

**IRAN**

# **Punishing Stars**

**Systematic Discrimination and Exclusion  
in Iranian Higher Education**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**December 2010**



**INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**

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## **Systematic Discrimination and Exclusion in Iranian Higher Education**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Full report is available for download at:  
<http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/12/punishing-stars-dec2010/>

**INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN**  
**FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN**

[www.iranhumanrights.org](http://www.iranhumanrights.org)

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The mission of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran is to gather support for Iranian human rights activists and defenders who are advocating for their civil, political, social, and economic rights within the framework of international treaties and standards that define Iran's obligations.

The Campaign is founded on these principles: that human rights in Iran, and in every country, are a matter of legitimate international concern and essential to establishing international peace and security; that human rights in Iran can only be implemented with the assistance of civil society, whose role must be protected and sustained; that human rights compliance in Iran should be approached from a non-partisan perspective and detached from political objectives; and that solidarity with any and all peoples prevented from enjoying their human rights is a moral imperative of our time.

## **ABOUT US**

In order to encourage and assist state authorities to respect and abide by international standards and law, the Campaign documents Iran's compliance with its international human rights obligations and publicizes this and other relevant information to help provide a basis for accurate evaluations and constructive recommendations for improvements.

The Campaign works to inform civil society actors and media from around the world on the situation of human rights in Iran, urging them to support their Iranian colleagues. The Campaign advocates in international institutions, promoting recommendations put forward by human rights and social movements in Iran and providing a platform for their views. The Campaign reaches out across the world to build a network devoted to its principles and ready to contribute to the realization of its goals.

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## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Pouyan Mahmoudian

Pouyan Mahmoudian, a Polymer Engineering student at Amirkabir University, had been an active member of the pro-democracy Student Union *Daftar Tahkim Vahdat* and an officer for the student publication *Rivar*. Due to his activities, authorities detained and allegedly tortured him in 2007.

In 2008, the results of entrance exams were posted on the Internet and I achieved the sixth highest score [but] officials from the Central Selection Committee summoned me.

There were three meetings, which were really like interrogation sessions, with people who claimed to represent the Herasat Office of the Ministry of Science. They wanted me to make false confessions regarding my work with student publications and wanted me to send a letter to the Judiciary denying that I was tortured while in detention. [I] refused to deny it.

At the third meeting, they changed their manner. They said if I ceased political activism and stopped talking about my detention and torture, I should be able to continue my education. They also asked me to collaborate with the Intelligence Ministry. I agreed to end my political activities but refused to collaborate with them.

When the Ministry of Science announced the names of students who were permitted to register, however, Mahmoudian was not among them.

I immediately started to follow up this development. I went to the [Ministry of Science] and met with Dr. Noorbakhsh [the head of testing].... [H]e asked me to keep it quiet for few months and not make any noise. He again promised to resolve the issue.

Mahmoudian also sought assistance for his case from other officials who promised to help resolve the matter.

After a month, they also gave similar answers, that it was the Intelligence Ministry's decision to disqualify me, regardless of my academic record. [One official] explicitly told me, "When the Intelligence Ministry is involved, there is nothing that I can do."

A few months before my disqualification, other students barred from education filed a complaint with the Supreme Court but received an answer that the Court could not adjudicate their case because the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution [that set the ethical and political criteria of university admissions] was formed based on Ayatollah Khomeini's orders and its decisions are above the law. Basically, there are no legal venues for objections. When the highest judicial authority in the country shrugs off responsibility, there is no place else to go. [And] there are no formal ways for contacting the Ministry of Intelligence to submit an objection. After a while, the [official] reply was something like, they expressed regret and sadness that a student with my kind of high ranking was [barred].

Mahmoudian is currently continuing his education outside of Iran.



Pouyan Mahmoudian received the sixth highest score on graduate entrance exams in polymer chemical engineering, but was barred from continuing his education due to his activities and criticism of the government.

## Negin Sayyahi Shahmirzadi

Negin Sayyahi Shahmirzadi was an Agricultural Engineering student at Sari's Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources University. She was effectively expelled and barred from education in 2009 when it became known she was a Baha'i.

I participated in an 11 March [2009] Conference about Wahabi Islam. A cleric at the conference started saying, 'Baha'is are Russian spies,' and insulted my beliefs as much as he could. I couldn't tolerate it, so I stood up in the middle of many other students and defended my beliefs. The atmosphere became quite tense. In the end, we got to the point where the cleric was at a loss for words.

