

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/056/2005

13 September 2005

Further Information on UA 164/05 (MDE 13/025/2005, 14 June 2005) and follow-ups (MDE 13/034/2005, 14 July 2005; MDE 13/037/2005, 19 July 2005; MDE 13/044/2005, 23 August 2005) - Medical concern/Prisoner of conscience/Incommunicado detention

IRAN Akbar Ganji (m), aged 46, journalist

Prisoner of conscience Akbar Ganji was reportedly sent back from hospital to Evin prison on 3 September, to serve the remainder of his six-year sentence. He had only recently ended a two-month hunger strike, and was in very poor health. He is not known to have met with his lawyer; his family have not been allowed to see him, and they fear that he may be in solitary confinement, where he might not be receiving adequate medical treatment. He is still demanding that the authorities release him unconditionally.

His wife, Massoumeh Shafii, has reportedly not been allowed to visit him since 26 August. On 11 September the news agency Reuters quoted her as saying, "I'm sure he's in solitary again otherwise we'd have heard from him... I'm concerned about his condition... his health is not good enough for him to be in solitary confinement again." She apparently also said that she had written to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asking him to try to secure Akbar Ganji's release. On 19 August, Kofi Annan had reportedly written to the new President, Dr Ahmadinejad, asking him to free Akbar Ganji on humanitarian grounds.

Akbar Ganji began a hunger strike on 11 June in protest at being denied access to medical care for chronic asthma, despite specialist recommendation that he be treated outside prison. On 17 July he was rushed to the Milad hospital. He ended his hunger strike in mid-August after nearly 70 days. He had reportedly lost over 30kg, and had been moved to an intensive care unit a week before he resumed eating.

Akbar Ganji was arrested in April 2000, together with 17 other Iranian journalists and intellectuals who had taken part in a cultural conference in Berlin. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, which was reduced on appeal to six months, for "taking part in an attempt against national security" and "propaganda against the Islamic system" (For details see EXTRA 43/00, MDE 13/07/00, 25 April 2000, and follow-ups). In July 2001 he was tried on charges of "collecting confidential state documents to jeopardize state security" and "spreading propaganda", and was sentenced to six years' imprisonment. In 2000 he wrote a series of articles, which were later published as a book, in which he implicated several high-ranking officials in the 1998 murders of several prominent writers and political activists, in what became known as the "serial murders" case. Among those implicated by the articles was the former President, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

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

- calling for Akbar Ganji to be granted regular access to his family and confidential meetings with his lawyer;
- seeking assurances that Akbar Ganji is given immediate access to any medical treatment he may require;
- urging the authorities to end the practice of solitary confinement, in line with the recommendations made by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention following its visit to Iran in February 2003, which noted that "such 'imprisonment within imprisonment' is arbitrary in nature and must be ended";
- calling for Akbar Ganji to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his beliefs.

APPEALS TO: (It may be difficult to get through to Iranian fax numbers, but please keep trying)

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 649 5880 (please mark 'For the attention of the Office of His Excellency,
Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei)
Email: info@wilayah.org
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: irjpr@iranjudiciary.org (mark 'Please forward to HE Ayatollah Shahroudi')
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Speaker of Parliament

Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami (Parliament)
Imam Khomeini Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 646 1746

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 25 October 2005.