Government occurred, which may explain why there was a lack of attention given to the Iranian situation.

### **Poland** (Anna Tomaszewska)

In the last three months the human rights situation in Iran was an almost non-existent topic in the Polish newspapers. Instead, there was plenty of news on foreign policy. On average, one would find some information on Iran almost every day. From this information, Iran comes across as a dangerous, unpredictable country, trying to intimidate the 'Western World' as well as their neighbouring countries. The perception of the press in Poland is that Iranian politicians are very busy threatening the world with their nuclear weapons (even though they do not at present have any). The Iranian nuclear programme was the number one news item on Iran. This is all evident from reading the broadsheets *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Dziennik*.

The tabloids do not pay much attention to this particular part of the world. As a matter of fact, in *Fakt* there was not one single news story about Iran. The newspaper *Super Express* considered the story about British marines held hostage by Iran interesting enough to give it a short paragraph. Neither *Fakt* nor *Super Express* have separate pages of information for foreign news. Both are targeted to the less educated and less wealthy parts of Polish society. Usually, these groups are more concerned with home affairs and local (national) problems. This may explain why there was a lack of information on Iran in the tabloids.

On average there was a story on Iran in the Polish broadsheets almost every day. Usually, the news is given in the form of small notes or in a short article. The overwhelming part of the reports concern political issues. There was no space for stories about everyday life in Iran. When reading the papers one would have no idea how life is under the Islamic regime, or what kind of problems the Iranian people have. Especially at the end of March and beginning of April, the attention of the broadsheets was mainly focused only on the British marines taken as prisoners.

For all these reasons it was quite surprising to find that between the 25 March and 25 April there were a few commentaries on Iran in the Polish broadsheets. *Dziennik Polska Europa Swiat* has a weekly supplement called *Europa* which contains analysis and opinions about the situation in Europe and in the world politics. *Dziennik* belongs to Axel Springer, which is why one can find in *Europa* a lot of famous names. The texts are not written just for *Europa* but are distributed in Axel Springer's other publications. The issue of 14 April, for example, contained two analyses about American and European policy towards Iran. The first one was by Joschka Fisher, the former German foreign minister. He analysed the situation in Iran and suggested the best way for Europe to deal with Tehran. He explained why, in the event of a war with Iran, Europe would be at a disadvantage. He said that Iran could be attacked by the USA which is a rare thing to say in Polish newspapers (which usually portrays the US in a favourable light). In this issue of *Europa* one can also find a text by Fred Halliday about Iranian foreign policy. He explained that Iranians think of their country as a world power. In his opinion, the revolution of 1979 is still propelling Iranian policy.

On 21 April, in the weekly supplement *Wysokie Obcasy* there was a big report about Iranian women, their dreams and everyday life. It was a story about seven women from different social groups, with a different education and with differing expectations of life. The first woman was 88 years old, a very devout woman who was happy with her life. She mentioned that her children live a modern life abroad and married non-Islamic partners. The second woman was Laleh Seddiq, the best Iranian racing-car driver and the only woman in the Middle East who takes part in rallies. She can practise driving only once a week, when the racetrack is free (in other words, when no men are there). She also cannot have a man as a navigator. The next women to be interviewed were Marziye and Raziye Borumand, a film director and an actress. In private the sisters wear European clothes and live a western life. All the women said that they were happy with their lives. Some of them are supporting social changes in Iran. For example, last year 64 per cent of all students in Iranian universities were women. They do not see the religion as a problem but the rules based on it after the revolution of 1979.

The main goal of this article is to show that women in Iran are also important members of society. They are the power behind a lot of changes taking place in Iran. This is the first article in three months to depict the Iranian people as 'normal', where women can also work and be happy in Iran. It shows also the differences and dilemmas between the European and Iranian population.

### **Russian Federation** (Victoria Rogova)

In the month of February most articles in the Russian press concentrated on the development of Iran's nuclear programme and Iran's relationship with the US. There was a lot of news on the sanctions imposed on Iran, and there was a great deal of speculation relating to whether the US intended to start a military campaign against Iran. Emphasis was also placed on the relationship between Iran and Russia, in particular on talks regarding creation of a 'gas OPEC'.

In March, the *Moscow Times*, *Kommersant*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* and *Izvestiya* concentrated on the following major topics: Iran's nuclear programme, Russian-Iranian nuclear relations, sanctions and detention of British Sailors by the Iranian authorities. There was also an article in the beginning of the month, based on a BBC report, which speculated that military aggression towards Iran may cause it to speed up their nuclear programme. They subsequently reported that Iran threatened military action against the US if they were not allowed to continue with nuclear development. The Russian-Iranian nuclear relationship received extensive coverage, in particular the issue of funding and construction of the nuclear plant in Bushehr, which was halted for political reasons. The papers also reported on Russia joining forces with the West in an attempt to contain the Iranian nuclear weapons programme. In mid-March these papers mentioned the Iranian President's express desire to address the UN Security Council during the summit



concerning Iran's nuclear development, and his subsequent struggle to get permission and a visa. After the UN summit took place, **Kommersant** featured an article on the UN veto on the Iranian nuclear programme and the imposition of harsh sanctions on Iran. At the end of the month, all of the papers (mentioned above) reported the controversial capture and detention of 15 British sailors by the Iranian authorities, and made an early comment that their detention may bring another war to the Middle East.

**Komsomolskaya Pravda** did not regard issues related to Iran as newsworthy. They only published an article, based on a BBC survey, alleging that Iran was one of the most unpopular countries in the world alongside the USA and Israel. There was also a very brief report on the capture by the Iranian authorities of the 15 British sailors.

