

UA 176/07 Prisoner of Conscience/Medical concernIRAN Mahmoud Salehi (m), trade union activist

Trade union activist Mahmoud Salehi, who has been imprisoned since 9 April, is seriously ill and is allegedly not receiving the specialist medical treatment that he requires. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association in connection with the 2004 May Day demonstration, and with his peaceful trade union activities.

Mahmoud Salehi is the Spokesperson for the Organisational Committee to Establish Trade Unions, former President of the Saez Bakery Workers' Association, and co-founder of the Coordinating Committee to Form Workers' Organisations. He was arrested after a peaceful demonstration to celebrate May Day 2004 along with six other trade union activists. They were all later released on bail that same month. In November 2005 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and three years' internal exile in the city of Ghorveh, in the north western province of Kordestan. At his trial, the prosecutor reportedly cited his trade union activities as evidence against him, and referred to a meeting he had held with officials from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in April 2004, shortly before the May Day demonstrations. His conviction was overturned on appeal, but after a retrial he was sentenced on 11 November 2006 to four years' imprisonment by Saez Revolutionary Court for "conspiring to commit crimes against national security" under article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code. Following an appeal, whose last hearing took place on 11 March, this was reduced to one year's imprisonment, and a three-year suspended prison sentence.

Mahmoud Salehi was arrested on 9 April 2007. His son, in a letter carried on the website of the Iranian Workers' Solidarity Network, described his father's arrest:

"One of the officers of the Saez security force went to where Mahmoud Salehi (my father) works and told my father that the Governor and the Prosecutor would like to talk to him about this year's May Day ceremonies. My father ..went to courthouse with this officer. Immediately after he entered the courthouse my father realised that this had nothing to do with the issue of [this year's] May Day! Instead this was about the May Day celebration of 2004 and the four-year sentence passed against him. Recently the appeal court changed the sentence to one year in custody and three years suspended, which the legal authorities are, in an illegal way, trying to implement. The legal authorities, despite my father and mother's protests, and my father's refusal to sign the summons and without paying any attention to his appeals and protests, immediately used severe security measures. Several officers surrounded him and bundled him into a car. The car carrying my father was escorted by several police vehicles and ..left town for an undisclosed destination. My father is the first person who has had his sentence carried out in this way and transferred to prison immediately. The summons is supposed to have been given to him beforehand so that he could prepare himself for it."

Mahmoud Salehi has only one kidney, is reported to be suffering from kidney stones, and is said to require dialysis treatment. A letter from his doctor, stating that Mahmoud Salehi requires treatment outside prison, was apparently delivered to prison officials on 15 May. His lawyer announced on 8 June that Mahmoud Salehi had begun a hunger strike in protest at his detention in Sanandaj Prison, which is 400km from where his family live. Amnesty International does not know whether he is continuing his hunger strike, but he is reported also to be suffering from heart and intestinal problems. On 17 June, he was reportedly taken to Towhid Hospital in Sanandaj, but was afterwards returned to prison.

Mahmoud Salehi has been denied visits from his lawyer and family; his family have been able to contact him by telephone.

He has been arrested several times before now. Amnesty International took action on his behalf in 2000 (see Medical Writing Action: Ill-health Mahmoud Salehi, AI Index: MDE 13/30/00).

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

- expressing concern at reports that trade union activist Mahmoud Salehi is seriously ill in detention in Sanandaj prison, and calling for him to be granted all necessary medical treatment, if necessary in specialist medical facilities outside the prison where he is held;

- calling for him to be granted regular access to his family and his lawyer.

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mahmoud Salehi as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association in connection with the 2004 May Day demonstration, and with his peaceful trade union activities.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

istiftaa@wilayah.org

Fax: +98 251 774 2228 (mark FAO Office of His Excellency Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Governor of Kordestan

Esmail Najjar

Email: In Persian and Kurdish via the feedback form on the Persian part of the website:

http://www.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?tabId=150&cv=4@0_1

In other languages, use the feedback form on the English part of the website:

<http://en.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?TabID=59>

Salutation: Dear Governor

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 17 August 2007.*****