

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE BAILED IN IRAN

Abdolfattah Soltani, a male lawyer and member of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), has been released on bail.

Abdolfattah Soltani was released on bail (amounting to just over US\$101,000, taken in the form of property deeds) on 26 August 2009. He had been held in Evin Prison and had been granted at least one meeting with his family, along with several telephone calls with them, during his detention. On release he was said to be in reasonable health.

Abdolfattah Soltani had been arrested on 16 June, at his office in central Tehran, in the aftermath of the disputed 12 June presidential election in Iran.

On 21 August 2009, in an open letter to the Head of Judiciary, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, Abdolfattah Soltani's wife appealed to the judiciary to act impartially and independently and to release Abdolfattah Soltani. Press reports on 22 August stated that officials from the prosecutor's office had entered his solitary cell and threatened him with a long imprisonment unless he severed his links with the CHRD and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, one of its co-founders, and stopped giving interviews about the cases he was working on.

The CHRD, which Shirin Ebadi and many other leading human rights activists founded in 2002, was forcibly closed in December 2008 shortly before the centre was to hold an event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The CHRD, whose members continue to work under the name of the centre, has three stated roles: reporting violations of human rights in Iran; providing free legal representation to political prisoners; and supporting the families of political prisoners.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to drop charges against Abdolfattah Soltani and other human rights defenders that criminalize their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
- Calling for an end to the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders in Iran, including members of the Centre for Human Rights Defenders (CHRD);
- Urging the authorities to facilitate the reopening of the CHRD and to allow its legal registration.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 08 October 2009 TO:

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: via website:
<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter>
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeqh Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: via website: (put given name in first starred box, family name in second starred box, and email address in third.
Paste appeal in large box)
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of the Interior
Sadegh Mahsouli
Ministry of the Interior
Dr Fatemi Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 8 896 203
+98 21 8 899 547
+98 21 6 650 203
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 160/09. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/059/2009/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdolfattah Soltani was previously arrested in 2005 and spent 219 days in detention, of which 43 were in solitary confinement. In 2006 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for "disclosing confidential documents", for which he received a sentence of four years; and one year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system". On 28 May 2007, he was acquitted of all charges brought against him.

Abdolfattah Soltani wanted to stand for election to the Central Bar Association's Board in 2008, but his candidacy was rejected on grounds of "unsuitability".

Subsequently he has been banned from travelling outside Iran. He has been awarded a human rights prize by the city of Nuremberg in Germany. It remains to be seen whether he will be free, let alone allowed to travel, to collect this award in person in October 2009.

In the days following the 13 June 2009 announcement that incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won the presidential election, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took part in mass and generally peaceful demonstrations throughout the country, disputing the election results. The authorities quickly imposed sweeping restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly and telecommunication and internet systems were severely disrupted. Iranian publications were banned from publishing information about the nationwide unrest and foreign journalists were banned from the streets, their visas not renewed and others arrested or expelled from the country.

In response to the mass protests, security forces, notably the paramilitary Basij, were widely deployed and around 4,000 arrested in the three to four weeks following the 12 June 2009 election, including prominent political figures close to either presidential candidates Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, or former President Khatami, who supported Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign. Some human rights defenders and journalists were also detained. They have been denied access to legal representation, but have generally been able to meet family members.

Security forces used excessive and lethal force against demonstrators, leading to the death of tens of protestors and the injuring of hundreds more. At least tens of others were killed and injured as a result of being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during the demonstrations themselves or later, in the custody of the security forces.

Mass trials of hundreds starting on 4 August 2009 were grossly unfair, as was one held on 25 August. Detainees were filmed "confessing" to vaguely worded charges, which are often not recognizably criminal offences, and some of these "confessions" were aired on TV, often before their trials took place. Evidence obtained through duress was accepted by the court. Some of those on trial could face the death penalty.

Iranian officials have confirmed the allegations of torture and other mistreatment of those detained after the post-election protests and that abuses took place in at least one detention centre, Kahrizak, a centre outside of Tehran. On 29 July, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered its closure and the head of a detention facility and three guards, thought to have worked at the Kahrizak detention centre, were reportedly dismissed and possibly detained.

Amnesty International has received reports consistent with a statement made by Mehdi Karroubi, one of the four candidates in the 12 June 2009 presidential election. He is reported to have complained that both women and male detainees have been tortured, including by rape, by security officials.

Further information on UA: 160/09 Index: MDE 13/090/2009 Issue Date: 26 August 2009

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