**Izvestiya** announced Iran's initial intention to build their first nuclear power station without any foreign help and doubted their ability to do so. The Bushehr plant negotiations were covered at great length from both political and economic perspectives. The newspaper reported that threat of military aggression against Iran on the part of the US will provoke Iran to build nuclear weapons. There were interesting articles relating to disappearance of three Iranian officials in the past three months and subsequent disappearance of another 10 officials/generals. Initially it was reported that they were kidnapped by the US in order to destabilize the Iranian Government, but subsequent reports claimed that they had escaped to the West on their own initiative. The capture of 15 British sailors received extensive coverage, in particular Russia's involvement in negotiations for their release.

Early April was dominated by reports on negotiations for the release of 15 British sailors. The **Moscow Times** did not just convey the facts, but it went further and questioned Iran's underlying intention for keeping them captive. The **Moscow Times** reported on an apparent threat to Europe from the Iranian missiles and subsequently discussed the pros and cons of the US anti-missile programme in Europe. Mid-April was dominated by the news relating to Iran's nuclear development: Iran's expansion of their uranium enrichment programme to 3,000 centrifuges and their intention to construct two nuclear plants in addition to the Bushehr project. Lastly, there was an article reporting that an Iranian Revolutionary Guard General visited Russia despite the travel ban.

**Kommersant**, **Rossiiskaya Gazeta** and **Izvestiya** all reported on the negotiations for the release of 15 British sailors. They also published articles addressing the question of military action against Iran. Russia warned the US to think twice before any attack on Iran, because of the possible consequences of such actions.

In April **Komsomolskaya Pravda** was unusually focused in Iran. In the beginning of the month they announced that World War III was to start on 6 April at 4.00 am when the US would start bombing Iran and speculated on how this attack would develop into a world war. They also reported that talks about a possible war in Iran caused the share price of many Russian oil companies to plummet. There were also articles relating to the release of British sailors and their not-so-heroic behaviour upon their return to England and an interesting piece alleging that Condoleezza Rice's dislike of Iran is personal.

**Izvestiya** was the only Russian newspaper during the entire monitoring period to publish a story on the human rights situation in Iran (['The hunt for women in breach of "Muslim dress code" has paid off', 24 April 2007](#)).

## United Kingdom (Victor Kattan)

At the end of January, the *Guardian* was the only British newspaper to publish stories pertaining to the internal human rights situation in Iran. However, it did not report (and neither did any of the other British newspapers) on the four men hanged for the Ahwaz bombings in January (the executions took place on 24 January). This was even though the executions were reported by **Agence France-Presse**, **Amnesty International** and condemned by the **German presidency of the EU**. In fact, it was not until almost a month later on 20 February that a British newspaper published a story on public executions in Iran (published by the *Daily Mail*), after a man was executed for allegedly planting a bomb which killed 11 members of Iran's revolutionary guards on 14 February. The *Sun*, for example, found the study undertaken by an Israeli NGO which concluded that Iranian children are being taught to hate the West more newsworthy than these public executions (in fact, that newspaper did not publish a single story, apart from this, on the internal human rights situation in Iran during the entire monitoring period). Instead the vast majority of news on Iran between January and February concerned Iran's relations with the West, its alleged nuclear weapons programme, its involvement in Iraq, Ahmedinajad's unpopularity at home, and whether or not Israel was going to attack Iran.

Towards the end of February and in early March, the *Guardian* reported that the Iranian Government was cracking down on internal dissent by closing down websites critical of government policy. That paper also reported on the university protests at Tehran's Amir Kabir University, where students had been expelled and earmarked for compulsory military service. The *Guardian* further reported the protests of teachers and trade unionists who protested against the Government. In contrast, *The Times* was more interested in the story that an Iranian general may have defected to the West. The *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* found Iran's accusations that the US was waging psychological warfare against them because of a film which they think portrays Iranians in a negative light newsworthy. The *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* were also the only British newspapers to report in any detail on the Russian u-turn over the Bushehr nuclear reactor (Russia had been assisting Iran with technical know-how in building the reactor). *The Times* published the full text of the UN Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on Iran. The *Guardian*, the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* reported the story that the chief of TOTAL, the French oil company is being questioned by police over bribery allegations relating to a deal in Iran. All of these papers, including the *Sun* and the *Mirror* reported on the hostage crisis between Iran and the UK, by publishing reports, commentaries, editorials and letters. Some of these reports were published on the front pages of these newspapers with large colour photographs. None of these papers reported the news that UN Human Rights Council had decided to drop its examinations of violations in Iran (even though this was reported by **Agence France-Presse**, the **Associated Press**, the **UN News website** and by **Human Rights Watch**) or that drug abuse is increasing amongst Iranian women (**BBC Monitoring International Reports**). Instead some commentators advanced the argument that Britain should invade Iran (not on humanitarian grounds but to release the British soldiers).

In fact there were more stories reported on Iran in the two-week-long hostage crisis (which lasted from 23 March to 4 April) than on the internal human rights situation in that country during the entire three-month period.

## USA (Alasdair Henderson)

In January there was fairly extensive coverage of Iran in the newspapers. However, the focus was almost entirely on two issues unrelated to the human rights field, namely Iranian nuclear ambitions and Iranian interference (alleged and actual) in Iraq. There were several open-editorial pieces on these two subjects as well, but none has touched on human rights concerns.

There was slightly more coverage of human rights and democratization issues in the papers monitored during February. However, the vast majority of news about Iran (and there was at least one article every day) was about the nuclear weapons situation, Iran's relations with the West, its influence in Iraq or the Middle East generally. There have been several extensive articles and opinion pieces covering these perspectives on Iran, and some lively debate in the letters pages (especially in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*). These have dealt with: Iranian nuclear ambitions, Iranian influence in Iraq, the recent stock market slide, the price of oil, general Iranian relations with the US and Europe, talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the offer of talks on Iraq by President Bush to Iran and Syria (**author's note**: these stories have not been included in the survey, because they are not human rights stories).

