



ARSEH SEVOM ANNUAL REPORT 2012

گزارش سالانه ۲۰۱۲

Promoting Vibrant Civil Society

WHO'S AFRAID OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

PROMOTING VIBRANT
CIVIL SOCIETY

“

Arseh Sevom seemed to really hit its stride in 2012 with successful trainings and an increase in readership on its website. An evaluation done of the organization at the end of the year by an independent consultant gave us the boost we needed as an organization, writing that some of the people interviewed called the organization “a living exercise in democracy.”

”

LETTER OF THE PRESIDENT

Dear Readers,

Arseh Sevom seemed to really hit its stride in 2012 with successful trainings and an increase in readership on its website. An evaluation done of the organization at the end of the year by an independent consultant gave us the boost we needed as an organization, writing that some of the people interviewed called the organization “a living exercise in democracy.”

We also learned that every once in awhile what we do, no matter how small, makes a difference. We are just one of many forces influencing civil society. We are not the only one or the most important one. We are not alone. There are others fighting for human rights, advocating for the marginalized, addressing issues of poverty, volunteering to clean parks and beaches, rebuilding homes destroyed by earthquakes, and participating in the life of society.

It can be frustrating and emotionally draining for individuals and groups working to build a better society when their efforts are consistently met with suspicion and harassment as they often are in Iran. A blogger in Iran suggested that civil society organizations need to be more open about what they do and what their role is in society in order to increase public support for their work.¹

The challenge to be open and transparent is one that NGOs all over the world would be wise to take up. It's one of the founding principles of Arseh Sevom, to be as open and transparent as possible while being realistic about security. In light of that principle, we offer a report on our 2012 activities.

This year's annual report is more than an overview of our accomplishments and finance. It also presents an overview of the context for civil society in Iran combined with information on how Arseh Sevom addressed a number of these issues with its content, through training, and with advocacy. The report ends with the question of what's next for Arseh Sevom? Like many organizations, Arseh Sevom is feeling the pinch of insufficient funding. The organization will continue at a reduced level in 2013, which means losing some of the momentum of the successes of 2012.

During my two short visits to Iran in the mid 2000s, I was struck by the energy, creativity, and warmth of the people we met traveling through the country. During

1 Iran: Bill Before Parliament Would Smother NGOs: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2013/01/iran-bill-before-parliament-would-smother-ngos/>





one trip, we brought several students and docents of Amsterdam's Rietveld Academy for a two-week trip. We had tried to make plans in advance and were a bit frustrated at the difficulty of actually getting our schedules completely booked in advance. Would the trip be a disaster, we wondered? From the minute we arrived, however, our trip went like clockwork. Artists, architects, designers, and others were generous with their time and experiences, sharing so much with the group. This really gave me faith in the power of surprise when it comes to Iran. It reminds me that even in the darkest moments, that energy is out there, waiting for the opportunity. Even now, there are people who want nothing more than to work for a better society.

Iran is not done surprising us, of that I am sure.

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Bert Taken

President of the Board

“This year’s annual report outlines the context for civil society in Iran combined with information on how Arseh Sevom addressed a number of these issues with its content, through training, and with advocacy. The report ends with the question of what’s next for Arseh Sevom? Like many organizations, Arseh Sevom is feeling the pinch of insufficient funding. The organization will continue at a reduced level in 2013, which means losing some of the momentum of the successes of 2012.”

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ABOUT ARSEH SEVOM

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Arseh Sevom (Third Sphere) is a non-governmental organization established in 2010 in Amsterdam, aiming to promote peace, democracy, and human rights. **Human and civil rights belong to all sectors of society and to all individuals.** Arseh Sevom promotes the advancement of rights for people of all beliefs, genders, ethnicities, non-violent political affiliations, and more. A key aim for Arseh Sevom is to work with individuals and organizations to amplify their actions and efforts in the promotion of civil society.

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Mission

Arseh Sevom works to create tools, resources, and opportunities for learning and collaboration that promote a capable, vibrant, and pluralistic civil society inside Iran, in the diaspora, and among related communities.

Vision

Arseh Sevom envisions a strengthened civil society in Iran and among related communities that is capable, pluralistic, participatory, and effective at achieving its objectives.

What is Civil Society

Arseh Sevom defines civil society as those informal, semiformal or formal organizations that **protect, promote, and facilitate principles and practices of democracy, participation, pluralism, rights, equity, justice and peace and among the people locally, nationally, or internationally.** They function outside the conventional spaces of state power and market forces, though they constantly negotiate, put pressure on, and persuade the institutions of the state as well as the market to be more responsible and responsive to the needs and rights of the people in general and the marginalized in particular.

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Partners

Arseh Sevom is always looking for productive partnerships with organizations and individuals that share a passion for pluralism and rights. In 2012, the organization worked with Article 19, United4Iran-London, United4Iran, EA Worldview, and Global Voices.



THE CONTEXT

The space and scope for Arseh Sevom to work towards its objectives is determined in large part by the context within Iran and the Iranian diaspora, along with the political climate affecting the image and reality of Iran world-wide.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has seen a number of fits and starts when it comes to civil society development. Looking back on the reformist presidency of Mohammad Khatami reveals relatively considerable space for activism and civil society development. The law governing NGOs was clarified to a great extent. Civil society was encouraged in order to meet the goals of the reform movement and often had close interactions with his government. Government and civil society were intertwined, with Khatami's administration actually founding many international NGOs. There was a conversation between civil society and the state – a give and take.

Despite the relative openness of the Khatami administration, there were still tight controls on civil society. The state was not prepared for a truly autonomous civil society and maintained control over organizations. It was only with the election of a new administration with its own view of the government relationship with civil society that many realized the importance of true independence of civil society.

When a new president came to power in 2005 with a different view of Iran's future and a different relationship with society, many of the civil society organizations established by reformists came under pressure. Their activities were viewed with suspicion and there was increased scrutiny on funding sources and political opinions. By 2009, especially after the demonstrations surrounding the flawed presidential campaign, the space for civil society was significantly diminished.

In early 2010, a list of fifty international organizations and foundations deemed hostile to the state was leaked. NGOs and individuals with connections to any of these organizations were seen as suspect, despite the fact that many inside the government itself had also had dealings with a number of the organizations. Association with a number of international foundations and organizations was essentially criminalized.²

The combination of harassment, arrests, and legal measures enacted during

2 United4Iran has the list posted here: <http://www.united4iran.org/2010/01/the-enemies-list-institutions-that-frighten-the-regime>





the Ahmadinejad administration put the squeeze on the civil society that had developed during the Khatami administration. Currently only NGOs linked to and approved by the government can operate publicly, such as those related to sports. Funding sources have been controlled to the point that receiving foreign funding other than from UN agencies within the country is not permitted.³

Harassment of civil society actors and human rights defenders has become the norm, often leading to interrogation and arrest. Attempts by the government to shut down NGOs and replace them with parallel organizations picked up steam during the second term of Ahmadinejad. Many are pressured to accept control of their boards of directors. Others are closed down completely, eventually to be replaced by government-sponsored organizations. Still a number manage to continue doing good and necessary work despite the hostile environment. Others work ad hoc without a formal structure to support their efforts.

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In addition, a bill remains before Iran's parliament that would remove the last vestiges of autonomy from NGOs. Portions of the draft bill have been finding their way into law for many years now, significantly limiting the independence of civil society. The newest changes to the bill would mandate oversight by unelected authorities. Arseh Sevom has been following its progress since 2010.⁴

“The combination of harassment, arrests, and legal measures enacted during the Ahmadinejad administration put the squeeze on the civil society.”

3 See the report State of Civil Society in Iran by Sohrab Razaghi (2010): <http://www.arsehsevom.net/site/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/State-of-Civil-Society-Iran2.pdf>

4 For more information see: Iran: Bill Before Parliament Would Smother NGOs (2012): <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2013/01/iran-bill-before-parliament-would-smother-ngos/> and Legalizing the Murder of Civil Society (2010) <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2010/11/legalizing-the-murder-of-civil-society/>

Legal Repression of NGO Activities

The bill, *The Establishment and Supervision of NGOs*, if ratified and executed as written, would mean the end of legally operating, independent civil society in Iran. Essentially, it would set up an extralegal committee that would have the power both to issue permits for civil society organizations and to revoke those permits.

In 2011, the bill went back to committee where it went through a number of changes, further eroding the rights of NGOs. Among the changes made to the bill, has been an increase in the role of police and military forces on the body controlling the activities of NGOs. In short changes to the bill add up to the following:

Criticism is now against the law. Any disagreement or criticism from NGOs of government bodies can lead to legal prosecution.

No work is legal without an operation permit. In earlier versions of the bill, filing registration documents was sufficient for an NGO to begin its activities. In the current draft, an actual operating permit is required.

Representation by NGOs on the extralegal committees governing their activities is further limited. Earlier drafts of the bill allowed for more NGO representation, now this has been reduced to one.

The only member with democratic accountability has no right to vote. In earlier drafts a member of the city council sat on the controlling committee as a full member, now this person has only observer status.

NGOs lose all independence, while checks and balances are removed. The extralegal committee has total power over the NGOs from its foundation to its demise. The new bill leaves NGOs without any avenue of appeals.

The government no longer has an obligation to NGOs. Government is no longer required to make its unclassified documents available to the NGOs.

Civil Society in Iran can only interact with international organizations by permission.

Fundamentally, the bill constitutes a violation of the rights to free association and assembly, which have been guaranteed in Articles 26

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and 27 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, and in Articles 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. True to the international standard of political double speak, the Iranian Interior Ministry calls its activities to control independent organizations “empowering civil society.”

Reporting concerning the status and content of The Establishment and Supervision of NGOs has been limited and incomplete. The Social Affairs Commission in parliament has refused to sufficiently comment to the public. Before it was brought to the parliament in 2010, Arseh Sevom, NGOs in Iran, international organizations, and a number of civil rights supporters criticized it intensely.⁵ When the bill was set to be approved in March 2011, a broad-based campaign for the Freedom of Association in Iran came into existence. This campaign caused the parliament to send the bill back to committee for further review, after having approved 26 articles (roughly half). One of the most important articles in this bill is the legalization of the presence of military and police forces in the composition of supervisory boards. Still, after the formation of a new (ninth) parliament, the bill has neither been entirely investigated nor passed. Arseh Sevom continues to monitor the situation.⁶

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5 The first letter to be sent regarding the bill was by Arseh Sevom and Amnesty International. It is available online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2011/04/iran-independent-civil-society-organizations-facing-obliteration/>

6 Read *The Main Shortcomings of the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill* here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2013/01/iran-bill-before-parliament-would-smother-ngos/>

Bill Before Parliament Would Smother NGOs



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Arseh Sevom – In 2010, Arseh Sevom published a report on the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill, *Legalizing the Murder of Civil Society* (pdf), which has been in and out of committee for more than five years (click here for more information). Several years after it was originally presented to the parliament in 2007, the Non-Governmental Organizations Bill, including five chapters and 46 articles, is still in suspension. Last year the bill was postponed once again.