According to what the Vice Chancellor told [my friend] Sona Gholinejad, I think this incident finalized my expulsion. Of course this incident had a profound impact among the university students. After this incident, university authorities had to hold a conference called, 'A Historical Critique of the Baha'i Cult' at the university. I didn't participate in the conference for a number of reasons.

Sayyahi discovered that she had been barred from education when she tried to enroll for classes.



*Negin Sayyahi* was in university before being expelled for being a member of the Baha'i faith. (Photo courtesy: Population of Combat Against Educational Discrimination)

I went to the Registrar's Office at my university. The person in charge asked for my student ID number. When he punched in the number, he told me, "You made a mistake!" because my file didn't open. Then he entered my first and last name. He got the message, "You are not allowed to enroll for classes." I had my class enrollment sheet with me. He said, "There is a problem with your registration. You must go to Mr. Akbari. He is the liaison between the Registrar and the Security Office."

Administrators sent her from one office to another, eventually saying her bar was ideologically motivated and nothing could be done.

When Akbari asked for my student ID number and entered it on his computer, he said, "You have a security issue. You must go to Mr. Saranjam." Mr. Saranjam had nothing to do with this issue. I told Mr. Saranjam the story. First, he didn't show any reaction; he was laughing. After he entered my student ID number, he said, "The person in charge of this issue is Mr. Erfani, Head of the University Security Office." After a while, when Mr. Erfani came, he said, "Your issue is related to Dr. Fazlollah." This was the man who had deleted [my friend]'s registration. [Apparently] my issue was a security issue.

[At] the Security Office, Mr. Akbari gave me the address for the Sanjesh Organization [testing division of the Ministry of Science], without saying anything. I asked him, "Is it an ideological issue?" and he said, "Unfortunately, yes."

My mother and I met with the University Chancellor. He did not treat us well. He said, "We will implement justice. You deserved to be dismissed." My mother's voice was rising. She told him that he was treating people unfairly because of his position. I told my mother to try and understand that if he sided with us, he would lose his livelihood. The authorities' reaction, without exception, was to say, "We are employees and must carry out orders."

When I asked to see my file, they said, "We have been ordered not to provide any documents, not even one piece of writing." But the professors treated us appropriately. My Statistics and Probability professor said, "Education is your human right." This individual was present at the Wahabi Conference, and afterwards asked me several times whether I had faced problems with my dismissal. He was always concerned and caring.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Soon after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2005, the term “starred students” entered Iranian discourse on higher education. Starring became synonymous with a mechanism for discrimination against, and exclusion of, students from higher education based solely on their political beliefs, the exercise of their freedom of expression, and, in the case of Baha’i students, their religious beliefs.

Authorities under Ahmadinejad’s administration, tasked with managing the country’s institutions of higher education and relevant admissions processes, began to flag the academic records of student activists and government critics, as well as Baha’i students, with one to three “stars.” These stars denote the barring of an applicant from gaining admission to bachelor degree programs or from continuing their education in graduate programs. In some cases, authorities have refused to release the results of applicant test scores altogether.

The Ministry of Intelligence has played a prominent role in this process, underscoring the politicization of student selection and enrollment. Generally, the Ministry of Intelligence is engaged in monitoring and detaining critics and dissidents throughout the country. By increasingly using university admissions and disciplinary mechanisms to bar targeted students, the Ministry has expanded its reach into academic environments.

Ministry of Intelligence agents have used threats, intimidation, and even detention to silence students who attempt to seek accountability and legal justification for their deprivation from higher education.

The starring process constitutes a systematic violation of the rights to expression, assembly, and conscience. It represents a form of religious persecution and a serious breach of the right to education.

During the past five years, hundreds of students have been barred from higher education through this process. The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran interviewed 27 students barred from higher education. Additionally, the Campaign compiled a list of 217 students who were denied their right to education. The true numbers are believed to be much higher, as many targeted students have preferred to remain silent and not make their cases public, fearing further persecution and prosecution, or hoping that they can reverse their education bans by giving written guarantees to cease future activism.

Starring and excluding students from higher education has had nothing to do with academic

performance or rankings in highly competitive entrance examinations to undergraduate and graduate programs. Indeed, in all cases reviewed in this report, students ranked high enough on entrance exams to gain admission. Nonetheless these candidates faced systematic, politically motivated discrimination and exclusion.

In tandem with discriminatory enrollment policies, authorities also extensively relied on Disciplinary Committees in universities to summon and suspend students already enrolled in programs of higher education based on their social and political activism, involvement in student publications, and participation in student associations. Repeated suspensions through this mechanism have also resulted in effectively denying the rights of targeted students to complete and continue their studies.

