

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/Torture and ill-treatment

21 January 2004

IRAN

Ensafali Hedayat (m), freelance journalist

Freelance journalist Ensafali Hedayat, who has written for a number of overseas newspapers, was arrested on 17 January. He had recently returned from reporting on a conference in Berlin, organised by a group which supports the establishment of a democratic and secular republic in Iran. Amnesty International fears for his safety, and believes that he may be may be tortured or ill-treated while in detention.

Three officials from the Ministry of Intelligence reportedly arrived at his house in Tabriz at 9am, and searched the premises thoroughly. They removed his computer and CD-ROM, and then arrested him. At 5pm, Ensafali Hedayat reportedly called his house and told his wife that "he could not reach an understanding with the Ministry of Intelligence and would remain in detention". His daughter later told Amnesty International that he was issued with a temporary detention order, which was renewed indefinitely the same day. His family appointed a lawyer, who was able to visit him on 17 January, but has not been allowed to see him since. His family do not know where he is being held.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ensafali Hedayat attended the founding conference of the Etehad-e Jomhuri Khahan-e Iran (known in English as 'Unity for Democracy and Secular Republic in Iran'), which took place in Berlin on 8-10 January. The organisation supports the principles of a pluralistic republic, parliamentary democracy, the separation of religion and state, and a non-violent approach to establish a new system of government in Iran that adheres to equal rights for all based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These principles form the organisation's 'Ten articles of the Unity', accessible online at:

<http://jomhuri.com/plus>

Up to 800 delegates, representing a range of political views, took part in the conference, which sought to establish a peaceful alternative political structure, in opposition to the current government of Iran.

According to a 19 January statement by the NGO Reporters Without Borders, Ensafali Hedayat had previously been arrested on 16 June 2003, at the University of Tabriz, where he was covering student demonstrations. Accused of inciting the students to revolt, he spent more than 20 days in solitary confinement. After his release on 14 July, he wrote a letter to President Khatami in which he spoke out against his prison conditions and against torture practised by the security forces.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Ensafali Hedayat, and seeking assurances that he is not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- asking where Ensafali Hedayat is now held;
- calling on the authorities release him immediately, or else charge him with a recognizably criminal offence;
- 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

Telegram: His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed >Ali Khamenei, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Tehran

E-mail: webmaster@wilayah.org (address may be unreliable; please try to resend if returned; on the subject line write: For the attention of the office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei, Qom)

Salutation: Your Excellency

President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegram: His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

E-mail: khatami@president.ir (please resend your message if it does not get through the first time)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegram: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 879 6671 (please keep trying; please mark "care of Director of International Affairs, Judiciary")

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Islamic Human Rights Commission

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far

Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Commission

PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 204 0541

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 3 March 2004.