In March most of the news on Iran was on foreign policy issues. There was exhaustive reporting in each monitored newspaper and several opinion pieces on the continuing nuclear ambitions issue, the role of Iran in the Iraqi insurgency, the US–Syria–Iran–Iraq conference, Ahmadinejad's trip to the UN, and, most recently, the seizure of the 15 British sailors. However, once more very little was reported regarding internal Iranian politics, human rights or democratization. There were a few exceptions to this, of which the series of articles in the *LA Times* and *The New York Times* on the women's rights demonstrations were the most important.

In April there was very little coverage of Iranian internal politics, democratization or human rights issues, although there was extremely extensive coverage of the British sailor's hostage crisis, and some of the articles looked like they might touch very briefly on such issues, but actually almost never did. There was also been continued coverage and commentary about Iranian interference in Iraq and Iranian nuclear ambitions, along with more opinion about possible responses by the US (although less than the month before). There were three articles in the *LA Times* at weekends which touched on the issues being monitored, but since these were not within the scope of monitoring process they have not been recorded.

## Appendix 2: Background Documents on Print Media

### Austrian Print Media (Lena Keyhan-Rad)

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#### Circulation figures

The Austrian print media market consists of seven daily national newspapers. The following five come under the so-called 'quality' papers (circulation figures are provided in brackets): **Kleine Zeitung** (269, 754), **Kurier** (169, 055), **Die Presse** (78.012), **Der Standard** (74, 790) and **Salzburger Nachrichten** (68, 967)

There are only two national tabloids in Austria, namely: **Die Krone** (849, 330) and **Österreich** (the first issue of **Österreich** was printed on the 1 September 2006 with a circulation figure of 250, 000 copies).

As the above figures illustrate the written press in Austria is dominated by **Die Krone**, which when measured against the total population of Austria (estimated in October, 2006 at 8,292,322 persons) sells copies to over 12.4 per cent of Austria's literate aged 15+ population (84 per cent of the population is 15 years of age and 98 per cent are literate as of October 2006) and is hence broadly believed to be one of the widest reaching national papers in the world.

**Die Krone** sells more copies than all the other daily papers together.

#### Ownership structure

Until 1987, **Die Krone** had been owned and controlled by the Dichand Family. In 1987 a 50 per cent shareholding was sold to the German WAZ (*Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*) who in 1988 also acquired a 49.4 per cent in **Die Kurier**.

In 1998, **Die Krone** and **Kurier** joined forces and founded Mediaprint, which is today the market leader with 55.4 per cent of the print distribution followed by the Styria Media AG (**Kleine Zeitung**, **Die Presse**) with 17.9 per cent. It is notable that the Styria Media AG is 98.33 per cent controlled by the Catholic diocese of Graz.

**Österreich** belongs to the Fellner Media AG, a family-run organization founded by the brothers Wolfgang & Helmut Fellner, which has its roots in the Magazine sector.

#### Political Stance

All Austrian newspapers describe themselves as politically neutral. The most influential print media—**Die Krone**—reports in a way that raises nationalistic sentiments and mobilises public opinion.

Wolfgang Fellner, chief editor of **Österreich**, advertizes the fact that he follows the example of **USA Today**, which is oriented towards the mass opinion. **Die Presse** takes a bourgeois, liberal view on a high level.

Nearer to the left-hand side of the political spectrum stands **Kurier**, which is directed at the middle class.

## Recommended publications to monitor

Broadsheets: *Die Presse* and *Kurier*  
Tabloids: *Die Krone* and *Österreich*

The recommended newspapers are most representative of the views of the Austrian public not only because they are the widest-reaching/published papers but also because they cover both the left and the right of the political divide.

## French Print Media (Celia Pascaud)

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### Context

In France, newspapers are not clearly categorized as either broadsheets or tabloids as is common in UK. One could, however, make a distinction between newspapers that place emphasis on analysis and international news (eg *Le Monde*) and those which are more popular and nationally focused (eg *Aujourd'hui en France*). Whereas the national press has encountered a decline in sales, regional newspapers (eg *Ouest France*) still have an important readership. Nevertheless, analyses of external relations are almost inexistent there. Thus, I would not use these newspapers to undertake an analysis about human rights in Iran.

### Circulation figures

The daily circulation figures of the main daily national newspapers in France are as follows: *20 Minutes* (711, 680), *Metro* (540, 223), *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* (511, 805), *L'Equipe* (366, 631), *Le Monde* (357, 899), *Le Figaro* (337, 779), *Libération* (142, 483), *Les Echos* (140, 300), *La Croix* (103, 565).<sup>18</sup> According to these statistics, the free newspapers are the most widely read, followed by *L'Equipe*, the sports newspaper, and *Le Monde*, the newspaper of record for the general news.

### Ownership structure

Groupe Ouest France and 20 Min Holding AG (Norwegian company Schibsted) own *20 Minutes*.  
Metro International (Swedish Media Company) owns the *Metro*.  
Groupe Amaury owns *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* and *L'Equipe*.  
Groupe La vie Le monde owns *Le Monde*.  
Company Socpresse (Serge Dassault) owns *Le Figaro*.  
Edouard de Rothschild (main shareholder) owns *Libération*.  
Pearson PLC (British media group) owns *Les Echos*.  
Bayard Presse owns *La Croix*.

### Political stance

Some of these papers can hardly be categorized according to their political stance: *20 Minutes* and *Metro*, as free newspapers, offer brief and factual news. *L'Equipe* is a sports newspaper and *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* is mainly focused on news in brief, and does not have an obvious political orientation.

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<sup>18</sup> Source: OJD, total circulation 2005–2006, <[http://www.ojd.com/engine/adhchif/adhe\\_list.php?mode=chif&cat=1771](http://www.ojd.com/engine/adhchif/adhe_list.php?mode=chif&cat=1771)>.

