

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/142/2006

22 December 2006

Further Information on 301/06 (MDE 13/126/2006, 13 November 2006) and follow-up (MDE 13/123/2006, 7 December 2006) - Fear of imminent execution

IRAN **Abdullah Suleymani (m) aged 27**
 Abdulreza Sanawati Zergani (m)
 Qasem Salamat (m) aged 43
 Mohammad Jaab Pour (m)
 Abdulmir Farjallah Jaab (m)
 Alireza Asakreh (m)
 Majed Alboghubaish (m)
 Khalaf Derhab Khudayrawi (m)
 Malek Banitamim (m) aged 30
 Abdul Husain Haribi (m)
 Husain Maramazi (m)
 Husain Asakreh (m)

Alireza Asakreh, Malek Banitamim and Ali Matouri Zadeh were reportedly executed on 19 December in Sepidar prison in Khuzestan province. The other nine men named above remain at grave risk of imminent execution.

The bodies of the executed men were reportedly not handed to their families for burial, and it is feared they will be buried in an unmarked, mass grave site called *La'natabad* (Place of the damned). The security forces are reportedly preventing people from visiting the families to offer condolences.

On 13 November, an Iranian local television station, Khuzestan TV, broadcast a documentary which included the "confessions" of nine of these men, as well as a tenth man named as Ali Motairi Nejad, whom Amnesty International believes to be Ali Matouri Zadeh, who was arrested along with his pregnant wife on 28 February 2006 (see UA 107/06, MDE 13/042/2006, 28 April 2006 and follow up). The 10 men had been sentenced to death in connection with involvement in bomb explosions which took place in cities in Khuzestan province in 2005. In the programme, the 10 people, said to be members of a group named *Al-e Naser*, (a little-known Iranian Arab militant group that is not known to have been active since the time of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s) "confessed" to their involvement in the bomb explosions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the province of Khuzestan, which borders Iraq. The province is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves, but the Arab population does not feel it has benefited as much from the oil revenue as the Persian population. Historically, the Arab community has been marginalised and discriminated against. In April 2005, Iranian Arabs took part in mass demonstrations in Ahvaz city, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Hundreds were arrested and some were reportedly tortured. Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz city in June and October 2005, which killed at least 14 people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October, the cycle of violence intensified, with hundreds people reportedly arrested. Further bombings on 24 January 2006, in which at least six people were killed, were followed by further mass arrests. Two men, Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, were executed in public on 2 March 2006 after they were convicted of involvement in the October bombings. Their executions followed unfair trials before a Revolutionary Court during which they are believed to have been denied access to lawyers, and their "confessions", along with those of seven other men, were broadcast on

television. Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life. Please see *Iran: Death Sentences appeal case – 11 Iranian Arab men facing death sentences*, AI Index MDE 13/051/2006, May 2006).

Iran has a history of airing video-taped "confessions" on television. In previous cases, people who have made such "confessions" have later stated that such confessions were made after they had been tortured or ill-treated.

Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which includes the right not to be compelled to testify against oneself or to confess guilt (Article 14.3.g). Principle 21 of the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment states that it should be prohibited to take undue advantage of the situation of a detainee for the purpose of compelling him to confess or incriminate himself.

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

- expressing grave concern that the nine remaining men (naming them) may be in imminent danger of execution;
- urging the Iranian authorities to commute their death sentences immediately;
- expressing concern that their trials appear to have been unfair, and asking for details of their trial proceedings, including whether they were granted access to independent lawyers of their choice, and, if indeed convicted and sentenced to death, whether they have been allowed to appeal against their convictions and sentences, as required by Article 14 (5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- expressing concern that the men may have been compelled to testify against themselves or to confess guilt during interrogations which did not respect the necessary human rights safeguards, such as the right to access to legal counsel;
- acknowledging that governments have a responsibility to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but stating your unconditional opposition to the death penalty, as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and violation of the right to life.

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 2 February 2007.