

PUBLIC

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12 September 2008

UA 258/08 Fear of torture and other ill-treatment/ prisoner of conscience

IRAN Ramtin Soodmand (m), aged 35, has two children

Ramtin Soodmand, a Christian who works for a church in Tehran and with youth groups, was arrested on 20 August. He is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment and is being held in an unknown location. He is a prisoner of conscience and should be released immediately as he has been detained solely for his religious beliefs.

On 17 August, Ramtin Soodmand received a call from Ministry of Intelligence officials. The officials told him to report to the Ministry of Intelligence office in Mashhad, north-east Iran. Ramtin Soodmand told them that he could see no reason why the officials in Mashhad might want to interview him as he lives in Tehran, but eventually he agreed to go.

Ramtin Soodmand has not been seen since he went to the Ministry of Intelligence office in Mashhad on 20 August. Since being detained he has been able to make three short phone calls to his family. On or around 24 August, he made a phone call to his mother, who lives in Mashhad. He then made a second call to both his mother and wife on 31 August. The third call was to his wife on 6 September. On all three occasions, he did not say where he was being held.

His family have visited the Ministry of Intelligence frequently but have been unable to obtain any information on his whereabouts or legal status. The Ministry of Intelligence officials claim that his case is still under investigation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ramtin Soodmand's father, Reverend Hossein Soodmand, was a Muslim who converted to Christianity in the 1960s, and became a Protestant pastor in Mashhad. He was hanged on 3 December 1990 in a prison in Mashhad after being convicted of apostasy; see *Iran: Arrest and execution of a Christian pastor* (Index: MDE 13/030/1990). He was also featured in Amnesty International's Annual Report 1991.

Christianity is a recognized religion in Iran, but evangelical Christians often experience harassment by the authorities. In recent months, since May, there has been an increase in the number of Christians arrested. Most of the arrests have taken place in Bandar Abbas, capital city of the Hormozgan province, Esfahan in central Iran, Sanandaj in north-west Iran and Kermanshah in western Iran.

Article 23 of the Iranian Constitution states: "The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." Under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

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

- expressing concern that Ramtin Soodmand has been detained solely on account of his religious belief and is a prisoner of conscience;

- calling on the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally, or charge him promptly with a recognizably criminal offence and give him a fair trial;
- asking why he has been arrested, what he has been charged with and where he is held;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he is not being tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and that he be provided immediate and regular access to his family, a lawyer and any medical treatment that he may require;
- reminding the authorities that freedom of religious belief is guaranteed by the Iranian Constitution, and by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a party.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Information

Second Negarestan Street

Pasdaran Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: iranprobe@iranprobe.com

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of the Head of the Judiciary

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

COPIES TO:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)

Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: **+98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)**

Email: fsharafi@bia-judiciary.ir (In the subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)

int_aff@judiciary.ir (In the subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)

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 24 October 2008.