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Iran tries human rights activist

Shiva Nazar-Ahari charged with "warring against God" and having links to opposition groups as trial opens in Tehran.

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Nazar-Ahari was originally arrested after Iran's disputed presidential election in June 2009

A court in Tehran, the Iranian capital, has tried a female human rights activist and journalist on charges including "warring against God," which has the potential punishment of death.

Shiva Nazar-Ahari, 26, went on trial on Saturday "on charges of Moharebeh [warring against God], conspiring and gathering to commit a crime, propaganda against the regime and harming public order," Mohammad Sharif, her lawyer, said.

"After presenting the last defence, the end of the trial was declared.

"We are awaiting the verdict and I am not pessimistic about the fate of the case."

An opposition website also said that Nazar-Ahari had been charged with links to the exiled People's Mujahedeen of Iran (PMOI).

"In the court, she expressed repulsion at this organisation [PMOI], denied any links with them and dismissed the accusation as completely baseless," the website Kaleme.com, of Mir Hossein Mousavi, the prominent Iranian opposition leader, said.

Nazar-Ahari was originally arrested after a disputed presidential election in June 2009, but released on bail after three months.

She was then re-arrested in December when travelling to attend the funeral of Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a dissident religious leader, in the city of Qom.

'Politicised trial'

The 2009 poll, won by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, sparked the largest demonstrations in Iran since the 1979 revolution that brought the current government to power.

The opposition against the result, known as the Green Movement, said that the election had been fixed.

The government has since undertaken a widespread crackdown on dissidents, with at least 10 people arrested in the protests being sentenced to death.

Mohamed Abdel Dayem, the Middle East co-ordinator for the Committee to Protect Journalists, told Al Jazeera from New York: "These charges frankly bear all the hallmarks of a politicised trial."

"Ms Ahari is one of a number of journalists who are being charged with Moharebeh and this is the first time in history that journalists are being charged with a capital crime such as this.

"One of the charges is for something that never took place because she was arrested before she arrived at the supposed location of the alleged crime.

"She is not part of the Green Movement but a journalist and a human-rights activist.

"There is no reason to charge a journalist and human rights activist with combating God, which is essentially what Moharebeh means."

'Really baseless'

Drewary Dyke, an Iran researcher at Amnesty International, told Al Jazeera that reports suggest that the trial took place in "a relatively calm and normal way".

"The lawyer is said to have been able to present the case for his client," Dyke said.

"But the story here is not about a trial or seeking to get to the bottom of a crime. It is about trying to create a narrative that the authorities would like to portray about justifying the continued clampdown that we are seeing in this country.

"And that is the subtext to the allegations to this group the PMOI. These allegations are really baseless as far as anyone can make out."