

## IRAN

### **Isa Saharkhiz** imprisoned journalist



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The health of Isa Saharkhiz, 58, a prominent reformist commentator & journalist, has deteriorated alarmingly during his two years as a prisoner of conscience, and his period of incarceration is being lengthened.

Isa Saharkhiz's family home in Tehran was raided on 20 June 2009 while he was travelling in Northern Iran, and campaign materials for the opposition presidential candidate he was supporting were confiscated. On 2 July, he posted an article on the news website Rooz in which he criticized the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei. On 4 July, Isa Saharkhiz was arrested in Northern Iran and taken to an undisclosed location.

He has said that his ribs were broken as a result of beatings sustained during his arrest. He has a torn eardrum and has lost mobility of his right leg for unknown reasons but has been denied medical leave to seek treatment. In late November/early December 2010, he was reported to have been suffering from severe pain; it was discovered that he was bleeding internally and a medical team was brought to perform surgery on him in the prison clinic. In June 2011, Isa Saharkhiz was among several prisoners who went on a hunger strike to protest against the deaths of Haleh Sahabi and Hoda Saber. He was transferred to the Raja'i Shahr Prison clinic on 27 June 2011 because of his deteriorating health.

Although in May 2010 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found Isa Saharkhiz's detention to be arbitrary and requested that the Iranian Government release him immediately and unconditionally, he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in September 2010 on charges of "insulting the leadership" and "propaganda against the system". On 5 August 2011, he was sentenced to an additional two years in prison for his former journalistic activities.

Isa Saharkhiz is the co-founder of Iran's Association for the Defense of Press Freedom. He is the former editor of the monthly magazine *Aftab* and the newspaper *Eghtesad*, both suspended in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

Addressing the Head of the Judiciary, please call for the immediate & unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Isa Saharkhiz, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. He should be allowed immediate access to any medical treatment he may require. Unlawful restrictions on freedom of expression and association in Iran should be removed, in accordance with international standards.

**Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani**  
**Office of the Head of the Judiciary**  
**Pasteur Street, Vali Asr Avenue,**  
**South of Serah-e Jomhuri**  
**Tehran 1316814737**  
**Islamic Republic of Iran**

**Iranian Interests Section**  
**2209 Wisconsin Avenue, NW**  
**Washington, DC 20007**

(Iran does not currently have an embassy in the United States.)

Salutation: *Your Excellency*

Airmail postage abroad: 98¢

Salutation: *Dear Sir or Madam*



**Amnesty International**  
focuses on preventing and ending  
grave abuses of the rights  
to physical & mental integrity,  
freedom of conscience  
& expression,  
and freedom from discrimination,  
while promoting all human rights.

Our particular concern during Banned Books Week is to draw attention to writers, editors, librarians, publishers and readers who suffer human rights violations because of their work.

from the  
**Universal Declaration  
of Human Rights**

**Article 1**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience . . .

**Article 3**

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

**Article 19**

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information & ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

**Article 27**

. . . Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. . . .

*All of these letters and signatures were extremely important in keeping Tissa's case alive and finally bringing about his release. We urge all of you to continue your good work so that others who are wrongly held will be able to survive.*

**Ronnate Tissainayagam,**  
wife of former Sri Lanka prisoner of conscience J.S. ("Tissa") Tissainayagam,  
freed in June 2010

**Banned Books Week 2011  
IMPORTANT NOTES:**

Please do not attempt to write directly to a prisoner; in some countries there might be reprisals. Experience shows that the rarity of replies from governments does not mean our letters are being ignored. If someone does receive a reply, please send a copy to the AI address on the other side (top) of this page.