

**AHMAD
ZEIDABADI
IRAN**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



**FREE THE
PRISONERS OF
CONSCIENCE**



AHMAD ZEIDABADI

Ahmad Zeidabadi was arrested on 21 June 2009, shortly after mass protests erupted following the announcement that incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the disputed presidential election. Ahmad Zeidabadi was held incommunicado in Evin Prison, Tehran, until his appearance on 8 August 2009 at a mass “show trial”.

Ahmad Zeidabadi is a journalist who worked with Roozonline, a Persian language online publication based in Belgium, which carries many articles critical of the Iranian authorities and on human rights issues. He also acted as Secretary-General of the Graduate’s Association of Iran, which promotes reform, and greater respect for human rights.

His wife, Mahdieh Mohammadi Gorgani, was only allowed to visit him in Evin Prison for the first time on 17 August 2009, and she reported that her husband was in a very poor physical and emotional state. She said that Ahmad Zeidabadi told her that he had been held in solitary confinement for 35 days after his arrest in a coffin-like cell only 1.5m long. He had apparently gone on hunger strike for 17 days until doctors convinced him to stop. His wife saw him again in mid-September 2009, when he told her that he had been severely

beaten during interrogation. Mahdieh Mohammadi Hargani said in an interview with Radio Farda, in September 2009: “His interrogator told him: ‘We are ordered to crush you, and if you do not co-operate we can do anything we want with you and if you do not write the interrogation papers, we will force you to eat them’.”

Ahmad Zeidabadi was sentenced in November 2009 to six years in prison and five years of internal exile in the city of Gonabad. He was also given a lifetime ban on all social and political activities. This sentence was upheld in January 2010. At the end of that month, he was transferred to Reja’i Shahr prison, where mostly non-political prisoners are held.

Ahmad Zeidabadi’s wife, Mahdieh Mohammadi, last saw him on 23 June 2011. She noticed that he seemed very weak, and had very noticeably lost a lot of weight in the last three weeks. She is very worried about this unexplained weight loss and thinks that he needs access to medical care.

Ahmad Zeidabadi was very upset about the death of Haleh Sahabi, a prisoner of conscience who died at the beginning of June 2011, while attending the funeral of her father, after she was struck by a member of the security forces.

Ahmad Zeidabadi’s wife has no confidence in the Iranian legal system’s willingness or ability to ensure that her husband receives any medical or other care that he needs. She has been to the Prosecutor’s office repeatedly over the past two years to express concern about him but that response is always the same - the officials there tell her to leave a letter with them and that they will investigate her husband’s situation and call her back, but they then never call her back – they have not done so even once.

She wishes that she and other members of the family were able to see Ahmad Zeidabadi in prison more often and more easily. The prison where he is held, in Raja’i Shahr, is far away and when members of the family are able to travel there to visit him they are only able to see him in a prison cabin. In these cabins, which are common in prisons in Iran, there is a partition in the room between the visitor and the prisoner, with microphones and speakers so the prisoner and visitor can communicate across the partition. She wishes that when they visit he would be allowed physical contact with her or at least their children instead. They would also like to be allowed to speak to him by telephone in between visits to the prison but this is not possible as telephone calls are currently banned. They also wish and urge that he be allowed at least temporary leave

from prison, which is provided for under the Prison Regulations, and which has been granted to many other prisoners.

Ahmad Zeidabadi has written for many newspapers perceived as reformist, some of which have been closed down. Ahmad Zeidabadi had been arrested a number of times before for the peaceful expression of his opinions, and Amnesty International campaigned then (2000, 2001), as now, for his release. Amnesty International recognises him as a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.