The bill went back to committee where it went through a number of changes, further eroding the rights of NGOs

Among the changes made to the bill, is an increase in the role of police and military forces on the body controlling the activities of NGOs. The article states:

“The supreme body of NGOs includes representatives from designated deputies of the Ministry of Interior (head of the body), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Intelligence, plenipotentiary representatives from the judiciary, police, IRI Broadcasting, Endowments and Charity Affairs Organization, Islamic Development Organization, Basij, Revolutionary Guards, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee and Centre of Mosque Affairs, selected representatives of national and expert organizations, representatives of supreme provincial councils and a representative from the social commission of the parliament. The body will observe activities of the NGOs”.

CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH

On his blog, social activist Hamid-Reza Vasheghani Farahani, discusses the changes to the bill and makes a number of recommendations to civil society actors to gain more support among lawmakers and the public. Arseh Sevom has translated it and published it on its site¹. What follows is an overview of his recommendations.

Recommendations

[A]number of recommendations can be provided for reducing the negative effects of the possible approval of the bill, affecting the approval process and correcting misguided viewpoints toward the organizations:

- Establishing special groups for discussing the bill, analyzing the outcomes, and providing sensitivity among society and organizations
- Increasing education about structure of NGOs and their role and functionality in society in order to provide a realistic and non-governmental model of civil foundations
- Publishing a list of activities, scientific and educational resources, in order to attract the attention of the public to the objectives of NGOs
- Improving networks and arranging meetings among NGOs in order to discuss common goals, emphasize them, and plan to achieve them
- Avoiding radical or irrational actions that could bring severe damage to the NGOs
- Compiling an alternate bill and presenting it to the public, media, authorities, main figures, and the parliament, together with an analysis of the negative effects of the current draft, and legal-social criticism of its articles and clauses
- Performing public and social activities in the form of cooperation between people and social activists, in order to prevent social indifference and enhance cooperation.

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1 The full text is here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2013/01/iran-bill-before-parliament-would-smother-ngos/>

Continuing Attacks Against Civil Society Organizations

In line with the objectives of the bill to control civil society organizations, in December 2011 the Iran Public Culture Council ruled Iran's *House of Cinema* illegal. The decision was made to settle a lawsuit filed in early December against the organization by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. A few months earlier, in September, the organization had received an official objection to its statement about the arrest of six Iranian documentary filmmakers, accused of "collaboration with the BBC Persian service."⁷

Cinema professionals protested the closing of the House of Cinema and nearly 2000 individuals signed a petition, including all of the House of Cinema's affiliated organizations along with a large number of its members. This list of signatories includes a number of famous Iranian filmmakers and actors.

Arseh Sevom followed this carefully, publishing a timeline of events leading to the closure of the organization. The timeline can be found online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/events-leading-up-to-the-dissolution-of-irans-house-of-cinema/>.

The House of Cinema was not the only organization to face government pressure and closure. It is notable because of its beginnings as a government sponsored organization and its efforts to maintain good relations with the government and open and transparent processes.

Under Khatami's administration, transnational connections with the diaspora were explored. The tentative relationship between civil actors in the diaspora and those within the country became more urgent following the earthquake that destroyed much of the ancient city of Bam in December of 2003.⁸ Much of the suspicion that governed transnational connections disappeared with the shared goal of getting aid to survivors and rebuilding the city.

Charity and political lobbying have been hallmarks of many of the Iran-related

7 An excerpt of the statement is available here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2011/09/sept-house-of-cinema-issues-statement-in-support-of-detained-documentary-filmmakers/>

8 For more information, read Berlin, Bam, New Media, and Transnational Networks by Halleh Ghorashi and Kees Boersma: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2011/04/berlin-bam-new-media-and-transnational-networks-2/>



Rise of Civil Society in Diaspora

civil society organizations in the United States. Many groups and individuals are politically engaged: absorbed in and divided over the debates around nuclear technology and sanctions or lobbying for the interests of Iranian-Americans. Other groups are engaged in charity work, often related to natural disasters and those in need, but including more long term projects. There are a number of groups engaged in investigating and reporting on human rights abuses, capacity building and training for civil society actors, while still others maintain links with opposition parties and focus on regime change.

In Europe, there is a mix of cultural and political civil society. Ties to opposition movements, particularly those associated with the revolution, are more active in Europe than the US. The activities vary by country depending on the make-up of the immigrant community. Cultural organizations such as the Iran Heritage Foundation, for instance, also thrive.

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“The tentative relationship between civil actors in the diaspora and those within the country became more urgent following the earthquake that destroyed much of the ancient city of Bam in December of 2003. Much of the suspicion that governed transnational connections disappeared with the shared goal of getting aid to survivors and rebuilding the city.”

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Waves of Migrants

Waves of emigration from Iran tend to rise from the suppression of the economic, political, and social aspirations of its citizens. The impetus for migration influences the expectations and wishes of individual migrants with respect to permanent settlement abroad, the desire to return, and their engagement with sociopolitical changes in Iran.

The most recent wave resulted from the repression of Iran's reformist party, culminating in the violent suppression of demonstrations following the flawed presidential elections. Many in this wave maintain close ties with Iran and intend to return when political space opens again. They are often involved in active social networks and civil society organizations, working to advocate for a more open Iran. The result has been an increase in the number and activities of civil society organizations focusing on Iran.

“Awareness about human rights has increased in the last decade thanks to the publication of books, civil activities, and access to satellite television and the Internet. It was during the reformist government (1997-2005) that many human rights activists began work on behalf of political and civil prisoners.”

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Women's Movement



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Over the past two decades, the women's movement was one of the most influential social movements in Iran. In 2007, the movement was able to stop the approval of a new bill in parliament, which discriminated the position of women concerning family rights. In 2012, women fought against changes to the law would have imposed additional travel restrictions on women.⁹ In February 2013, the controversial changes were eliminated.

Recent academic research shows that the participation of Iranian women in NGOs has a significant impact on their social and culture growth.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the Islamic government has applied restrictive policies against independent women's NGOs, particularly those with a feminist agenda. Extreme limitations have been placed on the activities of public campaigns. Among them is the campaign "One Million Signatures for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws," which began in 2006 and was active in more than twenty cities throughout Iran. Recently the campaign was forbidden and its members faced arrest. Since 2009, many well-known feminists have left the country, most with the intention of returning.

The government has continued its gender discrimination and segregation policies

9 Arseh Sevom first reported on the travel restrictions in November 2012: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/11/iran-we-should-not-bring-prisoners-into-detention-vertically-and-take-them-out-horizontally/>

10 Sadeh Gianpabah. 2007. The role of civil society organizations in the advancement of women. Graduate student research. Alameh Tabatabai University.

and has new plans and laws regarding gender segregation in universities and the exclusion of women from some academic fields. Simultaneously, women leading households has increased by 100%, with 12% of all households led by women. The latest Gender Gap Study from the World Economic Forum shows that the status of women in Iran has deteriorated quickly over the past six years. They have dropped an alarming 35 places in terms of health and survival of women and girls s

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| Iran's Gender Ranking (2006-2012) | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
| | out of 115 countries | out of 128 countries | out of 130 countries | out of 134 countries | out of 135 countries | out of 135 countries | out of 135 countries |
| Educational Attainment | 80 th | 90 th | 92 nd | 96 th | 96 th | 105 th | 101 st |
| Economic Participation and Opportunity | 113 th | 123 rd | 118 th | 131 st | 125 th | 125 th | 130 th |
| Political Empowerment | 109 th | 122 nd | 128 th | 132 nd | 129 th | 130 th | 126 th |
| Health and Survival | 52 nd | 58 th | 60 th | 63 rd | 83 rd | 85 th | 87 th |

World Economic Forum: The Gender Gap Reports: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012⁴⁹

Other policies, such as the expansion of the Islamic Culture of Virtue (Tarh Hejab wa Efaaf), have continued to control women's dress in the public. Public propaganda encourages women to obey the imposed rules, though the state still needs to suppress individual civil disobedience of women.

In the last three years, public activities regarding unequal rights led by feminist groups such as the Cultural Center for Women (Markaz Farhangi Zanan) and others have virtually stopped. Publishing continues, with the Internet playing an important role in disseminating information. A number of the secular NGOs do not want publicity for their activities such as organizing empowerment workshops for their members.

Sanctions Against Iran

Arseh Sevom wrote often about sanctions and their effects on society.¹¹ In an interview with Arseh Sevom economist Dr. Sara Bazoobandi discussed the effects of sanctions on Iran, stating:

The current economic hardships are due to a combination of factors including sanctions, lack of confidence in the Iranian market, global food price inflation, and the government's recent fiscal policies (i.e. targeted food and energy subsidies). Inflation, unemployment, and the overall disturbed economic condition in the Iranian context have contributed to a rise in crime rates, corruption, and the poor performance of the health care sector. The import of medical equipment and medicine has been interrupted, which boosted the cost of medical treatments in Iran and lowered the quality of the services at the same time. Smuggled medicine has made a comeback to the healthcare market in Iran, which was limited since the end of the Iran-Iraq war.¹²

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“Stories of the suffering of people in Iran as a result of a shortage of medicine or high prices due to crippling sanctions are commonplace. Although one cannot only blame the sanctions — the government’s mismanagement of the health sector and medical provisions also needs to be taken into consideration — victims of such policies are mounting on a daily basis. Sick children in poor families are among the most vulnerable.”

¹¹ A summary of our English articles on sanctions can be found here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/tag/iransanctions>

¹² <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/08/uncertainty-fuels-economic-woes-in-iran/>

Human Rights

After China, Iran has the highest number of executions in the world, making it the world's number one executioner per capita. Reports of human rights organizations show that nearly everyday people are executed in Iran. In addition to political prisoners from ethnic-based opposition in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Khuzestan and those killed following the 2009 elections, most of those executed over the past two years have been drug dealers, criminals, or individuals who fall outside the Islamic codes. The majority have had no access to the legal system or to an attorney.

One of the consequences the violence and terror in Iran resulting from the implementation of Sharia law has been the emergence of a human rights movement, which has received international support, particularly over the past decade.

Awareness about human rights has increased in the last decade thanks to the publication of books, civil activities, and access to satellite television and the Internet. It was during the reformist government (1997-2005) that many human rights activists began work on behalf of political and civil prisoners.

Shortly before and after the elections in 2009 the members of human rights NGOs such as the Center of Human Rights Defenders (Kanoon Modafean Hoghoogh Bashar 2001) were threatened or arrested. They were one of a number of organizations working to bring more awareness to the situation of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience.

Many human rights defenders have been arrested and imprisoned. Among them are lawyers such as Nasrin Sotoudeh, Abdolfatah Soltani, and Narges Mohammadi. Others, such as Mohammad Mostafaei, have fled the country, seeking refuge abroad. Their work has inspired groups inside and outside Iran, some of which are documenting and campaigning against human rights violations. There are a few organizations that work together under the name Collective of Human Rights Reporters (Harana), inside and outside the country. Harana was founded by a group of students in 2005 that included Ahmad Batebi and Kevan Rafie, focusing on human rights in Iran.

In the beginning they reported on the conditions of political prisoners. As a result of extensive human rights violations they decided to document and report as many cases as possible throughout the country. They built up sections in the

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organization that focused on women, children, religious minorities, criminals, and others. After the last elections in 2009, the police arrested 70 members of Harana and began broadcasting propaganda films on television against them. Harana became an underground organization, yet continued collecting information from different areas in Iran. The reports of Harana are used by news agencies and by Arseh Sevom as a source for human rights news.

Other organizations and campaigns abroad, such as the Borumand Foundation, The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, and the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center are also working diligently to publish reports and news.

