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PUBLIC STATEMENT

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO KILLINGS

Amnesty International has been alarmed by the recent killings of two prominent government critics -- as well as by other recent events -- in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The human rights organization calls upon the Iranian authorities to undertake immediate, independent investigations into these events, in accordance with United Nations 'Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal Arbitrary and Summary Executions', and to make public the findings of any such investigations. Attacks against critics of the government within Iran have rarely been subject to impartial and open investigation in the past.

Amnesty International has been dismayed by the killings of Dariyush Foruhar, a prominent critic of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and his wife, Parvaneh Foruhar, at their home in Tehran on 22 November 1998.

Dariyush Foruhar, who served as Minister of Labour in the Provisional Government of Mehdi Bazargan in 1979, was the leader of the Iran Nation Party (*Hezb-e Mellat-e Iran*), a banned but tolerated opposition group. Parvaneh Foruhar was also a prominent opposition activist. Unlike many opposition figures, Dariush Foruhar remained in Iran following the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and often criticised the authorities, especially on human rights issues.

Although it is unclear at present who was responsible for the killings, described by President Mohammad Khatami as a "repulsive crime", and although the Interior Minister Abdolvahed Musavi-Lari has stated that "the government is determined to get to the root of the matter and deal with the culprits whoever they may be or whatever their position", associates of Dariyush Foruhar have expressed their belief that the killings may have been politically motivated.

In a separate incident, the body of Majid Sharif, a translator and journalist, was identified in a Tehran mortuary on 24 November 1998 by one of his brothers, who had been summoned by officials. The coroner's report cited "heart failure" as the cause of death.

Majid Sharif had left home on 20 November 1998, having told his family that he planned to travel to the city of Mashhad to attend the funeral of a prominent cleric. His family became concerned when he failed to return. Majid Sharif formerly contributed to the journal *Iran-e Farda*, which was banned earlier this year and reportedly wrote articles advocating the separation of state and religion. According to other reports he had been questioned on several occasions by officials of the Ministry of Information in connection with his political views.

Amnesty International has also received unconfirmed reports suggesting that the mother of Pirouz Davani, another critic of the Iranian government who went missing in August 1998, was

recently contacted by unnamed persons who told her that her son had been killed. She reportedly suffered a fatal heart attack as a result of this news. Amnesty International has written to the Iranian government asking for clarification of the status of Pirouz Davani. To date, Amnesty International has received no reply to this request.

The organization is also concerned by reports that Dr. Sayed 'Ali Asghar Gharavi, a member of the unofficial Iran Freedom Movement (*Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran*), was arrested in the city of Esfahan on the basis of a warrant reportedly issued by the Special Court for the Clergy (*Dadgah-e Vizhe-ye Ruhaniyat*), the proceedings of which fall short of minimum international standards for fair trial. On the same day another member of the Iran Freedom Movement, 'Ali Ghofrani, was reportedly arrested in the town of Na'in, near Esfahan.

It remains unclear whether 'Ali Asghar Gharavi and 'Ali Ghofrani have as yet been formally charged with any recognized criminal offence. Amnesty International calls upon the Iranian authorities to release them if their detention is solely a result of the non-violent expression of their political beliefs.

Amnesty International is concerned that recent events may represent a trend towards targeting of opposition figures. While not seeking to apportion blame, the organization would remind the Iranian authorities of their duty to ensure the protection of the lives of all citizens of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party. Article 6 of the ICCPR states: "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life."

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