

# Cut! Take Press TV Off the Air



Justice For Iran  
عدالت برای ایران

**Cut!**

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## 1. Introduction

January and February 2012 saw the start of a wave of arrests of Arab activists in Iran. In the city of Shush alone, agents of the Ministry of Intelligence arrested over 30 people who were actively supporting and advertising the boycotting of March 2012 parliamentary elections. Shortly after these arrests, which resulted in the detention of over 60 people in the province of Khuzistan, sources close to the families of some of the detainees reported that at least two of the protestors were killed under torture while in custody at the detention centers. The severe violations of the rights of the Arab detainees, the complete silence of the official news agencies inside the country about the events of Ahvaz, capital of Ahvaz province, as well as the detainees families' lack of information regarding their fate, compelled Justice for Iran (JFI) to begin researching the matter. Pursuant to its research, JFI published an announcement as well as reports regarding the conditions of the Arab detainees and the impunity enjoyed by the agents of the atrocities, who, among other things, had killed two of the individuals in custody.<sup>[1]</sup> Later, in a detailed report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) affirmed the arrest of over 65 Arab minorities by intelligence agents and demanded that Iranian officials conduct an investigation into the death of the two individuals.<sup>[2]</sup>

Shortly after the publication of the JFI and HRW reports and their widespread media coverage, Press TV broadcast a report which included interviews with some of the Arab detainees of Khuzistan—individuals who had been held at an undisclosed location, even unknown to their next of kin, for nearly two months. In its report, Press TV introduced the detainees as terrorists and attempted to invalidate the reports of human rights organizations and activists including JFI's report on the killing of the two detainees. JFI's further investigative research exposed the manner in which Press TV violated the rights of the Arab detainees.<sup>[3]</sup>

Press TV's broadcasting was also part of its long-standing effort to introduce human rights activists as terrorists or supporters of terrorist activities in an attempt to undermine their documentation and reporting of human rights violations in Iran. As the propaganda arm of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Press TV has repeatedly violated professional standards of independence and neutrality of the media. It has further deprived individuals and organizations subject to Press TV's libel and false accusations from their right to reply, a fundamental right according to international regulations governing the media. Meanwhile, many of the individuals falsely accused by Press TV are either in prison and unable to respond or speak in their own defense, or are forced into silence due to security concerns. The close ties and collaboration between Press TV and the security and intelligence apparatus in Iran has caused fear among the individuals residing outside of Iran whose professional or personal dignity has been targeted by the Press TV's programs. Such individuals refrain from filing any official complaints against the satellite station or even engaging Press TV in a discussion out of fear for their own safety outside of the country or that of their family within Iran.

Upon its establishment, Press TV announced that it intends to be the "voice of the voiceless."<sup>[4]</sup> However, five years after it began broadcasting, the conduct of Press TV must be criticized for having in fact violated the rights of the voiceless. Furthermore, Press TV, as a legal entity, and all its officials, as individuals, must be held accountable for the violation of the rights of Iranian citizens as well as their other viewers

elsewhere, instead of enjoying impunity. For this reason, JFI has conducted wide-scale investigative research into Press TV's violation of human rights as well as regulations governing the media in European countries.

### 1.1. Methodology

To conduct our research, we closely monitored Press TV's various programs, in particular, "Iran Today". Aside from what was broadcast by Press TV, we were highly interested in what was happening behind the scenes of these programs. To acquire a better understanding of what was occurring off-camera, we conducted in-depth interviews with individuals whose rights or that of their families and close relations were violated by Press TV. We also closely studied reports and other publications about Press TV to verify the claims presented through our various sources and informers. In addition, we closely studied the content of some of the complaints issued against Press TV to the UK Office of Communications (Ofcom), the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries, such as the case of Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian journalist. In preparing this research, we also used the text of four complaints issued against Press TV.

Our research continues. However, since the German Commission on Licensing and Supervision (Kommission fuer Zulassung und Aufsicht – ZAK) is due to begin its investigation of Press TV on April 24, 2012, JFI is presenting its findings thus far regarding Press TV's various violations.

### 1.2. About Justice for Iran

Justice for Iran<sup>[5]</sup> is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization established in July 2010. Using methods such as documenting instances of human rights violations, collecting information and conducting research, JFI strives to use international legal and political mechanisms to hold accountable officials who are responsible for the severe and widespread violations of human rights in Iran.

### 1.3. About Press TV

Press TV is a 24-hour satellite television station broadcast in English by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The station launched its services on July 7, 2007 and since its inception has been managed by Mohammad Sarafraz, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's (IRIB) International Deputy. Sarfaraz was recently appointed by Ayatollah Khamenei as a member of the "Supreme Council of Cyber Space."<sup>[6]</sup> The Council is set to control all internet activities in Iran.