Arseh Sevom introduced these organizations and their partners, in addition to relevant activities such as the reports the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, and the activities of the Iran Tribunal, which investigated the mass executions of the 1980s. The interview with Payam Akhavan – who played a major role in establishing two symbolic international tribunals in London and The Hague – was among the most well-read articles in both Persian and English. When asked in what way the tribunal will influence the human rights crisis in Iran and other countries relationships with Iran, Payam Akhavan answered:

There are two views here, one is the popular view and the other politicians' view. People from other countries will have more sympathy with the Iranian people once this tribunal is held and testimonies are made. They will notice what difficult times Iranians have experienced and are still experiencing today; particularly during the first decade since the victory of the Islamic Revolution. This sympathy may turn out to be influential in the battle for democracy inside Iran as well. But the views of politicians are a totally different subject, they only care about nuclear energy and Iranian oil. In fact, Iranian human rights issues are at the bottom of their list. For many years they have been discussing the Iranian nuclear program. If they reach an agreement over this matter with Iran, then they will not care about upholding human rights in Iran any more and all discussions will be over too. This is the thing people do not want. The Iranian people value their civil rights. Because of that, I believe this process of revealing facts through the tribunal and documenting the stories of those who were affected by the crimes of 1988 will assist human rights activists to focus on the issue of establishing human rights in Iran at a higher speed.¹³

13 Read the entire interview in English here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/06/exclusive-interview-with-payam-akhavan-on-the-iran-tribunal->

THE CASE OF NASRIN SOTOUDEH



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A recent and widely protested case is that of Nasrin Sotoudeh, a lawyer and human rights defender who was arrested on September 4, 2010. A lower court sentenced her to 11 years in prison, a 20-year ban on her legal practice, and a 20-year ban on foreign travel. An appeals court reduced her sentence to six years in prison and a 10-year ban on her legal practice.

In October 2012 Nasrin Sotoudeh began a hunger strike (for 49 days) to protest the foreign travel ban imposed on her 13-year-old daughter, Mehraveh. Without any explanation or indication of her charges and solely because her mother is a political prisoner, the 13-year old was served papers indicating that she had been banned from leaving the country

Sotoudeh's resistance and objection to the travel ban of her daughter was supported widely by the Iranian diaspora, as well as by Amnesty International's campaign to free her. The International Campaign For Human Rights in Iran,

a US-based NGO, organized many activities to support and defend Sotoudeh. A group of civil activists in Iran supported her by writing protest letters to the government and parliament. Finally, the court was compelled to cancel the travel

[investigating-irans-bloody-decade/](#)

CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH

ban on her daughter, but only after a 49 day hunger strike by Sotoudeh, which she ended on December 4, when the judicial restriction on her daughter was lifted.

The case of Sotoudeh received support from the European Parliament and Sotoudeh and filmmaker Jafar Panahi were jointly awarded the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2012.

Arseh Sevom wrote about Sotoudeh's hunger strike and the reaction in the Iranian blogosphere in the post Iran: Where the Winner Gets Punished¹⁴ The response of blogger Akbar was translated into English from his blog Pen Movement:

"Your resistance is already proven to us all. So stay with us please. We need you and people like you. Everybody will be happy to hear about you breaking the hunger strike. We will need you and people like you for the Judgment Day when we call on your help to restore our rights by holding the officials accountable in the court of justice."

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“Activists all over the world have reacted to the unjust treatment of Nasrin Sotoudeh’s case and have urged the Iranian government to free her immediately and unconditionally.”

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The post can be read online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/11/iran-where-the-winner-gets-punished/>

Environmental Issues

Interest in the improvement of the environment, nature, and wildlife has increased over the past two decades. The young generation is especially interested in this as a field of study along with organizing activities and working for the improvement of Iran's environment. In recent years, 90% of the students taking courses related to nature and the environment have been women.



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People in big cities suffer from pollution, extreme dust in the summer, lack of water in desert areas, dried up rivers and lakes. Iran has several of the most polluted cities in the world, with Ahwaz ranking the worst in 2012. In 2011 and 2012 environmental NGOs in Azerbaijan were successful in organizing big demonstrations against the absence of effective policies protecting Lake Orumyeh (Urmia), which had almost totally dried up. Although demonstrations in Orumyeh and Tabriz were peaceful and large with thousands participating, the government employed police violence and arrested over 50 activists. Several were sentenced to prison.

Arseh Sevom wrote about protests concerning the condition of Lake Orumyeh in a piece entitled *Protests in Iran Spurred by Dying Lake*¹⁵.

In May 2012 Shirin Ebadi wrote a letter to Ahmad Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, to inform him about the suppression of these events.

15 The post can be read online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2011/09/protests-in-iran-spurred-by-disappearing-lake/>

Increasing Labor Strikes

Independent labor NGOs in Iran are another target of government control. Independent boards have been supplanted by those appointed by the government. Serving on an independent board leads to harassment and arrest, and dozens of active members sit in prison. Mansour Osanloo and Ibrahim Madadi, board members of the Bus Drivers Union, spent over four years in prison. The Worker Defenders Center (Kanon Modafean Hogoogh Kargar) has been pressured by the imprisonment of their board member, Fariborz Rais Dana, and members Reza Shahabi and Behnam Ibrahimzade. Meanwhile the number of strikes in 2012 increased. These were often staged to protest working conditions, unemployment, and low and unpaid wages.

According to recent publications of the Worker Defenders Center there are now four million children working in the streets. Societal attention to these children has increased in the last 5 years. This was covered on Arseh Sevom's Persian site.¹⁶

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“Iran’s working class is experiencing a heart-breaking situation with many lost jobs and others still struggling to collect long delayed salaries. The Saipa car factory in Kashan dismissed more than 10,000 employees. Saipa in Tehran has also reduced the shifts from three to just one. More than 600 steel workers demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Labor demanding five months of unpaid wages. Similarly, 200 members of Tehran’s Metropolitan Vahed Bus Company gathered on the 10th of October in front of the Tehran municipal building to protest discrimination in pay.”

16 Read more [fa]: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/fa/archives/1127>, <http://www.arsehsevom.net/fa/archives/1074>, <http://www.arsehsevom.net/fa/archives/951>

Ethnic and Religious Suppression

Ethnic and religious minorities in Iran suffer from all types of discrimination. Muslims who convert to Christianity have no rights according to Islamic law. Despite this, in the past three decades conversion to Christianity has increased in Iran. Religious meetings are organized in private homes while religious identities are hidden when in public. Imprisoned, who converted to Christianity, had a church and organized activities in the northern city of Rasht for 400 hundred people. The international community intervened and defended him. He was released after three years in the summer of 2012.

The Baha'i are perhaps the most persecuted of the minority religions. Baha'is face control and suppression in their daily lives and have no right to a university education. In 2012, a dozen Bahais who had given online courses via a kind of academia established by their community were arrested and sentenced to prison.

Sunni Muslims in parts of Iran such as Baluchistan or Kurdistan suffer from religious discrimination as well. In Baluchistan the relationship between the government and the local people has deteriorated. In one case the Sunni from Baluchistan asked the government to allow them to have a mosque in Tehran, but were denied.

State policy regarding ethnic minorities is not simply to control their political activities, but to dominate other civic activities as well. For instance, in January 2012, 18 ethnic Kurds who worked for environmental NGOs in the province of Kurdistan were arrested. Other organizations such as human rights groups were also forbidden. Sadegh Kaboodwand, a Kurdish journalist who established the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan has now been in prison for years and was recently on a hunger strike.

Ethnic conflicts in yet another part of Iran, Khuzestan, led to more tensions in 2011-2012, and the total number of arrested civil activists increased. In 2005, a letter claiming to be from the office of the vice president (under Khatami's administration) implying that state policy was aimed at the reduction of the ethnic Arab population in Ahwaz was leaked. The authenticity of the letter remains unverified. The local Arabs protested to show their anger and many were arrested. Annual protests continue.

Civic activities in Ahwaz regarding pollution, human rights, or ethnic interests are not tolerated by the authorities. Recently civic activists were arrested in Shush,

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Ahwaz, and Hamidihe. In June 2012, four Ahwazi Arabs were executed, three of them brothers.

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“The right to life is the most fundamental human right. The denial of this right makes it impossible to uphold any other human right.”

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“State policy regarding ethnic minorities is not simply to control their political activities, but to dominate other civic activities as well. For instance, in January 2012, 18 ethnic Kurds who worked for environmental NGOs in the province of Kurdistan were arrested. Other organizations such as human rights groups were also forbidden. Sadegh Kaboodwand, a Kurdish journalist who established the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan has now been in prison for years and was recently on a hunger strike.”

Dear Leader

Open, public letters sent by individuals or signed by dozens, even hundreds of people, remain one of the few outlets for public expression in Iran. [Mohammad Nourizad](#), a pro-government filmmaker who was imprisoned for criticizing the state wrote more than 20 letters from prison criticizing the leadership of the Supreme Leader. Nourizad continued to write after he was released and urged others to join him. In addition to well-known personalities such as Dr. Soroush, many unknown citizens also wrote letters. Although these kinds of actions have no immediate results, they are affecting the status of the Leader, eroding his infallible pope-like status and replacing it with a more grounded one as an individual responsible for his policies.

Mohammad Maleki, the former chancellor of the University of Tehran and long-time dissident, wrote a critical letter to the leader. His long-standing outspoken criticism of the state combined with his activism has led to multiple arrests and court appearances. In a 2012 letter to Ayatollah Khamenei he warned against mismanagement and corruption:

“Do accept that the regime is in its final days. Do not trust in the information your allies provide you. Their only concern is their interests. At the end they will leave you on your own. Now, Iranians see you as responsible for all their problems. It was you who denied, and is still denying, the endless problems of the people. It was you who made incorrect decisions and let foreigners impose sanctions on Iranians and make their lives miserable. It was you who implemented strategies that brought the entire world against Iran. It was you who showed a green light to his men to take terrorist actions everywhere and shed the blood of Iranian intellectuals. You, as former president and current supreme leader, are responsible for mass killings of the 80s and martyrdoms of Hoda, Halleh, Neda, Saba, Sattar, and many others.”¹⁷

17 Arseh Sevom translated the letter and published it online at: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/12/letter-from-maleki-doubt-not-tomorrow-is-your-turn/>. It remains one of our most popular posts.

CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH



“He carried the gallows on his shoulders his whole life; he died in love...”

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Yes Mr. Khamenei! You and I will live more or less for 80 years. But the difference is that I spent 50 years hoping Iran and Iranians would be free, while you spent 50 years loving power and office. I do not know who the winner of this gamble was; you or me? I gambled all I had on freedom and equality. I am left with nothing but a whim to have something to gamble with again. But you were seemingly the winner of this gamble. You have “power” and “office” and, I do not know what other ambitions and fantasies. Sometimes when I hear your speeches I feel that you are so distant from reality. Recently, in Northern Khorasan, you mentioned two civil movements. The first one was the demonstrations after 2009 presidential elections. You called the demonstrators a group of seditious people, while I saw them hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of people defending their votes and announcing the fraud in elections ordered by you. The second one was the demonstrations in Tehran’s bazaar. You called the demonstrators West-followers who were only capable of setting some trashcans on fire, while I saw thousands of people in the footage. The question is, how can one explain this obvious difference? Either my eyes were seeing more than the real numbers, or your eyes were seeing fewer.

