

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/085/2008
20 June 2008

Further Information on UA 297/07 (MDE 13/130/2007, 07 November 2007) and follow-up (MDE 13/063/2008, 14 April 2008) - Prisoner of conscience/fear of torture or other ill-treatment

IRAN

Ronak Safarzadeh (f)
Hana Abdi (f), aged 21

Hana Abdi has been sentenced to five years' imprisonment, to be served in exile in West Azerbaijan province, in the small town of Germei, on the border with the Republic of Azerbaijan, while Ronak Safarzadeh is in custody awaiting a further trial session. Amnesty International believes both women are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association, and that the charges brought against them are politically motivated.

According to Hana Abdi's lawyer, Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj convicted her of "gathering and colluding to commit a crime against national security." The lawyer representing both women expressed further shock and dismay at this sentence, the maximum for this offence, which he believes is inappropriate, but said that the trial judge has often given inappropriate sentences. He said he would appeal, and hoped this might lead to the sentence being overturned.

Ronak Safarzadeh has been charged with *moharebeh* (enmity against God), which can carry the death penalty, in connection with bomb attacks in Sanandaj. According to the lawyer, Ronak Safarzadeh's "confessions" were made under duress during the three months she spent in solitary confinement at a detention facility run by the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj, and were therefore inadmissible in court. He has also said that prison guards were present at all his meetings with the women, despite his objections.

Both women are active members of the Campaign for Equality, which is seeking an end to legalised discrimination against women, and of the NGO Azar Mehr Women's Organization of Sanandaj, which is affiliated to the Campaign for Equality.

In February 2008, the Head of Azar Mehr, Negin Sheikholeslami, said that in a phone call to the two women, "[they] stressed that they had not committed any crime. They had only sought justice and their only crime was to work for the equality of human beings - human beings who are discriminated against in this country because of their gender or ethnicity." She said they had told her, "We are only seeking our human rights, and as citizens we are asking that our rights be respected ... we have spent several months under intolerable conditions for crimes which we have not committed, and despite all the false accusations against us ... based on what we have witnessed during our time in prison and in our discussions with female prisoners [we] have come to believe more than ever before in the justness of our demands and our cause... we are not terrorists, and our activities were only intended to address and rectify gender and ethnic discrimination, and our aim is to bring peace and reconciliation to our country and between our people. Don't forget about us."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dozens of Campaign for Equality activists and supporters have been arrested because of their activities for the Campaign, some while collecting signatures for the petition aiming to end legal discrimination against women in Iran. The authorities have frequently refused permission to hold public meetings, and Campaign activists usually hold their meetings in the homes of sympathizers. The Campaign's website, and other websites associated with the women's movement in Iran, have often been blocked by the authorities.

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

- expressing concern that Hana Abdi has been sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and urging the authorities to release her and Ronak Safarzadeh immediately and unconditionally, as they are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for their peaceful activities in support of equal rights for women in Iran;
- calling on the authorities to order an investigation into reports that Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi were tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and bring those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
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: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Kordestan Province

Esmail Najjar
Email: In Persian and Kurdish, send via feedback form on the website:
http://www.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?tabId=150&cv=4@0_1
In English, French or other languages, use the feedback form on the website:
<http://en.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?TabID=59>
Salutation: Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880
Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: <http://www.president.ir/email/>

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani
C/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs
Ministry of Justice,
Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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 1 August 2008.