Based on what Press TV's website professes, its headquarters are in Tehran.<sup>[7]</sup> However, a company named Press TV Ltd.<sup>[8]</sup> has been registered in the UK, whose legal relationship with Press TV must be further researched.<sup>[9]</sup> The UK government has blocked the assets of Press TV Ltd. due to its direct contact with the Press TV satellite channel.<sup>[10]</sup> However, the London team of Press TV continues its activities in the UK.<sup>[11]</sup>

Further research must also be done to determine whether or not the programs of Press TV, presently hosted on 14 satellites, including by the satellites which are registered in France, Spain, Luxemburg and Australia, are being broadcast from Tehran or elsewhere.

In January 2012, Ofcom cancelled Press TV's broadcasting license in the UK after it refused to pay the penalty resulting from the complaint of Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian journalist, and also because the content of Press TV undergoes quality control in Tehran. In this manner, Press TV's broadcasting from Sky Satellite came to an end. On April 3, 2012, the head of the SES Astra satellite announced that the BLM, the German government's Munich Media Regulatory Office<sup>[12]</sup> had decided to terminate the broadcasting of Press TV.<sup>[13]</sup> Despite this, Press TV continues to be broadcast across the globe from 14 satellites, including Eutelsat, Hot Bird, Intelsat, and Galaxy.<sup>[14]</sup>

## **2. Instances Human Rights and Media Rights Violations by Press TV**

In numerous cases, Press TV has broadcast "interviews" with political prisoners, where in reality, those interviews were confessions obtained under pressure and torture. Based on reputable reports as well as the testimony and documents obtained by JFI, in all the cases described in this section, the prisoner, while still in custody and prior to the start of his court proceedings was coerced under severe torture to sit in front of the camera and was then fed the lines he was to speak through different methods. In most cases, the interrogators were present during the "interviews". In some cases, the interrogators also conducted the "interviews". The broadcasting of these interviews with Press TV were not consented to, verbally or in writing, by any of the victims involved in the cases discussed in this report. In fact, in most cases, the prisoner was told that the filming was intended for internal use and research only and would not be broadcast under any condition. This is while the conditions of political prisoners in Iran were such that they were completely incapable of defending themselves or protesting the broadcasting of their images.<sup>[15]</sup> Furthermore, these individuals' basic right of protection of privacy, right to reply, as well as right to human dignity were violated in numerous instances by Press TV.

One of these cases is that of Maziar Bahari, an Iranian-Canadian journalist who was arrested on June 21, 2009, at the height of the popular protests of the 2009 election results in Iran. In July 2009, while he had not yet been tried or convicted, Bahari told Press TV in an interview that he was the person who gave a video of the shooting of protestors from a Basij military base on June 15, 2009 to the Channel 4 television station.<sup>[16]</sup>

Once released from prison on bail, Bahari was lucky enough to be able to get himself out of the country and to the UK. In various interviews after his arrival in the UK, Bahari announced that his televised confessions were extracted through severe physical and mental torture, including threats to his life. Bahari filed a complaint with Ofcom against Press TV. In May 2011, Ofcom announced that since Press TV had not been able to produce a document proving that they acquired Bahari's consent to conduct an interview, Ofcom would uphold Bahari's claim and Press TV was sentenced to a monetary fine of 100,000 British Pounds. Press TV's refusal to pay the fine ultimately

led to Ofcom's decision in January 2012 to revoke Press TV's license for broadcasting in the UK.<sup>[17]</sup>

However, many other prisoners who confessed under torture or pressure to later have their confessions broadcast by Press TV, remain in prison or are still inside Iran. They do not have the opportunity or ability to file a complaint and tell the truth behind the "documentaries" broadcast by Press TV.

### 2.1. Loqman and Zanyar Moradi

Loqman Moradi, 29, and Zanyar Moradi, 22, were both arrested in August 2009 and charged with assassinating three individuals, one of whom was the son of the Friday Prayer Imam of the city of Mariwan. In the general meeting of March 12, 2012, Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran said, "Zanyar and Loghman Moradi [...] were detained for the first nine months of their detention without charges. [...] [They] were later compelled to confess to allegations of murder[ing the son of the Friday Prayer Imam] after being severely beaten and threatened with rape. [...] [N]o evidence or witnesses were brought against these men, and that they did not have reasonable access to their legal counsel. Both men were sentenced to public hanging."<sup>[18]</sup>

Based on the testimony of Witness A,<sup>[19]</sup> a close associate of the two prisoners, the agents of the Sanandaj Office of Intelligence, through severe torture and psychological pressure resulting from the threat of rape, forced the two to rewrite prepared texts about the details of murder of the son of the Friday Prayer Imam and two other individuals and then sign and fingerprint the writings. The two were also forced to falsely confess to being members of an Islamic Republic opposition group called *Komala*. One of the forms of torture Zanyar and Loqman were subject to was being forced to sit on a soda bottle instead of a chair during their interrogations.

In October 2010, 13 months after their arrest, Zanyar and Loqman Moradi were again tortured. This time, they were forced to repeat on camera the confessions they had previously written. The filming session most probably took place at the Intelligence Office of Sanandaj.<sup>[20]</sup> Before they entered the room for filming, the interrogator informed them of the questions that they will be asked and told them what answers they were expected to give. They were then filmed separately.



