



JOURNALISM III. POST- REVOLUTION ERA

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At the time of the 1978-79 Revolution, there were about 100 newspapers in Iran, of which twenty-three were dailies. Within two years of the revolution, 700 new titles had appeared, many of them political, such as *Mojāhed* (Holy Warrior), the organ of the leftist Islamic People's Mojahedin of Iran (Mojāhedin-e Kālq-e Irān), *Kār* (Labor), the organ of the Marxist-Leninist Fedā'iān-e Kālq guerrillas, and the leftist satirical weekly *Āhangar* (The Ironsmith). Others were resurrected pre-revolution titles that had been closed down by the former regime. The highest circulations were held by three pre-revolution dailies, *Eṭṭelā'āt*, *Kayhān*, and *Āyandegān* (qq.v.), run by their largely secular staff that had assumed control of the papers during the revolution. The Islamic authorities controlled the national radio and television and a few newspapers they had started, especially two dailies launched soon after the revolution: *Enqelāb-e eslāmi* (Islamic Revolution), established by Abu'l-Ḥasan Bani-Ṣadr, who was to become Iran's first president (before being deposed and forced into exile in 1981), and *Jomhuri-e eslāmi* (Islamic Republic), established in 1979 by Sayyed Ali Khamenei, who was to become Iran's third president in 1981—after the assassination of the second president, Moḥammad-'Ali Rejā'i, and then Supreme Leader (*rahbar*) in 1989, after



Ayatollah Khomeini's death.

CRITICAL JOURNALISM

The language used by the media sharpened as differences increased, on the one hand, between the Islamic Republic and large segments of the population on ethnic, gender and ideological grounds, and, on the other, among various strands of the new regime, especially between the clerical establishment and president Bani Šadr. The authorities blamed the opposition press for the rising dissatisfaction across the country, especially with regard to armed clashes in areas where ethnic minorities were demanding greater rights. By August 1979 the “Spring of Freedom” (*bahār-e āzādi*) had come to an end with the closure of many newspapers, including *Āyandegān*, and the state takeover of *Eṭṭelāʿāt* and *Kayhān*. Many professional journalists were purged from the press. Several were briefly jailed. Several others were executed, some on charges of having supported the former regime, others for their opposition to the new one. Some of the newspaper closures were backed by the first of the Islamic Republic's three press laws, passed in 1979. The other two were passed in 1986 and 2000, each version imposing new restrictions on journalists (Shahidi, pp. 2-6, 14-16).

The intensification of internal conflicts, Iran's invasion by Iraq in 1980, Bani-Šadr's removal from office and the defeat of an armed uprising by the Mojāhedīn in 1981 led to the silencing of most, if not all, voices of dissent. Fewer new publications emerged in Iran during the 8-year period of the Iran-Iraq War (q.v.) than had in the two years preceding it (author's calculations based on Qāsemi). These included the dailies *Kār o kārgar* (Work and Worker), licensed in 1984, published by the Islamic Republic's equivalent of a trade union federation, “*Kāna-ye kārgar*” (Workers' House) and *Resālat* (Mission), licensed in 1985, the organ of conservative Islamic politics, with close links to Iran's traditional commercial interests based in the bazaars. The war years also saw the publication of a number of specialist monthlies, some of them staffed by journalists from papers that had been closed down, especially *Āyandegān*. Most prominent among these were *Šanʿat-e ḥaml o naql* (Transport Industry) and *Film, Kešāvarz* (The Farmer), *Dānestanihā* (Things Worth Knowing), and the literary journal *Ādineh* (Friday). *Ādineh*, which promoted modern Iranian literature and introduced secular, including left-wing, social and political ideas, was closed down in 1999 (*Negahi gozarā beh tawqif-e našriyāt*, Wezārat-e farhang o eršād-e eslāmi, Tehran, 2003, p. 1).



The war years also witnessed the appearance of a mildly satirical column, “*Do kalameh ḥarf-e ḥesāb*” (A Couple of Sensible Words) in the *Eṭṭelā’āt* newspaper by Kiumarṭ Šāberī, one of the few remaining writers of the pre-Revolution satirical paper, *Tawfiq*. After the war, Šāberī started the Islamic Republic’s first satirical paper, the weekly *Golāqā* (Mr. Rose), a common name in the Iranian countryside. He closed down the paper in 2002, during another round of newspaper closures in Iran, and died two years later (see *Golāqā* at online sources).

