

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/117/2006

10 October 2006

Further Information on UA 263/06 (MDE 13/115/2006, 2 October 2006) Incommunicado detention/ Possible prisoners of conscience

IRAN	Fereshteh Dibaj (f) aged 28 Reza Montazemi (m) aged 35] Husband and wife]
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Fereshteh Dibaj and her husband Reza Montazemi, who are both Christians, were released on bail on 5 October. They had been held since 26 September at the office of the Ministry of Intelligence in the city of Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

According to reports, Reza Montazemi was allowed to telephone his mother for two minutes on 29 September, and his wife, Fereshteh, was able to call her relatives on 3 October. At 8am on 5 October, Reza Montazemi's elderly parents were summoned to the Revolutionary Court in Mashhad to pay the approximately 240 million Iranian Rials (US \$25,000) bail on behalf of their son and his wife. In order to raise this money, Reza Montazemi's parents had to hand over to the court the title deed for a property. Within hours of the payment, Fereshteh Dibaj and Reza Montazemi were released by police officials and allowed to return home. However, the charges against them have not been made public and they could be rearrested at any time.

Two days prior to Fereshteh Dibaj and Reza Montazemi's release, as Reza Montazemi's mother is the owner of the couple's home, Reza Montazemi's parents were reportedly ordered to sign a document, promising that no more Christian meetings for worship, prayer or Bible study would be held there. It is not known whether Fereshteh Dibaj and Reza Montazemi were required to sign such a document as a condition for their release.

According to Fereshteh Dibaj's brother, who spoke to the couple by telephone following their release, the couple were not ill-treated while in custody.

Fereshteh Dibaj is the daughter of Reverend Mehdi Dibaj, a Christian priest in Iran who was murdered in 1994 shortly after his release from prison. He had been arrested in 1984, and December 1993 he was sentenced to death for apostasy on account of his conversion to Christianity some 45 years previously. Although he was released after international pressure, including from Amnesty International, the charges against him were reportedly not dropped. He disappeared on 24 June 1994, and was found dead on 5 July.

Reza Montazemi reportedly converted to Christianity when he was in his twenties. He and his wife reportedly lead an independent house church in Mashhad.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although Christianity is a recognized religion in Iran, evangelical Christians, some of whom have converted from Islam, often face harassment by the authorities. Converts from Islam can risk arrest, attack or the death penalty. Conversion from Islam (apostasy) is forbidden under Islamic Law, which requires apostates to be put to death if they refuse to reconvert to Islam. There is no specific provision in the Iranian Penal Code for apostasy, but judges are required to use their knowledge of Islamic Law to rule on cases where no specific legislation exists in the Penal Code.

Article 23 of the Iranian Constitution states: "The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." Article 18 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, states: "Everyone shall have

the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

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

- welcoming the release on bail of Fereshteh Dibaj and Reza Montazemi;
- asking to be informed in detail of any charges brought against them;
- urging the authorities to drop any charges brought against them if they are solely related to their religious belief, as if convicted and imprisoned, they would be considered prisoners of conscience held solely on account of the peaceful exercise of their internationally recognized right to freedom of belief;
- reminding the authorities that freedom of belief is provided for under the Iranian Constitution, and Article 18 of the ICCPR.

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

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

COPIES TO:

President

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

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 6 646 1746

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 November 2006.