

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 31/006/2008
12 September 2008

UA 256/08 Fear of forcible return/possible POCs

YEMEN Zia'ullah Pourahmari (m)]
 Keyvan Qadari (m)] Iranian nationals
 Behrooz Rohani (m)]
 Sayfi Ibrahim Sayfi (m), Iraqi national

According to a trusted source in Yemen, the four men named above are at imminent risk of being forcibly returned to Iran and Iraq, where they would be at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. All of them are members of the Baha'i faith, and may have been detained solely because of this; if this is the case, they are prisoners of conscience. According to the source, they are held at the Criminal Investigation prison in the capital, Sana'a.

Iranian nationals Zia'ullah Pourahmari, Keyvan Qadari and Behrooz Rohani were arrested on 20 June at Zia'ullah Pourahmari's house in Sana'a. The fourth man, Iraqi national Sayfi Ibrahim Sayfi, who has sought asylum in Yemen, was arrested in the early hours of 21 June at his home in Sana'a.

On 2 September Amnesty International wrote to Yemeni Minister of Interior Mutaher Rashad al Masri urging him to intervene immediately to prevent the men from being forcibly returned to Iraq and Iran, and to release them immediately and unconditionally if they were held solely on the grounds of the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of religion. The minister has not responded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Baha'i faith was founded in Iran in the middle of the 19th century and has since spread around the world. The religion is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution, which recognizes only Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. The 300,000-strong Baha'i community has been systematically harassed and persecuted since the Islamic Republic of Iran was founded in 1979. Dozens of Baha'is have been arbitrarily detained every year, and some of the detainees have been tortured. They, along with adherents of other unrecognized religions in Iran, are denied the freedom to practise their beliefs and face discrimination, particularly in access to education and employment, as well as other violations of their internationally recognized human rights.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on states to immediately cease all forcible returns to any part of Iraq. Any return should only take place when the situation in the whole of Iraq has stabilized in a stable and durable peace.

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

- calling on the authorities to abide by their international obligations and ensure that the four men (naming them) are not forcibly sent to Iran or Iraq, either directly or through another country, where they might be at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture;
- calling on the authorities to allow the men the opportunity to challenge any decision on their expulsion;
- calling on them to release the men immediately and unconditionally if they are detained solely on account of their religious beliefs;

- seeking assurances that they are being treated humanely and given regular access to their families, lawyers of their own choosing, and any medical attention they may require.

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency General 'Ali 'Abdullah Saleh
President of the Republic of Yemen
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 127 4147

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Interior

His Excellency **Mutaher Rashad al Masri**
Ministry of Interior
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 133 2511

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Human Rights

Her Excellency Houda 'Ali 'Abdullatif al-Baan
Ministry for Human Rights
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Faxes: + 967 1 444 838

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

His Excellency Dr Ghazi Shaif Al-Aghbari
Ministry of Justice
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 1 222 015

Salutation: Your Excellency

Attorney General

His Excellency 'Abdullah al-'Ulufi
Office of Attorney General
Sana'a, Republic of Yemen

Fax: + 967 137 4412

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Yemen accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 October 2008.