*Still shot of an episode of "Iran Today" on Press TV clearly showing the name and face of Zanyar Moradi during his interview*

Prior to this event, the interrogators had coerced Loqman Moradi, by threatening him with the arrest of his other family members, to accept to speak with the Friday Prayer Imam, directly telling the Imam that he assassinated his son. Witness A says:

Loqman told me: "In order to [accept to] go to the Friday Prayer Imam, for 2-3 days they performed *hadd*<sup>[21]</sup> on me and yet I refused. Then they called my family in front of me and told them that they can't leave the house. They then said to me that if I refuse to tell the Friday Prayer Imam what they want, they will bring my entire family there [to prison]. I was forced to accept. We went to the house of the Friday Prayer Imam. We sat. The Imam said, "These are the families of the three who have been murdered." I said, "We made a mistake." This is what they had asked of me to say."

I was like a robot when I was doing those things. They told me that there was a camera and other equipments set up next to the Friday Prayer Imam and I should sit there. Then they connected a microphone as well. They said, "This filming is for our own purposes and stays in your case file." I had no idea that it will be broadcast. The whole ordeal took a few minutes and then we left. All I could think of was my misfortune and that of the families of those three slain individuals who were all stuck in a political game and so I was crying... None of us even knew there is a satellite station names Press TV! We had no information about the broadcasting of these films on the satellite. All they said to us what that they will record the films on a CD and keep that with our case file."



*Still shot of Press TV's "Exclusive" segment of Iran Today depicting Loqman Moradi's visit to the home of the Friday Prayer Imam*

The video of Loqman Moradi's visit to the home of the Friday Prayer Imam and his statements there, spoken under duress and force by intelligence agents, were packaged by Press TV as an "exclusive," along with Loqman and Zanyar Moradi's filmed confessions, on a program called Iran Today. The segments were included in an episode entitled "Komala Terrorist Organization" and broadcast on November 12, 2010. Press TV did not obtain Zanyar or Loqman Moradi's consent for broadcasting their "interviews". In fact, neither individual was aware of the broadcasting of their forced confessions.<sup>[22]</sup> However, as long as the aforementioned are in custody, they can be coerced by security officials to give consent for interviews and their broadcasting in the same manner.

In the Iran Today episode of November 12, 2010, the names and faces of Zanyar and Loqman Moradi are clearly shown for extended periods of time. At the time of broadcasting of the "documentary", neither individual had been tried or convicted of any crimes.

As part of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Press TV, a satellite station allegedly broadcast from inside Iran,<sup>[23]</sup> must abide by domestic Iranian laws. Based on Iranian laws, media publication of names, or even identifying characteristics that can lead to identification of a convicted individual, is forbidden so long as the sentence issued has not been upheld and finalized. If a media outlet violates this law, it can be tried and punished for having committed "libel" (accusing an individual of a criminal act).<sup>[24]</sup>

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights upholds the same right.<sup>[25]</sup> In many other countries, such as UK and Germany, showing the faces and announcing the

identity of an individual accused is considered a violation of their privacy and forbidden because it interferes with their process of returning to society.

The Constitution of Germany also recognizes this right. The Federal Constitutional Court of Germany (Bundesverfassungsgericht), in the “Lebach Judgment” assigned a higher priority to the protection of privacy over freedom of information (expression). Lebach was an individual whose name and image was broadcast several times in a documentary about a quadruple murder. In its decision, the Court states:

Freedom of the media as well as the private domain of the individuals are both amongst the basic rights in Germany. However, if the two rights were to collide, it is upon the court to decide which one takes precedence over the other. Human dignity, as the pivotal value for the constitution, will be the basis for evaluation.<sup>[26]</sup>

## 2.2. Witness B

Witness B was arrested in 2007, charged with collaboration with an opposition Kurdish party, and eventually given a long prison sentence. During one of his furloughs he managed to escape from Iran and cross the border into Iraqi Kurdistan. He subsequently spoke to a local Kurdish television station in the region and announced that he, along with 24 other Kurdish activists, were summoned to the Intelligence Office of Mahabad where his interrogator pressured and threatened him and said that if he was unwilling to undergo a televised interview, his prison sentence would be transformed to execution. He then agreed to an interview. Witness B told the Kurdish television station that during his forced interview, everything that the interrogators wanted him to say was written on the wall in front of him. They then placed the camera in front of him and he read from the wall as he was asked to do. For this reason, throughout the duration of the interview, his gaze is upwards, never leaving the wall.

His interview, along with those of some 24 activists, was broadcast in one of Press TV’s “Inside Iran” episodes.

Justice for Iran is keeping all information and documents pertaining to Witness B confidential and will only hand them over, if necessary, to competent judicial officials.

