

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/025/2003

31 July 2003

UA 230/03 Fear for safety/ Incommunicado detention/ Risk of torture and ill-treatment/Prisoners of conscience (POCs)

IRAN            Taqi Rahmani (m) ]  
                  Hoda Saber (m) ] activists associated with the *Melli Mazhabi* (religious nationalists)  
                  Amir Tairani (m) ]  
                  Reza Alijani (m) ]

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the four prisoners of conscience named above. They are affiliated with the *Melli Mazhabi* (religious nationalists), and are being detained solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs. They are being held in incommunicado detention, where Amnesty International fears that they may be at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Taqi Rahmani, Hoda Saber and Reza Alijani were arrested on 14 June and Amir Tairani on 17 June in the capital Tehran, on charges including "attempting to overthrow the state, acting against national security and holding secret meetings with students."

Taqi Rahmani, Hoda Saber, Reza Alijani and other activists from the *Melli Mazhabi* were previously tried on similar, security-related charges in January 2002, though a verdict, which should have been issued within one week of the completion of the trial, was not issued until 10 May 2003. One of the reasons cited by commentators regarding the delay in issuing the verdict, was that judicial officials were not confident of the methods in which "evidence" was obtained by interrogators appointed by the Revolutionary Guard's intelligence service. The accused were acquitted of the charge of seeking to overthrow – in Persian, *barandazi* – the state, but they were reportedly convicted on other security-related charges.

In an unexplained and unusual move, the verdict was not delivered to the accused in person by the judge. Instead, an unidentified individual handed to the lawyers of the accused, written verdicts. The lawyers are currently appealing against the prison sentences. (See also further information on UA 236/00, MDE 13/020/2001, 22 June 2001)

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Over recent years, Amnesty International has documented numerous occurrences of human rights violations against individuals associated with the *Melli Mazhabi* notably Ezzatollah Sahabi, Morteza Kazemian, Mohammad Maleki and Mohammad Mohammadi Ardahali. (See UA 182/00, MDE 13/13/00, 27 June 2000 and UA 236/00, MDE13/22/00, 9 August 2000, and follow-up MDE 13/020/2001, 22 June 2001)

On 11 June, nearly 80 students living in student dormitories in the Amir Abad area of Tehran protested against draft proposals to privatize universities in Iran, fearing that tuition fees would rise as a result. Student demonstrators were joined by local residents as the protests escalated and became increasingly politicized. Organized groups of non-uniformed, plain clothed individuals, who in Iran are widely called the "*lebas shakhsi-ha*" (the plain clothed) began to attack the demonstrators and police intervened to end the clashes. As the demonstrations grew over the following nights, units of the Special Forces (*Nirou-ye Vijeh*) were deployed to disperse demonstrators. Scores of students and other demonstrators "disappeared" and thousands of others were arrested. According to press reports, up to 4,000 individuals were arrested. At the time of writing up to two thousand individuals may remain in detention in connection with their alleged involvement in the demonstrations.

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

- urging the authorities to release Taqi Rahmani, Hoda Saber, Amir Tairani and Reza Alijani immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, who are being detained solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs;
- urging the authorities to tell the families of those arrested exactly where they are detained, and to let the detainees have access to their families and lawyers;
- asking the authorities to guarantee that the four detainees will be treated humanely in prison;
- seeking confirmation of what internationally-recognised criminal offences they are alleged to have committed or have been charged with;
- reminding the authorities that confessions extracted under duress are prohibited by Iranian law and a violation of Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party. It states that "No one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment."
- calling for all those found responsible of torture of prisoners to be brought to justice in fair trials.

**APPEALS TO:**

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,

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

**Telegram: His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Tehran**

**E-mail: webmaster@wilayah.org (address may be unreliable; please try to resend if returned; on the subject line write: For the attention of the office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei, Qom)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami

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

**Telegram: His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran**

**E-mail: khatami@president.ir (please resend your message if it does not get through the first time)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegram: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran**

**Fax: + 98 21 879 6671 (please keep trying; please mark "care of Director of International Affairs, Judiciary")**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs,

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Av

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Fax: + 98 21 390 1999 (please keep trying; please mark "care of the Human Rights Department, Foreign Ministry")**

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 11 September 2003.