Following the end of the war in 1988 and Ayatollah Khomeini’s death in 1989, Iran experienced a period of economic growth under President Ali-Akbar Hāšemi Rafsanjāni (Rafsanjani), and a relaxation of cultural restrictions introduced by his Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance (Wazir-e farhang o eršād-e eslāmi), Sayyed Mohammad Khatami (Moḥammad Kātami). In less than two years, the number of newspapers increased by about fifty percent, reaching 274; the number of dailies nearly doubled, from 10 to 19; and the number of scientific and specialist publications rose by 150 percent (Aminzādeh, pp. 26-28). Under Khatami, licenses were given to several papers that were closed down later: the literary monthly *Gardun* (1996); the daily *Salām* (1999); and the monthly *Kiān* (2001), which specialized in critical, Islamic social and political thought. Technically, the major innovation in this period was the emergence in 1992 of Tehran Municipality’s multi-color daily, *Hamšahri* (Fellow Citizens), which covered a wider range of subjects than the other newspaper’s largely political agenda. Within three years, *Hamšahri* became Iran’s best-selling newspaper, with a circulation of 400,000, roughly twice that of *Kayhān* and *Eṭṭelā’āt* (Mo’tamednežād, p. 3).

Criticized by conservatives, Khatami resigned in May 1992 and was replaced by ‘Ali Lārijāni, who had been the Deputy Chief of Staff and Acting Chief of Staff of the Revolutionary Guard Corps (Sepāh-e pāsdārān-e enḡelāb-e eslāmi). Two years later, Lārijāni was appointed director of radio and television, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB; *Šedā o simā-ye jomhuri-e eslāmi-e Irān*), and was succeeded as minister by another conservative politician, Moštafā Mir-Salim, who remained in office until 1997, when Khatami succeeded Rafsanjani as president (for Mir-Salim’s biography see *irhistory.com*).

The quantitative rise of the press continued under Lārijāni and Mir-Salim. By 1992, Iran had at least 2,145 journalists, more than three times that of the pre-Revolution era. Women made up 13 percent of the total, their share having



doubled during the same period. Average experience among journalists was just over four years; nearly three-quarters of them were part-timers, with an average monthly pay of about \$50. The license-holders were earning on average more than \$1,200 a month. (Moḥseniān-Rād, et al., 1993a, pp. 4-17; and 1993b, pp. 4-17). Surveys in 1994 found the papers to be of poor quality (Didāri, pp. 52-57) and the journalists holding a very low opinion of their publications and themselves (*Faṣl-nāme-ye Rasāneh* 5/2, 1994, pp. 8-13).

Rafsanajani's second term, 1993-97, ended with a mixed record on journalism. The first annual press festival (jašn-vāre-ye maṭbu'āt), with awards for journalists, was held by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in 1994. A press court with a jury, promised in the 1980 constitution, was established in 1995, albeit with a conservative majority. And a 1995 bill aimed at tightening the 1986 press law was withdrawn after it had been opposed by almost all newspaper publishers, several of them senior figures in the Islamic Republic. However, in 1995 there were also signs of concern with the press, which a government official divided into four categories: a) "progressive and goal-oriented;" b) "neutral;" c) "superficial," such as the commercial sports newspapers; and d) "sleepers," (*kofteh*) affiliated with the country's intellectuals who had "always been sick" and whose papers would "write about the most banal issues in the most remote corners of the world, but would not make a reference to the Holy Defense," the official title given to the Iran-Iraq war (Entezāmi, p. 81). The following year, Ayatollah Sayyed 'Ali Khamenei divided the press into three groups: a) those that had accepted the Islamic Republic; b) those who were indifferent; and c) those who were hostile (*mo'āned*), with "hard-line Marxists" among their rank, along with writers who had "cooperated with and praised the Shah's regime, in spite of its black oppression" but who were now presenting themselves as freedom-lovers. Ayatollah Khamenei said the first two groups would be supported by the state, and those in the third group would be tolerated, but they had to "correct themselves" (*Faṣl-nāme-ye Rasāneh* 7/1, 1996, pp. 2-11).

