

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/072/2008

22 May 2008

Further Information on UA 24/08 (MDE 13/016/2008, 25 January 2008) Fear of torture

**IRAN Jamshid Arazpour (m), ethnic Turkmen from Gomesh Deppeh
Haji Aman Khadivar (m), ethnic Turkmen from Chapaqli, Golestan
82 others**

Jamshid Arazpour and Haji Aman Khadivar, who were among a group of Iranians of Turkmen ethnicity detained in early January 2008, are now known to have been charged with public order offences and tried, although the outcomes of their trials are not known. Meanwhile, reports have emerged that some of those detained, including children, were tortured by security forces.

Between 200 and 300 Iranian Turkmen living in the coastal province of Golestan, near the city of Bandar-e Torkman, were arrested after the killing of an Iranian Turkmen fisherman by maritime security officers on 28 December 2007. The fisherman was one of a group fishing without a license in the Caspian Sea. The killing caused severe and widespread unrest in Turkmen areas around Bandar-e-Torkman. Government buildings and other public and private property was reportedly damaged.

Most of those detained were released without charge in January. Eighty-four people were charged with public order offences and released on bail, amounting to the equivalent of around US\$3,350 for each person. Most of those arrested are thought to be fishermen, labourers and students.

The trials of the 84, including Jamshid Arazpour and Haji Aman Khadivar, were scheduled to start on 6 May. Reports from human rights defenders mention that some of the defendants did not have access to legal assistance. The outcomes of the trials are not yet known.

At least six of those detained in January, students under the age of 15, were held for between seven and 12 days by security forces. According to their testimony, they were repeatedly beaten and kicked, and they were raped with an object. Amnesty International has previously received reports of the practice of male rape by security officials using, for example, glass bottles. The students say that their feet were bound with a wire or filament and they were subjected to electric shocks. One student claimed that the torture left him deaf for several days. Other detainees were kept outside, in sub-zero temperatures, for several hours, and food was denied to some prisoners. The students claim that in order to avoid being tortured, some of the detainees accepted all that was said about their alleged activities, even if they had nothing to do with the unrest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Turkmen of Iran number around 2.2 million (no more than 3% of the population), and speak a Turkic language. They are Sunni Muslim and live in the north-west of the country. They are allowed no education or social services in their mother tongue, though a small number of newspapers are allowed to publish in Turkmen. Turkmen cannot obtain senior positions in even local government, under discriminatory selection policies.

According to a statement made by the Organisation for the Defence of Human Rights in Turkmen Sahra, on or around 8 February, a Turkmen fisherman was injured by gunfire. On or around 5 April, maritime security forces were reported to have seized fishing equipment and other property belonging to Turkmen fishermen in various towns and villages near the Caspian Sea for reasons that are not known.

The parliamentary representative for Bandar-e Torkman, who is himself a Turkmen, has reportedly complained to parliament on three occasions about the killing of the fisherman and the subsequent mass arrests of his constituents. In one of his statements he is reported to have said that, "One cannot tell poor villagers that they should continue to live in hunger."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, English, (or Turkmen or Turkish to the Governor of Golestan) or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that some of those detained in January 2008 following the unrest relating to the killing of a Turkmen fisherman were tortured and that this included children;
- calling for an immediate investigation into reports of torture used against Iranians of Turkmen ethnicity, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice;
- calling on the authorities to review the cases of the 84 reportedly charged with public order offences in connection with the unrest following the killing of the fisherman, to ensure that none of those who were charged were so as a result of the threat of torture; and to ensure that they are tried in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- calling on the authorities to allow all those detained to be granted immediate and regular access to their families and lawyer of their choice and to be granted any medical treatment they may require;

APPEALS TO:

Governor of Golestan province

Governorate of Golestan (Ostandari-ye Ostan-e Golestan)

Gorgan, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: via website: <http://www.golestanstate.ir/layers.aspx?quiz=contact>

Put your name in the top field and your message in the last field. Click the grey box beneath to send.

Salutation: Dear Governor

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader

Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 July 2008.