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IRAN: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBLE
GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN DEATHS OF IRANIAN NATIONALS

Following the recent deaths in suspicious circumstances of three Iranian nationals in Iran and Turkey, Amnesty International today called on the Turkish and Iranian authorities to conduct immediate, thorough and impartial investigations into the deaths in their territory.

“We are particularly concerned about these deaths because of previous allegations of Iranian Government involvement in the deaths both at home and abroad of Iranians known or perceived to be opposed to the government,” Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is also seeking clarification of the Iranian Government’s position with respect to the deaths in Turkey.

Molavi Ahmad Sayyad, a leader of the minority Sunni community from Baluchistan, was reportedly found dead outside the city of Bandar Abbas on 2 February 1996, five days after being arrested at the airport as he returned from a six-week trip to the United Arab Emirates. He had previously been detained for about five years without charge after his return in 1990 from studying in Saudi Arabia. After his release from detention, he had opened a school for Sunni Muslims in Baluchistan.

Zahra Rajabi, a former member of the Leadership Council of the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), and Abdolali Moradi, said to be a sympathiser of the same organization, were reportedly found dead in Istanbul on 20 February 1996.

In 1994, another Sunni leader, Haji Mohammad Zia’ie was also found dead in suspicious circumstances. According to official Iranian sources, an investigation conducted by the police concluded he had died in a car accident. However, this account differs from eye-witness reports which suggested that his mutilated body was found separately from the car, which did not bear signs consistent with the alleged accident. Amnesty International continues to believe that the truth surrounding his death cannot be established unless a full and independent investigation is conducted.

A number of Iranian opposition activists have been killed in Turkey in previous years in circumstances suggesting that they may have been unlawfully killed by Iranian Government agents. For example, in June 1992, Ali Akbar Ghorbani, also a member of the PMOI, was abducted in Istanbul. His body, reportedly bearing signs of severe torture, was found in late January 1993. Three members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran were also assassinated between August 1993 and January 1994.

Amnesty International also remains concerned over the fate of Ali Tavassoli, a former leader of the Organization of Iranian People's Fedaian (Majority) who “disappeared” while travelling in Baku, Azerbaijan in September 1995 and whose fate has since been unknown. Unconfirmed reports suggested that Iranian nationals, possibly connected to the security forces, were involved in his abduction.

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