In contrast, *Libération* stands clearly on the left wing of the political spectrum, while *Le Figaro* could fairly be described as conservative. *Le Monde* is more likely to be perceived as a left-of-centre newspaper. *Les Echos* is the newspaper of record concerning the economy and its editorial line may be described as moderate. *La Croix* is historically a Catholic newspaper and could be described as centre left.

### Recommended publications to monitor

*Le Monde*, as a newspaper of record in France (29, 103, 475 visits on the website [Lemonde.fr](http://Lemonde.fr)<sup>19</sup>), *Le Figaro* and *Libération* in order to get opinions from both sides of the political spectrum. *20 Minutes* and *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France* should also be monitored as they are read by over 1.2 million French people.

## Canadian Print Media (Salman Haq)

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### Circulation figures

The top five Canadian daily newspapers are as follows, with daily circulation figures in brackets: *Toronto Star* (465,514); *Globe and Mail* (335,740); *Le Journal de Montréal* (272,875); *National Post* (231,244); and *La Presse* (216,354).<sup>20</sup> Only the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* are considered national papers; both are based in Toronto, Canada's largest city, and also have local coverage for the city. The third and fifth most read papers are in French, and originate from Montreal, Canada's second-largest city. Only *Le Journal de Montréal* is in tabloid format; the others are broadsheet newspapers.

### Ownership structure

Ownership of major daily newspapers in Canada underwent a tumultuous period of consolidation and transfers between 1997 and 2004. By 2005, however, five media groups owned almost 80 per cent of the market share: Canwest (28 per cent); Quebecor/Sun Media (20 per cent); Torstar (14 per cent); Power Corp (10 per cent); CTV/Globemedia (7 per cent). Each of these companies also owns one of the top five daily newspapers in terms of circulation. Canwest owns the *National Post*, Quebecor/Sun Media publishes *Le Journal de Montreal*, Torstar controls the *Toronto Star*, Power Corp owns *La Presse*, and CTV/Globemedia holds the *Globe and Mail*. It is important to note that the leading daily newspaper in virtually every Canadian city is owned by one of these five ownership groups, meaning that they control the vast majority of print media content in Canada.

### Political stance

The top three daily newspapers cover the political spectrum in Canada. The *Toronto Star* is considered left-leaning, the *Globe and Mail* centre or centre-right, and the *National Post* conservative and right-wing. The *Toronto Star* is considered the strongest leftist media voice in the country. The *Globe and Mail* is considered fiscally conservative but liberal on social issues, although it initially supported the war in Iraq. The *National Post* is unabashedly conservative, even on social issues such as gay marriage, and is a staunch supporter of Israel. In Québec, the tabloid *Le Journal de Montréal* has a conservative stance, while *La Presse* is somewhat leftist and liberal, especially on social issues.

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<sup>19</sup> Source: OJD. Visits on the website November 2006, <[http://www.ojd.com/dyn/\\_files/downloads/bim\\_nov06.pdf](http://www.ojd.com/dyn/_files/downloads/bim_nov06.pdf)>.

<sup>20</sup> All data from *Canadian Newspaper Association* (CNA) and is available online at <[www.can-acj.ca](http://www.can-acj.ca)>. Circulation figures as of November 2006. Ownership figures as of 2005.

## Recommended publications to monitor

**Toronto Star, Globe and Mail, National Post, La Presse**

These newspapers are the four largest broadsheet newspapers in Canada in terms of daily circulation and cover the political spectrum from left to right. Monitoring **La Presse** ensures that Québec, Canada's French language province, is not neglected.

## German Print Media (Anna Milena Jurca)

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### Circulation figures

Daily newspapers in Germany can be separated into broadsheets and tabloids, (circulation figures are provided in brackets): Broadsheets: **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (464, 898), **Süddeutsche Zeitung** (548, 348), **Die Welt** (929, 058), **die tageszeitung** (79, 429), and **Frankfurter Rundschau** (189, 151). Tabloids: the most important tabloid in Germany is **BILD** (4, 529, 737). It is the most-read newspaper in Europe, outnumbering the other daily newspapers all together. (Other tabloids with smaller and regional circulation are: **BZ** (Berlin, 264, 826), **Abendzeitung** (Munich, 205, 022), and **Express** (Cologne, 254, 632).<sup>21</sup>

### Ownership structure

**Die tageszeitung** (TAZ Verlags- und Vertriebsges.mbH), **Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung** (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH), **Abendzeitung** (Verlag Die Abendzeitung GmbH & Co KG), **Die Zeit** (Zeitverlag G Bucerius GmbH & Co) and **Süddeutsche Zeitung** (Süddeutsche Zeitung GmbH) own their own newspaper. **Frankfurter Rundschau** is owned by Druck-und Verlagshaus Frankfurt am Main GmbH, while **BZ** is owned by BZ Ullstein GmbH. The owner of the **Express** is M Dumont Schauberg Expedition der Kölnischen Zeitung GmbH & Co KG. **BILD** and **Die Welt** are both owned by Axel Springer AG, one of the largest newspaper publishing companies in Europe. Axel Springer AG also has shares at **BZ**.

### Political stance

By generalizing the political stance of the broadsheet newspapers mentioned above, we find a spectrum from right to left: **Die Welt—Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung—Die Zeit—Süddeutsche Zeitung—Frankfurter Rundschau—die tageszeitung**. While the first two in this list are in favour of more conservative values, **Süddeutsche Zeitung** and **Frankfurter Rundschau** could be described as emphasizing more liberal social views. **Die Zeit** is somewhat in the middle with a leaning slightly to the left, while **die tageszeitung** can be considered as far left. **BILD** is a tabloid with a more or less conservative orientation, favouring market economy and transatlantic relationships.

## Recommended publications to monitor

Broadsheets: **Frankfurter Allgemeine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt, Die Zeit**  
Tabloids: **BILD**

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<sup>21</sup> Circulation figures refer to the 3rd quarter of 2006; taken from IVW—Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern eV.

