

PUBLIC

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**Fear of torture and ill-treatment/ incommunicado detention**

IRAN

Reza Haidari (m), aged 11  
Kazem Sayahi (m), aged 14  
Hashem Jassem Sawari (m), aged 18  
Hadi Washahi (m), aged 17  
Said Manabi (m), aged 20  
Saleh 'Abidawi (m), imam  
Sheikh Saleh al-Haydari (m), imam of Da'ira mosque  
and scores of others

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The seven people named above and scores of others, all members of Iran's Arab minority, were reportedly arrested in the city of Ahvaz in Khuzestan province on 11 and 12 January. They may be held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The arrests took place after clashes in Ahvaz between Iranian security forces and members of the Arab Ahwazi community. The clashes followed an initially peaceful demonstration which took place on the Muslim festival of *'Id al-Adha* on 11 January, led by Sheikh Saleh al-Haydari, *imam* (prayer leader) of Da'ira mosque in Ahvaz. Demonstrators were reportedly demanding an end to the persecution of Arabs, poverty and unemployment among Arabs, and the release of political prisoners arrested following unrest in Khuzestan province which began in April 2005. The next day, scores more arrests followed in the city of Hamidiya, after a demonstration against the arrests which had taken place on *'Id al-Adha*, the previous day. According to reports, at least three men were killed during the clashes between 11 and 12 January by the security forces in the Khuzestan region and around 40 others wounded.

According to press reports, Sheikh Saleh al-Haydari has been on hunger strike since 25 January in protest at his detention. The authorities have reportedly accused him of threatening national security. Another *imam*, Saleh 'Abidawi, and three boys under the age of 18 are also among those believed to be in detention.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Iran's Arab community live mainly in the Khuzestan region, which borders Iraq. It is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves, but the Arab population does not feel it has benefited as much from the oil revenue as the Persian population. Historically the Arab community has been marginalised and discriminated against. Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April 2005, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Hundreds have been arrested and there have been reports of torture. Some have been sentenced to death. Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz in October, which killed six people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October, the cycle of violence in Khuzestan province intensified, leading to reports of scores of arrests and at least two deaths while demonstrations were broken up. Further bombs exploded on 24 January, killing six people.

Iran is a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which states: "No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time." The CRC also states that "every child deprived of liberty shall be treated... in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age [and] shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances."

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the seven people named above and scores of others who may be held incommunicado, and seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately, unless they are promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling for them to be given immediate access to lawyers, their family, interpreters and any necessary medical treatment;
- reminding the authorities that confessions extracted under duress are prohibited by Article 38 of the constitution of Iran, which says that "All forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information are forbidden," and that Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), of which Article 7 states that "No one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment";
- expressing concern at reports that the detainees include three boys under the age of 18, and reminding the authorities of their obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- calling on the authorities to set up an independent commission of inquiry to investigate both the unrest and the methods used to police the demonstrations;
- urging the security forces to urgently implement the standards set out in the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, in particular Principle 4, which requires the authorities to use non-violent policing methods before resorting to firearms, and Principle 9, which limits the use of firearms to specific cases of self-defence.

**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

**Fax: + 98 251 7 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")**

**Email: [info@leader.ir](mailto:info@leader.ir) OR [istiftaa@wilayah.org](mailto:istiftaa@wilayah.org)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

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

**Email: [irjpr@iranjudiciary.org](mailto:irjpr@iranjudiciary.org) (mark "Please forward to His Excellency Ayatollah Shahroudi")**

**OR via the judiciary website: [www.iranjudiciary.org/feedback\\_en.html](http://www.iranjudiciary.org/feedback_en.html)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

President

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

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

**Email: [dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir](mailto:dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir) OR via website: [www.president.ir/email](http://www.president.ir/email)**

Minister of the Interior

Hojjatoleslam Mustafa Purmohammadi  
Ministry of the Interior, Dr Fatemi Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email: [ravabetomomi@moi.gov.ir](mailto:ravabetomomi@moi.gov.ir)**

**Fax: +98 21 8 896 203 / 8 899 547 / 6 650 203**

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 15 March 2006.