

IRANDr Mahmudali Chehregani, aged 58

Prisoner of conscience Dr Mahmudali Chehregani is reported to be in a critical condition in Tabriz prison clinic. He has apparently been on hunger strike since 19 May, in protest at receiving an unfair trial. A diabetic, with heart disease, prison doctors have reportedly recommended that he be released on medical grounds.

Dr Mahmudali Chehregani, a lecturer at the University of Tabriz, is a prominent member of the Azeri community in Iran. He has previously demanded the recognition of the national rights of Azeris in Iran, as guaranteed under Article 15 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which permits the use of regional languages in the media and in schools when used in addition to Persian. Amnesty International believes that he has been imprisoned to suppress the non-violent expression of his conscientiously held beliefs, and as such is a prisoner of conscience.

He was first arrested by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence in December 1999, effectively preventing him registering as a candidate for the *Majles* (Parliament) election within the specified time. He was tried by a Revolutionary Court on charges including smuggling shampoo, and sentenced on 18 February to six months' imprisonment. He was also reportedly ordered to pay a fine of 20 million Toman (approximately US\$24,000) or face a further 10 years' imprisonment.

Amnesty International is concerned that his trial at the Revolutionary Court fell far short of international standards for fair trial. He was reportedly granted access to a lawyer only two hours before the trial started.

Dr Mahmudali Chehregani reportedly suffered a stroke in 1996, and is now said to be partially paralysed and to have lost the sight in his right eye. According to unconfirmed reports, in April 2000 Iranian security forces arrested scores of his supporters at a rally in his support in Tabriz.

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

- demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Mahmudali Chehregani as a prisoner of conscience;
- seeking assurances that he has been provided with all necessary medical treatment since he was arrested in February;
- seeking details of the exact charges and trial proceedings against Dr Mahmudali Chehregani, and expressing concern that he was tried in a Revolutionary Court, whose procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial;
- seeking confirmation of reports that supporters of Dr Mahmudali Chehregani were arrested at an April rally in Tabriz: if true, asking what charges were brought against them, and demanding their immediate release if they were arrested solely for their support of Dr Mahmudali Chehregani and have not been charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

1) Leader of the Islamic Republic
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei,
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue,
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

3) Head of Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far
Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Commission
PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Faxes: + 98 21 204 0541

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 July 2000.