The marking of students' records with stars as a punitive and exclusionary mechanism is carried out by the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Research, in cooperation with the Ministry of Intelligence. These ministries determine which students become starred based on the following scheme:

- *One star* officially denotes individuals who passed the academic examination but whose application authorities have flagged because of prior university disciplinary infractions. In practice, one-star applicants are often those whom the Ministry of Science's Central Selection Committee for Faculty and Students has permitted to continue their education conditionally, after giving written guarantees promising not to engage in undesirable political activities.
- *Two stars* officially denote individuals who have passed the university entrance exam but whose applications the Central Selection Committee deemed incomplete. In practice, these are candidates the Ministry of Intelligence does not deem qualified to continue their higher education. These individuals may be granted temporary privileges to continue their education on the condition that they promise to end their political activities. These students must accept that if they continue to be politically active, authorities will revoke their university admission.
- *Three stars* denote individuals who have passed the academic examination but whose qualifications have been completely rejected by the Central Selection Committee and the Ministry of Intelligence, and despite having secured top academic positioning in the entrance examination are barred from entering the university by the Selection Committee.

The Ministry of Science uses these stars as a way of simplifying a 0-5 coding system used internally. Code 1, like three stars, is for a rejected file. Codes 0 and 2, like two stars, are for an incomplete file. Codes 3 and 4 mean acceptance, and Code 5, like one and two stars, is for students who must provide recognizance.

In March 2007, reacting to public pressure from targeted students, lawmakers, and the media, the Ministry of Science announced stars would no longer be used on student transcripts, that no one would be excluded on the basis of stars, and that any candidate who passed the entrance exam would be allowed to enroll. Nonetheless, authorities have continued a *de facto* policy of starring students, and media outlets report that authorities blocked the admission of at least 50 students who passed the 2007

entrance exam, though not all of their names are known. The list of 217 students deprived of higher education provided in this report includes the names of two students in 2005, 19 in 2006, 19 in 2007, 49 in 2008, 58 in 2009, and 70 in 2010.

In practice, the Ministry of Science no longer prints stars, which were only shorthand for the 0-5 coding system, on the transcripts of applicants. Some applicants with activist backgrounds continue to receive letters instructing them to report to the Ministry of Science or, unable to access their transcripts online, are forced to report. The Ministry of Science informs these applicants of their obstacles or barred admission, or sends them to the Ministry of Intelligence.

## **The Admissions Process and Systematic Banning of Students**

Iranians who want to attend an undergraduate or graduate program at a government university must take an entrance exam. These exams are administered once a year by the Sanjesh Organization, the testing arm of the Ministry of Science, and are effectively the sole academic criteria for student admission. Applicants are rejected or accepted based on the score they receive on the entrance exam.

Authorities at the Ministry of Science have justified denying admission to students who have passed their entrance exams by relying on two regulations issued by the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council: the Moral Selection Regulations for University Entrance Applicants, adopted in 1987, and the Student Selection Criteria, adopted in 1988.

These resolutions require that the Central Selection Committee gain approval for student admissions from non-academic government organs, including the Ministry of Intelligence and the Prosecutor General of the General and Revolutionary Courts. These agencies can block or make conditional an applicant's admission irrespective of his or her performance on standardized examinations or academic merits.

Under these regulations, authorities can reject university applicants if they are drug addicts, are "reputed to be morally corrupt," or are "enemies" of the Islamic Republic. The resolutions make clear that a reputation of moral corruption "must be obvious and without need for investigation," and that "protesters" are different than "enemies." Since at least 2006, the Central Selection Committee and Ministry of Intelligence have barred numerous applicants based on a broader set of criteria including campus or political activism. Based on these regulations, students who enter university must belong to "Islam or the other recognized religions (which are Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism)."

The resolutions also allow the Central Selection Committee to make admissions conditional upon applicants signing recognizance letters promising to "reform their behavior" and not participate in the activities the government has deemed undesirable. These letters often include promises that if the student resumes the activities in question, he or she will be expelled and forced to repay tuition and fees that are otherwise covered by the government.

## **The Role of Disciplinary Committees**

Authorities have also put in place a process designed to exclude and discriminate against targeted students already enrolled at universities. For this purpose, Disciplinary Committees at each university

have been used to summon students and issue suspension sentences. In the case of many students, these suspensions, typically for one to two semesters, have been renewed several times, effectively resulting in the inability of suspended students to complete their academic work towards graduation.

