

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/017/2001

22 May 2001

Further information on UA 103/00 (MDE 13/20/00, 3 May 2000) and follow-up (MDE 13/16/00, 6 July 2000, MDE 13/34/00, 18 December 2000, MDE 13/005/2001, 17 January 2001) - ill-treatment/prisoners of conscience/medical concern

IRANAli Afshari (m), student representative  
Mehrangiz Kar (f), lawyer  
Shahla Lahiji (f), publisher

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Student leader Ali Afshari appeared on Iranian state television on 16 May, reportedly at his own request, and without his lawyer present, "confessing" to a plot to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran, and apologizing to the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei for his "mistakes". According to some press reports he looked "pale and strained", and despite official denials it appears that he may have "confessed" under duress.

Ali Afshari's "confession" was broadcast even though he is yet to be charged or brought to trial. He has been in temporary detention for around 160 days and is still said to be held incommunicado, without access to his lawyer. He has [apparently] not been allowed medical assistance, although he is in poor health.

Amnesty International considers that the televised "confession" of Ali Afshari implies his guilt before any trial has taken place, and as such is a breach of Article 11(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence."

Following the broadcast of the "confession", Ali Afshari's father was permitted to visit him. An official was present throughout the meeting, and the two were prevented from talking about social and political subjects.

Mehrangiz Kar and Shahla Lahiji's appeal hearings are reportedly now in progress. There are unconfirmed reports that Mehrangiz Kar has been acquitted. Both women were sentenced to four years' imprisonment in January, for acting against national security and disseminating propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran, because of their attendance at a social and cultural conference in Berlin in April 2000.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Four other participants at the Berlin conference were also sentenced to prison terms: Saeed Sadr, 10 years; Khalil Rostamkhani, nine years; Ezzatollah Sahabi, four years (see UA 182/00 and follow-up); Akbar Ganji, 10 years in prison to be followed by five years in exile (see Extra 43/00 and follow-ups). Akbar Ganji is reportedly set to be released on bail after an appeal court overturned his sentence on 15 May. Ezzatollah Sahabi is reportedly in a very poor condition, possibly as a result of prison conditions. A further six participants have reportedly been acquitted. Amnesty International considers all those detained solely for their attendance at the Berlin conference to be prisoners of conscience.

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

- seeking assurances that Ali Afshari will be treated humanely in custody, and urging the authorities to allow him immediate access to family, lawyers and any medical care he needs;
- urging an independent investigation into the circumstances of Ali Afshari's recent televised "confession";
- asking for the results of the investigation by the Article 90 Commission into the alleged incommunicado detention of Ali Afshari and Ezzatollah Sahabi in late December 2000;
- seeking clarification of the exact charges brought against Ali Afshari and asking when the appeal court hearing relating to the Berlin conference will take place;
- urging that Ali Afshari and all other prisoners of conscience be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging that the charges against all those convicted on the basis of their participation in the Berlin conference are reviewed and dropped upon appeal, since the existing charges do not appear to justify the convictions of the defendants.

**APPEALS TO:**

Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei  
c/o The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran,

**Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Iran**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi  
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegrams: Head of Judiciary, Tehran, Iran**

**Faxes: + 98 21 537 8827 (number may be unreliable. A recorded message will indicate when to send fax - please send before it gives you the tone to leave a voice message)**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Sayed Mohammad Khatami  
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,  
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran**

**Faxes: + 98 21 649 5880**

**E-mails: khatami@president.ir**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

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**

**E-mail: ihrc@Majlis.ir**

Parliamentary Committee

Mohsen Mirdamadi Najafabadi

Article 90 Commission (Komisyon-e Asl-e Navad), Majles-e Shura-ye Eslami, Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Faxes: + 98 21 646 1746 (Can be difficult to reach, please be patient)**

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 3 July 2001.