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/12/letter-from-maleki-doubt-not-tomorrow-is-your-turn/>

CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH

Iran's National Internet Project:
Keepin' It Clean With
Censorship



April 19, 2012. Claims that Iran will launch a “national internet” at the end of August, cutting off access to Google, Hotmail, and other external services, were denied by communications minister Reza Taghipour. He issued a statement denying plans to cut access to the internet calling the whole thing a “13th of Farvardin prank” [the 13th of Farvardin corresponds to April 1] accusing “the propaganda wing of the West” of spreading false rumors.

Non Denial-Denial

Despite Taghipour's non-denial denial, there was nothing surprising in the comments attributed to him. State efforts to control the internet and social networking are well documented and go back to 2001 when the government took control of access points.

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/04/irans-national-internet-project-keep-in-it-clean-with-censorship/>

“Wherever We Gather is The
House of Cinema”



January 23, 2012. For the past 32 years there has been a complex relationship between the Iranian cinema industry and the Islamic republic. The ideologues of the Islamic revolution of 1979 sought justice and independence, dismissing the Shah as the figurehead of the status quo and opposing the West. The dawn of 1979 revolution started out with the mass persecution of actors, actresses, singers, musicians, dancers and other Iranian media figures. They were accused of having acted as accomplices of the former regime in propagating Western values – hence ‘westoxification’. Many were forced to sign repentance letters in revolutionary courts from the ‘mischief’ they had committed, for tainting youths’ minds and spreading ‘Western corrupt values’ in the society.

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/01/jan-wherever-we-gather-is-the-house-of-cinema/>

Authoritarian Is as Authoritarian Does

One of the results of many years of political oppression in Iran and living in a “closed” society is that many starting NGOs in their new countries understandably bring the traits of an authoritarian culture and along with them. They have little or no experience in practical democracy, which is a precondition for the development of a vibrant civil society. Because of negative experiences at home many such leaders have little space for sharing and learning and respecting different views.

It is within this very mixed context that Arseh Sevom operates. Because of the increased restrictions on autonomous civil society activities within Iran, Arseh Sevom has had to adjust its target audience for direct engagement. Capacity building for civil society development is now primarily focused on groups and individuals that have come out of Iran recently rather than those still in Iran. The aim of the organization is to be one of many influences on the development of a more open society in Iran, nudging the process along, using every opening available.

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“One of the results of many years of political oppression in Iran and living in a “closed” society is that many starting NGOs in their new countries understandably bring the traits of an authoritarian culture and along with them. They have little or no experience in practical democracy, which is a precondition for the development of a vibrant civil society. Because of negative experiences at home many such leaders have little space for sharing and learning and respecting different views.”

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IN A NUTSHELL...ARSEH SEVOM IN 2012

In 2012 Arseh Sevom continued to promote civil society through various actions, strongly focusing on capacity building initiatives for civil society actors and human rights defenders.

This resulted in clear progress with regards to becoming one of the main actors in the field, network expansion, and lively interactions with people working to improve conditions inside Iran. At the same time, Arseh Sevom engaged in internal and external evaluation and addressed organizational issues. This resulted in substantial changes. While still struggling to reach set goals with limited resources, important steps were taken to ensure more efficient operations. Due to limitations on staffing and funding, living up to expectations and delivering quality work has remained a daily struggle for Arseh Sevom's small team. It is only thanks to the determination and dedication of all involved that Arseh Sevom can look back on a positive year. Further Arseh Sevom invested in several strategic meetings, which resulted in a well-defined and clear mission statement along with concrete guidelines and focus for the future.

“After Arseh Sevom's first face-to-face training session in the summer of 2012, one of the participants stated, “I am just 28 years old yet I feel that after these three days with these 30 people I have 300 years of experience behind me.””

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Sanctions: Who stole my medicine?



Oct. 26, 2012. The lives of six million patients in Iran are adversely affected due to shortages of medicine, as an immediate result of unprecedented sanctions. On top of the existing crippling sanctions, the European Union ministers agreed to a new set against Iran, on October 15. These new sanction ban the import of natural gas from the Islamic Republic. They are framed as part of a dual-track strategy including both diplomacy and pressure. It is no secret to the international community that its strategy on further isolating Iran has devastating effects on ordinary citizens, and particularly on patients, in Iran. The Washington Post highlighted the fact, stating:

“The effect [of sanctions], the experts say, is being felt by cancer patients and those being treated for complex disorders such as hemophilia, multiple sclerosis and thalassemia, as well as transplant and kidney dialysis patients, none of whom can afford interruptions or delays in medical supplies.”

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/10/sanctions-who-stole-my-medicine/>

Breaking and Bending Censorship with Walid Al-Saqaf



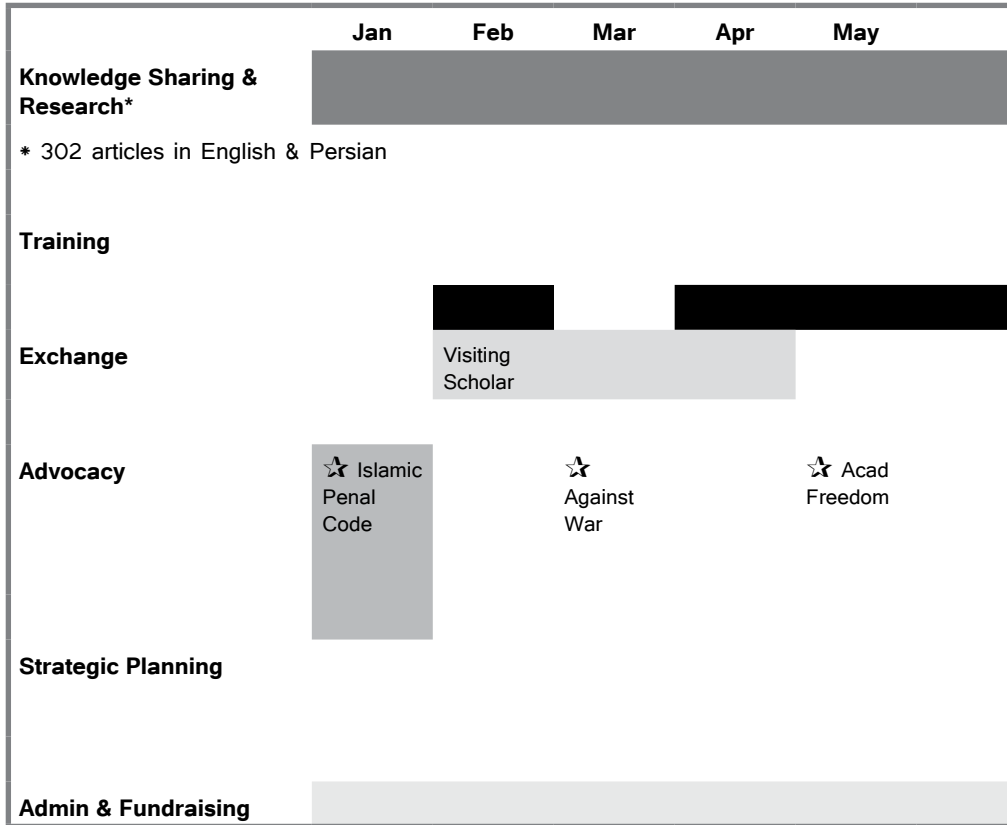
Feb. 14, 2012. In this article, Walid Al-Saqaf, a journalist and cyber-activist experienced in combating censorship in his native Yemen speaks to Arseh Sevom about his own experience building circumvention tools and the efforts of the Islamic Republic of Iran to circumvent the internet.

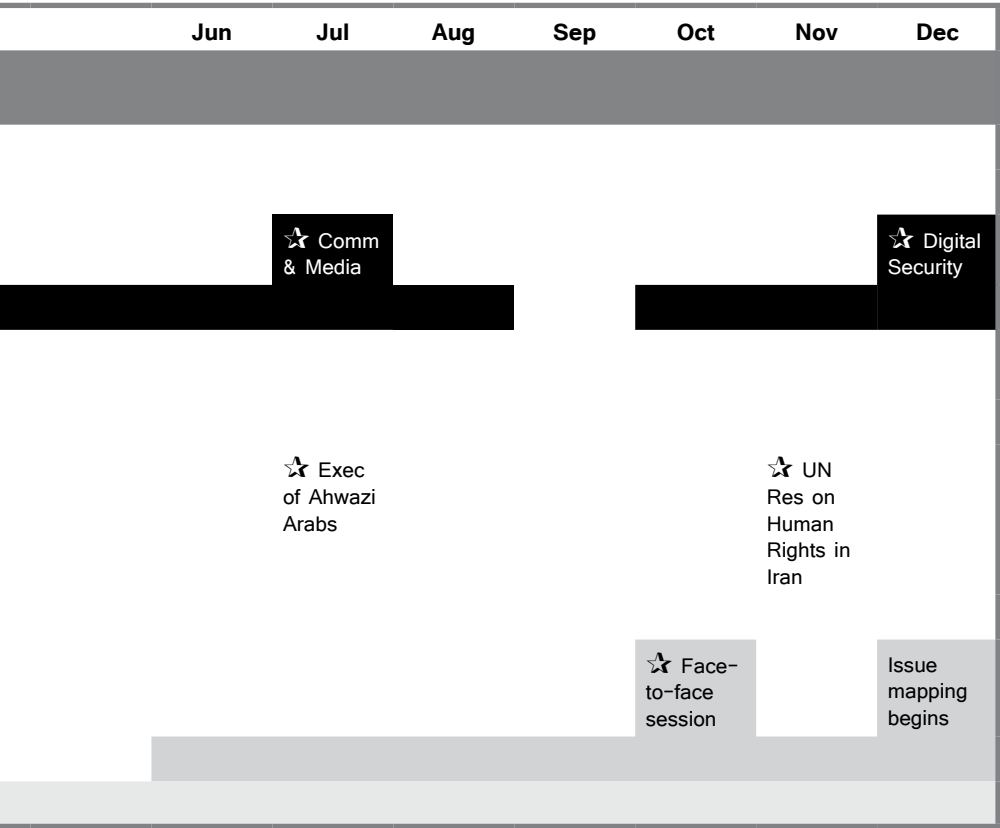
Al-Saqaf developed the web presence for Yemen’s first English-language newspaper, the Yemen Times. The newspaper was founded by his father in 1990. After his father died in a suspicious car accident that was never investigated.

When asked if he considered himself a journalist or an activist, Al-Saqaf answered, “[I]f you need to have a cause, then the cause is freedom, democracy and human rights. You cannot just work without a cause...So promoting those human values is what I feel is closest to me as an objective than to simply run a business or to manage software...”

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/02/breaking-and-bending-censorship-with-walid-al-saqaf/>

Primary Activities Arseh Sevom for 2012





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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2012 was a good year for the activities of Arseh Sevom. In the last quarter, an evaluation of Arseh Sevom was undertaken by a third party. One of the accomplishments highlighted was the transparency of Arseh Sevom and its willingness to partner and collaborate with others. Based on interviews and research, the evaluator called the organization “a living exercise in democracy,” writing:

Arseh Sevom constitutes and creates what some people called “a living exercise in democracy”. AS is self-critically and positively described by many Iranians as “rather un-Iranian”: refreshingly open and transparent, cooperating with others on principle, non-competitive, building bridges, creating trust, unbiased and non-partisan, hence not using civil society as a political tool.

