

PUBLIC

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17 June 2008

UA 169/08 Arbitrary arrest/fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAN Mahboubeh Karami (f), aged 40, journalist and women's rights defender
and about 200 others

Mahboubeh Karami, journalist and women's rights defender, was removed from a bus and arrested by plain clothed security forces on 13 June. The bus that Mahboubeh Karami was on travelled past Mellat Park, Tehran shortly after a demonstration had been held there. About 200 other people are known to have been arrested in connection to the demonstration. Amnesty International is not aware of any violence on the part of the protesters. The current whereabouts of all, including Mahboubeh Karami, are unknown and they are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

Deutsche Welle (in Persian at <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3412526,00.html>), quoting Iranian news agencies, reported that security forces used tear gas and electric shock batons to disperse the protestors. Check points were set up by security forces in Vali Asr Street which runs alongside the park. Car drivers were told to keep their vehicles moving and their windows up. Several public buses were stopped and boarded by plain clothed officers including the one Mahboubeh Karami was travelling on.

Prior to her bus being boarded Mahboubeh Karami used her cell phone to call her mother, Ms Mosa'edi, and tell her that she was on a bus coming from Tajrish Square (north-east of Mellat Park), but was stuck in traffic. Twenty minutes later, Mahboubeh Karami called again and, as it was happening, told her mother that she was being removed from the bus and that her coat had been pulled off. The cell phone was then disconnected and her family have been unable to reach her on it since.

Ms Mosa'edi told the Campaign for Equality that her daughter's bag was found in the street by a fellow passenger who returned it to her family and informed them that all the women passengers had been taken off the bus even though, as far as he could see, none had been part of the demonstration as they were all sitting on the bus.

Mahboubeh Karami's brother visited the Vozara detention centre to enquire about his sister. At the centre many relatives of those who had been arrested were there to find out about their relatives' location and welfare, but all were told that there was no information.

According to the Campaign for Equality, Rezvan Moghaddam, a friend of Mahboubeh Karami, visited Vanak Square to see if she was in a detention centre there. She was also unable to uncover any news of Mahboubeh Karami's whereabouts.

At a news conference on 14 June, the Head of the Tehran Judiciary, Ali Reza Avaie, confirmed that 200 people had been arrested. According to Deutsche Welle, he said that those who were innocent or suspected of minor crimes would hear about the status of their cases within a week.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Those demonstrating in Mellat Park were protesting about the arrest on 11 June of Abbas Palizdar, who had accused several senior Iranian officials of financial corruption in speeches he made at universities in Hamedan and Shiraz in May. He was a member of a parliamentary Judicial Inquiry and Review Committee that had conducted an investigation into affairs of the Judiciary.

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

- expressing concern at the reports that around 200 people, including Mahboubeh Karami, were arrested on 13 June following an apparently peaceful demonstration;
- calling on the authorities to clarify the names and current whereabouts of all those arrested;
- urging the authorities to ensure that none of those arrested are tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in detention;
- calling for all those detained to be allowed immediate access to their families, lawyers of their choice and to any medical treatment they may require;
- calling for the immediate release of all those detained unless they are charged with recognisably criminal offences and brought to trial promptly and fairly.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary in Tehran

Mr Ali Reza Avaie

Karimkhan Zand Avenue,

Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Ally 17, No 152,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir

Salutation: Dear Mr Avaie

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

COPIES TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh

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

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani

Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)

Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Iran

Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)

Email: fsharafi@bia-judiciary.ir (In the subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

int_aff@judiciary.ir (In the subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

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 29 July 2008