This selection covers both sides of the political spectrum and also takes into account circulation figures in order to reach a broad representation of the public opinion in Germany. Taken together, more than 7 million people buy those newspapers every day, probably more people read them. (For instance, the estimated readership of **BILD** is approximately 11.5 million people.)

## Iranian Print Media (Kourosh Taheri)

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### Circulation figures

Iranian daily national newspapers consist of the following, with circulation figures provided in brackets: Broadsheets: **Hamshahri** (500–700,000), **Etelaat** (100,000), **Hemayat** (100,000), **Hayat-e Now** (100,000), **MardomSalari** (150,000), **Iran** (400,000), **Resalat** (100,000), **Jam e Jam** (410,000), **Etemaad** (70,000), **Etemaad e Meli** (40,000), **Keyhan** (80,000), **Aftab e Yazd** (40,000), **Siasat e Rouz** (10,000), **Hambastegi** (15,000), and **Jomhuri Eslami** (50,000). There are no tabloid newspapers in Iran that can be compared to the Western newspapers but there are many sports newspapers and magazines. It should be noted that the circulation statistics report is not accessible through the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance and other State organs. The above information is submitted by two journalists currently working for two leading newspapers in Iran. Both journalists<sup>22</sup> confirmed the source to be officially accessed data but refused to name the source.

### Ownership structure

All newspapers in Iran are monitored and scrutinized by the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance. The Islamic Government subsidizes some of the paper used to print newspapers in Iran. However, the State-owned papers and those run by political parties enjoy more support than private or independent newspapers. This is because in Iran State-owned newspapers get direct financial support from the State.

The mayor of Tehran owns the **Hamshahri** newspaper, which is distributed nationally and financed by the State. **Etelaat** newspaper is also owned and financed by the State. **Hemayat** newspapers is owned and financed by the State and managed by the Organisation of Prisons. **Hayat-e Now** is a privately-owned newspaper and its editor-in-chief is Mr Khamenie, who is a brother of the Iranian leader Ali Khamenei, but who is considered a pro-reform political activist even though he is a member of the Militant Clerics Society.<sup>23</sup> **MardomSalari** is another private newspaper which is owned by MardomSalari (which means democracy in Persian), which is related to the MardomSalari Party. Its editor-in-chief is Mr Kovakabian. **Iran** newspaper and **Jam e Jam** are owned by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting Agency, which is a State-owned agency. **Resalaat** is a private newspaper owned by a faction of the Islamic party and its editor-in-chief is Mr Said Morteza Nabavi who is a hardliner close to the Islamic Coalition Party (ICP) and who, together with Mr Habib Allah Asgarowladi (Secretary General of ICP), is the principal shareholder of that newspaper. **Jomhuri Eslami** (JS) is owned by political parties linked to the leadership. It is assumed to be a private newspaper although it has links to the State. The JS publication licence is granted by the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, but the paper is financed by the Islamic Business group within the Tehran Bazaar.<sup>24</sup> So financially, it is a private newspaper but in terms of its management and political stance, it is run by the State.

### Political stance

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<sup>22</sup> I was asked by the journalists not to disclose their names in the report, so I can not cite any source for the statistics.

<sup>23</sup> House of Iranian Parties at <<http://www.ir-ph.org/Index.aspx>>.

<sup>24</sup> The Bazaar is the financial heart of Iran like the City in London. Historically, there has been a close connection between the Iranian Bazaar and the Islamic clerics. The Bazaar supports the Islamic Government politically and in return benefits from market monopolies.



The Iranian newspaper's political stance is hard to identify but the content, source and the links of the newspapers are parameters which assist in categorizing their political stance. The only legal opposition operating in Iran are called 'reformist' or sometimes assumed 'left' but the main reason for their 'legal' operation is that they have parted from the source of power but still obtain their connection. Both hardliners and reformists agree on the preservation of the Islamic values but the reformists tend to believe that the Islamic governance is compatible with democracy and human rights.

- A. Hard-line: (1) **Jomhuri Eslami**, (2) **Resalaat** (3) **Kiyhan** (4) **Siasat Rouz** (5) **Hemayat**
- B. Reformist : (1) **Etemad** (2) **Aftab e Yazd**
- C. Middle A&B: (1) **Hamshahri** (2) **Iran** (3) **Kargozaran**

#### Recommended publications to monitor

- A. (1) **Jomhuri Eslami**, (2) **Resalaat**
- B. (1) **Etemad** (2) **Aftab e Yazd**

Although a newspaper's circulation figures can be a factor in choosing a newspaper for the monitoring process, such statistics in Iran are unreliable because of the newspaper's ownership structure. In other words, the circulation figures do not necessarily reflect the fact that a particular newspaper is popular in Iran. The reasons for choosing the newspapers mentioned above are because they reflect the opinion of all sides of the political spectrum in Iran on human rights issues and democracy and because the publications in category B are read broadly by the public. All of the recommended newspapers can be monitored on the Internet.

#### Italian Print Media (Pejman Abdolmohammadi)

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##### Circulation figures

It is important to emphasize that there are more than 20 daily national newspapers in Italy today which express all the political trends of Italians, from the extreme left to the extreme right. In this study, only the most important and widely distributed papers will be monitored. The main Italian daily national newspapers consist of the following, with Italian circulation figures provided in brackets: Broadsheets: **Il Corriere della Sera** (677, 988), **La Repubblica** (626, 159), **Il Sole 24 Ore** (343, 000), **La Stampa** (322, 633), **Il Messaggero** (236, 000), and **Il Giornale** (208, 132). Most important weeklies: **L'Espresso** (562, 595), **Panorama** (505, 000), **Famiglia Cristiana** (718, 041).<sup>25</sup>

According to this data only 10 per cent of the Italian population reads a newspaper each day. The two most important newspapers are **Il Corriere della Sera** (founded in 1876, based in Milan) and **La Repubblica** (founded in 1976, based in Rome). There are also many other local and regional newspapers read daily by Italians. However, the printed press in Italy is not so widely read and according to the latest research almost 80 per cent of Italians prefer to watch news on the television rather than read it in the papers.<sup>26</sup>

##### Ownership structure

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<sup>25</sup> *Il Grande Libro della Stampa Italiana 2006:tutti i dati editoriali, societari e finanziari dei principali quotidiani, settimanali e mensili* (Genesis Press, Milano, 2006) 44, 88, 94, 95, 72, 60, 120, 136, 122.

