

## **Zahra Kazemi Case Timeline**

Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian Iranian photojournalist from Montreal, was murdered in Tehran in July 2003 after being imprisoned and tortured for taking photographs outside Evin prison.

Kazemi's body was buried in Shiraz, southern Iran, on 22 July 2003, contrary to the wishes of her son, Stéphan Hachemi. The journalist's mother, who lives in Iran, had asked that Kazemi's body be repatriated to Canada and signed a request to that effect at the Canadian embassy in Tehran. The Canadian authorities had supported the request. Despite the requests, Kazemi was hurriedly buried in Iran. Since then, calls for the body to be exhumed and repatriated to Canada have fallen on deaf ears. The journalist's mother has since said publicly that she was put under pressure to allow the burial in Iran.

PEN Canada will continue to monitor developments in the legal proceedings against Kazemi's killers and will post up-to-date information here as it emerges.

Below is a timeline of events in the case of the photojournalist.

### **July 2005**

A court in Iran dismisses an appeal made by lawyer and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, who represents Kazemi's family. Two years pass since the murder of Kazemi without anyone having been successfully prosecuted for the crime.

### **May 16, 2005**

An Iranian appeal court heard arguments from Kazemi's family lawyers calling for a new investigation into her death. The court adjourned without delivering a decision. The following day, the government of Canada announced restrictions on diplomatic contact with Iran. It will limit its encounters with Iranian officials to the Kazemi case, Iran's human-rights record and Iran's nuclear non-proliferation performance, Foreign Affairs minister Pierre Pettigrew said. No visits or exchanges by Iranian officials to Canada will be permitted nor will Canadian officials engage with Iran, except relating to these issues. The Iranian embassy in Ottawa will need to have any meetings with Canadian officials, in advance, by the federal Foreign Affairs department. However, Ottawa will not recall its ambassador from Tehran nor will it block the initiatives of private Canadian companies to trade with their Iranian counterparts.

### **March 31, 2005**

Sharham Azam, a former doctor with the Iranian Ministry of Defence, detailed the injuries suffered by Kazemi just days before her death. The doctor, who was granted asylum in Canada, catalogued countless injuries on the woman, who arrived at the hospital unconscious. He said the broken bones, bruising and marks suggested she had been beaten, tortured and raped, with the wounds suggesting the assaults had taken place over a period of time. In response, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Pettigrew said that the Canadian government would continue to press Iran for justice. "We believe the Iranian justice system has failed all across the line," Pettigrew said.

### **February 8, 2005**

Iran's ambassador to Britain acknowledged that Iranian officials killed Kazemi while she was in custody in Tehran. Questioned during an address at St Anthony's College, Oxford, Ambassador Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Adeli said, "I don't support the killing by some shrewd security forces of that lady." He then added, "We are sorry for it."

### **November 28, 2004**

Hamid Reza Asefi, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesman, warned Canada's new ambassador would get into "trouble" if he pursued the Kazemi case. "If anyone enters Iran on this mission they get themselves into trouble. This is a domestic issue of the Islamic Republic of Iran," Asefi, an Iranian foreign ministry spokesman, told reporters. Gordon Venner is the new ambassador to Iran. In announcing Venner's appointment, Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew said the Kazemi case remained a priority. "Canada remains deeply committed to this

case ... Justice denied is offensive to Canadians. This case will be pursued energetically," Pettigrew said. Asefi said that the case was still open. "It is nevertheless being followed up by the government and the judiciary, and I hope the rights of nobody, including those of the Kazemi family, are ignored," he said.

#### **July 28, 2004**

Iran's judiciary says the head injuries that killed Kazemi were the result of an accident. "With the acquittal of the sole defendant, only one option is left: the death of the late Kazemi was an accident due to fall in blood pressure resulting from a hunger strike and her fall on the ground while standing," says a judiciary statement.

#### **July 27, 2004**

Stephan Hachemi meets with Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew, but doesn't get a commitment for action from Ottawa. "The minister failed me and failed to have my mother's rights respected," he says.

#### **July 25, 2004**

Stephan Hachemi rejects \$12,000 in compensation for his mother's death from the Iranian government, calling it "blood money." Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew says he is dissatisfied with the trial and acquittal of Kazemi's accused killer. "This trial has done nothing to answer the real questions about how Zahra Kazemi died or to bring the perpetrators of her murder to justice," he says in a statement.

