

PUBLIC

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EXTRA 59/98

Fear for safety / Fear of detention without charge or trial

25 August 1998

UGANDA

Asgha Pishdar (alias Mohammed Jafar Mohammed el-Ali),
aged 49, of Iranian origin

There are deep concerns for the safety of Asgha Pishdar, known to the Ugandan authorities as Mohammed Jafar Mohammed el-Ali, whose whereabouts are unknown but who is apparently in illegal detention following his arrest on 15 August 1998. Amnesty International therefore fears he is at risk of ill-treatment or of being deported without having the opportunity of claiming asylum should he wish to do so.

Asgha Pishdar, who is disabled, was reportedly arrested at Entebbe Airport as he tried to check in for a flight to either Amsterdam or London. Dutch travel documents in his possession gave his name as Mohammed Jafar Mohammed el-Ali, born in Baghdad.

Asgha Pishdar is believed to have left Iran, following persistent harassment by the Iranian authorities, and to have arrived in Nairobi from Dubai on 22 July. On 3 August he apparently tried to board a British Airways flight to London but his travel documents were not accepted. Ten days later he arrived in Entebbe, Uganda.

Asgha Pishdar arrived in Uganda at a time of heightened security concerns following Ugandan press reports that the United States and British Embassies in Kampala had received bomb threats. This is in the wake of the bombing, on 7 August, of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam by an Islamist armed group in which hundreds of people were killed and thousands wounded.

Amnesty International believes that Asgha Pishdar may have been detained because his papers were thought to be false, possibly leading to the suspicion that he is linked to an international armed group.

Whatever the reason for his detention, Ugandan law states that he be held for no more than 48 hours before being charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought before a court. The organization believes he may now wish to claim asylum in Uganda.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Asgha Pishdar, known to the Ugandan authorities as Mohammed Jafar Mohammed el-Ali, whose whereabouts remain unknown following his arrest at Entebbe Airport on 15 August 1998;
- seeking assurances that he is not being ill-treated;
- expressing concern that he has been detained without charge or trial for a period exceeding 48 hours in contravention of Ugandan law;
- urging that he given immediate and regular access to family members, a lawyer of his choice, representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and any necessary medical attention;
- requesting that he be released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly to trial;
- reminding the Ugandan authorities of their obligation under international law not to refole anyone who seeks asylum without a proper consideration of their asylum claim.

APPEALS TO (Please note that fax tones may be difficult to obtain):

Major Tom Butime
Minister of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Internal Affairs
PO Box 7191, Kampala, UGANDA
Telegrams: Minister Internal Affairs, Kampala, Uganda
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Eriya Kategaya
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 7048, Kampala, UGANDA
Telegrams: Minister Foreign Affairs
Faxes: + 256 41 232874
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Amama Mbabazi
Minister of State for Regional Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 7048, Kampala, UGANDA
Faxes: + 256 41 232874
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Mukasa Muruli
Minister of State for Security
Office of the President
PO Box 7168, Kampala, UGANDA
Telegrams: Minister of State for Security, Kampala, Uganda
Faxes: + 256 41 235459
Telexes: 61048 RESIST / 61389 KAPITAL
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Philip Idro
Director
Internal Security Organization
Office of the President
PO Box 7168, Kampala, UGANDA
Faxes: + 256 41 235459
Telexes: 61048 RESIST / 61389 KAPITAL
Salutation: Dear Sir

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 September 1998.

**"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary
arrest, detention or exile"**

Article 9, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>