Protest-hit Iran Arrests Lawyer of Detained Journalists: Report

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By AFP

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Iran has arrested the lawyer of two female journalists detained after reporting the death of a woman in custody, which sparked three months of protests, a newspaper said Saturday.

The Islamic republic has been rocked by protests since Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin, died on September 16 after her arrest for an alleged breach of the country's dress code for women.

"Mohammad Ali Kamfirouzi, the lawyer for several activists and journalists, has been detained," the Ham Mihan newspaper said.

The arrest brings to 25 the number of lawyers detained in connection with the protests, the reformist daily said.

Kamfirouzi's lawyer, Mohammad Ali Bagherpour, was cited as saying his client had not received a summons, was unaware of the charges he faced, and that he had been detained without any legal formalities.

Ham Mihan quoted Kamfirouzi's brother as saying that the lawyer had been arrested on Wednesday. He said he held the judiciary was "responsible for protecting my brother's life and health."

**Charged with propaganda, conspiring**

Among Kamfirouzi's clients were Niloufar Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi, the two female journalists arrested after covering Amini's death and its aftermath.

Hamedi, who works at the reformist newspaper *Shargh*, was detained on September 20 after visiting the hospital where Amini had spent three days in a coma before her death.

Mohammadi, a journalist at *Ham Mihan,* was taken into custody on September 29 after she travelled to Amini's hometown of Saqez in Kurdistan province to report on her funeral.

The pair were charged on November 8 with propaganda against the state and conspiring against national security — capital crimes under the sharia law in force in Iran.

On Tuesday, the *Shargh*newspaper published a list of nearly 40 journalists and photojournalists arrested in Iran in connection with the protests.

Paris-based media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern about their fate and demanded their immediate release.

Iran said on December 3 that more than 200 people have been killed in the protests, which it describes as "riots," including dozens of security personnel.

Norway-based group Iran Human Rights said Iran's security forces had killed at least 469 people in the protests, in an updated toll issued on Saturday.

Thousands of people have been arrested since the protests erupted. Eleven have been sentenced to death, and two have already been executed.

Meanwhile, reformist newspapers reported that Iran has released two teenagers arrested on suspicion of taking part in the protests.

Amir Hossein Rahimi, 15, and Sonia Sharifi, 17, were both released on Thursday after almost two months in custody, the *Etemad*and *Ham Mihan*dailies reported.