

PUBLIC

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27 July 2007

UA 194/07 Arbitrary arrest/fear of torture/prisoners of conscience

IRAN Behareh Hedayat (f)]
 Mohammad Hashemi (m)]
 Ali Nikou Nesbati (m)] student activists
 Mehdi Arabshahi (m)]
 Hanif Yazdani (m)]
 Ali Vafaqi (m)]
 Abdollah Momeni, Spokesperson of the Alumni Association of Iran
 Mojtaba Bayat (m), Alumni Association member
 Seven others (names known to Amnesty International)

The 15 people listed above were arrested on 9 July, the eighth anniversary of student demonstrations in 1999 which were violently suppressed by the security forces. The eight who are named are believed to be held in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence; the other seven are also held in Evin Prison and may also be in solitary confinement. Amnesty International believes they are prisoners of conscience.

Behareh Hedayat is the head of the Women's Commission of the student body Office for the Consolidation of Unity (OCU). She was detained at a demonstration opposite Amir Kabir University of Technology, protesting at the continued detention of eight students arrested in May and June 2007 over articles regarded as insulting to Islam (see UA 113/07, MDE 13/054/2007, 15 May 2007 and follow up). OCU Central Council members Mohammad Hashemi, Ali Nikou Nesbati, Mehdi Arabshahi, Hanif Yazdani and Ali Vafaqi were detained with her.

Ten other people were arrested later that day at the offices of the Alumni Association of Iran, including Association spokesperson Abdollah Momeni, and they are said to have been beaten during their arrest. The arresting officials reportedly fired their guns in the air, and confiscated computers and documents before sealing the office. One Association staff member was reportedly released after five days.

Several detainees have been able to telephone their families, but not to meet their families or lawyers. Some have had their houses searched and personal property confiscated. The people who searched his house took Abdollah Momeni with them, apparently in handcuffs and with visible injuries from his beating. He is said to have complained about the treatment he was receiving.

A Judiciary spokesperson confirmed the arrests on 16 July: "They are in prison and the investigation is ongoing regarding their participation in illegal gatherings and acting against national security."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Alumni Association of Iran is legally registered as a political organisation. Its membership is open to graduates of Iranian universities and it is active in promoting democracy and human rights. Association head Ali-Akbar Mousavi-Kho'ini was arrested during a peaceful demonstration in Tehran on 12 June 2006, which called for legal reforms to end discrimination against women. He was allegedly tortured during the more than four months he spent in Evin Prison. (See UA 181/06, MDE 13/075/2006, 30 June 2006 and follow-ups).

Women's rights activist Behareh Hedayat was also arrested during the 12 June 2006 demonstration, for which she was sentenced in May 2007 to two years' imprisonment, suspended for five years, on charges of "acting against state security". She had been tried in April, without her lawyer being present. She may now

be at risk of having to serve this suspended sentence. On 10 April, the Minister of Intelligence publicly accused the women's movement and student campaigners of being part of an enemy conspiracy aiming at a "soft subversion" of the government. Since then, there has been a marked deterioration in the human rights situation in Iran (see News Release *Iran: Violations of human rights continue unabated*, 13 July 2007, MDE 13/085/2007).

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

- calling on the authorities to release Behareh Hedayat and others detained on 9 July immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association;
- expressing concern at reports that at least some were beaten during their arrest and urging the authorities to investigate those reports fully, with those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that none of those in custody suffers any further torture or ill-treatment;
- calling for all those detained to be granted immediate and regular access to their families, lawyers and any medical treatment they may require.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

istiftaa@wilayah.org

Fax: +98 251 7774 2228 (mark FAO Office of His Excellency Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 3355 6408

Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir

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 September 2007.