

URGENT ACTION

STUDENT ACTIVIST ON TRIAL

Mohammad Pour Abdollah, a male student arrested in February in Iran's capital, Tehran, is now on trial, apparently on charges related to national security for his activities in an Iranian student organization. He is still detained in Qezel Hesar Prison near Tehran and is likely to be a prisoner of conscience. Two other members of the same organization arrested in March have been released.

Mohammad Pour Abdollah's trial, believed to be on charges of "gathering and colluding with the aim of harming national security, propaganda against the system and membership of groups opposed to the system" finally began on 12 October after having been postponed on at least three occasions. No verdict has yet been passed. The charges apparently relate to his previous arrest after a student demonstration in Tehran in December 2007, and other charges possibly relating to articles he posted on his blog after his release.

Mohammad Pour Abdollah is a member of the left-wing Iranian students' organization Students for Freedom and Equality. Two other members of the same group, arrested on 1 March by security forces apparently seeking male student activist Amin Ghaza'i, have since been released: **Maryam Sheikh** was released on bail of 500 million rials (US\$50,000) after seven days, while Amin Ghaza'i's wife **Nasim Roshana'i** (also known as Somayeh) was released after eight days, also on bail of 500 million rials. Another female member of the student group, Sanaz Allahyari, who was detained for just over two weeks, was sentenced in August to one year's imprisonment, suspended for five years, for participating in an illegal student demonstration on 23 February.

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

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammad Pour Abdollah if, as appears to be the case, he is held solely for the peaceful expression of his right to freedom of expression and association;
- Calling for him to be protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Urging the authorities to review the suspended sentence of Sanaz Allahyari, as if detained she would be a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful expression of her right to freedom of assembly, and to drop any charges against other members of Students for Freedom and Equality related solely to the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St.
Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhour
Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: Via website:
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.aspx>
1st starred box: your given name; 2nd starred box: your family name; 3rd: your email address
Salutation: Your Excellency

Leader of the Islamic Republic

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

And copies to:

Speaker of Parliament
His Excellency Ali Larijani
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Baharestan Square
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3355 6408

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 second update of UA 60/09 (MDE 13/016/2009). Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/016/2009/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/028/2009/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students for Freedom and Equality is a left-wing student organization that was established around 2006 with objectives including the establishment of a nationwide students' network and an end to a military presence in Iranian universities. It was involved in organizing peaceful demonstrations in December 2007, following which around 70 people were arrested, the majority of whom were members of Students for Freedom and Equality (see UA 331/07 and follow ups). Several were tortured during their detention. For example, one student had his ribs and several of his teeth broken when he refused to be filmed "confessing" to having links with exile groups and attempting to destabilize the country. Another student lost the hearing in his left ear after a hard object was inserted into it and was so traumatized by his torture that he attempted suicide.

At least seven members were arrested in February and March 2009, including those named in this action. Another of those arrested, Ali Reza Davoudi, a 26-year-old man, was arrested on 12 February in Esfahan and was released on bail on 25 April. He was tortured during his detention, including with cigarette burns and beatings. He also told his family he had been suspended from the ceiling for three days. He became depressed following his release and was hospitalized in Esfahan in July. His health improved, but when his aunt called the hospital on 8 August to arrange his discharge, she was told he had died. His family believe his death is suspicious. They were also warned by officials not to publicize his funeral.

The student demonstration on 23 February was held to protest against the burial of unknown soldiers on the campus of a Tehran university, which was widely viewed as a move by the government to seek to control student groups opposed to its policies. Burial of soldiers, called martyrs on account of their sacrifice in fighting against Iraqi forces, appears to enable non-students to enter the campus without being required to show evidence that they are students, a normal requirement for access to university premises. Student groups fear that the presence of the graves would allow unrestricted access to the campuses by security forces, including the volunteer Basij militia who are under the control of the Revolutionary Guards and who have been responsible for human rights violations over many years. Students believe such access would lead to further restrictions on debates and discussions relating to government policy.

Others from Students for Freedom and Equality were arrested during the unrest following the disputed Iranian presidential election in June. Female student Bita Samimizad was arrested in the street in Tehran and released after two weeks and is due to stand trial in October. A male journalist and student at Mayboud University, Amir Mohsen Mohammadi, was arrested in Esfahan on 15 June after being summoned by Intelligence Ministry officials. According to Human Rights Activists in Iran, an Iranian human rights group, he was accused of organizing the election unrest, and was released on bail on 16 August. He had previously been arrested in Esfahan on 6 October 2008 and held for about 12 days. Mohammad Sayyadi, a student at the Bou Ali Sina University in Hamedan, was detained on 25 June 2009. He had previously been detained for three days in September 2008, when he was held in a Ministry of Intelligence detention centre where he was ill-treated. Released on bail, he was tried in December 2008, without a lawyer, and sentenced in January 2009 to six-and-a-half years in prison, on charges including "illegal formation and direction of a group for the purpose of overthrowing the system", "propaganda against the system", and "insulting Ayatollah Khomeini" (Articles 498, 500 and 514 of the Penal Code). The sentence was reduced on appeal to two years. He is believed to be held in Alvand Prison in Hamedan, although it is not clear to Amnesty International whether he is serving his prison sentence, or is facing new charges.

Further information on UA: 60/09 Index: MDE 13/108/2009 Issue Date: 21 October 2009

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