Khatami's first year in office, 1997-98, saw the establishment of the first journalists' union after the revolution, the Association of Iranian Journalists (Anjoman-e ruz-nāma negārān-e Irān); changes in the make up of the press jury, resulting in more decisions in favor of critical journalists; press trials shown on television, with big audiences; and a rise in the number of newspapers to 850, selling more than two million copies a day (Mo'tamednezhād, 1998, p. 45). At the first Seminar to Study the Problems of the



Iranian Press, held in 1998, Iran was described as witnessing an “expansion of press freedom” that had been “unprecedented” in its history (ibid, 1998, pp. 2-3). However, there was also a warning that unable to compete with the subsidized state-owned papers, the independent papers amounted to “an ocean one millimeter deep” that could be “blown away by the slightest breeze” (Rezā’i, pp. 131-41). Reporting in Iran was likened to walking through a minefield (Farahmand, 1998, pp. 115-17), carried out by journalists most of whom had no professional education or training (Zāre’, 1998, p. 642).

Two dailies licensed by Khatami’s administration, *Jāme’eh* (Society) and *Zan* (Woman), appeared in 1998 and were soon closed down by the press court. *Jāme’eh* was banned in July 1998 after quoting the commander of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, General Raḥim Şafavi, as having said that some newspapers were undermining national security; “the roots of counter-revolution” would be “cut off;” and that there were those that “we must behead and those whose tongues we shall cut off.” The paper also quoted commentators who had likened General Sayyed-Yaḥyā Raḥim Şafavi, the Commander of Revolutionary Guards, to Pol Pot and Saddam Hussein. The publishers immediately replaced *Jāme’eh* with another daily, *Ṭus*, identical to the banned paper, except for its name. To the judiciary, this was reminiscent of Iran in the late 1940s and early 1950s when the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party had used a stock of publishing licenses to replace its banned newspapers. *Ṭus* was banned by the Press Court, but an intervention by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance and protests by students at Tehran University resulted in the sentence being commuted to a monetary fine. The paper was allowed to reappear with non controversial front page (Purostād, pp. 17-42).

Over the course of the ensuing weeks there were many attacks on Iran’s new press by senior figures of the Islamic Republic, including Ayatollah Khomeini, who repeatedly warned against a “cultural offensive by the West” with its “old technique of ‘divide and rule’,” sometimes using “negligent, careless elements” within the Islamic Republic (Rasā’i, pp. 172-80). In September 1998, *Ṭus* was permanently shut down after quoting the former French President, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, as having said that Ayatollah Khomeini had applied for asylum when he arrived in France from his exile in Iraq in 1978. Several of the paper’s senior editors and managers were briefly arrested.

In February 1999, *Ṭus* was replaced with another daily, *Neşāṭ* (Joy), that was closed down in September after it had published an article against the death penalty by an exiled Iranian activist, Ḥosayn Bāqerzādeh; another article by



one of the paper's own writers, 'Emād-al-Din Bāqi, that was critical of the Islamic punishment of *qeshās* (retribution); and an unfavorable open letter to Ayatollah Khamenei by 'Ezzat-Allāh Saḥābi, who had been a minister and a member of parliament in the early months of the revolution, and a political prisoner both before and after it. Bāqi, the paper's editor, Māšā-Allāh Šams-al-Wā'eżin, and its publisher, Laṭif Šafari were imprisoned, the latter two albeit only briefly (Kāši, pp. 126-27).

Zan, owned by the former President Rafsanjani's daughter, Fā'ezeḥ Hāšemi, was banned in April 1999 after it had published excerpts from the exiled former Queen Farah's Nowruz message, and a cartoon of a man pointing to his wife and telling an armed assailant to kill her, "because her blood money is less than mine."

A survey of the Iranian press for the years 1994-99 found that the amount of "sensitive" criticism, dealing directly with the authorities, had increased by ten fold. For the first time since the revolution, the press had not only criticized the president, but also the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei (Moḥseniān-Rād, 2001, pp. 136-39). At the sixth Press Festival in May 1999—when the number of newspapers had reached 930 with a total circulation of 2.7 million copies—many of the awards went to strongly critical pieces, including articles on the 1998 killings of political activists and writers, including Dāryuš and Parvāneh Foruhar, Moḥammad Moḳtāri, and Moḥammad Ja'far Puyandeh, and graphic reports on AIDS, poverty and drug use in Tehran (Wezārat-e farhang o eršād-e eslāmi, 1999).

