

Monthly Report of Association for the Defense of Azerbaijani Political Prisoners in Iran – September 2009

The systematic violation of ethnic and human rights of Azerbaijanis in Iran continued throughout September. Pressure on Azerbaijani activists increased this month following demonstrations demanding education in the mother tongue on the first day of the academic year. Student activists' admission into schools of higher education was blocked. Arbitrary detentions continue and the detainees are again subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment. In most cases, the cause for arrest and the location of the detainees are not given. The activists are usually not allowed access to a lawyer or granted visits from their families. Authorities do not provide health care in prisons and the requests of prisoners to be cared for outside of the prisons are denied.

Azerbaijani journalist and human rights defender, Said Matinpur, is in poor health in prison

Said Matinpur, Azerbaijani journalist and human rights defender, serving an eight year jail term in Evin Prison, is in poor physical health and is deprived access to a doctor.

The human rights activist has suffered from heart and lung problems since

September, 2009. He is reported to be experiencing severe pain in his chest and left hand and recently he has experienced aching in his lungs. With the degraded state of his health, Matinpur is no longer able to talk and he has become visibly jaundiced.



His cell-mates took him to the medical center in the prison, but the doctor there told Matinpur that he has a nervous disorder without performing any exams. He was sent back to his cell with three medications for psychological stress. Matinpur objects to the doctor's prescription as it was given to him without any medical examination; he has thus refused to take the anti-anxiety medications.

Matinpur has called his home from prison but has not been able to talk because of his continuous coughing. He also is not able to take antibiotics for his pulmonary infection because of gastro-intestinal problems.



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Several times in recent months Matinpur has requested care at hospitals outside of the prison but the authorities have continuously denied his requests despite his family's and his lawyer's efforts.

Atiye Taheri, Matinpur's wife, is deeply concerned over the state of her husband's health, especially following her visit to him on September 26. Matinpur's serious health issues, which include heart disease, stomach bleeding, severe headaches, digestive problems, and back pain, are becoming increasingly severe. Although his health condition is rapidly deteriorating, he is still prevented from being treated by a qualified physician.

In May 2007, Said Matinpur was arrested in Zanjan. He was released after 278 days of detention in solitary confinement on a bail of 5 billion Rials (\$500,000). As a result of both harsh treatment and unsanitary cell conditions, Matinpur suffered from serious back problems and digestive difficulties after his release from prison. False confessions were extracted from him during his detention by means of physical and psychological tortured.

Matinpur was charged with "connections to foreigners" and with "propaganda

against the regime" based on his alleged participation in a conference in Turkey about human rights attended by several other Azerbaijanis from Iran. However, Matinpur was in Iran at the time the conference was held. The charges against him were founded on his confessions, obtained through torture. He was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment. The appeal trial issued the same verdict.

Matinpur graduated in Philosophy from Tehran University. He wrote for the journals *Yarpaq* and *Moj-e Bidari*. He also moderated a blog called *Haq* (Right) in which he wrote about the ethnically discriminatory policies of Iranian authorities toward Iranian Azerbaijanis. He has also written many articles about the Azerbaijani language and national rights.

Reporters without Borders issued a report on September 24 disputing the claim of some Iranian authorities that Iran is the world's most free country. Their dispute took into account Matinpur's denied access to health care; they also expressed their concern that journalists in Iran are deprived from their fundamental rights.

Amnesty International, Reporters without Borders, Front Line and The Committee to



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Protect Journalists (CPJ) have released urgent action documents on Matinpour's behalf. In them they described Matinpour as a prisoner of conscience and called for his unconditional release.

Azerbaijani cultural activists detained

September 23 is the first day of the academic year in Iran. For non-Persian ethnic minorities, the lack of availability in Iran of education in their mother language has made this day a symbolic one: especially for Azerbaijanis in Iran, it is a day that stands for educational and language discrimination. Every year on this day Azerbaijanis distribute articles and CD's, organizing peaceful demonstrations condemning Iran's discriminatory policies. They also demand that Azerbaijani Turkish be recognized as an official language in Iran, and that education be offered in their mother language. Iranian authorities consistently arrest Azerbaijani activists who demand these rights.

Hossein (Aref) Lesani, Mohsen Rafi, and Hamed Heydari, three Azerbaijani cultural activists in Ardebil, were arrested on September 14, 2009 by intelligence officers and released after 3 days of detention. They were detained following

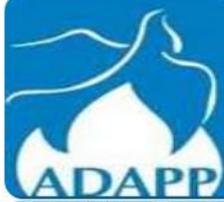
the distribution of articles and CD's in Ardebil that advocated for mother tongue education and also for establishing Azerbaijani Turkish as an official language in Iran.



On September 14, intelligence officers entered Rafi's shop without a warrant and arrested him, Lesani, and Heydari. Searching his house and shop, they took his computer and some of his personal properties.

Lesani and Rafi are prominent activists in Ardebil and are both relatives of the prominent Azerbaijani activist Abbas Lesani; Lesani is his brother and Rafi is his cousin. Heydari is a student activist from Esfahan University.