## In Their Own Words: Testimonies of Banned Students

Students who spoke to the Campaign described in detail the arbitrary nature of their exclusion from higher education and the mechanisms leading to this outcome. They also recounted their intensive efforts to seek accountability and remedies for such decisions.

Students who reported being barred from universities were either activists or Baha'is. Activist students were involved in various social and political issues including women's rights, academic freedom, political dissent, human rights, and the rights of political prisoners. Some students worked on campus publications, organized forums or protests, or were members of *Daftar Tahkim-e Vahdat* Student Union and other campus organizations. In most of these activities, students were critical of government and university policies and authorities targeted them in connection to their activism. Baha'i students were barred or expelled usually after their faith came to the attention of education officials.

The interviews reveal that authorities targeted students and deprived them of further education regardless of their academic merits. This process has affected some of the best and brightest students in Iranian universities.

For example, Pouyan Mahmoudian was ranked sixth in the graduate entrance exam in chemistry. The entrance exam is highly competitive, and receiving top ranks is thus an indication of Mahmoudian's academic excellence. However, despite his impressive academic achievement, he was starred and denied admission to the graduate program due to his student activism during his undergraduate studies.

Other students told the Campaign they had fallen victim to multiple suspensions by Disciplinary Committees. Several students told the Campaign that the university Disciplinary Committee summoned and suspended them simply for protesting the process of banning other students. The efforts of these students to organize and seek accountability and transparency regarding starrng led to their own exclusion from higher education.

Zia Nabavi, Sadegh Shojaii, Mahdieh Golroo, and Saeed Feyzallah are examples of student advocates who themselves ended up being banned from continuing their higher education. Another three students at Allameh Tabatabai University in Tehran were excluded from continuing their education in 2007 after organizing activities in support of banned students.

The systematic banning of students from higher education has been applied through the starrng process to Baha'i students as well. This report includes interviews with Baha'i students who detail how they were prevented from admission altogether, regardless of their academic performance. Baha'i students who had already managed to enroll at universities before the starrng process was instituted were identified and expelled from universities or denied graduate admission by becoming starred.

## From Denial to Acknowledgment

In 2006, when the news of starred students and their exclusion from higher education became public, authorities in President Ahmadinejad's administration denied the existence of such practices. Ministry of Science officials specifically denied that political motives influenced their admissions process, that any recognizance letters required students to cease activism, or that there were any three-starred students or students wholly barred from admission. After affected students and their supporters organized protests and took their case to the media and members of Parliament in 2006, authorities made contradictory and conflicting statements. Throughout the 2006-2007 school year, the issue of starred students was an ongoing controversy drawing repeated government reactions.

On 20 September 2006, the newspaper *Etemad Melli* reported that the Ministry of Science had issued new procedures instructing universities not to enroll starred students. On 22 September 2006, the top official in charge of university admissions, Morteza Noorbakhsh, director of the Ministry of Science's Central Committee of Selection, originally denied the existence of discriminatory policies and claimed that starred students were those with "incomplete files." He further threatened students not to pursue their cases. But on 24 September, Mehdi Zahedi, the Minister of Science, called the existence of starred students a "lie," denying that any students had been excluded or blocked from enrollment because of political activity.

Some of the starred students took their cases to members of Parliament, while others organized protests and publicized their plight in the media. On 4 October 2006, the Iranian media published the text of letters sent to starred students, which included the following: "According to the student selection criteria adopted by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, you have not been admitted."

Eventually, on 20 December 2006, Zahedi acknowledged the existence of starred students, but accused them of having criminal records relating to "prison, flogging, and rape." In a reference to the prominent role of the Ministry of Intelligence in this process, he further added, "The individuals referred to as having three stars on their record have been disqualified by authorities other than the Ministry of Science."

Students who sought legal counsel to bring their cases to court and seek judicial remedies were told that these decisions are based upon resolutions of the Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution, "which is above the law."

## Violations of International Law

Iran ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1975 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1975. The ICCPR protects freedoms of opinion, expression, association, and assembly. The Iranian government systematically violates these rights by barring or expelling students on the basis of their beliefs, expression of views critical of the government, membership in student organizations, or participation in public forums and peaceful protests.

The ICCPR prohibits Iran from discriminating against persons on the basis of religion. Additionally,

under the ICCPR, restricting access to education on the basis of one's faith violates freedom of religion. By adopting regulations, policies, and practices that bar Baha'is from higher education the Iranian government continues to breach the ICCPR.

The ICESCR establishes the "right of everyone to education" and stipulates, "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all," without discrimination against religion or political opinion. Iran fails to meet its ICESCR obligations by discriminatorily denying education to activists and Baha'i students.