After Arseh Sevom’s first face-to-face training session in the summer of 2012, one of the participants stated, “I am just 28 years old yet I feel that after these three days with these 30 people I have 300 years of experience behind me.”

One of the facilitators summed up what many felt by saying “I get so depressed in my work. This [the training] was a real shot in the arm for me. I feel re-energized and supported.”

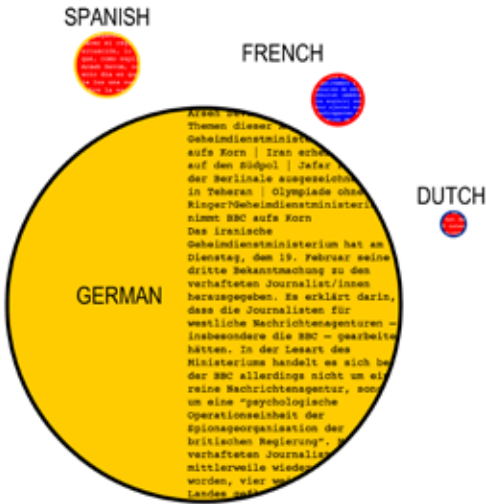
Arseh Sevom is also seeing evidence that its training and website content is reaching its target audience inside Iran. The evidence comes from increased website readership and, more importantly, contact with the organization, offers of content, and requests for programs and partnerships.

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Knowledge Sharing & Research



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suggest that content is also monitored and read by people inside of government offices. Visitors with an IP address in Iran make up the second highest number of visits to the site.

Since the introduction of weekly updates, visits and time spent on different pages of the website have increased. Analysis of records shows that the number of hits has more than doubled since 2011. According to the evaluation of Arseh Sevom, the Persian and English sites were “praised for their quality and well-researched content, rather than only quick journalistic coverage.” Content from the Arseh Sevom site is also being translated and linked to by non-English and non-Persian sites. A Google German search shows over 9000 entries for Arseh Sevom, for instance. [Julias Blog](#) translates content into German regularly.

The website is also used as source of information by a number of embassies and scholars.

Arseh Sevom has undertaken and published/distributed research and fact-finding materials on the broad field of the space for and activities by civil society

Arseh Sevom combines face-to-face training with online content available to others with a Creative Commons share-and-share-alike license. Content published on the site is regularly shared with and by other organizations and individuals.

Arseh Sevom’s website remains one of the most important tools to share information with people interested in civil society issues related to Iran. Despite filtering in Iran, the content is still viewed both via proxy and directly. Analytics

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groups and individuals. Much more research is still planned. An inventory and analysis of 100 civil society groups has begun and will be completed in 2013.

Arseh Sevom also collected and published material on theoretical challenges of human rights in Iran, such as Islam and human rights, the anti-West discourse and its effects on the impression of human rights among intellectuals, academics, and the general public.

The Arseh Sevom Persian site is first and foremost a platform for up to date information on Civil Society activities and organizations in Iran. The English site is considerably less active, focusing primarily on weekly overviews and translations.

The topics covered in 2012 include:

- Human rights violations in general and civil and political prisoners in particular;
- Ethnic, religious matters;
- Women's movement and emancipation of LGBT groups;
- Student movement;
- Environmental movement;
- Labor movement;
- Culture;
- Media;
- Sanctions against Iran;
- Legislation, such as the Islamic Penal Code, the Bill to Protect the Rights of Children, and Labor Law.

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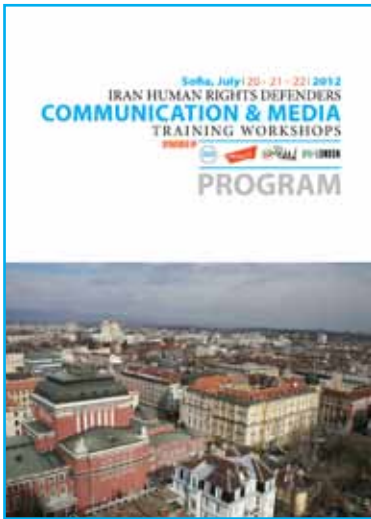
Training & Exchange

Two physical face-to-face trainings were organized in 2012. The topics covered were communication and advocacy, human rights evidence gathering, and internet security. Approximately 65 people attended the two trainings.

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Training on Communication and Media – July 2012

Organization by Arseh Sevom in cooperation with Article 19 and United4Iran and U4I-London

Project management by Arseh Sevom.

Arseh Sevom and its partners United4Iran, United4Iran-London, and Article 19 deliberately set out to create a workshop that would give participants the sense that they were valued and, in a sense, partners in creating a successful learning environment. This was done by working with top-flight facilitators, creating well-designed and highly informative information packets, and by taking the down time as seriously as

the session time. The team believed that by providing professional facilitation combined with space and time for socializing, participants would feel valued and that it would foster an atmosphere of collaboration.

The communication and media training was praised by participants and trainers alike as a positive contribution to skills enhancement on the issues of communication, internet usage, and human rights evidence collection.

Individual evaluations by the participants stressed that they valued more than the practical learning. They were impressed by the way the training was organized and conducted and the general atmosphere created by Arseh Sevom and the co-organizers, calling it: “*typical for the Arseh Sevom approach.*”

Many of the participants cited a refreshing lack of bickering and disputes over



political issues and competition between agencies over contributions. They felt that there was respectful attention to those with different points of view. The training was praised for its openness, the space to differ and for dialogue. Participants felt there was ample opportunity to listen, learn, and appreciate different experiences and views. The evaluator wrote:

“Despite any issues with some of the technical content, **overall participants found this event to be the best Iran human rights workshop they have attended.** The reasons for this not only included the caliber of the content and organization, but the fact that such a spirit of cooperation and unity was created. The Iranian community, both in country and abroad, can be riddled with in fighting over differences of approach and strategy. **The organizers of this event managed to create an atmosphere of cooperation, unity and enthusiasm that was evident in the smallest organizational approach all the way to the weekend’s largest gatherings.** This does not mean there were no issues or conflicts of opinion. But those were handled with cooperation and a spirit of putting the mission and the movement first. This is of immense value in any endeavor. However, in social change movements, where victories can be hard to come by, the ability to foster a spirit of unity and partnership is immeasurable. Participants unanimously felt energized and invigorated by the gathering and found many common grounds with one another. **Many ideas for partnership emerged and the single request from all participants was to keep the alliance going through continued workshops, networking and most of all, partnership on key projects.**”

Selection of Participants

All organizing parties were involved in drafting the participant list based upon a set of criteria. The training was aimed at mid-level human rights defenders with a focus on Iran. Personal invitations were sent to 50 individuals and 5 human rights organizations were approached to sponsor participants. From the total of 55 invitations, 24 positive responses were received.

Learning Opportunities

Every project presents opportunities for learning and this one was no exception. Suggestions for improving future trainings included:

Improve pre-workshop communication among partners

No Girls Allowed Out



Are you single? Do you have a permit from your guardian? How old were you again?

Nov. 20, 2012. Lawmakers in Iran are considering proposals that will require single women under 40 obtain permission from a father or male guardian in order to obtain a passport or travel outside Iran, digital journal [en] reported.

To date only unmarried women under the age of 18 are required to have male permission in order to obtain a passport, while married women require written permission from their husbands. The irony here is, as Shirin Ebadi has put it, that the age of majority for girls in Iran is just 9. That's the age when she will be treated as an adult by the criminal justice system. Yet if the bill becomes law, she will require permission for foreign travel from a male guardian until the age of 40.

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/11/iran-we-should-not-bring-prisoners-into-detention-vertically-and-take-them-out-horizontally/>

From Medals to Disaster



Aug. 14, 2012. It was a week that began with medals and international sportsmanship yet ended with disaster as two earthquakes hit an area close to Tabriz in Northwestern Iran. Netizens were shocked by the lack of Iranian media coverage of the quakes and an MP called for direct donations and volunteerism. Many inside and outside Iran are using social media to organize and report on assistance to the quake stricken areas. The Supreme Leader turns a deaf ear to pleas from student organizations to “open prison gates” and a news agency affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards acknowledges the mass executions of the 1980s. There are questions about a doubling of US wheat imports while sanctions blocking the payments for needed medications are in place. A community exchanges waterpipes for sports equipment and Islamic space jurisprudence is now a thing.

<http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/08/iran-civil-society-review-from-medals-to-disaster/>

Training & Exchange

Assess learning levels in advance of workshops, divide group by knowledge levels
 Revisit selection procedure and have clear expectations of participants post-training
 Reduce the number of topics covered during the training session

2012

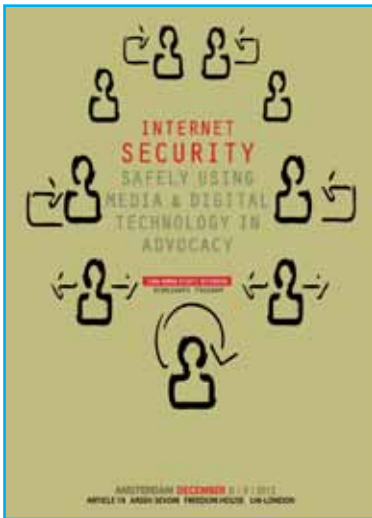


PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Safely using Media and Digital Technology in Advocacy – December 2012

Organization by Article 19, Arseh Sevom, Freedom House,

Project Management: Article 19



In early December 2012, ARTICLE 19, Arseh Sevom, and Freedom House partnered to deliver a 2-day training workshop aimed at supporting Iranian online activists to increase their skills and knowledge in working effectively and safely online.

The training brought together 25-30 individual activists and organisations from a range of backgrounds to build their knowledge and learn about tools to safely use new media and digital technology to advocate for free expression, democracy and human rights in Iran. In addition, partners provided resources to participants that enabled them to train other activists as well as build their existing networks.

There were only two days for this workshop, which significantly decreased the amount of time for networking and socializing. In addition, an unexpected snowstorm meant that nearly all flights were late and some were even cancelled. This took a bite out of the time the participants could spend together.

Once again, the organizing team tried to create a professional atmosphere by caring for the needs of the participants and facilitators, ensuring that



information was useful and professionally designed, and that the training was innovative and professional.

Selection of Participants

All organizing parties were involved in drafting the participant list based upon a set of criteria. The training was aimed at mid-level human rights defenders with a focus on Iran. Personal invitations were sent to 50 individuals and 5 human rights organizations were approached to sponsor participants. From the total of 55 invitations, 24 positive responses were received.

Overall the participants were pleased with the workshop. Evaluation showed a generally high positive assessment about the workshops, the organization, the facilitators, and the knowledge shared. One participant wrote, “It was quite interesting for me to learn how a government like Iran is monitoring people and political activists. And also I’ve got some knowledge on how to protect ourself [sic] ...”

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It seems that there cannot be too much training in digital security. Some of the participants who felt that they had an excellent grasp on security issues, still managed to exhibit unsafe behavior during and after the workshop. This points the way clearly to an opportunity for improving and changing tactics for future workshops.

Follow-ups are important. One participant commented, “Whatever we do there are holes that we can’t fill we must be cautious all the time.” Others felt that the workshop confirmed their hesitance to contact people inside Iran.

