

PUBLIC

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UA 57/06 Death penalty/fear of imminent execution

IRAN Dr Awdeh Afrawi (m), aged 52
Nazem Bureihi (m)
Aliredha Salman Delfi (m)
Ali Helfi (m)
Ali Manbouhi (m)
Jaafar Sawari (m)
Risan Sawari (m), teacher
Mohammad Ali Sawari (m), teacher
Moslem al-Ha'i (m)

The nine men named above, all members of Iran's Arab minority, have reportedly been sentenced to death for their alleged involvement in bomb explosions in the city of Ahvaz, in Khuzestan province, which took place in October 2005. It is not known exactly what they were convicted of, but they are feared to be in imminent danger of execution. Two other men have already been executed. Seven have been shown "confessing" on local television, with one other mentioned as a participant in the bombings, and another reportedly convicted of the same offence.

According to the Minister of Justice, 45 people have been arrested in connection with the October explosions. On 14 February, the Minister of Justice told the state news agency IRNA that seven of them had been convicted on charges including "enmity with God (*mohareb*, for which the penalty is death), corruption on earth and murder" and that their sentences would be announced shortly. On 20 February, the Prosecutor General reportedly said that "some of those convicted in this case have been sentenced to death, including the two main culprits, whose presence in the recent Ahvaz incidents was proved and their execution verdict is definite". On 21 February, in a statement to IRNA commenting on this report, the Minister of Justice stated that only two had been sentenced to death and these sentences were under review by the Supreme Court. He noted that "the seven convicts have not all committed crimes that call for the death penalty."

Although seven men were said to have been convicted of involvement in the October bombings, nine men were shown "confessing" on Khuzestan Provincial TV on 1 March. Among them were Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, who were hanged in public the following morning; Dr Awdeh Afrawi (father of executed Ali Awdeh Afrawi); Aliredha Salman Delfi; Ali Manbouhi; Jaafar Sawari; Ali Helfi, Nazem Burehi, and Risan Sawari.

Ali Manbouhi, Ali Helfi and Nazem Bureihi have reportedly been in custody since 2000, when they were arrested on charges of "insurgency" and each sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment. However they also featured in the "confessions" footage. There are unconfirmed reports that they may soon face a retrial on charges of *mohareb* and murder.

Dr Awdeh Afrawi is a psychologist at Ahvaz's Shahid Chamran hospital. He and his son were reportedly arrested in Ahvaz shortly after the October 2005 explosions. Risan Sawari was reportedly arrested in April 2005, released and arrested again in September. Jaafar Sawari and Aliredha Salman Delfi were reportedly arrested in September 2005. Mehdi Nawaseri was reportedly arrested on 19 October and Mohammad Ali Sawari on or around 4 November. Moslem al-Ha'i was mentioned during the "confessions" as a participant in the bombings, but it is not known when he was arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran's Arab community live mainly in the Khuzestan region, which borders Iraq. It is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves, but the Arab population does not feel it has benefited as much from the oil revenue as the Persian population. Historically the Arab community has been marginalised and discriminated against. Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April 2005, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Hundreds have been arrested and there have been reports of torture. Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz in June and October 2005, which killed at least 14 people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October, the cycle of violence in Khuzestan province has intensified, with hundreds of people reportedly arrested. Further bombs exploded on 24 January 2006, killing at least six people and were followed by further mass arrests.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Arabic, Persian or your own language:

- expressing grave concern that the nine men (naming them) may be in imminent danger of execution;
- urging the Iranian authorities to commute their death sentences immediately;
- asking for details of the men's trial proceedings, including the specific charges against them, whether they have been granted access to independent lawyers of their choice, and, if indeed convicted and sentenced to death, whether they have been allowed to appeal against their convictions and sentences, as required by Article 14 (5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- acknowledging that governments have a responsibility to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but stating your unconditional opposition to the death penalty, as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and violation of the right to life.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 251 7 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")

Email: info@leader.ir
istiftaa@wilayah.org

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

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

Email: irjpr@iranjudiciary.org (mark "Please forward to His Excellency Ayatollah Shahroudi")
via the judiciary website: www.iranjudiciary.org/feedback_en.html

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email

Minister of the Interior

Hojjatolislam Mustafa Purmohammadi
Ministry of the Interior, Dr Fatemi Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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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 20 April 2006.