

EXTERNAL

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Medical Concern / Ill-Treatment

22 January 1998

JAPANSaeid Pilhvar, Iranian national, aged 27

The life of Saeid Pilhvar, an Iranian detainee in Fuchu Detention Centre near Tokyo, is reported to be in grave danger as a result of ill-treatment and lack of adequate medical attention.

Saeid Pilhvar was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for robbery in 1995 by a Japanese court. In mid-1997, Saeid Pilhvar went on hunger-strike after he was interrogated for having a "private conversation" with another inmate at Kurobane Prison, Tochigi District. Although Saeid Pilhvar, according to lawyers, was merely discussing with the inmate his concerns about the financial welfare of his family in Iran, the conversation was considered by the authorities to be a breach of prison rules.

The prison authorities reacted to Saeid Pilhvar's hunger-strike by forcibly inserting an intravenous drip into his right leg. His leg apparently became severely swollen and painful, but the authorities disregarded Saeid Pilhvar's complaints and kept the drip in place for about two weeks. At the end of that period, his leg was numb. He became unable to walk and started using a wheelchair.

In mid-1997, Saeid Pilhvar was transferred to Fuchu Detention Centre in Tokyo, where he resumed his hunger-strike, demanding access to a translator and an improvement in his conditions of detention. He was then force-fed with a drip inserted through his nose. However, he soon became unable to digest most of his food, and started vomiting. In October 1997, he was sent for six weeks to a prison hospital where his leg was treated. However, his malnutrition was not successfully treated. After his return to Fuchu Detention centre in December 1997, he continued to be unable to digest food, and can now only absorb liquids. According to lawyers who visited him in January 1998, his weight has dropped from about 78 kilograms (172 lb) in 1995 to about 42 kg (92 lb) now, a loss of some 45% of his body weight. He appears to be at grave risk of dying if not given specialist treatment in a civilian hospital.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Conditions of detention in Japanese prisons are very harsh, and in many respects amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Medical treatment is often cursory. It is often difficult for inmates to obtain adequate medical treatment; very few complaints of ill-treatment have been upheld by courts. The Japanese Government regularly claims that treatment is adequate and accords with Japan's international obligations. However patterns of ill-treatment remain, for Japanese as well as foreign detainees.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in Japanese or your own language:

- expressing deep concern at the sharp deterioration in the health of Saeid Pilhvar and at the inadequacy of his treatment;
- calling on the Japanese authorities to ensure that Saeid Pilhvar is transferred without delay to a civilian hospital for treatment;
- calling on the authorities to launch an independent and impartial investigation into the circumstances which have led to the deterioration of the health of Saeid Pilhvar, and to make the results of that investigation public. Any official suspected of human rights violations in this case should be brought to trial in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Mr Kawano Kazuo
Director, Fuchu Prison
4-10 Harumi-cho, Fuchu-shi
Tokyo 183
Japan

Faxes: +81 4 2340 7416

Telegrams: Director, Fuchu Prison, Tokyo, Japan

Salutation: Dear Director

Mr Shimoinaba Kokichi
Minister of Justice
1-1-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100
Japan

Telegrams: Minister Shimoinaba, Tokyo, Japan

E-mails: webmaster@moj.go.jp

Faxes: +81 3 3592 7011/3593 3009 (answer machine message followed by tone)/5511 7207

Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Koizumi Junichiro
Minister of Health and Welfare
1-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku
Tokyo 100
Japan

Telegrams: Minister Koizumi, Tokyo, Japan

Salutation: Dear Minister

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Fukushima Takeshi Law Office (Centre for Prisoners' Rights)
Shimazaki Building 2/F
Mizoguchi 138, Takatsu-ku
Kawasaki 213
Japan

and to diplomatic representatives of Japan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 February 1998.