

PUBLIC

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01 June 2007

Further Information on UA 110/07 (MDE 13/053/2007, 14 May 2007) Prisoner of conscience New concern: Fear of torture or ill-treatment/ Fear for safety

IRAN **Dr Haleh Esfandiari (f), aged 67, academic, joint US-Iranian national**

New names: **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**

On 29 May, the Iranian Intelligence Ministry reportedly formally charged three joint US-Iranian nationals, Haleh Esfandiari, Kian Tajbakhsh and Parnaz Azima, with "acting against state security by engaging in propaganda and espionage for foreigners." Ali Shakeri, another US-Iranian national, is believed to be in detention.

Haleh Esfandiari, the director of the Middle East program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in the US capital, Washington, DC, was arrested on 8 May by agents of the Intelligence Ministry and transferred to Tehran's Evin Prison the same day. Kian Tajbakhsh, a social scientist and urban planner who has taught at universities both in Iran and the USA, was reportedly arrested three days later, on 11 May. Both are being detained incommunicado in Section 209 of Evin Prison and are denied access to their lawyers and family. On 20 May the Intelligence Ministry issued a statement accusing Haleh Esfandiari of promoting civil society in Iran "to further the interests of foreign powers." This statement and a number of articles in the daily *Kayhan* have referred to Haleh Esfandiari and Kian Tajbakhsh's professional activities, such as attending international academic conferences, as evidence of "acting against national security."

Parnaz Azima, a Czech Republic-based journalist with Radio Farda, the Persian-language service run jointly by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America, had her passport confiscated upon her arrival at Tehran's airport on 25 January 2007 when she returned to Iran to visit her mother. On 15 May she reportedly appeared before the Special Security Bureau of the Revolutionary Court's Public Prosecutor's office, and was told that she would be charged with working for Radio Farda, an organization that prosecutors claim "spreads propaganda against the Islamic Republic." Based on these charges, her bail was set at 400 million Tomans (about US\$ 440,000) - an amount reportedly based on an estimate of the salary she earned during her nine years of employment with Radio Farda. Parnaz Azima's lawyer reportedly posted the bail on 21 May by presenting the deeds to Parnaz Azima's mother's Tehran home. The payment of bail was accepted but the authorities refused to return her passport.

On 29 May, the Judiciary's spokesperson, Alireza Jamshidi, told a news conference that Haleh Esfandiari, Kian Tajbakhsh and Parnaz Azima had been arrested after a complaint was made against them by the Ministry of Intelligence.

Ali Shakeri, a peace activist from the city of Irvine in California, USA, was reportedly arrested on 8 May at one of Tehran's international airports as he was leaving Iran for Europe. Two days later he reportedly phoned his family saying: "There was a misunderstanding, and I am OK." He was reportedly unable to confirm that he was in detention. On 29 May, the Judiciary's spokesperson said "Shakeri is not in detention, and there are no charges against him."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In recent months the Iranian authorities have increased pressure on journalists, academics and others perceived as having links with foreign countries. French-Iranian national journalism student, Mehrnoush Solouki, was reportedly arrested on 17 February and was banned from leaving Iran. She had gone to Tehran in December 2006 as part of her studies at Canada's Québec University to work on a documentary on the aftermath of the 1988 ceasefire between Iran and Iraq. She was reportedly held in Evin prison for a month, and her notes and film were confiscated. Mehrnoush Solouki was released on 19 March on bail but her passport was retained, preventing her from leaving Iran. She has also allegedly been repeatedly summoned by intelligence officials.

For more information on the latest arrests, please see
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130632007>

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Haleh Esfandiari, Kian Tajbakhsh, Parnaz Azima and Ali Shakeri;
- calling on the authorities to release Haleh Esfandiari and Kian Tajbakhsh immediately and unconditionally, as they are held solely for their peaceful activities, including their academic work;
- calling on the authorities to make public his current whereabouts and to release him immediately and unconditionally if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling for Haleh Esfandiari, Kian Tajbakhsh and Ali Shakeri to be granted immediate and unconditional access to their lawyers, family members, and any medical treatment they may require;
- seeking assurances that they not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- asking for a detailed account 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.
- calling on the authorities to allow them to leave the country to join their families abroad.

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

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, Azarbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir OR via website: www.president.ir/email

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 13 July 2007.