

URGENT ACTION

MURDER WITNESS FACES ILL-TREATMENT

Tehran resident Caspian Makan, who was the fiancé of Neda Agha Soltan, a young woman killed in the recent protests in Iran, is in detention in Evin Prison. Amnesty International believes that he is being held because he witnessed her murder and later made a statement linking her killing to a member of Iran's Basij militia. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Neda Agha Soltan, 27, was killed on 20 June in Tehran. She was shot as she and three companions, including her fiancé Caspian Makan, were leaving a demonstration, one of many mass events that took place following Iran's disputed presidential election on 12 June. Moments after the bullet hit her, when other demonstrators were trying to help her, a man with a mobile phone camera filmed her dying moments. The video footage was widely circulated on the internet and became a symbol of the unrest that developed in Iran.

Caspian Makan was arrested at his home in north Tehran on 26 June. He had told BBC Persian TV, in an interview on 22 June that "Eyewitnesses and video footage [...] clearly show that probably Basij paramilitaries [...] deliberately targeted her". It later emerged that a member of the Basij militia, a state security body under the command of the Revolutionary Guard, incriminated himself by exclaiming after her shooting that he did not mean to kill her.

Caspian Makan is reported to have told his family that if he signs a "confession" saying that the PMOI, a political body banned in Iran since 1981, killed her, then he may be released from Evin Prison in Tehran. Amnesty International fears that he may be forced to sign such a "confession" under torture or other ill-treatment, given the pattern of human rights violations following the election. He may be a prisoner of conscience, held for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, English or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Caspian Makan may have been detained on account of his being a witness to the killing of his fiancé and on account of statements that he made linking state officials to her death;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to protect him from torture or other ill-treatment while in detention and, in particular, to ensure that he is not forced to sign any "confessions" under such treatment;
- urging them to grant him immediate access to his lawyer, family and any medical treatment he may need;
- calling for him to be released immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 OCTOBER TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Office of the Supreme Leader

Islamic Republic Street – End of

Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran,

Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: via website: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)

<http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/index.php?p=letter> (Persian)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani

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: Via website:

[http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.a](http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.aspx)

spX First starred box: your given name;

second starred box: your family name;

third: your email address

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Ali Larijani

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami

Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic

Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 3355 6408

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is reported to have described Neda Agha Soltan's death as "suspicious" and on 29 June wrote to the Head of the Judiciary requesting that an investigation be undertaken into it. However, in the days following her killing, a number of government officials made statements denying that the state security forces were involved in her death and, in some cases, blamed others. Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami, a representative of the Supreme Leader, stated in Friday prayers at Tehran University on 26 June that the evidence showed that the protesters themselves killed her and did so as a way of making "propaganda" against the system.

The authorities have since intimidated Iranians who have spoken out about the killing. Chief of Police, Brigadier General Ahmadi-Moghaddam, is said to have told a press conference on 30 June that the Iranian police and Ministry of Intelligence had issued an international arrest warrant via Interpol for the arrest of Dr Arash Hejazi, a doctor who tried to save Neda Agha Soltan's life at the scene of her shooting and who spoke publicly about what he witnessed to international news media, accusing him of spreading misinformation about the killing and thereby "poisoning the international atmosphere" against the Iranian government. Dr Arash Hejazi, as well as the TV journalist who interviewed Caspian Makan, have both left Iran, fearing for their safety.

The Iranian authorities also harassed and intimidated Neda Agha Soltan's family and other mourners after her death. Before burying her in Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery, in a section apparently set aside by the authorities for those killed in the unrest, her family were reportedly told by the authorities to ensure mourners other than family members did not attend the burial and were threatened with unspecified punishment if they did not comply. The authorities were also reported to have issued a ban on collective prayers for Neda Agha Soltan in mosques. When Agha Soltan's family and other mourners tried to hold a commemoration service for her at Niloufar mosque in Abbas Abad, they were interrupted after 10 minutes by about 20 Basij paramilitaries, who entered the mosque and dispersed the attendees.

Neda Agha Soltan's father was out of the country when she was killed. Upon learning of the circumstances of her death after returning to Tehran, he is reported to have cried out: "They killed my daughter." Nevertheless, he later appeared on state television claiming that she had been killed by the "*monafeqin*", a term used by the government to refer to the PMOI. It is not clear under what circumstances this statement was made and, in particular, whether it was in any way made under duress.

Having provided hundreds of thousands of servicemen during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, the Basij militia, whose overall commander is appointed by the Supreme Leader, is held in very high regard by government leaders. Its prestige and close affiliation to the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran means that the authorities are reluctant to admit that Basij officials may have committed crimes against Iranian citizens. This may be seen by the leadership as unacceptably tarnishing the reputation of the Supreme Leader himself.

Hundreds of people who took part in post-election protests have "confessed" to vaguely worded charges, which are often not recognizably criminal offences. These "confessions" often appear to have been obtained under duress. Amnesty International has received numerous reports that both women and male detainees have been subjected to torture, including rape, by security officials. Iranian officials have confirmed that at least some of those detained have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and that abuses took place in at least one detention centre, Kahrizak, a centre outside of Tehran.

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