
amnesty international

DEATH IN CUSTODY - APPEAL CASE

IRAN: THE CASE OF ALI BATRANI

17 May 2006

AI INDEX: MDE 13/057/2006

Ali Batrani, an Iranian Arab, died at some point in the three days following his arrest on 15 April 2005 during violent demonstrations in Ahvaz city in Khuzestan province, south western Iran.

According to reports, his body was found in the Karoun River which runs through Ahvaz city, on 18 April 2005, but was not handed over to his family until 10 May 2005. According to his family, his body bore severe marks of torture, including marks on his knees and bruises around his eyes. They said the soles of his feet were completely black, and that marks of handcuffs were visible on his wrists. His family has also said that they had to pay the authorities in order to receive his body for burial. Unconfirmed reports have suggested that at least two other bodies were found in the Karoun River in body bags and bore marks which may have been the result of torture.

Amnesty International wrote to the Iranian authorities in November 2005 about the death of Ali Batrani and called for his death to be investigated without delay and for anyone suspected of involvement in his death promptly to be brought to justice. By May 2006, the organization had received no response from the Iranian authorities.

Any investigation into his death should be prompt and impartial and consistent with the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions. Should any torture, ill-treatment and/or unlawful killing be established, then his family members should receive reparation, including fair and adequate compensation.

Torture has been used systematically in Iran for many years for the purpose of extracting information and "confessions" are sometimes broadcast on television. Torture is facilitated by laws and procedures governing detention and interrogation which permit solitary confinement and ban access of detainees to lawyers until the process of investigation is completed, and by the

existence of parallel and sometimes informal institutions which run their own detention centres to which the judiciary has no access.

BACKGROUND

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. Historically, the Arab community has been marginalized and discriminated against.

Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April 2005, when scores of Iranian Arabs were killed, hundreds were injured and hundreds more detained during and following demonstrations. The demonstrations were undertaken in protest at a letter which came to light allegedly written in 1999 by a presidential adviser, who denied its authenticity, which set out policies for the reduction of the Arab population of Khuzestan, including resettling Arabs in other regions of Iran, resettling non-Arabs in the province, and replacing Arabic place names with Persian ones. The text, with an English translation, can be found at

<http://www.ahwaz.org.uk/images/ahwaz-khuzestan.pdf>; the reputed author's denial that he wrote the letter, along with an explanation of the contents, can be found (in Persian) at <http://www.webneveshteha.com/>.

The security forces appear to have used excessive force in stopping the demonstration resulting in unlawful killings, including possible extra-judicial executions. Following the unrest, 180 members of the Majles (Iran's Parliament) wrote to the then President, Mohammad Khatami, urging the release of detainees who were found not to have committed any crime and criticizing officials who had not taken sufficient measures to address the socio-political problems of Khuzestan. They also called for civil rights to be respected.

Since then, the cycle of violence has intensified in the province. Scores of Iranian Arabs were arrested following four pre-election bomb blasts in June 2005 in Ahvaz and two others in Tehran which killed up to 10 and injured at least 90 people. Other bombs in October 2005 and January 2006 killed at least 12 people and were followed by waves of arrest. Arrests have also followed demonstrations on significant dates such as the Muslim festivals of 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha. Amnesty International has received the names of around 500 Arabs detained since April 2005, some repeatedly.

Two Iranian Arabs, Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, were executed in public on 2 March 2006 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" were broadcast on television. Others are feared to be at risk of execution.

Amnesty International recognizes that there have been acts of violence in Khuzestan province which have led to injuries and deaths among the civilian population. It also recognizes that the Iranian government has a responsibility to bring to justice those who commit criminal offences. However, when doing so, the Iranian authorities must abide by relevant international human rights law and standards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Please send faxes/ e-mail letters in Persian, Arabic, English or French:

- expressing concern at the death in custody of Ali Batrani following his arrest during the demonstrations in Ahvaz city in April 2005;
- expressing concern at reports that he appears to have been tortured before his death;
- urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation into his death, which should be in accordance with the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions;
- calling for anyone suspected of involvement in his death to be brought to justice without delay.

PLEASE SEND YOUR 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

Salutation: Your Excellency

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan
Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
**Fax: Via foreign affairs: +98 21 6 674 790 and
ask to be forwarded to H.E Dr Ahmadinejad**
Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi
Shahrudi
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](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

COPIES TO

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue,
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Islamic Human Rights Commission

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Governor General of Khuzestan Province

His Excellency Amir Hayat-Moqaddam
The Office of the Governor General
Felestin Street, Amanieh, Ahvaz,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 611 336 7313
Salutation: Your Excellency