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Iran: Allow peaceful commemorations of 18 Tir (9 July) events

Today, the tenth anniversary of the brutal suppression of student-lead protests - known as the events of 18 Tir, from the date in the Persian calendar - Amnesty International urges the Iranian government to ensure that those wishing to commemorate the victims be allowed to do so peacefully. In particular, the organization is calling on the government to refrain from using the Basij militia to police today's demonstrations following their attacks on and killings of demonstrators challenging the disputed official outcome of the last month's presidential election and the history of abuses committed by this unaccountable branch of the security forces.

The 18 Tir events in 1999 were sparked off when students gathered to protest against the judiciary's closure of *Salam* newspaper. Although the protest was peaceful, police fired tear gas at the students and they were attacked by members of a state-sanctioned militia group, Ansar-e Hezbollah, who, along with the police, forced their way into student dormitories in Amir Abad, Tehran, beating and ill-treating students and destroying their property. At least one student was killed.

The attack on the students provoked widespread protests and demonstrations, and hundreds, possibly thousands, were arrested in Tehran and other centres. Most were released within two months, but others were detained for long periods and dozens of students were tortured at Towhid then a Ministry of Intelligence prison, by being beaten, whipped on the feet with metal cables, suspended by their limbs, and in at least one case forcing a detainee's head into a toilet full of excrement causing partial drowning. They were forced to sign "confessions" and at least 14 people were sentenced to prison terms and four to death, although these sentences were all later overturned. One of the four later died in custody in suspicious circumstances.

Reports now emerging from Iran as the government continues to clamp down on protests related to the disputed presidential election on 12 June increasingly echo what occurred in 1999 at Towhid. Students and other demonstrators detained by Iranian security forces are reported to have been taken to the basement of the Interior Ministry in Tehran, tortured, and denied medical treatment. At least 2,000 people have been detained across the country for protesting against the official election result and the authorities have acknowledged that at least 21 have been killed, though the true figure could be considerably higher. Hundreds have been injured. According to some sources,, those detained include people who had sought hospital treatment for injuries caused by the *Basij* and other government forces. The government has announced that demonstrators will be tried before a "special tribunal", though without disclosing what this may be or what procedures it will use, raising concern that many may be sentenced to heavy prison terms and perhaps death on the basis of "confessions" extracted under torture and unfair trials.

Background:

The Iranian date 18 Tir falls in 2009 on 9 July.

For further information see Iran: Stop using Basij militia to police demonstrations, 22 June 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/iran-stop-using-basij-militia-to-police-demonstrations-20090622>

For information on Amnesty International's work relating to post-election unrest in Iran, please see: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/iran-election-unrest>

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

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