In the same episode,<sup>[27]</sup> Kurdish lawyer and civil activist, Mokhtar Zarei, was also interviewed by Press TV as a political analyst. After the program was broadcast, in a complaint letter to Press TV, Zarei writes,

As you are aware, you broadcast an episode in the Iran Today program about Kurdistan in which parts of my interview was broadcast. For this reason, I humbly request your attention in solving the following questions and ambiguities. I hope that in removing the below concerns there be more and better possibilities of collaboration.

1- The topic of our discussion was terrorism. In that light, I answered your reporter’s questions and explained in detail about liberating movements insisting on the right to determine one’s own destiny and its fundamental difference with terrorism based on the definitions put forth by international conventions. Unfortunately, the segment broadcast by your program omitted the major topic of the conversation and only

showed the details discussed about PJAK and the *Mojahedin-e Khalq* Organization. [The segment pertaining to me] was heavily edited, an action disapproved of by professionally accepted behaviour of Media.

2- In the same episode, confessions of individuals was also aired who have not yet been tried for their crimes, are deprived from the right to have an attorney, and are under interrogation at solitary cells of the Office of Intelligence thereby rendering the broadcasting of their confessions as illegal and far from the Islamic principles. Many commentators are of the opinion that the confessions were extracted under unusual circumstances, pressure and force and that the individuals had no hand in the bombings but where in fact arrested for environmental activism(!!!) I neither confirm nor deny those confessions. However, I do want a fair trial for the imprisoned in the presence of independent reporters and human rights activists. Otherwise, the commentators prevail.

3- It would have been better if, prior to interviewing me, you could alert me to the manner of conducting the episode, in particular the merging of the confessions, as this is an accepted costum to alert the interviewee of the content of the program in advance. However, I can only take responsibility for my own words and yet, had I known about the details of the program prior to the interview, I would have certainly rejected the invitation.

...

Respectfully,

Mokhtar Zarei”

Press TV never issued a response to this letter or attempted to answer any of the questions posed in it. By doing so, it has violated the interviewee’s right to reply.

### 2.3. Recent Incidents in Khuzistan

In January and February of 2012, over 60 Arab activists were arrested in the Khuzistan Province of Iran. At the time this report was finalized, none of the arrested individuals were formally charged with a crime or tried in an official court. Although no legal case file appears to have formed for the recent detainees in Khuzistan, in a program broadcast on March 14, 2012, Press TV introduced them as terrorists.<sup>[28]</sup> According to Iranian law, the punishment handed down for the charge of terrorism in Iran is most often execution.

Three months after their arrest, the families of the individuals arrested still do not know where they are being held. They have been deprived from the right to legal counsel and have not yet had visitation with their families. While the detainees are being held incommunicado and completely blocked from the outside world, in an episode of “Inside Iran” entitled “Al-Ahwaz Terrorist Groups in Khuzistan” aired on March 14, 2012, Press TV broadcast videos of the interviews conducted with the detainees arrested in Ahwaz, Hamidiyeh and Shush. It is unclear how and under what circumstances the interviews were recorded. As long as the detainees remain inside

prison and are not completely free to speak, discovering whether or not Press TV acquired consent from them prior to broadcasting the videos of their “interviews” is impossible.

During the course of our Investigation, the family members of one of the detainees introduced in the Press TV episode as a member of “the Al-Ahwaz terror group” told Justice for Iran that the individual’s name does not appear in the registry of any of the judicial authorities of the Revolutionary Prosecution Office of Ahvaz or the General Prosecution Office of Ahvaz. Similarly, no case file has been created for this individual. One of his family members told JFI, “I contacted an attorney to pursue his case. The attorney asked me, “Where is his case file created?” I said, “An authority I reached out to indicated that no case file has been registered.” He asked, “where is he imprisoned?” I said, “We don’t know! The few times he called us he could only talk about his health and wellbeing and couldn’t tell us where he is.” The attorney then said, “How can I accept representation of someone when it is unclear where he is or where his case file is created!!”<sup>[29]</sup>

As discussed earlier, according to Iranian laws showing the image of and naming an accused when his charges have not been proved and his case has not been finalized is libel, forbidden and punishable by law. Even still, Press TV, a subdivision of the international office of IRIB, broadcast the images and names of some of the individuals arrested during the unrest two months ago, while no case file had been created for them in any of the legal offices and certainly no verdict had been issued for them. Such broadcasting is a clear and evident violation of the rights of the detainees in Khuzistan by Press TV. Also, these videos clearly violate the detainees’ right to return to society.

Press TV’s episode broadcasts (Al-Ahvazi Terrorist Groups in Khuzestan<sup>[30]</sup>) an interview with Ahmad Debat, an individual arrested during the Arba’in<sup>[31]</sup> unrest in the city of Shush. In the broadcasting, he confesses to blowing up oil pipelines and shooting at people’s houses and at law enforcement officials. The same episode broadcasts another interview with Sajjad Beyt Abdollah (Ka’abi) who confesses to armed assault. In his exclusive testimony given to Justice for Iran, Sa’id Debat, brother of Ahmad Debat and cousin of Sajjad Beyt Abdollah says, “It is completely obvious that both [Debat and Beyt Abdollah] are severely tortured to confess to an action they did not committed. The movie clearly shows that both individuals’ teeth are broken. Comparing their before and after photos shows that their teeth and faces have completely changed under severe torture.” Sa’id Debat provided JFI with photos of his brother and cousin before their arrest as evidence.



