

Amnesty International & Reporters Sans Frontieres

Public Statement

16 July 2010

AI Index: MDE 13/079/2010

IRAN - Health of prisoners of conscience at Iranian government's mercy

Many journalists and other prisoners of conscience still detained despite being seriously ill

A year after the launch of a major crackdown in response to the demonstrations that followed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection, more than 100 political prisoners are still being held in Iranian jails in inhuman and degrading conditions. Their most basic rights are being violated, starting with the right to adequate medical treatment.

The human rights organisations Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders are outraged by the conditions in which these prisoners are being held. These conditions have had a considerable physical and psychological impact on their health and most of them are ill. The two organisations believe that the purpose of the denial of medical treatment is to put pressure on them and their families.

"We reiterate our condemnation of the arbitrary detention and mistreatment of prisoners of conscience," Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders said. "All those who were arrested solely because of their legitimate media activity or for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly should be freed immediately and unconditionally."

The information obtained from families and from reports often published in the official media confirms that in the past year many prisoners of conscience have had heart attacks or other cardiac problems in different prisons, especially Evin and Raja'i Shahr. The health of some detainees is deteriorating steadily. The prison authorities refuse to allow ailing prisoners to be transferred to hospitals even though they urgently need treatment that can only be given outside a prison and even when the prison doctors themselves recommend it.

"The authorities are responsible for the health and safety of all the persons they detain," Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders said. "They must provide them with access to adequate medical care, outside detention centres if necessary."

The internal regulations of Iran's prisons, issued by the judicial body in charge of managing detention centres, require prison officials to provide detainees with the medical care they need. Articles 102 and 103 of the regulations say that "monthly medical checks are obligatory in the prison clinic" and that "if necessary, the detainee must be transferred urgently from the prison to the hospital." These regulations also say that the judge in charge of the case is responsible for the health and safety of any prisoner with a serious and incurable illness.

According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party, denial of medical treatment can be regarded as violation of the ban on torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights protects the right of all persons to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Furthermore, the UN's minimum rules for the treatment of detainees state that ailing detainees who need special treatment should be transferred to specialised prison facilities or to civilian hospitals.

Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders call for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Iran and urge the Iranian authorities to try the other political prisoners without delay on charges envisaged by the law, without requesting the death penalty and following procedures that fully comply with international standards as regards due process.

Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders urge the Iranian authorities to provide adequate medical treatment as a matter of urgency to the following political prisoners:

Shiva Nazar Ahari, Masoud Bastani Ayatollah Sayed Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi Amir Khosro Dalirsani Rahim Gholami Kouhyar Goudarzi Nader Karimi Jouni Mansour Ossanlu Mohammad Sadegh Kaboudvand Masoud Lavassani Mojtaba Lotfi Mehdi Mahmoudian Said Matinpour Abolfazl Abedini Nasr Hamed Rouhinejad Issa Saharkhiz Ali Saremi Hengameh Shahidi, Behrouz Tavakkoli Majid Tavakkoli Behrouz Javid Tehrani, Ahmad Zaidabadi