#### **July 24, 2004**

An Iranian court acquits intelligence agent Mohammad Reza Aghdam Ahmadi in Kazemi's death. Kazemi's son, Stephan Hachemi, calls on Ottawa "to bring justice to this case."

#### **July 21, 2004**

PEN Canada joins a list of signatories to a letter to the President of Iran condemning the trial of the intelligence officer charged in the death of Zahra Kazemi. The letter states, The trial that took place over the weekend, July 17-18 2004, has not met international standards for a fair trial according to section 14 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The trial not only violates Zahra Kazemi's right to justice but also the rights of the accused, Mr. Reza Aghdam Ahmadi." For his part, PEN Canada President Haroon Siddiqui says, "In the year since Zahra Kazemi's tragic death from torture in Tehran's Evin prison, the only thing that has become crystal clear is the utter contempt for international human rights standards held by the powers that be in Iran. Only a truly impartial investigation by a reputable international body has a hope of dispelling the clouds of distrust and disbelief now surrounding this case."

#### **July 19, 2004**

Iranian journalists say a prosecutor warned them to censor their coverage of the trial of Kazemi's alleged killer.

#### **July 18, 2004**

Canada again recalls its ambassador to Iran after a court in Tehran bans foreign observers from watching the second day of proceedings. The trial ends with no word of a verdict. The legal team representing Kazemi's mother refuses to sign the record of proceedings and leaves the courthouse in protest.

#### **July 17, 2004**

Canadian observers, including Canada's ambassador to Iran, Philip MacKinnon, are allowed to attend the trial of an Iranian agent charged in Kazemi's death. At the trial, lawyers representing Kazemi's mother say prison official Mohammad Bakhshi, not the man on trial, tortured and killed her in a premeditated way. Iranian officials deny the claims. Meanwhile, two reformist newspapers are forced to shut down when the trial begins.

#### **July 14, 2004**

Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham says the Canadian government will not be allowed to attend the trial of an Iranian agent charged in Kazemi's death. He also announces that Canada's ambassador to Iran has been recalled. Graham says he plans to take the case to the UN's International Court of Justice.

#### **July 9, 2004**

At a memorial service in Kazemi's honour, her son, Stephan Hachemi, says the Canadian government hasn't done enough to solve her death.

#### **June 12, 2004**

Nobel Prize winner Shirian Ebadi is barred from representing the family of Zahra Kazemi at the trial of the security agent charged with her death. Ebadi's name doesn't appear on a court list for the July hearing.

#### **May 2004**

Lawyer, human rights activist and Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, who is acting for the family of the slain photojournalist, says she has brought a motion before the Iranian court to have the charge of "quasi-intentional murder" against intelligence ministry agent Mohammad Reza Aghdam Ahmadi upgraded to "intentional murder". The case comes to trial on July 18. Ebadi has obtained full standing at the trial to represent Kazemi's family. This means that she will have the same rights as other lawyers to question witnesses and make submissions. For its part, a spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) said that it was the government's "firm intention" to find independent Canadian legal observers for the trial.

#### **December 22, 2003**

The United Nations 58th General Assembly, during its 77th meeting, adopted a draft resolution (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/ga10223.doc.htm>) on the human rights situation in Iran. The actions of the Canadian government resulted in this action being taken.

#### **October 28, 2003**

The Iranian Parliament implicates a chief Tehran prosecutor for failing to provide information and making incorrect statements about the death of Kazemi. Saeed Mortazavi is condemned for refusing to justify Kazemi's detention to Parliament, for accusing Kazemi of spying and announcing the cause of her death as a stroke.

#### **October 14, 2003**

An Iranian judge ordered Mohammed Reza Aghdam Ahmadi, an Iranian intelligence agent accused of murdering Kazemi, to be released on \$50,000 bail. Ahmadi's lawyer, Ghasem Shabani, told The Associated Press the judge accepted the argument that his client should only be held in custody if charged with deliberate murder.

