

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN WOMAN RISKS TORTURE IF DEPORTED

Azizi Mirmahaleh, a 60-year old woman from Iran, is currently in a detention centre in Laval, Québec, awaiting her scheduled deportation on 28 February. If deported to Iran, she would be at risk of serious human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment.

Upon applying for refugee status in Canada, authorities deemed **Azizi Mirmahaleh** ineligible because of her previous affiliation with the banned opposition group the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an organization that Canada previously designated as a terrorist group. After a negative Pre-Removal Risk Assessment, she is currently held in the CBSA Laval Immigration Holding Centre in Laval, Québec, and faces imminent deportation on 28 February.

Azizi Mirmahaleh claims that she was not involved in the armed activities of the PMOI when she was active in the organization from 1979-1982. She has indicated that her work with the organization at the time was peaceful, and consisted of educating women and children about their rights, leading community meetings with women, and distributing documents prepared by the PMOI. In 1982, Azizi Mirmahaleh and her husband were convicted and imprisoned for their participation in the organization. Azizi Mirmahaleh was released from prison four years later; however, her husband was executed while in prison in 1988. Azizi Mirmahaleh's account is consistent with Amnesty International research indicating that many members of opposition groups, including the PMOI, were executed or sentenced to prison terms in the 1980s as a result of non-violent conduct, including distributing newspapers and leaflets, taking part in demonstrations or collecting funds for prisoners' families. Azizi Mirmahaleh's husband was among an estimated 5,000 political prisoners who were executed in secret and without trial in the summer of 1988, and buried in mass, unmarked graves.

In Iran, Azizi Mirmahaleh faced difficulties with authorities due to her previous political activities and relationship to her husband, including threats, harassment and beatings. She now faces the prospect of even harsher treatment at the hands of Iranian authorities due to her recent activism in Canada, including participating in demonstrations against the Iranian government. If returned to Iran, Azizi Mirmahaleh would be at serious risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and an unfair trial which could result in a death sentence or lengthy imprisonment given her political activism, her family history, and her past affiliation with the PMOI.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Urging the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, to halt Azizi Mirmahaleh's deportation;
- Urging the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, to grant her immediate protection in accordance with her wishes.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 28 FEBRUARY 2017 TO:

Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

The Honourable Ralph Goodale
269 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1A 0P8
Canada
Fax: +1 613 954-5186
Email: Ralph.Goodale@parl.gc.ca
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

The Honourable Ahmed Hussen
365 Laurier Ave West
Ottawa, ON K1A 1L1
Canada
Fax: +1 613 952-5533
Email: Minister@cic.gc.ca
Salutation: Dear Minister

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Azizi Mirmahaleh came to Canada in October 2012 on a visitor visa in order to visit her daughter who is studying in Canada. She subsequently applied for refugee status in December 2013 after her visa had expired, but she was deemed ineligible due to her previous involvement in the PMOI. She therefore had to rely on a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment application, which was rejected. The legal grounds and procedural safeguards available to individuals making these applications are more limited than under a refugee claim.

Before coming to Canada, Iranian authorities prevented Azizi Mirmahaleh from obtaining or holding employment, and required her to present herself on a continual basis to report on her activities. Iranian authorities also interfered with her ability to visit the mass gravesite where her husband and other executed political prisoners are buried. Iranian authorities considered her meetings with other families at the gravesite to be an illegal gathering, and subjected them to threats, harassment, and beatings. These repressive measures are aimed at stopping families from going to the mass gravesite and silencing all public discussions related to the mass executions of 1988 and other gross human rights violations perpetrated by the Iranian authorities in the 1980s.

In Iran, individuals who have real or perceived links with the PMOI face arbitrary arrest and detention, interrogation, torture and other ill-treatment, imprisonment and the death penalty. This is regardless of whether they have held membership in the PMOI or contributed to its activities. In some cases, individuals have been prosecuted and punished simply because their relatives were former or current members of the PMOI, without any evidence of their involvement in violent activities. In other cases, a vague or tangential association or a mere expression of support or sympathy for the group, including historically, has resulted in persecution. The authorities often convict individuals with real or perceived links to the PMOI with overly broad and vaguely worded offences including “enmity against God” (*moharabeh*) and “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel-arz*) which are punishable by the death penalty (See: *From protest to prison: Iran one year after the election*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE13/062/2010/en/>).

Since arriving in Canada, Azizi Mirmahaleh has been filmed at demonstrations against the Iranian government and the footage is available online, placing her at risk of reprisals should she be returned to Iran. She reports that her brother has recently faced harassment in Iran and has been detained for questioning by authorities due to her activities in Canada.

Amnesty International considers the expansive application of inadmissibility criteria in this case to be inconsistent with Canada’s obligations to grant protection to asylum-seekers under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In addition, Azizi Mirmahaleh’s planned deportation would be inconsistent with Canada’s absolute obligation under the Convention against Torture to not deport someone where there are “substantial grounds” for believing she is in danger of being tortured or otherwise ill-treated.

The PMOI is a banned opposition group, which advocates the overthrow of the Iranian government. It has previously engaged in armed action against the Iranian government and was based in Iraq until recently.

Name: Azizi Mirmahaleh
Gender m/f: f