## Recommendations

### *To the government of Iran:*

- Ensure that students and university applicants can exercise their right to expression, association, assembly, and religious freedom without interference by authorities and without having fear of persecution, arrest, or expulsion or denial of university admissions.
- Establish a formal mechanism within the Ministry of Science that allows students to appeal decisions of the Central Selection Committee. Ensure that this mechanism has independent power to overrule decisions of the Committee.
- Reinstate students barred from education based on their political or religious beliefs or activities. Ensure that such students can seek financial restitution in civil courts.
- Release all students detained and prosecuted for activities related to or advocating on behalf of those deprived of education.
- Release all student activists and prisoners of conscience who have been detained and prosecuted for exercising their freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

### *To the Iranian Parliament:*

- Launch an impartial investigation, conducted by a committee including representatives of independent student associations, to review all cases of students barred or expelled on allegedly political and discriminatory grounds. This committee should hold public hearings and bring students who allege being subjected to such bars and expulsions to testify. The committee should have the power to subpoena members of the executive branch and security authorities to testify.
- Expand the jurisdiction of civil courts so they can adjudicate cases brought by students regarding deprivation of education.

- Amend all university admissions regulations to remove any discriminatory or arbitrary criteria for disqualification, including religious requirements and vague determinations that an applicant is an “enemy” of the Islamic Republic.
- Amend all university admissions regulations to remove any role for non-educational bodies, namely the Ministry of Intelligence.
- Amend university rules and regulations, including Disciplinary Committee regulations that allow for suspension of students on discriminatory, vague, and arbitrary grounds, such as insulting Islamic and national beliefs or acting against national security.

*To the Iranian Prosecutor General and Judiciary:*

- Investigate, prosecute, and hold accountable members of the Ministry of Intelligence responsible for threatening, intimidating, arresting, persecuting, and expelling student activists based on political and ideological grounds.
- Adjudicate civil claims brought by students regarding deprivation of education. Provide financial restitution for students that suffered undue delays in attaining degrees or losing academic credit because of illegal deprivation of education.

*To the universities and institutions of higher learning outside Iran partnering with Iranian universities:*

- Require partner Iranian universities to provide a transparent account of any exclusionary policies.
- Provide admission and scholarships to Iranian students barred from Iranian universities.

## 217 STUDENTS BARRED FROM HIGHER EDUCATION

Year	Name	University	Reason: activism/faith
2005	Mehdi Aminzadeh	Shahid Rajae & Mofid	Pro-democracy
2	Peyman Aref	Tehran U.	Right to education
2006	Matin Meshkin	Amirkabir	Pro-democracy
4	Gharib Sajjadi	Tehran Tarbiat Moallem	Kurdish rights
5	Farhad Zatali Fard	Elm-o-San'at & Sharif	Not available (N/A)
6	Siamak Karimi	Bu Ali Law & Shahid Behshti	N/A
7	Saeed Ardeshiri	Bahonar & Allameh U.	N/A
8	Zahra Janipour	Birjand U. & Tarbiat Modarres U.	N/A
9	Salar Saket	Kurdistan & Tehran U.	Kurdish rights
10	Hannan Azizi Banitorof	Tehran U.	Father's ethnic rights
11	Mansour Ezzati	Malek Ashtar & Allameh Tabatabai	Pro-democracy
12	Yashar Ghajar	Amirkabir & Tabriz U.	N/A
13	Mohammad Shooresh Moradi	Kurdistan & Tehran U.	N/A
14	Mohsen Fattehi	Tehran U.	N/A
15	Roosbeh Riazi Moghadam	Amirkabir	N/A
16	Mehdi Zamani	N/A	Right to education
17	Tohid Alizadeh	Tehran U.	N/A
18	Mohammad Hossein Hassanpour Bisheh	N/A	N/A
19	Hamed Hassandoust	Isfahan U.	N/A
20	Ehsan Nojoomi	Petroleum Tech. & Imam Khomeini	N/A
21	Mehrdaad Islamkhah	Imam Hossein	Student activism
2007	Morteza Hosseinzadeh	Bu Ali	N/A
23	Alireza Khoshbakht	Bu Ali	N/A
24	Farshid Moghaddam Salimi	Allameh Tabatabai	N/A
25	Hanif Karageri	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
26	Yasser Goli	Sanandaj Azad U.	Kurdish rights
27	Zahra Tohidi	Bu Ali	N/A
28	Yahya Safi Aryan	Bu Ali	N/A
29	Zohreh Asadpour	Gilan U.	Women's rights
30	Farhad Zatalifar	Elm-o-San'at	N/A
31	Afshin Rezapour	N/A	N/A
32	Shayan Moghimi Firouzabad	Sadoughi Med.	Baha'i
33	Ghader Kiani	Tehran U.	Azari rights
34	Parham Aghdassi	Bu Ali	Baha'i
35	Shayan Vahdati	N/A	Baha'i
36	Sepehr Atefi	N/A	Baha'i
37	Rahil Mehdizadeh	N/A	Baha'i
38	Dorsa Sobhani	Sari U.	Baha'i
39	Amir Salimiha	N/A	N/A
40	Eftekhar Barzegarian	Ferdowsi	N/A
2008	Sadegh Shojaee	Allameh Tabatabai	N/A
42	Mahdieh Golroo	Allameh Tabatabai	Right to education
43	Majid Dorri	N/A	Right to education
44	Asu Saleh	Kurdistan U.	N/A
45	Navid Khanjani	N/A	Baha'i & Right to edu
46	Hessam Misaghian	N/A	Baha'i & Right to edu
47	Ali Saberi	Amirkabir	N/A
48	Nasser Pouyafar	Amirkabir	N/A
49	Seyed Ziaeddin Nabavi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A