Learning Opportunities

It could be that we “over learned” some of the lessons of the first training. This training focussed exclusively on digital security, yet a number of participants missed the opportunity to learn more about more effective usage of social media. Suggestions for improving future trainings included:

- Improve pre-workshop communication among partners (again): this time there was confusion between program management and project management. In the future, project management and program management should be handled by two different people. Fortunately, the troubles we

faced were invisible to the participants.

- Although levels of knowledge were assessed prior to the workshops, groups still needed to be divided adequately.
- The group was too large – smaller groups from now on.
- Participants got the most out of the small group/one-on-one interactions with the facilitators. These sessions addressed needs directly and were effective. There is an opportunity to really address the needs of participants by bringing them into the project planning.
- The timing of the workshop (December) was difficult for students.
- Ground rules for participation should be made clear often.
- Visiting Scholar
- In 2012, Arseh Sevom hosted a visiting scholar who was given the space and time to complete a research project focussing on civil society in Iran.
- The scholar remained with the organization for three months, providing advice to staff and the board and engaging in research.

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

Advocacy

Advocacy by Arseh Sevom is different from many other diaspora groups. Arseh Sevom's advocacy among the Iran diaspora groups relates to the necessity of dialogue and cooperation rather than competition, as well as awareness about the need to acquire skills towards building civil society capacities.

In the past year the organization participated in a number of joint letters and campaigns. These projects can be a challenge for the lead organization. Multiple voices are involved with varying concerns and capacities. Organizations need to make sure that they have the support of their constituents and board. Everyone is careful to ensure that the information is accurate, which in itself is a challenge given the difficulty of confirming stories and information.

A lot of time and effort goes into bringing together signatories and getting buy-in to each letter/campaign.

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Concerns About the Islamic Penal Code

In 2012, Arseh Sevom took the lead on a private letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Iran, which several organizations and individuals signed. The private letter addressed concerns about the Islamic Penal Code. In addition, Arseh Sevom and United4Iran initiated a letter writing campaign about the code, gaining the participation of over 1000 people.¹⁸

UN Resolution on Human Rights in Iran

Arseh Sevom signed a letter urging UN members to support the resolution on the situation of human rights in Iran that was voted on by the Third Committee of the 67th UN General Assembly on November 27, 2012. An excerpt of the letter stated:

"In recent years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has increasingly and systematically repressed its population and committed widespread and far-ranging abuses with impunity Until the Islamic Republic of Iran stops its repressive practices against its people and begins cooperation and compliance with its human rights obligations, the international community has an

18 More information about the Islamic Penal Code is available online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/01/urge-irans-parliament-to-reject-anti-human-rights-penal-code/>. The letter-writing campaign can be found online here: http://org2.democracyinaction.org/o/6160/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=9146

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY



*obligation to stand up for the Iranian people and hold their government to account for its widespread transgressions.*¹⁹

Iran and Financial Support for Drug Trafficking

Arseh Sevom joined in asking the UN to put pressure on Iran to end the death penalty for drug trafficking offenses.²⁰ Currently the UN Office on Drugs and Crime works with Iranian police to step up border control. In the years previous to their support, thousands of Iranian police officers lost their lives because of the superior fire power of drug smugglers.

No one wants to put the police in unnecessary danger. One of the mandates of support from the UN, however, was to end the application of the death penalty for drug offenses. The letter writers stated:

Too often, the targets of these sweeping anti-drug laws are the most vulnerable members of Iranian society. Poor and marginalized groups, including ethnic minorities and foreign nationals who have been historically discriminated against by the Iranian government, are targeted by Iran's drug laws, as are single mothers who, with no other means to support their children, engage in drug trafficking to feed their children.

The Execution of Ahwazi Arabs

In July of 2012, four Ahwazi Arabs were executed after being arrested for taking part in demonstrations. Three of them were brothers. Arseh Sevom was a signatory of a letter protesting their executions. The writers wrote:

Ethnic and religious minorities, which have been marginalized as a result of systematic discrimination, are often the primary targets of the Iranian authority's lawless system.²¹

19 For more information: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/11/ngos-call-on-un-member-states-to-support-unga-resolution-addressing-human-rights-abuses-in-iran/>

20 The letter can be found online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/10/letter-opposing-the-death-penalty-for-drug-related-offenses/>

21 The letter is online: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/07/statement-against-the-execution-of-four-ahwazi-arabs-and-the-death-penalty-in-iran/>



Academic Freedom

Seventeen organizations, including Arseh Sevom, made a joint statement concerning infringements of academic freedom in Iran.

“Violence against academic freedom and arbitrary decisions against students, especially against members of the Baha’i religion will ultimately lead to a insipid and even destructive society of fear, as we know out of our various authoritarian pasts,”

stated Arseh Sevom Board member [Dr. Hajo Funke](#), an expert on authoritarianism and democracy and professor at Free University Berlin and Touro College New York, Berlin.²²

Statement Against War

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In the spring of 2012, the call for war against Iran seemed almost deafening. Arseh Sevom felt compelled to take a stand and in March issued a statement. An excerpt reads:

There has never been a time when calls for a preemptive attack against Iran were louder than now. These calls are a gift to hardline forces in Iran that have worked so hard to keep the nation in a kind of permanent insecure status. They use the threat of war as an excuse to consolidate power, crackdown on civil society, jam satellite transmissions, and stifle all forms of open communication.

Civil Society cannot thrive under the threat of war. Human rights and those who defend them are easily dismissed as a result.²³

22 The statement is online here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/05/joint-statement-on-the-right-to-education-and-academic-freedom-in-iran/>

23 Read the complete statement here: <http://www.arsehsevom.net/2012/03/statement-against-war/>

17 NGOs Call on Iran to Uphold the Right to Education and Academic Freedom

- Abdollah Boroumand Foundation * Amnesty International
- * Arseh Sevom * ARTICLE 19 * Bahá'í International Community
- * Committee of Human Rights Reporters
- * Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
- * Green Students for a Democratic Iran – Southern California
- * Human Rights Activists in Iran * Human Rights Watch
- * International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran
- * International Federation for Human Rights
- * Iran Human Rights Documentation Center
- * Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights
- * Society to Combat Discrimination in Education
- * Iranian Democratic Student Association of George Washington University *
United for Iran

Washington, D.C. – Today 17 non-governmental organizations published a joint statement calling upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to uphold the right to education and immediately address the alarming state of academic freedom in Iran, in particular the violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association, and assembly on university campuses.

“Each year, hundreds of students are deprived of education because of their religion, belief or social and political activities,” said Puyan Mahmudian, a former student activist and researcher at United for Iran who spent nearly 80 days in solitary confinement for peaceful activism.

Mahmudian was ranked sixth in nationwide entrance exams in Iran for graduate school, but was deprived of pursuing his studies by the Ministry of Intelligence for his political activities.

“Deprivation of education is one of the most degrading, immoral and inhumane tools of suppression, which the Iranian government uses to repress political dissent inside Iranian universities,” he said.

The right to education for all persons without discrimination is explicitly guaranteed under international instruments, which Iran has accepted or to which it is a party, and is also guaranteed under Iran’s Constitution. Despite that, the Network for Education and Academic Rights, an independent



CIVIL SOCIETY WATCH

NGO that monitors academic freedom reported 92 violations last year.

Over 600 students, and some university lecturers, have been arrested since 2009 for the peaceful expression of their opinions, many of whom have been imprisoned. Hundreds have been deprived of education due to their political activities, and hundreds of student gatherings, publications, and organizations have been shut down. More than 30 students are currently in prison for their political activism or for membership in student organizations critical of government policies.

Some of those students are friends of Abbas Hakimzadeh, a former political prisoner in Iran who is currently living as a political refugee and student in the United States.

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“I was a member of central council of Daftar-Tahkim-Vahdat, the biggest student union in Iran which promotes academic freedom, human rights and democracy,” Hakimzadeh said. “I was arrested three times by the Intelligence Ministry for my political activism. I was held in solitary confinement for 37, 120 and 30 days each time and released on \$400,000 bail.”

Iran’s minorities also face systematic deprivation and discrimination in higher education. Every year, hundreds of qualified Bahá’í students are prevented from pursuing higher education, discriminated solely on the basis of their religious beliefs. In 2011, authorities raided the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), an online correspondence university, and arrested and jailed thirty members of the BIHE. Student activists that advocate for ethnic minority rights often face the harshest punishments by Iranian authorities for voicing their discontent, and in some instances the death sentence.

“The right to education is an essential right. How can a government deprive its young people from a future because of their opinion or belief?” said Diane Alai, the Bahai International Community’s U.N. representative in Geneva. “What kind of government puts behind bars men and women whose sole aim is to provide their fellow citizens with knowledge?”

The organizations also noted that discrimination against women is increasing within Iran’s higher education system. Policies of gender quotas

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

appear to restrict women's admission to specific fields of study and campuses, and recent gender segregation in some universities raise questions about whether men and women will continue to enjoy equal access to the same quality of higher education as required under international law.

"With the new gender segregation policies, as well as new university admissions and enrollment quotas, the Iranian government is putting in place a system designed to limit women's educational opportunities and slow the advancements women have achieved in Iranian society over the last few decades," said Hadi Ghaemi, spokesperson for the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. "This is blatant discrimination and an affront on the rights of Iranian women and hard working female students."

The joint letter strongly urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to release all student prisoners of conscience and higher education personnel; allow student organizations to operate freely; abolish all policies and practices that discriminate against women and religious and ethnic minorities; end the practice of firing higher education teaching personnel for the peaceful expression of their opinions; and ensure the governance and curricula of universities are independent from government control.

"The measure of a society lies in its willingness to encourage and tolerate knowledge and ideas, no matter how challenging or inconvenient this may be," said Scott Lucas, Professor of American Studies at Birmingham University and board member of Arseh Sevom.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING

It's been a little more than two years for Arseh Sevom and a good time to reflect on the state of the organization, civil society in Iran and related communities, and what the next few years will look like.

A professional consultant with in-depth knowledge of civil society organizations and Iran volunteered to guide Arseh Sevom and its board through the process of organizational soul searching. She created guidelines for the process, sent preparatory readings, and questionnaires to everyone.

In October, the organization's stakeholders were brought together for a two-day meeting to plan for the future and to find a way to become most effective given resources and expertise.

Surprisingly, the group was able to come to consensus in a relatively short amount of time. The group agreed to a focus on developing tools to help civil society actors achieve their goals. At the end of 2012, Arseh Sevom began working on the next phase of the strategic planning: identifying the issues that face civil society actors who focus on Iran and related communities with the goal of identifying how Arseh Sevom can be most effective.

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OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

In the past year Arseh Sevom has worked hard to establish clear and practical procedures and structures to ensure smoother operations. As in the past we are still facing the challenges of limited and often undecided funding, resulting in a shortage of resources to engage sufficient staff. This results in an intensive workload for our small team.

- Procedures have been put in place do help with the overall structure and transparency.
- Improvement of internal communication and transparency:
- Weekly office meetings to ensure an efficient flow of information, resulting in regular reporting and evaluation of ongoing reports, website-content and accomplished work.
- Regular and detailed reporting by the Executive Director towards the Board of Directors.
- Board meetings on a regular basis, resulting in clear minutes and defined agreements.
- Improvement of financial procedures:
- All payments are done only upon receipt of valid invoices, and only after approval by the Executive Director.
- All financial transactions are evaluated and verified during monthly meetings between Arseh Sevom's executive director, the operational management consultant and the accountant.
- A yearly audit by an external and recognized auditors is conducted.
- Set up of administrative process:
- Improved administration of employment contracts, holiday procedures, job descriptions etc.
- Clear and efficient archive set up.