*Left, photo of Ahmad Debat before his arrest; Right, still shot of the Press TV episode where Ahmad Debat's broken upper teeth are clearly visible*



*Ahmad Debat and Sajjad Beyt Abdollah before their arrest*



*Still shot of from the Press TV episode where Sajjad Beyt [Beit] Abdollah's broken upper teeth are clearly visible*

At least two of the individuals who were accused during the aforementioned episode, either through confessions of the prisoners or indirectly by Press TV presenters, have filed official complaints to responsible authorities against Press TV. Karim Abdian, a U.S. citizen, in a letter of complaint sent to Ofcom and ZAK, demanded processing of the lies disseminated against him by Press TV. In his complaint, Abdian states that he has been called a “terrorist” repeatedly by the satellite television station. (See letter of Abdian, attached)

Similarly, after being called a “terrorist” by Press TV on Iran Today’s March 14, 2012 episode about the Al-Ahwaz Terror Group, Sa’id Debat, a resident of Denmark, has denied all the allegations and demanded in a letter to Press TV that he be given adequate airtime by the satellite station to have a chance to refute the accusations. Press TV never responded to this demand and so, Sa’id Debat pursued his case through a complaint filed with the ZAK in Germany. (See letter of Sa’id Debat, attached)

Therefore, Press TV has clearly violated the aforementioned individual’s Right to Reply, as prescribed by article 8 of the European Convention of Transfrontier Television.<sup>[32]</sup>

#### 2.4. Violating the Rights of those Accused of Collaboration with BBC Persian

On March 4, 2012, Press TV broadcast a documentary entitled “Worn Out” about BBC Persian satellite television station. During the movie, a segment was broadcast depicting the storming of the home of one of the journalists arrested and detained on charges of collaboration with BBC Persian by an intelligence officer of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). The segment, which showed the surprise of the journalist and his family due to the storming of their house, was clearly shot without obtaining the journalist’s permission. Its broadcasting is a clear example of violating a private domain, in violation of article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Particularly since the names of the journalists detained are clearly spoken and identifiable in the broadcasting.<sup>[33]</sup>



*An interrogation session recorded by the IRGC and broadcast by Press TV*

The same documentary shows parts of the interrogation session of three accused journalists, filmed in an interrogation room of Ward 2A, inside Evin Prison. On the right hand corner of the video, a sign says, "IRGC Video."<sup>[34]</sup> This is while the IRGC has been subject to sanctions by the U.S. government due to its severe and widespread role in violating the human rights of Iranian civilians.<sup>[35]</sup>

Furthermore, some photographs are shown in other parts of this documentary that are labeled to have been provided to Press TV by the IRGC Cyber Defense Command. The photographs are of an educational workshop about journalism set up by BBC Persian in Turkey for Iranian journalists and appear to have been taken from the private computers of the detainees. This is certainly an action violating the private domain of individuals. There are reputable reports that the officers of the IRGC Center for Organized Crime use physical and psychological torture and pressure on the detainees to force them to falsely confess against themselves or others in front of cameras.<sup>[36]</sup>

### 2.5. Case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani

On December 10, 2010, a new episode of Iran Today aired entitled "Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the Spotlight".<sup>[37]</sup> In the course of this episode, Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, a woman charged with adultery and sentenced to stoning, is transferred from prison to her home, where she reenacted the scene of her husband's murder—a crime she was also charged with—while being filmed by the Press TV camera crew. In the reenactment of the scene, Sajjad Ghadezadeh, Ashtiani's son, played the role of his murdered father.<sup>[38]</sup> The resulting scenes and the use of the accused—Ashtiani—to demonstrate the alleged crime is a clear case of misleading the minds of the viewers. Furthermore, use of the son of the accused, who was only a boy at the time of the murder, is a clear violation of his human dignity that television stations are bound to observe as per article 7 of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. The Press TV "exclusive" never mentioned the important fact that at the time of the reenactment of the crime scene, Sajjad Ghaderzadeh was in detention. Gahderzadeh, along with Ashtiani's attorney Javid Houtan Kian, and two German reporters, Marcus Hellwig and Jens Koch, were arrested on October 10, 2010 while Gahderzadeh was giving an interview about the situation of his mother. Two months after his arrest, he appeared on the Press TV exclusive and was then released a day after the broadcasting of the show.<sup>[39]</sup>