#### **October 8, 2003**

The president of Iran criticizes the judiciary handling the murder trial of intelligence officer Mohammed Reza Aghdam Ahmadi, charged in the death of Kazemi. President Mohammad Khatami says the court handling the case is trying to blame his administration.

#### **October 7, 2003**

The trial of Mohammed Reza Aghdam Ahmadi opens in Tehran. The 42-year-old Iranian intelligence agent pleads not guilty in the death of Zahra Kazemi. Ahmadi is charged with "quasi intentional murder." Conviction carries a sentence of up to three years in prison and the payment of money to the family of the victim if requested. The case was adjourned at Ahmadi's request for more time to study his charges.

#### **September 22, 2003**

A judge charges an Iranian Intelligence Ministry agent with "semi-premeditated murder" in the killing of Kazemi. The agent was one of two Intelligence Ministry officials charged September 1 in Kazemi's death. The second agent was acquitted.

**September 10, 2003**

Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham says he wants the UN Human Rights commission to help find out what really happened when Kazemi died in a jail in Iran.

**September 1, 2003**

Tehran's deputy prosecutor general drops charges against two intelligence officers and calls for "further investigations" into Kazemi's murder. Foreign affairs minister Bill Graham says the withdrawn indictments could be a positive development for the investigation after suggestions the officials were being made scapegoats.

**August 25, 2003**

Iran announces charges of complicity in "quasi-intentional murder" against two interrogators from the Intelligence Ministry.

**July 30, 2003**

Iran's vice-president says government agents probably murdered Kazemi. Mohammad Ali Abtahi admitted to reporters that Kazemi was likely killed by a deliberately delivered blow to the head following her arrest June 23 after she took some photos outside a Tehran prison.

**July 27, 2003**

Foreign Affairs spokesperson Isabelle Savard says the arrest of five people in the beating death of a Canadian photojournalist in Iran would satisfy Canada. She makes the statement in reaction to reports that five Iranian security agents had been detained in the fatal beating of Kazemi while she was in police custody. Iran's state-run radio reported days earlier that the men had been rounded up after "comprehensive investigations."

**July 25, 2003**

Diplomatic relations between Canada and Iran deteriorate as the ambassador to Iran returns to Ottawa and the foreign affairs minister rejects claims of Canadian injustice. Iran accused a B.C. police officer of murdering one of its nationals. A Port Moody police officer shot and killed 18-year-old Keyvan Tabesh on July 21. They allege he threatened them with a machete. Iranian officials call the shooting "incomprehensible" and demand those responsible be brought to justice.

**July 23, 2003**

Angry with the way Iran has dealt with the death of Kazemi, Canada recalls ambassador Philip MacKinnon from Iran. Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham calls the move "a strong indication in diplomatic terms of the complete dissatisfaction of one government to another government."

**July 21, 2003**

Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham joins in the call for swifter action in the investigation into the death of Kazemi. He says Kazemi's treatment "was a flagrant violation of her rights under international human rights law and a breach of obligations that Iran owes to the international community."

**July 20, 2003**

Iran's official news agency reports that Kazemi died from a fractured skull caused by "a physical attack." The same day, Stephan Hachemi - Kazemi's son - tells reporters Canada is not pressing Iran hard enough to get her body home.

**July 16, 2003**

Iran admits Kazemi died after beating.

Mohammad Ali Abtahi, Iran's vice-president, admits that Kazemi died as a result of being beaten. "If crimes have been committed," says Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, "we're pushing the Iranian government to punish those who committed the crime."

**July 14, 2003**

Deputy Prime Minister John Manley calls on Iran to return the body of Zahra Kazemi to Canada.

**July 13, 2003**

Iran's official news agency reports that Kazemi "suffered a stroke when she was subject to interrogation and died in hospital." The same day, under pressure from Canada, Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, orders an investigation into her death.

**July 12, 2003**

Ottawa orders Canada's ambassador to Iran - Philip MacKinnon - to investigate Kazemi's death.

**July 11, 2003**

Kazemi dies in Tehran hospital while under guard.

**June 23, 2003**

Kazemi is arrested while taking photographs outside Evin prison in Tehran during student-led protests. She is later taken into custody and interrogated by police, prosecutors and intelligence officials for 77 hours.

**Spring 2003**

Kazemi leaves Canada for Iran.