

PUBLIC

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UA 151/06 Incommunicado detention/ fear of torture and ill-treatment

IRAN Dr Ahmad Gholipoor Rezaie, known as Dr Heydaroglu, (m) aged 47 or 48
Hasan Ali Hajabollu, known as Hasan Ark, (m) aged 47 or 48
Hassan Shahi (m)
Ahmad Soltani (m)
Changiz Bakhtave (m)
Babak Bakhtave (m)
Ebrahim Dashti (m)
Hussein Sababi (m)
Javad Abbasi (m)
Saber Beytallahi (m)
Ali Husseinejad (m)
Bahman Nasirzadeh (m)
Ali Halmi (m)
Mohsen Damirchi (m)
Asgar Akbarzadeh (m)
Ismail Rezaie (m)
and hundreds of others

The above named individuals and hundreds of others, who are members of the Azeri Turkish minority community, have been arrested during and following widespread and ongoing demonstrations in north-western Iran. They are reportedly held incommunicado and it is feared that they are at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

The demonstrations began following the publication of a cartoon in the daily state-owned newspaper *Iran* on 12 May which offended many in the Azeri Turkish community (who refer to themselves as Iranian Azerbaijanis). The newspaper was suspended on 23 May and the editor in chief and the cartoonist arrested.

Azeri Turkish students at universities in cities such as Tehran and Tabriz were the initial demonstrators. However, protests spread throughout cities such as Tabriz, Oromieh, Ardebil, Maragheh and Zenjan in north-west Iran, where the population is predominantly Azeri Turkish.

Demonstrations have grown dramatically, and in Tabriz alone around 300,000 to 500,000 people are said to have taken part in protests on 22 May. Hundreds of demonstrators are said to have been arrested and on 24 May, the Commander for Law Enforcement Force confirmed that around 60 people had been detained at each of the disturbances.

Demonstrators were reportedly beaten by members of the Special Forces and the plain clothes militia called the Basij. Scores were injured, and some or all of those injured are reportedly detained in a military hospital where they are not permitted visits from family members. It has been alleged that some demonstrators were killed after Special Forces opened fire in the city of Tabriz. However, this has been denied by the authorities.

Azeri activists Saber Beytallahi, Ali Husseinejad, Bahman Nasirzadeh, and Mohsen Damirchi were detained by Ministry of Intelligence officials in the city of Maku on or around 18 May. No further details about them are known to Amnesty International. Ahmad Soltani and his brother were arrested at his home by officials from the Ministry of Intelligence around 22 May. The officials searched Ahmad Soltani's home, and seized Turkish language books, CDs and papers. It is believed that the brothers are detained at the Ministry of Intelligence

facility in Tabriz. Changiz Bakhtave and Hassan Shahi were arrested in Tabriz on 22 May. It is not known however where they are detained. Azeri activist, Dr Ahmad Gholipoor Rezaie, (also known as Dr Heydaroglu) was also arrested on 22 May, along with Hasan Ali Hajabollu (also known as Hasan Ark) after they attended a demonstration in Tabriz. Officials from the Intelligence Ministry arrested them at around 6pm, as they were getting into a car. They were taken initially to the police station, before being transferred to a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Tabriz. They have been denied access to their family and lawyer. Since his arrest, Dr Rezaie's family have visited the detention centre daily in order to get news about him.

Javad Abbasi, a teacher and well-known Azeri activist was arrested on 24 May at his home in the city of Salmas. Ministry of Intelligence officials searched his house, and took Turkish books and CDs, as well as the family's address book and computer, prior to arresting him. His family believe that he is detained at a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Oromieh, but neither they nor his lawyer have been able to see him. Javid Abbasi began a six-month prison in December 2005 after conviction of "promoting separatism and connection with pan-Turkic groups". He did not however serve the full term and was released on 12 March.

Ebrahim Dashti was detained at his house in Tabriz by plain-clothed members of the Ministry of Intelligence officials on 25 May. His family have not heard from him since, but believe he is held at the Ministry of Intelligence detention facility. His two sons were arrested when they went to the detention facility to ask for information about their father. Amnesty International has learnt that one of the sons is called Babak Dashti, but the name of the other son is currently unknown. Hussein Sababi was arrested at his workplace in Ardebil by plain-clothes officials from the Ministry of Intelligence on 25 May. He had earlier been distributing flyers for a demonstration to be held in Ardebil on 27 May. Asgar Akbarzadeh was arrested in the street the same day for distributing flyers for the demonstration.

Ismail Rezaie was arrested at his home in Tabriz on 26 May by plain-clothed individuals who failed to identify themselves. The men are believed to be officials from the Ministry of Intelligence, who reportedly beat his wife during the arrest.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of the 16 men (name them) and hundreds of others who have reportedly been detained during and following widespread protests by the Azeri Turkish minority community in north-west Iran;
- asking whether the detainees have been charged, and if so for the charges to be made public. If they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, they should be released immediately;
- calling on the authorities to confirm the detainees' places of detention, and for them to be granted immediate and unconditional access to their lawyers, family members, interpreters, and any medical treatment they may require;
- seeking assurances that they not being tortured or ill-treated in detention.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Please send emails via the feedback form on the Persian site of the website

<http://www.iranjudiciary.org/contactus-feedback-fa.html>

The text of the feedback form translates as:

1st line: name, 2nd line: email address, 3rd line: subject heading

then enter your email into the text box

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

COPIES 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 7 July 2006.