

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/059/2005

23 September 2005

UA 252/05      Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture or ill-treatment

IRAN            **Hamid Qate'Pour (m), teacher**  
**Emad Rafi'i (m), teacher**  
**Mohammad Hezbawi (also known as Hezbaee Zadeh) (m), newspaper editor**

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Hamid Qate'Pour, Emad Rafi'i and Mohammad Hezbawi (also known as Hezbaee Zadeh), members of Iran's Arab minority, have all reportedly been detained in or around the city of Ahvaz, southwestern Iran. They are being held incommunicado at unknown locations and are reportedly at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Emad Rafi'i, a teacher, was arrested on 10 August. Hamid Qate'Pour, also a teacher, was arrested around 17 September in Area 2 of Ahvaz city. Mohammad Hezbawi, the editor of *Hamsayeha*, a regional newspaper, was arrested on 18 September. The three are not known to have been charged with any offence.

Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Since then, hundreds of Iranian Arabs have been detained (See, for example, UA 91/05, MDE 13/014/2005, 18 April 2005 and UA 222/05, MDE 13/048/2005, 26 August 2005). In the last few weeks alone, approximately 250 people have been arrested. Those detained include prominent journalists, lawyers, tribal leaders, students and human rights activists.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Arab community mainly lives in the Khuzestan region, which borders Iraq. It is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves. The Arab population do not feel they have benefited as much from the oil revenue as the Persian population; historically they have been marginalised and discriminated against, for instance being denied the right to an education in their own language.

In a media interview on 9 August 2005, UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Miloon Kothari noted that hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of the area around Ahvaz are being displaced from their villages in order to establish large-scale government development projects in the area. They are often granted only limited access to basic services such as clean water, sanitation, gas and electricity, as well as inferior housing and land rights.

Additionally, the government is building new towns in the Khuzestan region and is bringing in new people from other provinces to live and work there. Miloon Kothari cited the example of the town of Shirinshah, where most of the people are arriving from the Yazd province and are of non-Arab descent.

On 14 August, the Iranian government reportedly accused the UK and the USA of instigating the recent ethnic clashes involving the Arab and Kurdish minorities in the country.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Hamid Qate'Pour, Emad Rafi'i and Mohammad Hezbawi, who are reportedly held in incommunicado detention and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to reveal where they are detained, and release them immediately, unless they are promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence;

- calling for them to be given immediate access to lawyers, their family, interpreters and medical treatment if necessary;
- seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- reminding the authorities that confessions extracted under duress are prohibited by Article 38 of the constitution of Iran, which says that "All forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information are forbidden," and that Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), of which Article 7 states that "No one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment."

**APPEALS TO:**

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](mailto: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](mailto:irjpr@iranjudiciary.org) (mark 'Please forward to His Excellency 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 4 November 2005.