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Website Overhaul

In 2012, Arseh Sevom's Persian and English websites got a much needed overhaul and makeover. The backend code was streamlined and improved and the frontend was made more visually appealing, professional, and easy to use.



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WHAT'S NEXT?

After a few years of operation, it's not unusual for organizations to find themselves needing to clarify their mission and strategy. The same was true of Arseh Sevom. The conditions surrounding the founding of the organization have changed. The team is smaller than expected and the need for clarity for future actions was strong.

In 2012 Arseh Sevom worked hard to establish a better view of its own strengths and weaknesses, revisit its vision and actual mission. Several strategy meetings were organized to permit board members and staff to consider these themes in-depth and formulate clear objectives. Guided by an external strategy consultant, this resulted in some clarity for Arseh Sevom's future. The consensus was for a need to focus organizational efforts on the promotion of civil society through capacity building.

In 2013 the organization will continue to change its focus, looking more at the issues that concern civil society organizations both in the diaspora and inside Iran.

As a result of the initial strategy meeting, Arseh Sevom clarified its mission and definition of civil society.

Arseh Sevom works to create tools, resources, and opportunities for learning and collaboration that promote a capable, vibrant, and pluralistic civil society inside Iran, in the diaspora, and among related communities.

Arseh Sevom defines civil society as those informal, semiformal or formal organizations that protect, promote, and facilitate principles and practices of democracy, participation, pluralism, rights, equity, justice and peace and among the people locally, nationally, or internationally. They function outside the conventional spaces of state power and market forces, though they constantly negotiate, put pressure on, and persuade the institutions of the state as well as the market to be more responsible and responsive to the needs and rights of the people in general and the marginalized in particular.

Based on the outcome of the strategy meeting, all projects and publications are now constantly evaluated on actual accordance with Arseh Sevom's mission. The strategy will be continuously evaluated and deepened throughout the coming years.

Making it through the coming year is a challenge for us. Budget cuts will mean a

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

drastic reduction in operations and make the possibility of closure a real one. This would be a positive outcome if Arseh Sevom felt its mission had been fulfilled. It is a painful one now, knowing that so much is left to be done.

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“In 2012 Arseh Sevom worked hard to establish a better view of its own strengths and weaknesses, revisit its vision and actual mission. Several strategy meetings were organized to permit board members and staff to consider these themes in-depth and formulate clear objectives. Guided by an external strategy consultant, this resulted in some clarity for Arseh Sevom’s future. The consensus was for a need to focus organizational efforts on the promotion of civil society through capacity building. ”

BOARD & ADVISORY BOARD

Arseh Sevom worked hard to build a strong board. The result is a powerhouse of thinkers, analysts, and others who have worked on civil society issues from a variety of viewpoints.

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Hajo Funke: Chair on Politics and Culture at the Otto-Suhr-Institute of Free University Berlin (until retiring in 2010). Main Research: Authoritarianism and Democracy. Right wing Extremism. Studies on Mideast. Studies on Political Culture of Post-Holocaust-Germany.

Funke reconstructed and analyzed the ideology of the right-wing oriented German political party the 'Republicans,' particularly in reference to its hatred of foreigners, its anti-Semitism, and its ultra-nationalism. He also analyzed the ideas and roots of ethnocentricity within German nationalism. Funke has written widely on the neo-Nazi networks and the effect on them of radical revisionism and social prejudices, especially anti-Semitism and a hatred of foreigners.



Scott Lucas: Professor of American Studies at the University of Birmingham since 1989. Lucas is a specialist in US and British foreign policy and has written and edited seven books, more than 30 major articles, and a radio documentary and co-directed the 2007 film Laban!.

Formerly a journalist in the United States, Lucas has written for newspapers including The Guardian and The Independent and was an essayist for The New Statesman. He appears regularly on British, American, and international radio and television as a specialist on current affairs, politics, and history. He is the founder and editor of the online news and analysis site, EA Worldview.



Fred Andon Petrossians: Iranian journalist, researcher and blogger. He is the online editor in chief of Radio Farda, Iran editor of Harvard's Global Voices, and co-founder of the award-winning *March 18 Movement to protect bloggers*.

Petrossians has commented frequently on Iranian media and civil society in international media and delivered speeches on this topic in media and academic centers such as Yale University. He has also contributed to various digital projects such as Digiactive.

Petrossians has an MA in European Politics, Cultures and Organizations.

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CHAIR MAN OF
THE BOARD

Bert Taken: Lecturer on Philosophy at Rietveld Academy. Taken is carrying out PhD research into the philosophical basis of art and design education. He is examining the foundation of art education and contributing to a national and international discussion on its future.

Bert Taken has visited Iran three times, twice for study with students and professors of the Rietveld.



Annie van de Pas: Political scientist and historian who has conducted research and written about the Middle East and North Africa. She is experienced in political development cooperation and worked as a political advisor for a Dutch democracy support organization (see www.nimd.org, for her publication on the MENA region, *Beyond Orthodox Approaches. Assessing possibilities democracy support in The Middle East and North Africa*). At present she is project leader at the GroenLinks research office in Utrecht.

BOARD & ADVISORY BOARD



Kamran Hashemi: Director of Risk Management at State Street Bank, with a long history of involvement in charitable organizations related to Iran and the Iranian community. Kamran was founding member and member of the Management Board of Iranian Community Centre (ICC) established in 1983 to provide legal advisory service to the growing population of asylum seekers in London, worked with charities devoted to education and technology in Iranian schools, and is a founding member of United4Iran-London.



Steven Loyst: Specialist in leading international humanitarian responses and organizational transition in conflict, post-conflict and development contexts. Steven Loyst is currently Head of Operations for North Africa with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies based in Tunis, Tunisia and serves as a Guest Lecturer at the American University in Kosovo.

Building on a background in civil-military cooperation, Steven has provided consultancy services to non-governmental organisations, donors and directed the country offices and interventions of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Kosovo, Pakistan, Indonesia, Madagascar, Niger, Haiti, Russia, Guinea, Serbia and Rwanda. He lived in Iran for three years, from 2004 to 2007, where work with United Nations and interaction among private citizens, civil society activists, journalists, government and diplomatic representatives reaffirmed a profound interest in the country that continues to the present day.

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PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY



Maryam Pasha: Maryam has worked in NGOs and event management for the past 8 years. She is currently the Network and Innovation Manager at the Migrants Rights Network a human rights charity in London. She also is on the advisory board of Arseh Sevom and a trustee for United4Iran London. In 2010 she founded Young Professionals in Human Rights and this year she started The Circle, which aims to empower and support women who are committed and motivated to transform their lives. Maryam has lead on a number of different events including the McGill Model United Nations Assembly (2001 - 2005) and the Global Conference on the Prevention of Genocide (Montreal, 2007); she is currently the curator and license holder for TEDxEastEnd in London.

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EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Kamran Ashtary: Human rights activist, researcher, and artist, former Communications Director of Radio Zamaneh. After leaving Iran in the early 1980s, Ashtary lived and worked in Amsterdam, New York, and California. In 2003, he returned to Iran for four years, where he managed a communication and design business. Ashtary was on the core founding team of United4Iran and organized the July 25th and December 12th events in the Netherlands.

Ashtary regularly presents on media in closed societies and serves as a regular commentator on Iran-related issues. Ashtary is the designer and editor of the 2010 book, *Hope, Votes & Bullets*, a co-author of the blog *View from Iran* (viewfromiran.blogspot.com) and the book *Iran: View from Here*. His photographs of Iran were recently published in the book, *Iran Ist Anders*, published in Switzerland. Other artwork has been published and exhibited worldwide.

ARSEH SEVOM DONORS

Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation

A fair, free and sustainable world – that is what Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation, wants to contribute to. Together with local organisations in developing countries, Hivos strives for a world in which all citizens – both men and women – have equal access to resources and opportunities for development.

Mission

Hivos is a Dutch development organisation guided by humanist values. Together with local civil society organisations in developing countries, Hivos wants to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world. A world in which all citizens – both women and men – have equal access to opportunities and resources for development and can participate actively and equally in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future.

Hivos trusts in the creativity and capacity of people. Quality, cooperation and innovation are core values in Hivos' business philosophy. Hivos is committed to poor and marginalised people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A lasting improvement in these people's situation is the ultimate measure for the work and efforts of Hivos. One of the guiding principles of our philosophy is strengthening the social position of women."

www.hivos.com



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ARSEH SEVOM FINANCIAL REPORT 2012



Jan Bos Accountancy B.V.
Celsiusweg 5a
3752 LE Bunschoten-Spakenburg
The Netherlands
Tel.: 033 - 298 05 93
Fax: 033 - 299 41 72
E-mail: info@jb-accountancy.nl

ARSEH SEVOM FINANCIAL REPORT 2012

Approved by the Arseh Sevom Board in March, 2012

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I General

I.1.1 Foundation

The foundation has been founded at the 25th of February 2010 and bears the name Arseh Sevom.

I.1.2 Governing body

As at december 31, 2012 the governing body of the association according to the Chamber of Commerce is composed as follows:

| <u>Name:</u> | <u>Function:</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Mr. A.T.J.M. Taken | President |
| Mr. K. Ashtary | Secretary |
| Mr. D. Bakker | Treasurer |
| Mrs. J. van de Pas | Member |
| Mr. F. Andon Petrossians | Member |
| Mr. L. Scott | Member |

I.1.3 Registration Chamber of Commerce

The Foundation is registered at the Chamber of Commerce at Amsterdam under number 34383076 and is established under Dutch Law.

I.1.4 Nature of operations

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Dutch accounting Standards. These standards are applicable to a going concern, which assumes the foundation will continue to realize its assets and discharge its liabilities for the foreseeable future.



