

URGENT ACTION

STUDENT JAILED AFTER REFUSAL TO SPY

Iranian graduate student Hamid Babaei, serving a six-year sentence for “acting against national security by communicating with hostile governments”, including Belgium, has lodged an appeal. His wife, Cobra Parsajoo, is at risk of arrest for peacefully campaigning for his release.

Graduate student **Hamid Babaei** filed his appeal on 2 February 2014 with Branch 54 of the Appeals Court in Tehran. He had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment on 21 December 2013 on the charge of “acting against national security by communicating with hostile governments [Belgium]” by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court. The charge appears to relate to his refusal to monitor and spy on Iranian students studying in Belgium, where he had been pursuing graduate studies, as requested by the Ministry of Intelligence. The scholarship and funds he received from Belgium's University of Liege as a graduate student were used as “evidence” of his alleged work for “hostile governments”.

Hamid Babaei and his wife, Cobra Parsajoo, 29, also a graduate student in Belgium, had travelled back to Iran on holiday in July 2013. Cobra Parsajoo has been peacefully campaigning on behalf of her husband, including by giving interviews to media abroad. Since at least 15 February she has been threatened with arrest for speaking publicly about her husband's case. Cobra Parsajoo has already been barred from travel. Amnesty International understands that Hamid Babaei has been under pressure to make a forced televised “confession” against himself and his wife but has refused to do so. Hamid Babaei has not been permitted to hire a lawyer of his own choosing. He was assigned a government lawyer by the court after he had already been interrogated and held for at least 35 days at Tehran's Evin Prison following his August 2013 arrest.

Please write immediately in Persian, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Hamid Babaei if he has been prosecuted solely for refusing to spy on Iranian students abroad in Belgium;
- Pending his release, urging the authorities to allow him regular visits with his family, lawyer of his own choosing, and any medical care he may require;
- Reminding them that the harassment and arrest of family members of prisoners, solely in order to stop their public campaigning, amounts to reprisals that violate Iran's obligations as state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to uphold freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 APRIL 2014 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: @khamenei_ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Hamid Babaei returned to Iran on holiday in July 2013. According to Cobra Parsajoo, the Ministry of Intelligence asked him whether he could report back to the Iranian authorities on other Iranians studying in Belgium, where Hamid Babaei had been pursuing a PhD. During this meeting the Ministry of Intelligence officials also showed Hamid Babaei photographs of Iranian students in Belgium and asked him to identify them. Hamid Babaei refused both these requests, saying he wished to serve his country only through his academic studies.

When Hamid Babaei and Cobra Parsajoo attempted to return to Belgium in August 2013 for the start of the new academic year, Hamid Babaei was barred from leaving Iran at the airport, though he was given no reason at the time. He was called to report to a Minister of Intelligence office on 13 August. Cobra Parsajoo accompanied her husband, but was not allowed to go into the meeting with him. At the end of the day, when Hamid Babaei still had not come out of the office, Cobra Parsajoo was told that her husband had been detained. For the next week she tried to find where he was, but officials at both Tehran's Evin Prison and the Ministry of Intelligence denied having him in custody. She was eventually told that Hamid Babaei was being held in solitary confinement in Evin Prison. Hamid Babaei spent 20 days in Section 240 in solitary confinement, then 15 days in Section 209, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, of Evin Prison before being transferred to Section 350, where he is now held.

Hamid Babaei has a history of panic attacks, for which he needs medication. Cobra Parsajoo has been able to take his prescriptions to be filled at a pharmacy outside the prison and bring him his medicine, which he receives about a week later, after the prison authorities have screened it. Amnesty International understands that Hamid Babaei's panic attacks have worsened under the stress of prison conditions.

Until he was arrested, Hamid Babaei had been pursuing a PhD at the University of Liege, in the department of Finance and Law. Cobra Parsajoo had been a pharmaceutical studies graduate student at another Belgian university, the Université libre de Bruxelles.

Name: Hamid Babaei (m), Cobra Parsajoo (f)

Gender m/f: both

UA: 36/14 Index: MDE 13/011/2014 Issue Date: 21 February 2014