Year	Name	University	Reason: activism/faith
50	Samad Pashaee	Tabriz U.	N/A
51	Nader Mahd Gharebagh	Tabriz U.	N/A
52	Amin Emami	Tabriz U.	N/A
53	Nahid Babazadeh	Tabriz U.	N/A
54	Tohid Alizadeh	Tehran U.	N/A
55	Seyed Hamed Ahmadi	Tehran U.	N/A
56	Mohammad Hashemi	N/A	Student activism
57	Mohsen Fatehi	Shiraz U.	N/A
58	Asghar Ghanbari	Malek Ashtar	N/A
59	Hossein Najafi	Ferdowsi	Student activism
60	Adib Rostampour	Mohaghegh Ardabili	N/A
61	Reza Mohseni	Malek Ashtar	Pro-democracy
62	Hassan Khalili	Yazd U.	N/A
63	Ali Hossein Asadzadeh	Tehran U.	N/A
64	Puyan Mahmoudian	Amirkabir	Student publications
65	Siamak Karimi	Bu Ali Law	N/A
66	Sivan Bahmani	Bu Ali	N/A
67	Mohammad Javad Dordkeshan	Lorestan U.	N/A
68	Sadegh Motamed	Kashan U.	N/A
69	Davood Habibi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
70	Ali Taghipour	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
71	Amid Moshrefzadeh	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
72	Marzieh Deylam Salehi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
73	Shiva Nazar Ahari	Azad U.	N/A
74	Afshin Akbarian	Yazd U.	N/A
75	Mohammad Bakhshandeh	Yazd U.	N/A
76	Mojtaba Kharazian	Yazd U.	N/A
77	Amir Salimiha	Tehran U.	N/A
78	Siamak Karimi	Bu Ali Law	N/A
79	Hadi Haj Amiri	Sanandaj U.	N/A
80	Ghader Kiani	Tehran U.	N/A
81	Afshin Akbarian	Yazd U.	Student publication
82	Javad Alizadeh	Allameh Tabatabai	Student activism
83	Mojtaba Kharazian	Yazd U.	N/A
84	Ebrahim Rashidi	Orumiyeh U.	Ethnic rights & student publication
85	Mohammad Saleh Ayouman	Tehran U.	N/A
86	Mohammad Bakhshandeh	Yazd U.	N/A
87	Sama Nourani	Sahand U.	Baha'i
88	Rashid Ismaeli	Allameh Tabatabai	Pro-democracy
89	Sina Dana	Sahand U.	Baha'i
2009	Safoura Eliasi	N/A	N/A
91	Mohammad Sharif	Allameh Tabatabai	Human rights
92	Somayeh Rashidi	Allameh Tabatabai	Women's rights & right to edu
93	Seyed Rouhollah Torabi	Imam Khomeini Int'l	N/A
94	Bina Momtazi	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
95	Sepehr Ghodrat	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
96	Mahnoosh Dehghan	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
97	Ghazal Sadeghi	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
98	Danial Motahari	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
99	Leva Baghi	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
100	Niloofer Kan'ani	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
101	Nasim Mo'atar	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i