In the autumn of 1998 and the first half of 1999, Ayatollah Khamenei issued more warnings against the "cultural offensive" and called for counter-measures. In July 1999, the conservative-dominated Fifth Majles voted to amend the 1986 Press Law, in spite of strong criticism inside and outside the chamber. On the same day as the Majles vote, *Salām* ran a front page report which claimed that amending the press law had been recommended by Sa'id Eslāmi, also known as Emāmi, a senior Intelligence Ministry official who had been named as the chief culprit in the assassinations of the Foruhars, Moḳtāri, and Puyandeh, and who had later been officially reported to have committed suicide while in prison. *Salām*, published by a clergyman, Sayyed Moḥammad Musawi-Ḳo'inihā, was immediately closed down by the Special Court for the Clergy (Dādgāh-e viže-ye ruḥāniyat), leading to protests by students and riots in central Tehran, which were put down by the police and plainclothes security agents. In December 1999, Ayatollah Khamenei said some of the



domestic media belonged “to the enemy” and were “lying” and “crying out all the time, complaining of oppression” (Rasā’i, pp. 200-4).

March and April 2000 witnessed a series of events that led to increased tensions in the country, along with the biggest round of newspaper closures in nearly twenty years. First, there was the reformists’ overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections, followed by an assassination attempt on a reformist politician, Sa’id Ḥajjāriān. Then, a group of reformist journalists and political activists who had attended a conference in Berlin, which was disrupted by exiled Iranians shouting slogans against the Islamic Republic, were arrested upon their return to the country. Shortly thereafter, the controversial new press law passed its final reading in the last days of the Fifth Majles. Ayatollah Khamenei announced that some papers had become “enemy bases,” and “10 or 15 newspapers” appeared “to be directed from the same center,” with the aim of “making the people pessimistic about the system” (Rasā’i, pp. 206-9). Within a week, the judiciary had closed down 16 reformist newspapers, using a 1960 law aimed at crime prevention. The reformist majority in the Sixth Majles, which included ten journalists, introduced an urgent bill to amend the press law, but Ayatollah Khamenei ordered the bill removed from the Majles agenda. This was the first of many defeats by reformist lawmakers whose later decisions were blocked by the upper chamber, the Council of Guardians of the Constitution (Šurā-ye negahbān-e qānun-e asāsi).

On the one hand, during President Khatami’s first term (1997-2001) many newspapers were closed down, mostly by the judiciary, and sometimes by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. On the other hand, the Ministry supported press festivals, now organized by the Association of Iranian Journalists, at which awards were given to many journalists whose newspapers had been closed down and, in some cases, had also been jailed. Journalists who were imprisoned included Bāqi, Mas’ud Behnud, Akbar Ganji, Sayyed-Ebrāhim Nabawi, ‘Amid Nā’ini, Hojjat-al-Eslām ‘Abd-Allāh Nuri, Moḥammad Qučāni, and Aḥmad Zaydābādi (*Ruznāma-negār*, no. 13, October 2000, p. 1; no. 22, August 2001, p. 2; no. 23, October 2001, p. 3; no. 30, June 2002, p. 16; no. 43, August 2004, p. 4).

The demise of press freedom was matched by a fall in voter participation in the June 2001 presidential elections. Although President Khatami garnered 22 million votes, even more than his first victory, some 14 million eligible Iranians did not go to the polls. The ensuing years saw the closure of more newspapers; attacks on or detention of journalists covering student protests;



and the death in prison in July 2003 of the Iranian-Canadian journalist, Zahrā Kāzemi, who had been arrested after taking photographs outside Tehran's Evin prison (BBC World Service, 29 July 2004).

An official report in 2003 stated that Iran's national newspapers relied almost exclusively on news agency reports, "exactly replicating" all of their errors; carried reports with anonymous sources, or no sources at all; plagiarized other papers' material; and carried misleading, poorly written, convoluted, visually unattractive headlines, unrelated to the main news point. Most reports were too long, badly structured, and confusing. There were plenty of spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors, and an overuse of Arabic, English, and French words. Some newspapers were described as "too negative, projecting a dark and violent image, as if they were being produced for a dead society" (Bahrāmpur, pp. 42-49).

Conditions were worst in the provinces, with journalists who were poorly paid or unpaid and lacking in training, resources, or insurance cover, while publishers used subsidized newsprint and facilities and ran ads supplied by the government. Newspapers published in Hormozgān province, on the Persian Gulf coast, where many journalists were school students, had to be printed some 1,500 kilometers away in Tehran (*Ẓamime-ye Rasāneh* 1/1, 16 June 2004, p. 4), which had about 10 percent of the country's population, but 95 percent of its newspaper printing machines, 51 percent of them in the state sector (*Faṣl-nāma-ye Rasāneh* 15/2, Summer 2004, p. 230).