Hasan Arak, an Azerbaijani Journalist, and Ebrahim Dashti, a political activist from



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Tabriz, were also arrested on the 21st of September. The reason for and the place of their detention are not yet known.

Both activists were detained in their homes mere days before the beginning of the academic year. In both cases security forces searched their homes and took their personal computers and also handwritten notes.

Omid Shokri, an Azerbaijani journalist and student activist, was arrested on September 16, 2009 by officers from the Ministry of Intelligence when he was traveling to Iran from Turkey to visit his family.

Shokri has been a PhD student in Turkey since 2007. He was a reporter at ISNA (*Iranian Students' News Agency*), and at CHN (*Cultural Heritage News Agency*), and was also the director-in-chief of the Sayan student journal from 2002 to 2006 which was published at Ardebil's Peyam-e Noor University. This student journal published articles about discrimination against Azerbaijanis in Iran. Azerbaijani activists believe that he was arrested on the sole basis of his involvement with the Sayan student journal. The journal was closed down in June 2009 by authorities

from the Ministry of Science and Technology.



Mahbub Budaghi, an Azerbaijani poet and writer in Zerrin Abad (a town near Zanjan) was arrested on August 17, 2009 by officers of the Ministry of Intelligence. He was arrested in his shop in Zerrin Abad. His shop and house were searched by officers who took his books and handwritten notes. After 10 days of detention in the Intelligence office in Zanjan, he was transferred to Tabriz Prison. Budaghi is a member of “Zanjan Eshragh Literary Association” and also a member of the “Byram” writers' board, a monthly cultural journal.

Judiciary authorities refuse to provide information concerning the reason for his detention to Budaghi's family. He is also denied access to a lawyer. The Azerbaijani poet was ill before detention but



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imprisonment has rendered his illness more severe.



Azerbaijani activists sentenced to prison

Behruz Alizade, Vadud Saadeti, Rahim Gholami, Hossein Hosseini, and Ardashir Karimi Khiyavi are Azerbaijani cultural Activists in Ardebil who have been sentenced to one year of imprisonment in an appeals court. The jail term of Hosseini and Karimi has been suspended for two years.

The activists were charged with “membership in groups in order to damage national security” but since there was no material evidence against them the authorities decided to charge them with “propaganda against the regime.”

Previously, on February 1, 2008, the Ardebil Revolutionary Court sentenced Behruz Alizade, Vadud Saadati, Rahim Gholami Hossein Hosseini, and Ardashir

Karimi Khiyavi to five years of imprisonment in addition to exile.

Asgar Akbarzade, another Azerbaijani activist from Ardebil, was sentenced to five years of imprisonment along with exile. He has also contested his case and is waiting for a verdict from an appeals court.



The Activists were all detained in April, 2008 for a period of 20 days in the Ardebil Intelligence Office. They were subjected to torture and other abuses. They demand education in Azerbaijani Turkish in schools and are accused with organizing demonstrations in Ardebil province in order to publicize their demands.

Although Iran’s Constitution allows people to organize peaceful demonstrations, Azerbaijani activists are continuously charged with crimes like participating in protests and demonstrations, and are tortured in detention centers and in prisons.



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Moreover, they are tried and sentenced to jail terms and to exile because of their involvement with or participation in demonstrations.

The appeals court sentenced Vadud Asadi to one year of suspended imprisonment which has been postponed for five years. The appeals court verdict was issued on May 26, 2009 but the verdict was only communicated to him orally on September 25th, 2009. He was charged with “propaganda against regime” and “participating in ethnic movements.”

Previously, Asadi was sentenced to 18 months of imprisonment along with Hossein Rahimi, another Azerbaijani activist. They were detained in the Rasht Intelligence Office for one month during the summer of 2008 and were later released on bail.

Front line published an urgent action on August 8, 2008 condemning the detention of Vadud Asadi, and demanding his freedom.

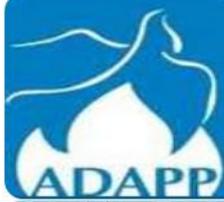
Yahar Hakkakpur, an Azerbaijani human rights activist who was arrested on January 21, 2006, was sentenced to six months of imprisonment. The Zanjan Revolutionary

Court issued the verdict on August 17, 2009. He was charged with “propaganda against regime.” Later he will also be charged with another crime, “provocation of public thought,” in Zanjan.



The human rights activist was detained for one month in 2006 and was then released, to be tried later, on a bail of 350 million rials (\$35,000). There will be two other trials in Maragheh and Zanjan with the same claims.

Hakkakpur reports that he was interrogated about his activities at Zanjan University and also about preparing and distributing the student journals, “Qiziluzen” and “Zangan Sozleri” in this university. He also was asked about his efforts to establish the, “Azerbaijan’s Children House” NGO in Maraghe in addition to being asked about some of his handwritten notes.



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Hakkakpur was a member of Zanjan University Islamic Association, director-in-chief of the student journal “Heyme,” editor-in-chief of the student journals “Qiziluzen,” and “Zangan Sozleri,” and was also the director of the “Azerbaijan’s Children House” NGO in Maraghe. He now lives outside of Iran and is a spokesman of ADAPP.