<sup>26</sup> <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/4373775.stm>> (published: 31 October 2006).

Of the papers that will be monitored, the Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera (RCS) group owns the ***Il Corriere della Sera***. Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso, which is controlled by industrialist Carlo de Benedetti, owns ***La Repubblica*** and the weekly magazine ***L'Espresso***. The Fiat Group led by the Agnelli's family owns ***La Stampa***. The Il Sole 24 Ore Group, which is controlled by the Italian industrialists' association 'Confindustria', owns the business newspaper ***Il Sole 24 Ore***. ***Il Messaggero*** is owned by the Caltagirone Group. Societa Europea di Edizioni SPA controlled by Paolo Berlusconi, the brother of the head of the Italian opposition Silvio Berlusconi, owns ***Il Giornale***. The weekly magazine ***Panorama*** is controlled by Mondadori-Fininvest group, which is owned by Silvio Berlusconi.

### Political stance

From these newspapers it is possible to classify ***Il Giornale*** as a centre-right newspaper, ***Il Messaggero*** as a conservative, ***Il Corriere della Sera*** and ***La Stampa*** as centrist and ***la Repubblica*** as to the left in their political orientations. ***Il Sole 24 Ore*** being a business newspaper has a pragmatic line of thought and considers mostly the technical sides of the issues rather than their political origins.

### Recommended publications to monitor

#### ***La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera, Il Giornale***

These publications are broadly representative of the political orientation of the Italian public covering the centre-left, centre and centre-right of the present Italian political panorama. They are also read by almost 2.5 million Italians, making them the most popular newspapers in the country. ***La Repubblica*** expresses the positions and the ideas of the Italian left-wing intellectuals and politicians. ***Il Corriere della Sera*** adopts a kind of centrist style which critiques both right and left wings. ***Il Giornale*** stands completely on the right of the political spectrum and supports the political line of Silvio Berlusconi, the leader of the present opposition in Italy. The more important issues that make a difference between the centre-right and centre-left in Italy today is Government policy towards immigration, social justice and welfare. For example, regarding immigration, ***La Repubblica*** supports the idea of a new law to help and facilitate the integration of new immigrants, whereas ***Il Giornale*** is campaigning against immigrants and their integration into Italian society. Regarding the war in Iraq ***La Repubblica*** and ***Il Corriere della Sera*** opposed the Bush invasion without the support of the UN Security Council, whereas the right-wing papers such as ***Il Giornale*** supported the invasion and defined it as a 'defensive war against terrorism'.

### Polish Print Media (Anna Tomaszewska)

#### Circulation figures and participation on the market:

The Polish daily national newspaper market consists of following:

Daily newspapers	Circulations figures: available (sold)	Participation
GAZETA WYBORCZA (broadsheet)	596, 087 (429, 181)	19,81 per cent
FAKT (tabloid)	698, 066 (501, 572)	19,18 per cent

SUPER EXPRESS (tabloid)	319, 579 (192, 782)	8,66 per cent
DZIENNIK POLSKA EUROPA SWIAT (broadsheet)	448, 413 (224, 651)	7,79 per cent
RZECZPOSPOLITA (broadsheet)	240, 286 (152, 006)	5,43 per cent

This table shows that the Polish print-media market is divided between tabloids (27,84 per cent) and broadsheets (33,03 per cent). However, the most influential newspaper is without a doubt **Gazeta Wyborcza**, the first Polish private newspaper after 1989. Polish newspapers are still looking for their place at the market; the tabloids became more popular after **Fakt's** entry in October 2003 with their 'new style' of journalism.

### Ownership structure

Amongst the papers that will be monitored, the editor Axel Springer Polska owns **Fakt** and **Dziennik Polska Europa Swiat**. **Gazeta Wyborcza** belongs to Agora, a stock market company which owns a few radio stations, magazines and an Internet portal as well. Express Media (a Polish company with Swedish shareholders) owns **Super Express**. Fifty-one per cent of **Rzeczpospolita** belongs to the British investment fund Mecom Group and 49 per cent to Rzeczpospolita Inc, a State-owned enterprise.

### Political stance

It is difficult to categorize the political stance of newspapers in Poland. **Gazeta Wyborcza** is liberal, promotes free-market economy, liberal trade and tries to build open society. **Dziennik Polska Europa Swiat** is a new newspaper, but one could say that it is situated rather on the right side of the political spectrum, and may be more likely to emphasize a conservative point of view and traditional values.

The tabloids, **Fakt** and **Super Express**, are populist and mostly conservative, but they could also support some social or even socialist ideas, depending on public opinion. They usually support every initiative that has a chance of becoming popular, so it can increase the sales of the newspaper.

**Rzeczpospolita** is conservative, sometimes even right-wing and populist, but liberal concerning economic issues.

### Recommended publications to monitor:

Tabloids: **Fakt** and **Super Express**

Broadsheets: **Gazeta Wyborcza** and **Dziennik Polska Europa Swiat**

These publications cover more than 55 per cent of the market, so they are broadly representative. The circulation figures are divided in two groups to show the number of newspapers on the market and the number of papers actually sold. In fact, it is not the number of buyers which indicates real readership but the number of people who read it, although they may not have bought it. These papers cover the most popular opinions in Poland. None of the chosen papers are left-wing, because these papers do not have any significant influence on Polish public discourse. All the public institutions subscribe to **Rzeczpospolita**, because it contains information which is useful for everyday work like foreign exchange rates, bank rates, stock market information and public tenders and first-hand tax and customs information.

