

PUBLIC

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UA 309/06

Incommunicado detention/ fear of torture

17 November 2006

IRAN

Asghar Akbarzadeh (m), student, aged about 21

Iranian Azerbaijani Asghar Akbarzadeh is believed to be held incommunicado at an undisclosed location, where he is at risk of torture.

Asghar Akbarzadeh is a chemistry student at the Paymane Noor University of Ardebil. He was reportedly detained on 31 October, while outside the University premises, by plain clothes individuals believed to be officials from the Ministry of Intelligence (Etela'at). Since this time, his family have received no news about him. His mother has reportedly repeatedly gone to Ardebil Court, and the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in Ardebil, seeking news of her son, but the authorities have reportedly refused to confirm his whereabouts, or even that he has been arrested.

Asghar Akbarzadeh was previously arrested on 25 May 2006, two days before a demonstration in Ardebil. He was released after around 12 days in detention. On the day of the demonstration in Ardebil, while Asghar was detained, officials from the Ministry of Intelligence searched his family home after cutting the telephone line. They left without taking anything. Prior to Asghar Akbarzadeh's arrest, officials from the Ministry of Intelligence came to the family home on two occasions looking for Asghar, but he was not at home.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In May 2006, massive demonstrations took place in towns and cities in north-western Iran, where the majority of the population is Azeri Turkish, in protest at a cartoon published on 12 May by the state-owned daily newspaper Iran which many Azeri Turks found offensive. Hundreds were arrested during or following the demonstrations (see UA 151/06, MDE 13/055/2006, 26 May 2006 and UA 163/06, MDE 13/063/2006, 8 June 2006). Some of those detained have allegedly been tortured, with some requiring hospital treatment. Publication of the newspaper was suspended on 23 May and the editor-in-chief and the cartoonist were arrested. Iranian Azerbaijani sources have claimed that dozens were killed and hundreds injured by the security forces. The security forces have generally denied that anyone was killed, although on 29 May a police official acknowledged that four people had been killed and 43 injured in the town of Naqada.

Iranian security forces frequently hold people, for days or weeks, sometimes in secret detention centres, before acknowledging that they are in custody or allowing them to contact their families. Student activist Abed Tavancheh was thought to have "disappeared" when he did not contact his family for over a week: on 5 June he was able to call them from Tehran's Evin prison to say that he had been arrested on 26 May (see UA 165/06, MDE 13/065/2006, 9 June 2006).

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

- expressing concern at reports that the whereabouts of Asghar Akbarzadeh are not known since his believed arrest by plain-clothed members of the Ministry of Intelligence (Etela'at) on 31 October;
- calling on the authorities to say whether he is in custody, and if so, where he is held and why he was arrested, including any charges against him;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that he is not tortured or ill-treated and to allow him immediate access to his family and a lawyer of his own choosing, and to any medical treatment he may require
- calling on the authorities to bring him to trial promptly and fairly, or release him immediately and unconditionally if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

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

Fax: + 98 251 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")

Email: info@leader.ir
istiftaa@wilayah.org

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

Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880

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.