

PUBLIC

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UA 103/06 Fear for safety/torture and ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

IRAN Mohammad Suwaidi (m), aged 18

Mohammad Suwaidi, a member of Iran's Arab minority, was reportedly arrested on 16 March near the border with Iraq. He is held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Mohammad Suwaidi is a political activist for the rights of the Arab minority. He was taken to a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility after he was arrested, and later reportedly taken for interrogation to Section 2 of the Prosecutor's Office in Ahvaz city, in the province of Khuzestan, where he is believed to be still held. His family have not been allowed to visit him.

His brother, Adel Suwaidi, is a journalist and human rights activist who fled Iran in about 1996 and successfully claimed asylum in the Netherlands. He has been holding meetings and conferences where he describes the Arab minority's situation in Iran.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the province of Khuzestan, 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, when 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.

Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz City in June and October 2005, which killed at least 14 people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October, the cycle of violence intensified, with hundreds of people reportedly arrested. Further bombings on 24 January 2006, in which at least six people were killed, were followed by further mass arrests. Two men, Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, were executed in public on 2 March after they were convicted of involvement in the October bombings. Their executions followed unfair trials before a Revolutionary Court during which they are believed to have been denied access to lawyers, and their confessions, along with those of six other men, were broadcast on television.

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 Mohammad Suwaidi, who was reportedly arrested on 16 March and is now held incommunicado;
- calling on the authorities to release him immediately, unless he is to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on them to ensure that he is given immediate access to lawyers, his family, interpreters and any medical treatment he may need;
- seeking assurances that he is not being tortured or ill-treated;
- 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, of which Article 7 states that "No one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment."

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

Email: info@leader.ir
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 (mark "Please forward to His Excellency Ayatollah Shahroudi")
via the judiciary website: 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
via website: 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

Speaker of Parliament

Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami (Parliament)
Imam Khomeini Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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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 6 June 2006.