## Russian Print Media (Victoria Rogova)

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### General information and circulation figures

There are about 400 daily titles in circulation in Russia. However, the circulation figures are relatively low. As a news medium, the press has been overtaken by television, and as a result just over 100 papers are sold in Russia for every 1,000 inhabitants (one third of UK figures). The main Russian daily newspapers consist of the following, with the daily circulation figures provided in brackets: **Argumenty i Fakty** (weekly publication) (2,611,000), **Izvestia** (234,500), **Kommersant** (110,000–120,000), **Komsomolskaya Pravda** (729,000), **Moskovsky Komsomolets** (800,000), **Nezavisimaya Gazeta** (27,000), **Novaya Gazeta** (97,000), **Rossiyskaya Gazeta** (374,000), **Trud** (613,000), **Vedomosti** (42,000). There is no strict distinction between tabloids and broadsheets, as many newspapers publish both types of content. In addition to the Russian-language press there are English language publications, aimed at the ex-patriot community, the **Moscow Times** being the most popular of these newspapers.

### Ownership structure

In the 1990s, newspaper ownership in Russia was dominated by the oligarchs such as Boris Berezovsky, who acquired controlling interests in a number of titles. In recent years, however, several of the most influential papers have been bought by companies with close links to the Government. The main newspapers and owners are as follows: **Argumenty i Fakty**—Promsvyazbank, **Izvestia**—Gazprom-Media, **Kommersant**—Alisher Usmanov, **Komsomolskaya Pravda**—Prof-Media, **Moskovsky Komsomolets**—Pavel Gusev, **Nezavisimaya Gazeta**—Konstantin Remchukov, **Novaya Gazeta**—Staff (majority shareholder), **Rossiyskaya Gazeta**—Russian gGovernment, **Trud**—Promsvyazbank, **Vedomosti**—Wall Street Journal, Financial Times & Independent Media.<sup>27</sup>

### Political stance

Due to the current ownership of the newspapers, a lot adopt a pro-Kremlin attitude or are otherwise influenced by the Government. These include **Izvestiya**, **Kommersant**, and **Rossiyskaya Gazeta**. On the left of the political spectrum is **Komsomolskaya Pravda**; **Trud** **Nezavisimaya** (the Independent) takes the centrist position; and **Vedomosti** and the **Moscow Times** portray themselves as politically neutral.

### Publications to be monitored

**Kommersant**, **Izvestiya**, **Nezavisimaya**, **Komsomolskaya Pravda**, **Rossiyskaya Gazeta** and **Moscow Times**.

These publications are broadly representative of the Russian public. They are widely read and well-established newspapers. These papers cover all spectrums of political divide.

## UK Print Media (Victor Kattan)

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### Circulation figures

<sup>27</sup> General information and ownership details courtesy of <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/europe/4315129.stm>>.

The main British daily national newspapers consist of the following, with the daily UK circulation figures provided in brackets. Broadsheets: **Financial Times** (137, 635), **The Times** (620, 085), **Guardian** (332, 867), **Daily Telegraph** (851, 902) and the **Independent** (214, 892). Tabloids: **Sun** (2, 930, 512), **Daily Mirror** (1, 476, 682), **Daily Mail** (2, 176, 256), **Daily Star** (649, 642) and the **Daily Express** (741, 603).<sup>28</sup> As is clearly evident from these figures the British public generally prefer to read the tabloids over the broadsheets. For instance, the **Sun** sells more copies than all the broadsheets combined.

### Ownership structure

Of the papers that will be monitored (ie only the dailies), Express Newspapers (Northern & Shell Plc) owns the **Daily Express** and the **Daily Star**. Associated Newspapers Ltd owns the **Daily Mail**, the Financial Times Ltd (The Pearson Group) owns the **Financial Times** and News International (Rupert Murdoch's company) owns **The Times** and the **Sun**, among others. The **Guardian** (the Guardian Media Group) and the **Independent** (Independent News & Media) own their own newspapers.

### Political stance

It is not easy to categorize the political stance of a newspaper, but if one were to generalize one could say that on the right of the political spectrum stands the **Daily Telegraph**, **The Times**, the **Daily Mail**, the **Sun** and the **Daily Express**. These papers are more likely to emphasize traditional conservative family values and lower taxes. In contrast, the **Guardian** and the **Mirror** could fairly be described as belonging to the left of the political spectrum with the **Independent** straddled somewhere in the middle. The **Guardian** and the **Mirror** are more likely to place stress on issues like social justice for example.

### Recommended publications to monitor

Broadsheets: **The Times** and the **Guardian**  
Tabloids: **Sun** and the **Daily Mirror**

These publications are broadly representative of the British public. They are read by over 5.5 million Britons (and it should be remembered that the circulation figures are based on actual sales, not on the number of persons who read the paper). These papers also cover both the left and the right of the political divide. For example, concerning foreign policy and coverage of the Middle East, both **The Times** and the **Sun** supported the invasion of Iraq, whereas the **Mirror** and the **Guardian** campaigned against it.

### US Print Media (Alasdair Henderson)

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#### Circulation figures

There has been a 20-year declining trend in US newspaper circulation figures, with first television and now the Internet providing stiff competition to the print media. However, the top 10 daily newspapers still have relatively high circulation: **USA Today** (2,272,815), **Wall St Journal** (2,049,786), **The New York Times** (1,142,464), **Los Angeles Times** (851,832), **Washington Post** (724,242), **New York Daily News** (708,477), **New York Post** (673,379), **Chicago Tribune**

<sup>28</sup> Courtesy of ABC (<[www.abc.org.uk](http://www.abc.org.uk)>) correct as of November 2006.

