

PUBLIC

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UA 25/08 Possible prisoners of conscience/fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAN **Haleh Rouhi Jahromi (f), aged 29**  
**Raha Sabet Sarvestani (f), aged 33**  
**Sasan Taqva (m), 32**

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Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva, all Baha'is (a religious minority), have been detained by the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz since 19 November 2007. It is not clear why they are held. They may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their religious beliefs, or their peaceful activities teaching underprivileged children.

The three had previously helped to organize a programme teaching underprivileged children in the city of Shiraz, southern Iran. More than 50 people involved in the programme were arrested in May 2006, even though the authorities had granted permission for their activities. Most of those arrested were Baha'is. Several Muslims and one Baha'i with learning difficulties were released the same day; 50 other Baha'is were released by the sixth day, but Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva were detained for about one month.

In August 2007, the 53 Baha'is who had been held were tried by Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Shiraz. They were charged with offences relating to state security. Fourteen who attended the court sessions were told orally of the verdict against the whole group. Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "organizing illegal groups" and to an additional one year's imprisonment for "propaganda on behalf of groups that are opposed to the Islamic system". The other 50 were sentenced to suspended prison sentences of four months for "participating in an illegal group" and a further eight months for "propaganda on behalf of groups that are opposed to the Islamic system". All those involved have appealed against their convictions and sentences. Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva remained free pending the outcome of their appeal.

On 19 November 2007, Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva were told by telephone to go to the Office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz to retrieve items that had been confiscated from them when they were first arrested. When they did not return home, family members who had accompanied them were given conflicting information by intelligence officials. The officials tried to claim that the three had not entered the building, even though their relatives had seen them do so. Eventually, their relatives were informed that the three were still being held at the Office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz. Reports suggest that the three have been permitted limited visits from relatives.

It is not clear whether they are serving the prison sentences imposed in August 2007. If they are serving these sentences, they should be held in prisons run by the Prison Service, as under Iranian law, the Ministry of Intelligence is only empowered to hold detainees for interrogation.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Baha'i faith was founded about 150 years ago in Iran and has since spread around the world. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Baha'i community there has been systematically harassed and persecuted. There are over 300,000 Baha'is currently in Iran, but their religion is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution, which only recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Baha'is in Iran are subject to discriminatory laws and regulations which violate their right to practise their religion freely, as set out in Article 18(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party, and which deny them equal rights to work and to a decent standard of

living by restricting their access to employment and benefits such as pensions. They are not permitted to meet, to hold religious ceremonies or to practice their religion communally. Since President Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005, dozens of Baha'is have been arrested because of their faith.

Members of the Baha'i community in Iran profess their allegiance to the state and deny that they are involved in any subversive acts against the government, which they state would be against their religion.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, Arabic, English or your own language:**

- asking why Haleh Rouhi Jahromi, Raha Sabet Sarvestani and Sasan Taqva have been detained by the Ministry of Intelligence in Shiraz since 19 November 2007;
- stating that Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience if they are detained because of their Baha'i faith or their peaceful activities teaching underprivileged children;
- calling for their release if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial promptly and fairly;
- calling on the authorities not to torture or ill-treat them;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they are given immediate and regular access to their relatives and lawyers of their choice.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Office of the Supreme Leader, Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email: info@leader.ir**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of the Head of the Judiciary

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir**

**via website: www.president.ir/email**

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 March 2008.