Three Prominent Writers In Iran Sentenced To 18 Years

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In a statement issued on Thursday, the Iran's Writers Association (IWA), a civil society union, has protested the sentencing of three Iranian writers, who received a total of 18 years in prison

IWA condemned the verdict as one "against all writers and everyone struggling for freedom of expression."

Iran’s Judiciary on Wednesday sentenced Reza Khandan Mahabadi, Baktash Abtin, and Kayvan Bajan to a total of 18 years in jail, the writers' defense lawyers told the press.

Two of the trio, Mahabadi and Abtin were indicted last August based on a complaint made by the Ministry of Intelligence in 2015.

The ministry had accused the writers of "propagating against the regime, and publishing an illegal publication," referring to the union's internal pamphlet.

The Iranian Writers Association in the statement called the accusations "irrelevant" and "baseless," adding that the evidence presented by the complainant against the writers was even more irrelevant.

According to the statement, the writers were asked in their interrogations about the reasons for their membership in the Writers Association and publishing the association's pamphlet.

Among their accusations were paying tribute to deceased poets and writers, the statement said.

The Iranian government does not recognize the Writers Association although it has been active for many decades, campaigning against censorship and in support of freedom of expression.

Iranian authorities have never responded to concerns expressed by international human rights watchdogs about its gross violation of human rights including the rights of Iranian writers and intellectuals.