Azerbaijani activist tried

Shahruz Asadi Azerbaijani, a cultural activist in Germe, was tried on September 29, 2009. He was charged with “propaganda against the regime.” This charge for his crime is founded on his shop’s sign which is written in Azerbaijani Turkish.

Previously, he was under pressure by the Germe Intelligence Office to remove the table. In addition to being detained over his issue, his shop was searched by officers, his personal computer was taken, and the shop’s sign was taken away since he has refused to do so himself. Asadi was released after one week of detention.

Azerbaijani activist subjected to long term temporary detention

Hasan Abdullahi, an Azerbaijani writer and Azerbaijani Turkish teacher who was arrested in his home on July 13, 2009, is still in prison after three months of temporary detention. It is believed that he has been detained on a charge of establishing illegal groups in order to damage national security; this, on the basis of his having prepared CD’s about the national and linguistic rights of Azerbaijanis in Iran.



Azerbaijani activists released

Aydin Zakeri, an Azerbaijani activist in Meshginshahr (Khyav) who was arrested on May 31, 2009, was released on September 2, 2009 on a bail of 600 million rials (\$60,000) after 93 days of detention.

Prior to this date, Mansur Seyfi, Fardin Nobakht, Ilgar Moazzenzade, Ali Feyzi, and Jafar AgaMohammadi, who had each



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been detained in the past months in Meshginshahr, were released on bail after some days of detention.

All activists were detained after the distribution of articles in town about the ethnic and linguistic rights of Azerbaijanis. It is believed that they are each charged with, “propaganda against the regime” and with “movement against national security.”

Naghi Ahmadi Azer, an Azerbaijani writer and historian who was arrested by intelligence officers on April 4, 2009 in Tabriz, was released after 104 days of detention on August 31 on bail of 1,5 billion rials (\$150,000). The first segment of his trial will begin on November 5, 2009.

Ahmadi was a writer for the weekly journal *Shams Tabriz*, which was shut down by the Iranian government. He is an author of Azerbaijani literature and history and has translated several books into Azerbaijani Turkish. He is a member of the “Iranian Writers Association” and is a distinguished member of the “Azerbaijani Writers Association.”

Peyman Bashiri, an Azerbaijani political activist, was released on September 21,

2009 from prison after serving a four month jail term.

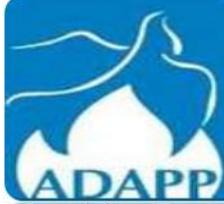
This activist was arrested on September 14, 2008 in Tabriz, just shortly before the beginning of the academic year in Iran and was detained for 50 days in Tabriz prison. He was tried after his release and was sentenced to four months of imprisonment by Tabriz Revolutionary Court.

Azerbaijani Students Are Prevented From Entering Graduate Schools

Pressure on Azerbaijani student activists has increased recently. Through past months at least four Azerbaijani activists have been detained. Three students have been sentenced to prison at least 9 student have been prevented from entering graduate schools.

Hamed Tofiq, an Azerbaijani student activist, has not yet received the results of the exam from Azad University which is normally sent to the students who sat for the exam. He has gone to the examination center of this university but the authorities have informed him that they are not able to issue the result for him.

Tofiq was a prominent activist in Tabriz University. He graduated from the



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Electrical engineering department of this university.

Following the announcement of the results of the Iran's state university graduate school exams, Amane Ghasempur was not allowed to apply to graduate programs even though she had earned the rank of 36th among thousands of participant, thereby enabling her to apply for graduate schools. After she objected to the result, Iran's Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology informed her that she is generally unfit for graduate studies.

Amane Ghasempur graduated in the psychology department at Tabriz University. She was a member of Association of Azerbaijan.

Hakime Sehhat Noshahr, an Azerbaijani women's rights activist, also has not received the result of the exam allowing entry into the graduate school of Sociology at Azad University. The Azad University examination center refused to inform her about their reason for not issuing her results.

Sehhat was a member of the "one million signature" campaign in Tabriz. She also is a member of managing board of the

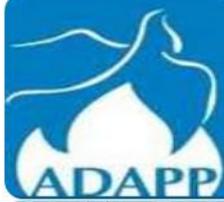
"Farasu" NGO and also the moderator of the "Yariyol" weblog.



Earlier this month, three other Azerbaijani student activists, Behzad Jeddi, Shahram Shoghi, and Ebrahim Shahbazi, were also prevented from entering the graduate schools even though they had earned the minimum score on their entrance exams.

The restrictions on Azerbaijani student activists are not limited to blocking access to graduate education. Recently Seyyed Masud Alavi was suspended from his program for two semesters. Prior Alavi was sentenced to 2 millions rials (\$2,000) charges and also 30 lashes. Alevi was arrested during the demonstration of Iran's last presidential results, which was claimed to be rigged on Jun 16, 2009. He was released after one day of detention.

Demonstration of women was reacted to severely by police



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A Peaceful demonstration of women in Tabriz on September 14, 2009 was met with brutal force from the policr. The women participating in this protest gathered in front of Tabriz city hall building to object to the city's gas policies of the city hall administrations. The participants in protest were threatened to leave the square, but finally the demonstration was severely pushed down by police and security forces.