Year	Name	University	Reason: activism/faith
102	Arman Roshani	Shahid Bahonar	Baha'i
103	Younes Zareyoon	Tabriz Azad U.	Student activism
104	Vahid Sheikh Begloo	Tabriz Azad U.	Student activism
105	Behnam Tarkanpour	Tabriz Azad U.	Student activism
106	Navid Mohammadi	Tabriz Azad U.	Student activism
107	Shayan Sanaei	Bojnourd Payame Noor	Baha'i
108	Mona Sharifi Mohabati	Bojnourd Payame Noor	Baha'i
109	Anoush Sharifi Mohabati	Bojnourd Payame Noor	Baha'i
110	Mona Rezaei	Mashad Sajad U.	Baha'i
111	Payman Nodinian	Kurdistan Azad U.	N/A
112	Leila Sehat	Tehran Azad U.	Women's rights; Mousavi
113	Razieh Jafari	Shiraz U.	N/A
114	Saba Mohebpour	N/A	Baha'i
115	Ali Qolizadeh	Shahrood U.	N/A
116	Ali Taghipour	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
117	Amid Moshrefzadeh	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
118	Iman Sedighi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
119	Mohsen Barzegar	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
120	Nima Nahvi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
121	Nikzad Zanganeh	N/A	Women's rights
122	Katayoun Rahimi	Shahid Beheshti	Student activism
123	Alborz Zahedi	Tehran U.	N/A
124	Behzad Jeddi	Tabriz U.	N/A
125	Ebrahim Shahbazi	Tabriz U.	N/A
126	Ameneh Ghasempour	Tabriz U.	N/A
127	Vahid Sheibani	Birjand U.	N/A
128	Saeed Akbari	Tabriz U.	N/A
129	Mehrnoosh Karimi	Malek Ashtar	N/A
130	Sohail Ziaei	Amirkabir	N/A
131	Sayed Ashkan Madani	Azad U.	N/A
132	Hamid Tofigh	Azad U.	N/A
133	Saeed Komijani	Azad U.	N/A
134	Hakimeh Sehat	Azad U.	N/A
135	Mahsa Jazini	Azad U.	N/A
136	Sourna Hashemi	Zanjan U.	Exposed rape attempt
137	Bahram Vahedi	Zanjan U.	Exposed rape attempt
138	Alireza Firouzi	Zanjan U.	Exposed rape attempt
139	Negar Mishaghian	Shiraz U.	Student activism
140	Pejman Abbasi	Malek Ashtar	Student activism
141	Shafagh Timajchi	Amol U.	Baha'i
142	Negin Sayahi Shahmirzadi	Sari U.	Baha'i
143	Sona Gholinejad	Sari U.	Baha'i
144	Naim Kamali	Sari U.	Baha'i
145	Ardalan Tabianian	Semnan U.	Baha'i
146	Frahnaz Felfeli	Semnan U.	Baha'i
147	Mojdeh Noorani	Semnan U.	Baha'i
2010	Majid Makouee	Malek Ashtar	Azeri rights
149	Seyed Hanzaleh Hedayati	N/A	Mousavi campaign
150	Kamelia Kowsari	Allameh Tabatabai	Right to education
151	Arman Sedaghati	Amirkabir	N/A
152	Amir Jahangiri	Amirkabir	N/A
153	Khalil-ol-Rahman Khalilpour	Amirkabir	Sunni Muslim
154	Samaneh Navvab	Amirkabir	Father's activism
155	Mohammad Amin Shirzad	N/A	N/A
156	Mansour Shakerian	Amirkabir	N/A