In February 2004, the dailies *Šarq* (East) and *Yās-e now* (New Jasmine) were closed down for publishing a critical letter addressed to Ayatollah Khamenei, signed by 144 Majles deputies. While *Šarq* was later allowed to reemerge, *Yās-e now* was succeeded by *Waqāye'-e ettefāqiya*, named after the paper launched by Amir Kabir in 1850. The judiciary closed down the new *Waqāye'-e ettefāqiya* within a few months, saying its journalists had been the same as those in *Yās-e now*. The paper remained closed in spite of protests based on the absence of any law prohibiting such employment. Two more dailies, *Jomhuriyat* (Republic) and *Nasim-e šabā* (North-Eastern Breeze) and the monthly *Āftāb* (Sunshine) were banned shortly afterwards (*Ruznāma-negār*, no. 43, August 2004, p. 4).

Addressing the 11th Press Festival in August 2004, the President of the Association of Iranian Journalists, 'Ali Mazru'i, said that during the previous five years, 110 newspapers had been closed down; journalists no longer



“dared approach news stories;” some former festival prize winners had left the profession, and some had left the country. The cautious attitude of the press was summed up by the editor of *Šarq*, Moḥammad Qučāni, who defined honesty for journalists as “not lying to society.” This, he said, was because of “uncharted red lines” that could not be crossed. His paper, he said, had consequently decided “not to enter certain arenas,” not because of “lack of honesty,” but because of “lack of ability,” in order to ensure the paper’s survival. “Journalism,” he said, “is our job, our passion and our life, something that we don’t want to lose, unless we reach the point where we cannot work honorably.” “Life,” said Qučāni, “is a compromise” (Qučāni, 2004).

INTERNET JOURNALISM

The increasing restrictions on political newspapers were accompanied by an increase in the use of the internet by journalists. By the end of 2006, Iran had more than thirty online news agencies and news sites, some clearly affiliated with various political factions within the Islamic Republic, as well as online editions of many newspapers. The internet also enabled members of the public to express their views in online diaries, or blogs. By April 2008, the “Persian blogosphere” consisted of “approximately 60,000 routinely updated blogs featuring a rich and varied mix of bloggers” (Cyber Law Harvard). Earlier, Persian language blogs had been reported in quantity to be ranked fourth in the world, after those in English, French, and Portuguese (*Badjens*, online newsletter, 2004). However, the internet was limited as a mass medium in Iran whose estimated 7.5 million internet users made up only 10 per cent of its population, compared to Sweden’s 74.3 per cent. Iran’s per capita internet usage, or “depth of penetration,” was also modest compared to some neighboring countries, such as Qatar’s 20.7 per cent. Furthermore, the Iranian authorities blocked many sites—about 10 million by the end of 2006 (Reporters Without Borders)—on the grounds that they were immoral or harmful to national interests.

Just as the proliferation of newspapers had led to a collision with the Judiciary, so did the expansion of internet journalism. Between August 2004 and October 2006, nearly twenty people were arrested for having worked on internet news sites or for working on the content of their own blogs. They were released on bail after varying periods of detention, and some complained of ill treatment. Some eventually left the country and continued to work as journalists abroad.

Meanwhile, Iran was also experiencing a rapid rise in the use of mobile



telephones capable of transmitting simple text messages (SMS) and photographs. By the end of 2004, 3.5 million Iranians were using mobile phones, and 5.6 million phones were to be made available in the following few years. It was expected that the number of mobile phone users would exceed 25 million by the end of the 4th Development Plan in 2010 (*Šarq*, 19 April 2005). Political text messages were widely used during the June 2005 Presidential elections, attacking former President Rafsanjani in the run-up to the first round, but supporting him in the second round, against the Tehran Mayor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Maḥmud Aḥmadinežād).

NEW RESTRICTIONS

Ahmadinejad, a former Revolutionary Guard Corps officer, appointed another former officer in the Corps, Ḥosayn Šaffār Harandi, as Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, who for ten years had edited the daily, *Kayhān*, attacking the reform movement and liberal journalists and intellectuals. Šaffār Harandi's first year in office saw three very prominent newspaper closures, which highlighted the continued serious assault on the Iranian media and the demise of its relationship with the state. The first came in February 2006, when seven journalists on the weekly *Tamaddon-e Hormozgān* (Hormozgān Civilization), in Hormozgān province, published by a conservative member of parliament, were arrested after the paper had published a piece by an Iranian satirist abroad which likened the emergence of the Islamic Republic to the spread of AIDS. There was also a protest in the city in which the office of the newspaper was set on fire. The young journalist responsible for publishing the article, Ms. Elhām Afrutan, said that in a last minute effort to "fill the page," she had copied the piece from a Persian language weblog, believing it contained medical advice on how to stop the spread of AIDS. Five of the detainees were acquitted, and the editor-in-chief and the page editor were released in June, pending a trial (CPJ, 2006a).

