

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/107/2007

24 August 2007

Further Information on UA 110/07 (MDE 13/053/2007, 14 May 2007) and follow-up (MDE 13/064/2007, 01 June 2007) – Prisoner of conscience/fear of torture or ill treatment/fear for safety

IRAN **Dr Haleh Esfandiari (f), aged 67, academic, joint US-Iranian national**
Kian Tajbakhsh (m), aged 45, academic, joint US-Iranian national
Parnaz Azima (f), journalist, joint US-Iranian national
Ali Shakeri (m), aged 59, peace activist, joint US-Iranian national

Haleh Esfandiari was released on 21 August, on bail of three billion Rials (US\$320,000). She is currently unable to leave Iran. The director of the Middle East program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC, USA, Haleh Esfandiari was arrested on 8 May by officials from the Ministry of Intelligence and taken to Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, which is run by the Ministry of Intelligence.

On 21 May the Ministry of Intelligence issued a statement accusing her of activities which it said was aimed at a "soft overthrow of the [Iranian] system". A 29 May statement by the judiciary specified that she had been detained because of a complaint made by the Ministry of Intelligence, which accused her of "acting against state security through propaganda and espionage for foreigners". It is not clear, however, whether she has been formally charged. Haleh Esfandiari was never allowed to see her lawyers while she was in custody.

Kian Tajbakhsh, a social scientist and urban planner, was arrested on 11 May and is believed to be held in Section 209 of Evin Prison. He too was accused in May of "acting against Iran's national security" and "spying for foreigners". He does not have access to legal representation.

In July, Haleh Esfandiari appeared with Kian Tajbakhsh in an Iranian TV programme in which they gave what were described as "confessions" by some Iranian newspapers (see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130922007?open&of=ENG-2MD>). Such footage breaches Iran's obligations under the ICCPR, which guarantees the right "not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt".

Parnaz Azima, a journalist with Radio Farda, the Persian-language service run jointly by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America, reportedly appeared before the Revolutionary Court's Public Prosecutor on 15 May and ordered to post bail. Bail of around US\$440,000 was deposited on 21 May but the authorities have refused to return her passport. On 15 July, her lawyer stated that her case had been referred to Branch 13 of the Revolutionary Court. She has apparently been accused of "acting against national security by spreading propaganda against the system". No date is known to have been set for a trial.

Ali Shakeri, a peace activist from the city of Irvine in California, USA, was arrested on 8 May at one of Tehran's international airports as he was leaving for Europe. He is held in an unknown location by the Ministry of Intelligence. He is not believed to have been charged. On 8 June, the judiciary confirmed that he was in custody. He has not been given access to legal representation. On 12 August, Tehran's Deputy Prosecutor stated that Ali Shakeri's case was not related to the cases of Haleh Esfandiari and Kian Tajbakhsh and that "the time had not yet arrived for providing full information about his situation"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent months the Iranian authorities have increased pressure on journalists, academics, human rights defenders and others perceived as having links with foreign countries or having been involved in initiatives to build Iran's civil society. In April, Minister of Intelligence Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie publicly accused the womens' movement and student campaigners of being part of an enemy conspiracy for a "soft subversion" of the government in Iran. In May, an official at the Ministry of Intelligence warned Iranian academics not to have contact with foreigners. He said, "Unfortunately our academics are subject to intelligence threats, and, with the methods they use, they first establish an initial contact, and this academic contact soon turns into an intelligence link."

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

- welcoming the release on bail of Haleh Esfandiari and calling for any charges against her and Parnaz Azima relating solely to the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and association to be dropped and for them to be allowed to travel freely;
- expressing concern for the safety of Kian Tajbakhsh and Ali Shakeri, and urging the authorities to ensure that they are not tortured or otherwise ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to release Kian Tajbakhsh immediately and unconditionally, as he is held solely for his peaceful activities, including his academic work;
- calling on the authorities to make public the current whereabouts of Ali Shakeri and to release him immediately and unconditionally if he is not to be charged with a recognisably criminal offence;
- calling for Kian Tajbakhsh and Ali Shakeri to be granted immediate and unconditional access to their lawyers, families and any medical treatment they may require;
- asking to be informed in detail of the reasons for their arrest, including any charges brought against them;
- reminding the authorities that Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that under Article 14 (g), everyone has the right not to be compelled to testify against him or herself or to confess guilt, and urging them to end the practice of showing videotaped "confessions" on television.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

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 5 October 2007.