Year	Name	University	Reason: activism/faith
157	Hamed Ghazanfari	Amirkabir	N/A
158	Saeed Moradi Naghadah	Gilan U.	Student activism
159	Siamak Mirzaee	Rasht U.	Azari rights
160	Hafez Sardarpour	Rasht U.	Student publication
161	Emad Behavar	Yazd & Mazandaran U.	Pro-democracy
162	Ashkan Zahabian	Mashad Ferdowsi	N/A
163	Siavash Saliminejad	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
164	Iman Sedighi	Babol Noshiravani	N/A
165	Hamed Honarhah	Imam Khomeini Int'l	N/A
166	Payam Heydar Ghazvini	Imam Khomeini Int'l	Karroubi campaign
167	Sara Khademi	Mazandaran U.	Student activism
168	Behnam Farazmand	Mazandaran U.	Student activism
169	Kaveh Daneshvar	Babol Noshiravani	Student activism
170	Hajar Kabiri	Tabriz U.	Women's rights
171	Mohsen Saghafi	Tehran Azad U.	Student activism
172	Ali Ojaghi	Malek Ashtar	N/A
173	Arash Sadeghi	Allameh Tabatabai	N/A
174	Arsalan Sadeghi	Malek Ashtar	Leftist activism
175	Maziar Masoumi	Malek Ashtar	Leftist activism
176	Vessal Momtazi	Imam Khomeini Int'l	Baha'i
177	Mohsen Rajabi	Malek Ashtar	N/A
178	Hossein Ghabel	Mashad Ferdowsi	N/A
179	Kazem Rezaee	Shiraz U.	N/A
180	Abdoljalil Rezaee	Shiraz U.	N/A
181	Hamdollah Namjoo	Shiraz U.	Karroubi campaign
182	Esmail Jalilvand	Shiraz U.	Karroubi campaign
183	Younes Mir Hosseini	Shiraz U.	Student activism
184	Alma Ranjbar	Shiraz U.	N/A
185	Hadi Alamli	N/A	N/A
186	Arash Roostaei	N/A	N/A
187	Mohsen Zarinkamar	N/A	Political
188	Farzaneh Jalali	Tehran U.	N/A
189	Ali Khairjoo	Mohaghegh Ardabili	Student activism
190	Shaida Neekravan	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
191	Nariman Afshar	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
192	Fouad Nemaee	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
193	Arsalan Saeedi	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
194	Mahsa Meshkin	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
195	Soha Yazdani	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
196	Farivar Yazdani	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
197	Milad Mahrami	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
198	Faez Samimi	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
199	Ramin Derakhshan	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
200	Naghmeh Rastgar	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
201	Saghar Aghdasi	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
202	Fouad Khanjani	Industrial Mgmt. Inst.	Baha'i
203	Babak Saran	N/A	Father's activism
204	Sima Didar	N/A	Cultural
205	Ruhollah Ghodrat	Rafsanjan U.	Baha'i
206	Pouya Sharifi	Iran Science & Tech	Student activism
207	Hammid Reza Sahraei	Iran Science & Tech	N/A
208	Ali Asadollahi	Iran Science & Tech	N/A
209	Sajjad Darvish	Iran Science & Tech	N/A
210	Siamak Amin	Orumiyeh U.	N/A
211	Arezo Sammimi	Behshahr Science & Tech	N/A
212	Sahar Kohbar	Shiraz Payam Noor	N/A
213	Abbas Rashidi	Karaj Tarbiat Moallem	N/A
214	Amin Arya	Karaj Tarbiat Moallem	N/A
215	Yaser Rahmani	Shiraz Medical	N/A
216	Amir Hossein Tavakoli	Imam Khomeini Int'l	N/A
217	Anoush Nokhoubberiz	Ferdowsi	N/A

# Punishing Stars

## Systematic Discrimination and Exclusion in Iranian Higher Education

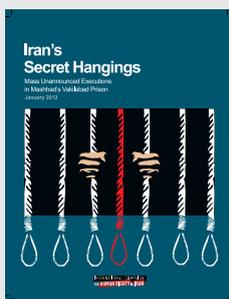
Soon after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became president of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2005, the term “starred students” entered Iranian discourse on higher education. Starring became synonymous with a mechanism for discrimination against, and exclusion of, students from higher education based solely on their political beliefs, the exercise of their freedom of expression, and in the case of Baha’i students, their religious beliefs.

**“Punishing Stars: Systematic Discrimination and Exclusion in Iranian Higher Education”** is a thorough study of Iran’s on-going discriminatory higher education practices, based on close examinations of official policies and on direct testimonies from students about being barred from study, and their efforts to seek accountability by Iranian authorities.

*Excluding students from universities based on their political and religious views is a totalitarian practice that ruins careers and removes reform-oriented young people from future professional cohorts. Barring students from higher education is a violation of Iran’s international legal obligations to promote equality and nondiscrimination, and the Iranian people’s right to education.*

— Hadi Ghaemi, International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran

Other reports by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran



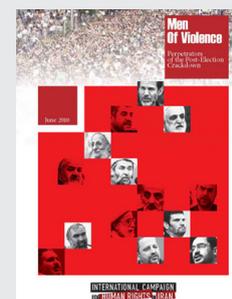
**Iran’s Secret Hangings:** Mass Unannounced Executions in Mashhad’s Vakilabad Prison



**Official Distortion and Disinformation:** A Guide to Iran’s Human Rights Crisis



**Raising Their Voices:** Iranian Civil Society Reflections on the Military Option



**Men of Violence:** Perpetrators of the Post-Election Countdown