The second closure, in May 2006, affected the state daily, *Irān*, the license for which is held by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The paper was closed and its editor and a cartoonist were arrested after they had published an article on public health aimed at children, written in a humorous language, accompanied by a cartoon, which some Azarbaijanis found offensive. There were protests in several parts of northwestern Iran, home to most of the country's Āzeri population, with clashes in which several people were reportedly killed by Iranian security forces (BBC News, 28 May 2006). The paper's editor and the cartoonist, himself of Azarbaijani descent, were



released in September (CPJ, 2006b). The protests were the latest in a series by Iran's ethnic minorities. The previous year, protests by Iranian Kurds and Arabs, in western and southwestern Iran, respectively, demanding greater rights, had been violently put down. In the media, there was little ethnic representation, in spite of the Constitutional commitment to local dialects. There were few newspapers in languages other than Persian, and some of these were closed down and their journalists arrested on charges of acting against the state (CPJ, 2006c and 2005). One survey published in 2003 found that, while Persian speakers made up just over 50 per cent of Iran's population, more than 90 per cent of the national radio and television airtime was broadcast in the Persian-language (Moḥseniān-e Rād, 2003, pp. 19-26). This dominant role of Persian in the country's media was inevitable, given the fact that for over 1,000 years Persian has been Iran's administrative language—irrespective of the ethnicity of the country's rulers—and a lingua franca in the world of Islam. Persian has also been Iran's formal national language since the 20th century. However, the ethno-linguistic groups probably deserve more media coverage in their respective languages.

The ban on *Irān* newspaper was lifted on 11 September 2006, but on the same day the reformist daily, *Šarq* was closed down, after being accused of committing many violations, including the publication of articles that gave a negative image of Iran's Islamic Revolution, or, conversely, positive images of Israel and Britain, and “insulting Sattār Khan,” an Azarbaijani hero of the Constitutionalist Revolution. *Šarq* was also accused of having carried an “insulting cartoon” which depicted a chessboard with a white knight facing a black donkey, whose head was surrounded by a white smudge. Some said the cartoon had been aimed at President Ahmadinejad, who had said in the previous year that he felt he had been surrounded by a halo when addressing the United Nations General Assembly (CPJ, 2006b).

Repeated newspaper closures, and the detention or exclusion of experienced journalists undoubtedly affected the quality of Iranian journalism under the Islamic Republic, from the proper use of Persian and other languages, to a thorough understanding of life in Iran and the rest of the world. This was especially true with regards to political coverage, leading to low circulations, estimated at 100,000 in the case of the most popular daily, *Šarq* (see Newsweek, 15 September 2006, online). Nonetheless, there were significant improvements in photography, graphic arts, design, and layout, most notably in the specialist papers, which made up 60 percent of the titles of Iranian



papers by the end of 2004. There were also improvements in journalism education and training, with courses offered at several colleges and training centers, especially the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's Center for Media Studies and Research, which also produced a large number of books and articles on journalism.

Since 1979, when the Islamic Revolution opened a new chapter in the history of Iranian journalism, the most significant development in the profession was the rise in the numbers of journalists and their trade unions. By 2005, Iran had more than 5,000 professional journalists (Shahidi, 2006, p. 25), wiring for 1,300 newspapers (Magiran .com, 2006). Both numbers had grown much faster than the country's population, which had doubled since the 1979 Revolution. During the same period, the number of women journalists had increased from less than 7 percent of the total to about 25 percent (Shahidi, pp. 4, 23), although they were underrepresented at senior editorial and managerial positions in the press, holding less than 10 percent of the licenses.

There are currently some 15 trade unions representing journalists. While most are too small to supply their members with anything more than personal accreditation and professional networks, the largest union, the Association of Iranian Journalists, is prominent in defending press freedoms as well as supporting its members in disputes with their employers, and providing them with facilities such as subsidized housing (Shahidi, 2006, pp. 25-26). A rise in the quality of Iranian journalism depends in part on an extended period of calm, the prospects for which are not clear more than a quarter century after the revolution. However, the Iranian press does appear to have gained enough in numbers and organization to withstand the kinds of social upheavals that in earlier phases may have slowed or thwarted its development.

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