

PUBLIC

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5 November 2003

UA 318/03 "Disappearance"/ fear for safety/ fear of forcible return

TURKEY Hojjat Zamani (m), aged 27, Iranian national
 Massoud Moqtadari (m), Iranian national

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Iranian nationals Hojjat Zamani and Massoud Moqtadari, who were reportedly detained by police officers in Istanbul on 3 August. Massoud Moqtadari was released shortly afterwards, but the whereabouts of Hojjat Zamani are unknown. It is feared that he may have been, or may be facing forcible return to Iran, where he could be at risk of serious human rights abuses, including torture or ill-treatment.

Hojjat Zamani and Massoud Moqtadari were reportedly arrested arbitrarily by plainclothes policemen near Taksim square in Beyoglu, a district of central Istanbul, and taken away in separate unmarked cars. Massoud Moqtadari reported that his head was held down and that he could not see where he was taken, but that after a twenty-minute journey they arrived at an unknown building and were placed in separate cells. This was the last time Massoud Moqtadari saw Hojjat Zamani.

Massoud Moqtadari was reportedly questioned by police officers, including about his relationship with Hojjat Zamani. He was allegedly released on 5 August due to the minimal knowledge he had about Hojjat Zamani. He provided an account of his arrest with Hojjat Zamani to an Istanbul lawyer, Ercan Kanar, and to representatives of the Istanbul branch of the *Insan Haklari Dernegi* (IHD), Human Rights Association, on 17 October. There are fears for the safety of Massoud Moqtadari as it is believed he may face reprisals for reporting his experiences to Ercan Kanar and the IHD.

Ercan Kanar and the IHD have made inquiries about Hojjat Zamani's whereabouts to the public prosecutor in Beyoglu and to the Istanbul police headquarters. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also made efforts to discover whether Hojjat Zamani was recorded as being in police custody. The relevant Turkish authorities have, however, denied that a man by the name of Hojjat Zamani was ever registered as being in police detention and state that they have no knowledge of his current whereabouts.

Amnesty International fears that Hojjat Zamani may be at particular risk of human rights abuses if returned to Iran due to his affiliation with the Iranian armed opposition group, the People's Mojahedin of Iran (PMOI).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Iraq-based PMOI is an armed opposition group opposed to the government of Iran. It is a banned organization in a wide range of countries. Amnesty International continues to receive reports of human rights violations carried out by the PMOI against its own members. However, Amnesty International opposes the forced return to Iran of all those who may face human rights violations.

The reported detention and "disappearance" of Hojjat Zamani comes in the context of moves in a number of countries to forcibly return Iranian asylum seekers to Iran. Two Iranian refugees, Ebrahim Khodabandeh and Jamil Bassam, were reportedly forcibly returned to Iran by the Syrian authorities on 12 June (see UA 171/03, MDE 13/013/2003, 17 June 2003 and follow-ups).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Iranian national Hojjat Zamani, who was reportedly arrested by plainclothes police officers in Istanbul on 3 August, and who has not been seen since;
- urging the authorities to provide access to legal counsel and, if required, medical care on behalf of Hojjat Zamani if he is found to be detained in Turkey;
- expressing concern for the safety of Massoud Moqtadari, also an Iranian national who was arrested with Hojjat Zamani, and asking the authorities what measures they are taking, in accordance with the wishes of Massoud Moqtadari himself, to ensure his safety;
- urging the authorities to make public the whereabouts of Hojjat Zamani immediately, and to inform the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of his whereabouts and status without delay;
- expressing concern that Hojjat Zamani may face forced returned to Iran, where he would be at risk of torture, ill-treatment or other human rights abuses, and calling on the authorities to ensure that Hojjat Zamani is not returned to Iran, either directly or indirectly;

APPEALS TO:

Minister of the Interior

Mr Abdulkadir Aksu
 Ministry of Interior
 Icisleri Bakanligi
 06644 Ankara, Turkey

Telegram: Interior Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Fax: + 90 312 418 17 95

Salutation: Dear Minister

Foreign Minister and State Minister with responsibility for Human Rights

Mr Abdullah Gül,
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 Icisleri Bakanligi
 06100 Ankara, Turkey

Telegram: Foreign Minister, Ankara, Turkey

Fax: + 90 312 287 15 81

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Turkey accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 December 2003.