II.1 Balance sheet as at december 31, 2012

ASSETS

| | <u>2012</u> | <u>2011</u> |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| | € | € |
| Current Assets | | |
| Receivables, prepayments and accrued income | 9.642 | 1.800 |
| Cash at bank and in hand | <u>21.341</u> | <u>58.665</u> |
| | 30.983 | 60.465 |
| | | |
| Total Assets | <u><u>30.983</u></u> | <u><u>60.465</u></u> |

LIABILITIES

Capital

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Foundation capital | 255 | 212 |
|--------------------|-----|-----|

Short term liabilities

| | | |
|---|--------|--------|
| Liabilities, accruals and deferred income | 30.728 | 60.253 |
|---|--------|--------|

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Total liabilities | <u><u>30.983</u></u> | <u><u>60.465</u></u> |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|



II.2 Profit and loss account 2012

| | 2012 | | 2011 | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------|------|------------|
| | € | € | € | € |
| INCOME | | | | |
| Contributions | | 210.793 | | 179.101 |
| Total income | | 210.793 | | 179.101 |
| EXPENSES | | | | |
| Project costs | | 106.955 | | 37.706 |
| Staf- and office costs | | 74.405 | | 115.212 |
| Other expenses | | 29.022 | | 25.680 |
| Total expenses | | 210.382 | | 178.598 |
| OPERATING RESULT | | 411 | | 503 |
| Interest and similar expenses | | 368- | | 185- |
| NET RESULT | | <u>43</u> | | <u>318</u> |

Appropriation of result

It is proposed to add the result to the foundation capital



II.4 Notes to the balance sheet

ASSETS

| | <u>2012</u> | <u>2011</u> |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| | € | € |
| Current assets | | |
| Receivables, Prepayments and accrued income | | |
| Other debtors | <u>9.642</u> | <u>1.800</u> |
| Balance as at december 31 | <u>9.642</u> | <u>1.800</u> |
| <u>Other debtors</u> | | |
| Receivable amounts | 5.470 | |
| Prepayments | 2.372 | |
| Guarantee deposit | <u>1.800</u> | <u>1.800</u> |
| | <u>9.642</u> | <u>1.800</u> |
| Cash at bank and in hand | | |
| ING Bank 5006341 | 21.342 | 58.287 |
| Crossposting / receivables | - | 150 |
| Petty cash | <u>-</u> | <u>228</u> |
| Balance as at december 31 | <u>21.342</u> | <u>58.666</u> |



II.4 Notes to the balance sheet

| PASSIVA | <u>2012</u> | <u>2011</u> |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| | € | € |
| Capital | | |
| Foundation capital | | |
| Balance as at 1 January | 212 | 106- |
| Result financial year | <u>43</u> | <u>318</u> |
| Balance as at december 31 | <u>255</u> | <u>212</u> |
| | | |
| Short term liabilities | | |
| Liabilities, accruals and deferred income | | |
| Amounts owned to credit institutions | 2.478 | 4.450 |
| VAT + income tax | 3.806 | 2.740 |
| Other liabilities | <u>24.444</u> | <u>53.063</u> |
| Balance as at december 31 | <u>30.728</u> | <u>60.253</u> |
| | | |
| <u>Other liabilities</u> | | |
| Advance payments received | 8.800 | 46.387 |
| Payable auditor's costs | 1.500 | 2.100 |
| Reservation Holidaymoney | 3.344 | 545 |
| Salary payments | 2.796 | 3.531 |
| Payable staff and office costs | <u>8.004</u> | <u>500</u> |
| | <u>24.444</u> | <u>53.063</u> |

Off balance sheet commitments

The foundation accepted a rental agreement on November 1, 2010, for office space at De Wittenstraat 25, in Amsterdam. The agreement was made for a period of two years, and is effective November 1, 2012 extended by three years. The total sum of rental costs amounts december 31, 2012 € 7.524.



II.5 Notes to the profit and loss account 2012

INCOME

| | <u>2012</u> | <u>2011</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | € | € |
| Contributions | | |
| Contribution Hivos | 146.387 | 154.101 |
| Contribution Hivos / Salary | 10.808 | |
| Contribution Hivos / Sofia | 30.000 | |
| Contribution Others / Sofia | 6.428 | |
| Contribution Art. 19 | 17.170 | |
| Foundation Internet4all | - | 25.000 |
| | <u>210.793</u> | <u>179.101</u> |

EXPENSES

Project costs (direct related to contributions)

| | | |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Project costs including traveling expenses | <u>106.955</u> | <u>37.706</u> |
|--|----------------|---------------|

Staff- and office costs

| | | |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Salary costs | 61.826 | 63.940 |
| Other personnel expenses | <u>12.579</u> | <u>51.272</u> |

| | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|
| | <u>74.405</u> | <u>115.212</u> |
|--|---------------|----------------|

Other expenses

| | | |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Office costs | 9.665 | 5.241 |
| General expenses | 8.962 | 10.635 |
| Housing expenses | <u>10.395</u> | <u>9.804</u> |

| | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| | <u>29.022</u> | <u>25.680</u> |
|--|---------------|---------------|

Housing expenses

Office costs

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Printed matter | 500 | 1.791 |
| Telephone | 1.702 | 1.215 |
| Small expenses | 7.463 | 2.235 |
| | <u>9.665</u> | <u>5.241</u> |

General expenses

| | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Administrative expenses | 6.225 | 5.381 |
| Accounting expenses | 2.473 | 3.352 |
| Lawyer | - | 1.087 |
| Other general expenses | 264 | 815 |
| | <u>8.962</u> | <u>10.635</u> |

Housing expenses

| | | |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Rent | 7.449 | 7.356 |
| Utilities | 2.804 | 2.432 |
| Other housing expenses | 142 | 16 |
| | <u>10.395</u> | <u>9.804</u> |

Financial income and expenses

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Financial costs and interest | <u>368</u> | <u>185</u> |
| | <u>368</u> | <u>185</u> |

 Financial report 2012

در باره ما عرصه سوم

جامعه مدنی کانون مقاومت، تحدید قدرت سیاسی و عرصه قدرت یابی شهروندان است. جامعه مدنی مرکز بروز خلاقیت‌ها، ابتکارات جدید اجتماعی و مدرسه آموزش و تمرین دموکراسی، تساهل، مدارا، شهامت و اخلاق مدنی است. جامعه مدنی کانون تولید، انباشت سرمایه اجتماعی و عرصه آزادی، رهایی و برابری است.

2012



PROMOTING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY

در سی سال اخیر با بازگشت جامعه مدنی به عرصه آکادمیک و سپهر عمومی، نقش آن در اقصی نقاط جهان به طور چشمگیری رشد و گسترش یافته است به همین دلیل عده‌ای از پژوهشگران جامعه مدنی را بزرگ‌ترین پروژه هزاره جدید می‌نامند.

جامعه مدنی به مثابه عرصه سوم در فرایند توسعه، صلح و دموکراتیک سازی بدلیل برخورداری از قابلیت‌ها بی چون: نمایندگی گروههای اجتماعی، ارتباط نزدیک‌تر و گسترده‌تر با جوامع محلی، مفصل بندی و پیگیری مطالبات آنان، منعکس کردن صدای مردم و گروههای به حاشیه رانده شده، فراهم ساختن ابزارها و فرصت‌های لازم برای ارائه و بیان دیدگاه‌های شهروندان، قدرتمند ساختن شهروندان برای پیکار و تغییر سیاست‌های عمومی و ساختن جهان دیگر و... از سایر بازیگران توسعه (دولت و بخش خصوصی) متمایز می‌شوند.

جامعه مدنی تلاش می‌کند در پارادایم جدید توسعه و فرایند دموکراتیک سازی، الگوی جدیدی از کارآیی و کارآمدی، پاسخگویی، شفافیت، نهادینه ساختن تنوع و تکثر و نظم انجمنی در جامعه ارائه دهد.

در چند دهه اخیر جامعه ایرانی نیز با پایان جنگ تحمیلی عراق و ایران، فروکش کردن هیجان‌های انقلابی، افول پوپولیسم، غیرایدئولوژیک شدن جامعه و مسلط شدن گفت‌وگو، همگام با تحولات جامعه جهانی و موج سوم دموکراسی، شاهد بازگشت اما آرام جامعه مدنی بوده است در این سال‌ها جامعه مدنی ایرانی به‌رغم محدودیت‌ها و تنگناها و وجود کانون‌های مقاومت، از رشد، تنوع و پویایی نسبتاً چشمگیر برخوردار بوده است.

اما با انتخابات ریاست جمهوری در سال ۱۳۸۴ با به قدرت رسیدن یک طبقه جدید سیاسی، شکل‌گیری دولت پادگانی، ورود نظامیان به عرصه سیاست، اقتصاد، فرهنگ و جامعه مجازی و مسلط شدن گفت‌وگوهای دموکراسی‌ستیز و جامعه مدنی‌هراسی بر جامعه ایرانی، جامعه مدنی با تهدیدات و تنگناهای جدی مواجه شده است.

در شرایط پر مخاطره کنونی برای جلوگیری از جوامع‌گرگی و بسط جامعه مدنی، قدرت یابی شهروندان، دفاع از آزادی انجمن‌ها و حقوق شهروندان و توانا سازی محیط سیاسی و اجتماعی و... مهم‌ترین دغدغه و هدف استراتژیک فعالان و اصحاب جامعه مدنی است.

از این رو جمعی از فعالان مدنی به منظور:

- ترویج و بسط اندیشه‌های مدنی، صلح، دموکراسی و حقوق بشر،
 - ظرفیت سازی سازمان‌ها، فعالان جامعه مدنی و مدافعان حقوق بشر،
 - ترویج و گسترش اخلاق مدنی و فرهنگ اقدام‌های داوطلبانه
 - تسهیل در دسترسی، گردش و مبادله آزاد اطلاعات،
 - ایجاد فضایی مناسب برای تبادل نظر، گفتگو بین فعالان جامعه مدنی و دیگر گروه‌های اجتماعی...
- اقدام به تاسیس موسسه عرصه سوم در عرصه جامعه مدنی ایرانی کرده‌اند. موسسه عرصه سوم که نام آن به نقش جامعه مدنی اشاره دارد، سازمانی غیر دولتی و غیر انتفاعی است که سال ۱۳۸۹ در آمستردام هلند تاسیس و به ثبت رسیده است.
- عرصه سوم سازمانی غیر سیاسی و مستقل مدنی است که بر حقوق بشر، صلح و دموکراسی برسه معضل گریه جامعه ایرانی تاکید دارد.

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عرصه سوم ارتقاء دهنده حقوق همه احاد جامعه، گروه‌ها و نیروهای اجتماعی با هر نوع اعتقادی از هر جنس، قوم و تعلق‌های سیاسی غیر خشونت‌آمیز است. از آنجا که برای گذار به یک جامعه دموکراتیک، بررسی موانع فرهنگی، اجتماعی و سیاسی، اجرای اعلامیه جهانی حقوق بشر در آن جامعه اهمیت دارد، عرصه سوم در تحقق تلاش‌های جنبش حقوق مدنی - سیاسی در ایران و برای ظرفیت سازی و تامین نیازهای آتی و توسعه جامعه مدنی دموکراتیک و توسعه گرا، با رهبران و فعالان جامعه مدنی ایرانی همکاری می‌کند.

عرصه سوم همچنین برای جهت دادن به نگرش روشنفکران، دانشگاهیان، روزنامه نگاران و بلاگرها، فعالان مدنی - سیاسی و عموم مردم، تولید و ترویج ادبیات جامعه مدنی، حقوق بشر، صلح و دموکراسی، ارتقای دانش تئوریک، ظرفیت سازی سازمان‌ها و فعالان مدنی، مبادله دانش، اطلاعات و انتقال تجربیات، اطلاع رسانی شفاف و... در کانون فعالیت‌ها و برنامه‌های خود قرار داده است.

Arseh Sevom (Third Sphere) is a non-governmental organization established in 2010 in Amsterdam, aiming to promote peace, democracy, and human rights. Human and civil rights belong to all sectors of society and to all individuals. Arseh Sevom promotes the advancement of rights for people of all beliefs, genders, ethnicities, non-violent political affiliations, and more. A key aim for Arseh Sevom is to work with individuals and organizations to amplify their actions and efforts in the promotion of civil society.

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www.arsehsevom.net

ARSEH
SEVOM

[De Wittenstraat 25
1052 AK, Amsterdam
The Netherlands]

[Phone: +31 (0) 85 878 6434
contact@arsehsevom.net
press@arsehsevom.net]