

## **IRAN: Threats of legal proceedings against Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi for international human rights advocacy**

**Paris-Geneva, June 26, 2009.** The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), expresses its utmost concern regarding the threats of judicial prosecution against Ms. **Shirin Ebadi**, human rights lawyer, co-founder of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC), and Nobel Prize winner.

The Iranian official media have recently circulated an unsigned letter reportedly drafted by lawyers, university scholars and families of veterans and martyrs, calling upon Justice Minister Gholam-Hussein Elham –who is also spokesman for the government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad– to launch judicial proceedings against Ms. Shirin Ebadi for allegedly violating Islamic and constitutional law through her human rights advocacy.

Such threats seem to be a direct consequence of the series of meetings and conversations organised by FIDH for Ms. Ebadi, with the UN Secretary General, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the High Representative for the European Union Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Commissioner on External Relations, as well as the President and members of the European Parliament, to report on the current human rights situation in Iran in the wake of repression of peaceful demonstrations. Ms. Ebadi also publicly presented the 2009 annual report of the Observatory in Geneva on June 19, outlining the direness of the situation of human rights defenders in the country.

*«Shirin Ebadi, the DHRC and her staff have been continuously slandered and harassed over the past year. The threat of prosecution against Ms. Ebadi is another evidence of the determination of the Iranian authorities to silence outspoken human rights defenders in the country. This comes only a few days after the arrest of Abdolfattah Soltani, another founding member of the DHRC »* said Karim Lahidji, President of the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI) and FIDH Vice-President.

*«Criminalising human rights advocacy work is a blatant violation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders that the international community cannot ignore»,* said Eric Sottas, OMCT Secretary General.

The Observatory calls upon the Iranian authorities to stop these acts of harassment against Ms. Shirin Ebadi, as well as all other civil society activists, and guarantee their right to defend human rights in conformity with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, in particular its Article 12.2 (“The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the [...] Declaration”), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as international human rights instruments ratified by Iran.

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