This episode of Iran Today also included an interview with Javid Houtan Kian, Ashtiani's attorney. Later, in a letter authenticated by Amnesty International, Houtan Kian states that he was detained under the severest forms of torture at Ward 209 of Evin Prison from the day following his arrest (October 11, 2010) until two days after the broadcasting of the episode (December 12, 2010). In this letter, parts of which were published by Amnesty International, Houtan Kian states that "he had been burned with cigarettes and repeatedly beaten, causing some of his teeth to be broken." The letter also states that he was "soaked with water and left for hours in the cold. He was reportedly hospitalized as a result."<sup>[40]</sup>



*Still shot of an episode of “Iran Today” on Press TV clearly showing the name and face of Javid Houtan Kian, Sakineh Ashtiani’s lawyer*

Javid Houtan Kian’s attorney, Naghi Mohammadian, visited him at Tabriz Prison in April 2011. He says, “After over six months, signs of burning and torture was still discernible on [Houtan Kian’s] hands and feet. Regarding the televised interviews, Houtan Kian told his attorney, “They took me for the televised interviews with the promise of releasing me. They said that it will not be broadcast anywhere but only remain in the archive of the Ministry of Intelligence.”

The interview, recorded by the Intelligence officers after much coercion and torture, was broadcast from Press TV. Houtan Kian, who represented Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, continues to remain in Tabriz prison to serve the six years’ imprisonment he received for having interviewed with foreign media about the situation of his client. Houtan Kian was recently transferred to the drug addict’s ward. He suffers from symptoms of sever physical and psychological torture and is administered a strong dose of pain killers to lessen his suffering.

Therefore, at the time of his interview with Press TV, Houtan Kian was held under torture at Ward 209 of Evin Prison. The exclusive does not make any attempt to clarify that Houtan Kian is a prisoner. Instead, in an attempt to mislead the viewers, the producers make it appear that Houtan Kian was interviewed under normal circumstances.

Amnesty International considers the entirety of the statements of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, Sajjad Ghaderzadeh, and Houtan Kian suspect. The organization believes that, since there is a great possibility for the statements to have been made under coercion, they cannot be used as evidence in a court of law.<sup>[41]</sup>

In another segment of this episode, a claim is made that Mohammad Mostafaei, Ashtiani's attorney, was paid 2 million tomans (roughly \$2,000) by her son while in a BBC interview, he claimed that he did not receive any money from Ashtiani or other individuals whose human rights he defended. The show effectively accuses Mostafaei of having lied. This accusation can tarnish Mostafaei's respect and reputation as a human rights attorney.<sup>[42]</sup> Meanwhile, JFI's research shows that no attempts were made to contact Mostafaei on behalf of Press TV to ask him about the matter or allow him to offer a response regarding the accusations. Subsequently, Mostafaei filed a complaint against Press TV with ZAK in Germany for violating his right to reply, spreading lies, defamation of character and destroying his reputation as a human rights attorney.

### 3. Conclusion

JFI continues its research on the role of Press TV in violating the human rights of individuals as well as its search for such victims. So far, this report effectively demonstrates that Press TV has repeatedly attempted to justify the violation of the rights of Iranian citizens; in particular those arrested for political reasons, and has in effect become a tool for committing human rights violations.

The report clearly demonstrates that Press TV stands in violation of the European laws governing the media, such as those ensuring the principle of independence and neutrality, the principle of respect for privacy, the principle of respect for human dignity and the right to reply. Also, in collaboration with the Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC, Press TV violated the rights of the detainees through obtaining televised confessions under torture and duress and then broadcasting them. Both the Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC have been sanctioned by the U.S. government for severely violating of the rights of Iranian citizens. Furthermore, many of the commanders and central officers of the two organization are amongst the individuals sanctioned by the European Union and banned from entry into EU member-states and have their assets blocked in those states.<sup>[43]</sup> The EU has further sanctioned Mohammad Zarghami, managing director of the IRIB, the parent organization of Press TV, for having broadcast the forced confessions of the prisoners as well as what came to be known as the "show trials"<sup>[44]</sup> in August 2009 and December 2011.<sup>[45]</sup>

Justice for Iran, as a human rights organization, defends freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, we believe that any media organization acting at the service of torturing and suppressing the citizens is not a media organization any more. Hence, based on the documents listed in this report, JFI asks of all relevant authorities in particular the governments of France, Spain, Luxembourg, and Australia where satellite systems hosting Press TV are registered, to quickly and in the interest of preventing further violation of the rights of Iranian citizens and non-Iranian viewers of Press TV:

- 1- Do what is necessary to hold Press TV accountable by media monitoring organizations and judicial officials for the damage it inflicts upon the rights of Iranian citizens as well as its viewers.
- 2- Sanction Press TV, as a legal entity, as well as the individuals responsible for it, such as Mohammad Sarafraz, manager of the station, for their human rights violations.

3- Revoke Press TV's broadcasting permission from satellites registered in countries who respect and uphold international human rights principles.

*To see the German translation of this report, click link below:*

<http://justiceforiran.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Press-TV-Menschenrechtsverletzungen-f.pdf>

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[1] Justice for Iran Call-to-Action for Identifying those Responsible for the Murder of the Detainees in Khuzistan, Justice for Iran, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/ahvaz/?lang=en>; and Those Responsible for the Death of Detainees in Khuzistan Enjoy Impunity, Justice for Iran, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/khuzestan2/?lang=en><http://justiceforiran.org/khuzestan2/>.

