

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 22/03/98

1 April 1998

Further information on EXTRA 08/98 (ASA 22/01/98, 22 January 1998) - Medical concern / Ill-treatment

JAPAN Saeid Pilhvar, Iranian National, aged 27

---

The lawyer of Saeid Pilhvar has informed Amnesty International that his client is currently receiving treatment in hospital and has gained weight.

Saeid Pilhvar was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for robbery in 1995.

In mid-1997 he went on hunger-strike after he was interrogated for having a "private conversation" with another inmate at Kurobane Prison, Tochigi District -- an apparent breach of prison rules.

The prison authorities reacted to Saeid Pilhvar's hunger-strike by forcibly inserting an intravenous drip into his right leg. The drip was kept in for around two weeks causing swelling and severe pain. When the drip was removed he had lost feeling in his leg and required a wheelchair.

Soon after this Saeid Pilhvar was transferred to Fuchu Prison in Tokyo where he resumed his hunger strike. He was again force-fed using a drip but found it difficult to digest food and was vomiting. Despite a six-week period in a prison hospital to treat his leg he remained severely malnourished, under-weight and unable to digest food.

In a letter sent recently to Amnesty International, in response to a large number of appeals received for Saeid Pilhvar, the Japanese Ministry of Justice denied ill-treating or neglecting to provide him with adequate medical treatment. They claim that his state of health was never life-threatening and that there was therefore no need to administer an intravenous drip. They also claim that he chose to refuse food in order to place himself in the same position as his family in Iran who were suffering from economic hardship. Amnesty International rejects the Japanese government's interpretation of the facts.

No further action is required by the network at this stage. Many thanks to all who sent appeals which the organization believes helped save Saeid Pilhvar's life. His progress will continue to be monitored.