

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/009/2007

26 January 2007

Further Information on UA 331/06 (MDE 13/135/2006, 12 December 2006) and follow-up (MDE 13/137/2006, 14 December 2006) - Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatment/possible prisoner of conscience New concern: Unfair trial

IRAN Sherko Jihani (m), journalist and human rights defender

Journalist and human rights defender Sherko Jihani has been transferred to Mahabad Central Prison in northwestern Iran. He had previously been held incommunicado at an unknown location, believed to be a detention facility belonging to the Ministry of Intelligence. He is believed to have been tortured, including by being beaten severely, and he is said to be in poor health. He may have been detained for his peaceful activities in defence of the rights of Iran's Kurdish minority, in which case Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience.

A report published on 31 December 2006 on the website of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK), (see http://basharnews.blogspot.com/2006_12_01_basharnews_archive.html) stated that Sherko Jihani had been moved back to Mahabad Central Prison. On 25 January 2007, the HROK reported that Sherko Jihani had appeared before Branch 1 of the General Court of Mahabad on 22 January, charged with "spreading lies". He appeared in a separate case on 24 January 2007 before Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court of Mahabad charged with "propaganda against the system" and "acting against state security" (http://basharnews.blogspot.com/2007_01_01_basharnews_archive.html). Both trial sessions were said to have been closed and to taken place without the presence of a defence lawyer.

Sherko Jihani's family were able to visit him in Mahabad Central Prison on 8 January 2007, and again shortly before his first trial hearing. They have not been permitted to visit him since then.

Sherko Jihani, the correspondent of the Turkish news agency *Euphrat* in Mahabad and a member of the HROK, was detained on 27 November 2006. During his interrogation, he was reportedly accused of involvement in organizing protests against the kidnapping on 8 January 2006 of a woman human rights activist, Sarveh Komkar (Kamkar), and for giving interviews to foreign stations about the killing by Iranian security forces of a Kurdish activist, Showan (Shivan) Qaderi, in July 2005.

Sherko Jihani reportedly refused to pay bail of 50 million Rials (about US\$ 5,500) and on 30 November began a hunger strike in protest at his arrest and detention. On 4 December, he began refusing to speak. On 6 December 2006, Sherko Jihani was removed from Mahabad Prison and was held incommunicado at an unknown location until 13 December when he was allowed to phone his family briefly.

Sherko Jihani has reportedly been arrested nine times since 1999 and is said to have been tortured during previous periods of detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Violent unrest in the Kurdish areas of northwest Iran broke out in July 2005 and continued for several weeks after Iranian security forces shot dead a Kurdish opposition activist, Showan Qaderi, and reportedly dragged his body through the streets behind a Jeep. Thousands of Kurds took to the streets to protest. Security forces reportedly used light and heavy weaponry in response to the demonstrations, which in at least some places included attacks by demonstrators on government buildings and offices. Up to 20 people were reportedly killed and hundreds more injured. The authorities acknowledged that five people were killed, and

stated that their deaths were under investigation. At least 190 people were arrested, according to official reports, although the true figure may well be higher.

Kurdish human rights defenders in Iran are at risk. Several human rights defenders and journalists involved in the July 2005 demonstrations have received death threats.

On 8 January 2006, Sarveh Komkar, also a member of HROK, was reportedly arrested by a special intelligence and security unit of the Revolutionary Guards before witnesses in the town of Mahabad, Kurdistan. She was released five hours later, having sustained injuries and bruises from a severe beating, after her family and the members of HROK complained to the authorities and pointed to a lack of evidence against her. Other members of the HROK have also been imprisoned or are facing prosecution, possibly in connection with their peaceful activities on behalf of the Kurdish minority in Iran.

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

- expressing concern that Sherko Jihani may have been detained solely in connection with his peaceful activities on behalf of the rights of the Kurdish minority. If this is the case, he is a prisoner of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- asking to be informed in detail of the charges against Sherko Jihani, including the evidence against him and the outcome of any trial proceedings against him;
- expressing concern that his trial proceedings on 22 and 24 January 2007 without the presence of a defence lawyer do not appear to have met international standards for fair trial;
- calling for an investigation into the allegations that he has been tortured in detention, and for anyone found responsible for abuses to be brought to justice promptly and fairly;
- calling for him to be granted immediate access to a lawyer of his own choosing and to any medical treatment he 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 OR istiftaa@wilayah.org

Fax: +98 251 774 2228 (mark "FAO the 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

Email: iranprobe@iranprobe.com

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

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 6 646 1746

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 9 March 2007.