[2] Iran: Arrest Sweeps Target Arab Minority, Human Rights Watch, February 7, 2012, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/07/iran-arrest-sweeps-target-arab-minority>.

[3] Press TV Violates the Rights of the Detainees in Khuzistan, Justice for Iran, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/presstv-khuzestan/?lang=en>.

[4] UK shuts down voice of the voiceless?

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/222539.html>

[5] Find more information about Justice for Iran at their official website at [www.justiceforiran.com](http://www.justiceforiran.com).

[6] Formation of the Supreme Council of Cyber Space and Appointing of its Real and Legal Members, Military Information Website, available at <http://www.aja.ir/portal/Home/ShowPage.aspx?Object=News&CategoryID=f7d36395-588c-496a-983f-379f6fcae43f&WebPartID=c997cbc2-e1fb-4ffc-9360-99122e25e385&ID=184c3505-802d-4685-89f2-db55ec137317>.

[7] About Press TV, Press TV, available at <http://www.presstv.ir/about.html>.

[8] See website of Press TV Ltd. at <http://www.presstv.co.uk>.

[9] Before January 2012, when Press TV's license was revoked in the UK, the company had permit to perform media work in the UK.

[10] 'Blocking Press TV accounts illegal,' Press TV, January 1, 2011, available at <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/158100.html>.

[11] See Press TV's YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/user/presstvLondon>.

[12] The German government, Munich media regulatory office (BLM)

[13] Germany illegally removes Press TV from SES Astra, Press TV, April 3, 2012, available at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/234434.html>.

[14] Frequencies, Press TV, available at <http://www.presstv.ir/Frequencies.html>.

[15] For more information regarding the conditions of Iranian political prisoners, see the latest report of the United Nation's Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/english-report-of-the-special-rapporteur-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-in-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-6-march-2012/?lang=en>.

[16] Video of this interview is available at New Footage of Basij Military Base Attack, YouTube PressTV Channel, July 2, 2009, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W20A52QhCNw>.

[17] Press TV Licence Revoked, Ofcom, January 20, 2012, available at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/enforcement/broadcast-licence-conditions/press-tv-revoked>.

[18] Special Rapporteur, ID on situation in Iran, 30th Meeting, United Nation's Webcast, March 12, 2012, available at <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2012/03/special-rapporteur-id-on-situation-in-iran-30th-meeting.html>.

[19] All identifying details about this individual will be kept confidential at Justice for Iran and will be handed over, if necessary, to relevant judicial authorities along with other documents and evidence.

[20] Neither Zanyar nor Loqman are certain of the location of the filming as they were taken to the building and the room where filming took place blindfolded. However, both think that they were taken to the Intelligence Office of Sanandaj where they were detained.

[21] Hadd in this case means lashing.

[22] The video of the Press TV episode is accessible at Press TV's YouTube Channel. See minutes 5:45 to 8:10 of Iran Today–Komala Terrorist Organization (Part 2), November 12, 2012, available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtwD4odmNgc&list=PLB44834DAB7FA4029&index=80&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtwD4odmNgc&list=PLB44834DAB7FA4029&index=80&feature=plpp_video) and minutes 0:01 to 1:17 of Iran Today–Komala Terrorist Organization (Part 3), November 12, 2012,, available at

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qij5lawbWbQ&list=PLB44834DAB7FA4029&index=79&feature=plpp\\_video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qij5lawbWbQ&list=PLB44834DAB7FA4029&index=79&feature=plpp_video).

[23] Germany's Ban on Press TV from SES Astra Illegal: Lawyer, Press TV, April 5, 2012, available at <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/234695.html>.

[24] Note 1 of Article 188 of the Criminal Procedure Code of General and Revolutionary Courts. See Amending of Note 1 of Article 188 of the Criminal Code of Procedure of General and Revolutionary Courts. Research Center of the Islamic Consultative Majlis, available at <http://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/97841>.

[25] See European Convention of Human Rights, available at <http://www.echr.coe.int/nr/rdonlyres/d5cc24a7-dc13-4318-b457-5c9014916d7a/0/englishanglais.pdf>,

[26] The German text of the quote is "Rundfunkfreiheit und Persönlichkeitsrecht sind in Deutschland gleichrangige Grundrechte. Im Konfliktfall werden beide Verfassungswerte durch das Gericht möglichst zum Ausgleich gebracht. Wenn dies nicht gelingt – wie im vorliegenden Fall –, dann entscheidet das höchste deutsche Gericht, welches Interesse im Einzelfall zurückzutreten hat. Hierbei werden beide Grundrechte in ihrer Beziehung zur Menschenwürde als dem Mittelpunkt des Wertesystems des deutschen Grundgesetzes betrachtet." See, Freedom for Marcus Hellwig and Jens Koch, Politcaly Incorrect, December 1, 2010, available at <http://www.pi-news.net/2010/12/freiheit-fuer-marcus-hellwig-und-jens-koch/>.