(579,079), **Houston Chronicle** (513,387), **Arizona Republic** (428,722).<sup>29</sup> As the list demonstrates, the biggest-selling newspapers are all based in large cities (New York is particularly well represented). The **San Francisco Chronicle** (398,246) and **Boston Globe** (397,288) are also in the top 20.

### Ownership structure

As with much of the US media, there has been increasing concentration of ownership of newspapers into the hands of a small number of large corporations. Of the daily newspapers, **USA Today** is owned by the Gannett Company (which also owns the Arizona Republic), Dow Jones and Company owns the **Wall St Journal**, **The New York Times** is owned by The New York Times Company (which also owns the **Boston Globe** and the **International Herald Tribune**, amongst others), the Tribune Company owns both the **Los Angeles Times** and the **Chicago Tribune**, The Washington Post Company owns the **Washington Post** (along with **Newsweek**), Mortimer Zuckerman owns the **New York Daily News**, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation owns the **New York Post**, and the Hearst Corporation owns the **Houston Chronicle** and the **San Francisco Chronicle**.

### Political stance

The political stance of US newspapers is often hard to judge, since most profess to report news and discuss issues in as impartial a way as possible. Some titles, notably **The New York Times**, **Boston Globe** and **San Francisco Chronicle**, are definitely centre-left on most issues, and some are proudly libertarian in outlook (the **Wall Street Journal** and **Chicago Tribune**) or centre-right (**Arizona Republic**). Others, such as the **Washington Post** or **Los Angeles Times**, are traditionally liberal but have been conservative-leaning recently. The **Houston Chronicle** has recently been the subject of boycott efforts by local conservative groups over allegations of a liberal political bias. **USA Today** is perhaps the most difficult to pigeon-hole—it is largely populist and centrist, though perhaps leans to a centre-left stance.

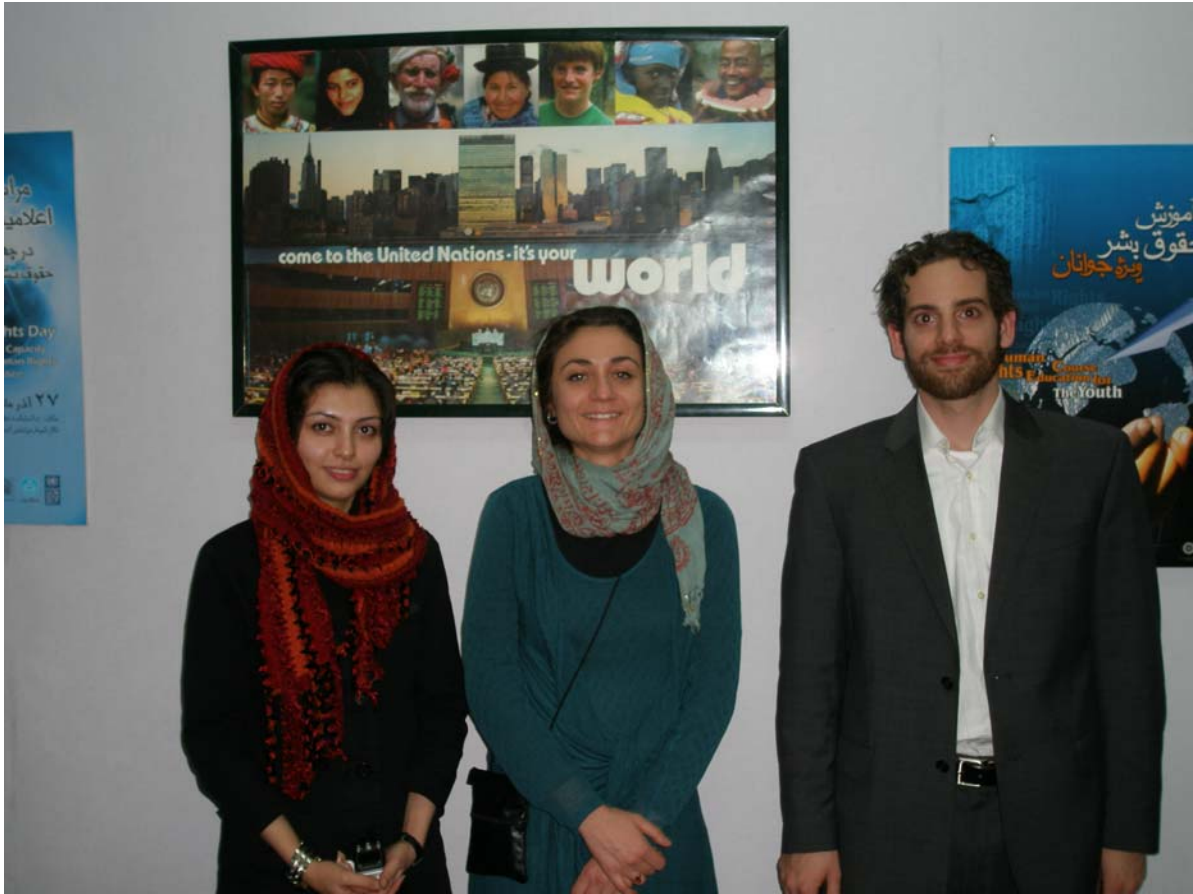
### Recommended publications to monitor:

#### **New York Times, LA Times, USA Today and Wall Street Journal**

Reasons for choice: US newspapers are not as clearly split into tabloids and broadsheets as the British press, and the broadsheets are generally the biggest-selling titles. However, international coverage is often fairly limited, particularly outside those based in the northeastern cities. These publications are some of the most widely read and span a range of US regions (**USA Today** being a truly national paper) and political views.

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<sup>29</sup> Audit Bureau of Circulations, 4 May 2006.



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