

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/170/2008
21 November 2008

Further Information on 271/08 (MDE 13/142/2008, 23 September 2008) Fear for safety/fear of torture or ill treatment / possible prisoners of conscience

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|------|------------------------|---|---|
| IRAN | Maqsoud Ahdi (m) |] | |
| | Mansour Aminian (m) |] | |
| | Dariush Hatemi (m), 29 |] | |
| | Aydin Khaje'i (m), 23 |] | student activists for the cultural rights of Iranian Azerbaijanis |
| | Amir Mardani (m) |] | |
| | Majid Makuyi (m) |] | |
| | Sejjad Radmehr (m) |] | |
| | Feraz Zahtab (m), 23 |] | |

All the student activists named above, except for Dariush Hatemi, were released on bail from Tabriz prison in north-western Iran on 28 October. Dariush Hatemi continues to remain in detention because he was unable to raise the bail of US\$50,000 required for his release. All the student activists have been charged with "establishing and membership of illegal groups in order to disrupt national security" and "propaganda against the state".

According to the Vancouver-based Association for the Defence of Azerbaijani Political Prisoners (ADAPP), the police searched the students' houses after their detention and confiscated their computers, CDs, documents and books. All the students were detained for three months in Tabriz prison, where they were regularly interrogated by Ministry of Intelligence officials. During their detention they were denied family visits although some of the activists were occasionally allowed telephone calls.

None of the activists were allowed their preferred legal representation. According to the ADAPP, family members of the student activists claimed that the students "were tortured during the detention in the Ministry of Intelligence in Tabriz and the authorities subjected them to 24-hour interrogations, sleeplessness, torture and abuses."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iranian Azerbaijanis, who are mainly Shi'a Muslims, are recognized as the largest minority in Iran and are generally believed to constitute between 25-30 per cent of the population. They are located mainly in the north and north-west of Iran. Although generally well integrated into society, in recent years they have increasingly called for greater cultural and linguistic rights, such as the right to education through the medium of the Azerbaijani Turkic language, which they believe is provided for under the Constitution, and the right to celebrate Azerbaijani culture and history at cultural events.

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

- welcoming the release on bail of Maqsoud Ahdi, Mansour Aminian, Aydin Khaje'i, Amir Mardani, Majid Makuyi, Sejjad Radmehr and Feraz Zahtab;
- expressing concern that the charges brought against the seven, as well as against fellow student activist Dariush Hatemi, who remains in detention, relate solely to their peaceful expression of their right to freedom of expression and assembly and urging the authorities, if this is the case, to release Dariush Hatemi immediately and unconditionally and to drop the charges against all eight;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Dariush Hatemi is protected from torture or other ill-treatment;

- call for the authorities to allow Dariush Hatemi immediate and regular access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, and to any medical treatment he may require.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Avenue, south of Serah-e Jomhouri
Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency
Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: **+ 98 21 6 649 5880**

Email: **via website:** <http://www.president.ir/email/>

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 Avenue, south of Serah-e Jomhouri
Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

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

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

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 02 January 2009