[27] This program can be viewed at Press TV's YouTube Channel at PJAk attacks on Iran, January 10, 2012, available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VABdrG\\_vnMI&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VABdrG_vnMI&feature=relmfu).

[28] See Al-Ahvazi Terrorist Groups in Khuzestan, Press TV, March 14, 2012, available at <http://www.presstv.ir/Program/231645.html>.

[29] Press TV Violates the Rights of the Detainees in Khuzistan, Justice for Iran, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/presstv-khuzestan/?lang=en>.

[30] Al-Ahvazi Terrorist Groups in Khuzestan

<http://www.presstv.ir/Program/231645.html>

[31] Arba'in is a Shia Muslim religious observation that occurs 40 days after the Day of Ashura, the day of martyrdom of Hussein bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad.

[32] Article 8 states, "Each transmitting Party shall ensure that every natural or legal person, regardless of nationality or place of residence, shall have the opportunity to exercise a right of reply or to seek other comparable legal or administrative remedies relating to programmes transmitted by a broadcaster within its jurisdiction, within the meaning of Article 5. In particular, it shall ensure that timing and other arrangements for the exercise of the right of reply are such that this right can be effectively exercised.

The effective exercise of this right or other comparable legal or administrative remedies shall be ensured both as regards the timing and the modalities.” See European Convention of Transfrontier Television, available at <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/132.htm>.

[33] See minutes 10:15 to 10:46 of A Film About the Manner of Arrest and the Confessions of Some of the Collaborators of BBC Persian in Iran, Fars News Agency, available at <http://www.farsnews.com/media.php?nn=13901214001242>.

[34] See minutes 12:17 to 13:03, 14:48 to 14:55, 16:40 to 17:20, 17:55 to 18:15 and 20:50 to 21:09 of A Film About the Manner of Arrest and the Confessions of Some of the Collaborators of BBC Persian in Iran, Fars News Agency, available at <http://www.farsnews.com/media.php?nn=13901214001242>.

[35] Department of Treasury and State Announce Sanctions of Iranian Security Forces for Human Rights Abuses, US Department of State, June 9, 2011, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/06/165300.htm>.

[36] For more information, see Gerdab: A dictated Scenario, available at <http://justiceforiran.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Gerdab-a-dictated-scenario.pdf>.

[37] The episode is accessible at Press TV’s YouTube channel at Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight (Part 1), December 10, 2010, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xj49BSvGpFM&feature=relmfu>; Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight (Part 2), December 10, 2010, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVt6d9UkiZU&feature=relmfu>; Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight (Part 3), December 10, 2010, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TMPYWse8GU&feature=relmfu>.

[38] See minutes 7:25 to 7:46 of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight (Part 1), December 10, 2010, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xj49BSvGpFM&feature=relmfu> and minutes 0:08 to 2:24 of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight (Part 2), December 10, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVt6d9UkiZU&feature=relmfu>.

[39] Further Information: Fear of Torture of Detained Iranian Lawyer: Javid Houtan Kiyan, Amnesty International April 7, 2011, available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/040/2011/en/1fadf969-029d-406d-935b-9a3bca3fbecc/mde130402011en.html>.

[40] Further Information: Fear of Torture of Detained Iranian Lawyer: Javid Houtan Kiyan, Amnesty International April 7, 2011, available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/040/2011/en/1fadf969-029d-406d-935b-9a3bca3fbecc/mde130402011en.html>.

[41] Reaction to Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani’s Latest TV “Confessions,” Amnesty International, November 16, 2010, available at

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/103/2010/en/9c5fc98f-a061-434f-8a28-a310d1f8e71f/mde131032010en.html>.

[42] See Minutes 0:47 to 2:25 of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in the spotlight, available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TMPYWse8GU&feature=relmfu>.

[43] See EU Council Regulations No 359/2011, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:100:0001:0011:EN:PDF>; EU Council Implementing Regulations No 611/2011, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:164:0001:0003:EN:PDF>; EU Council Implementing Decision 2011/670/CFSP, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:267:0013:0018:EN:PDF>; EU Council Regulations No 264/2012, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:087:0026:0036:EN:PDF>; and EU Council Regulation No 264/2012, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:087:0026:0036:EN:PDF>.

[44] For more information, see Iran 'show trials' make sorry spectacle, BBC, August 27, 2009, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8223239.stm>; Iran: Show Trial Exposes Arbitrary Detention, Human Rights Watch, August 4, 2009, available at <http://www.hrw.org/news/2009/08/04/iran-show-trial-exposes-arbitrary-detention>; Iran's Show Trials: The Hard-Liners Build Their Case, Time, August 4, 2009, available at <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1914294,00.html>.

[45] Council Regulation (EU) No 264/2012, EU, March 23, 2012, available at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:087:0026:0036:EN:PDF>.