

EXTERNAL

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## *MEDICAL CONCERN*

### Arrests of prisoners of conscience IRAN

Amnesty International is concerned for the well-being of more than 20 people arrested in Iran in June after signing an open letter to President Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani. The letter, signed by some 90 people, criticized the government's economic and foreign policies and its failure to guarantee the rights and freedoms set down in the Iranian Constitution. The detainees include former government ministers and other prominent associates of the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mehdi Bazargan. Mehdi Bazargan was also President of the opposition Association for the Defense of Freedom and Sovereignty of the Iranian Nation (AFSIN) - now dissolved - and some of those arrested recently were AFSIN members or members of the Freedom Movement of Iran of which Mehdi Bazargan is also Secretary General. Several have been imprisoned on previous occasions and some of the prisoners are elderly and/or reported to be in ill-health. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be subjected to ill-treatment.

The first arrests took place in mid-June 1990 and two days later an order for the dissolution of AFSIN was issued. Iranian officials and the press have welcomed the arrests, claiming that those arrested had been in regular contact with "foreign circles" and describing them as enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. On 6 August 1990 Iranian television broadcast the confession of one of the prisoners, Farhad Behbhani, which contained allegations about AFSIN's links with foreign powers. Amnesty International believes that this confession may have been made as a result of torture or coercion. At least some of those arrested are reported to have been beaten or ill-treated at the time and Amnesty International fears that ill-treatment may now be used against other prisoners to compel them to make similar statements designed to discredit AFSIN.

The arrests are apparently intended to silence the only remaining political opposition operating openly within Iran. AFSIN had applied for registration under the Political Parties Act of 1981, but had received no reply. It operated with uneasy tolerance from the authorities until the announcement of its dissolution after arrests began to take place.

At least eight of the prisoners are said to be in ill-health or to require medical attention. Some of the prisoners are believed to be held in Tehran's Evin Prison while others are believed to be in the custody of the Ministry of Intelligence in Toopkhaneh Square in central Tehran.

▪ **Ali Ardalan**, aged 73, was Head of AFSIN's Executive Committee. He was appointed Finance Minister in 1979 under the government of Mehdi Bazargan. Ali Ardalan was previously imprisoned between 1981 and 1985 and again in 1988 when he was arrested in connection with an open letter sent by Mehdi Bazargan to Ayatollah Khomeini calling for an end to the war with Iraq. On this occasion he was arrested at his home in Tehran on 19 June 1990 and was allegedly beaten at the time of his arrest. He suffers from ischaemic heart disease for which he has been receiving medical attention

for over 20 years. Recent reports indicate that he appears to be in a poor condition and that the prison authorities had refused to accept medication brought to the prison for him. During his period of imprisonment in 1988 his medical problems required his transfer to hospital.

- **Hossain Bani Assadi**, aged around 49, was Deputy Prime Minister in Mehdi Bazargan's government. He was subsequently appointed head of the Organization of Industrial Management, a position from which he was purged in the early 1980s. No details of his current state of health are available, but he is believed to have suffered kidney problems requiring surgery in 1989.

- **Hossain Shah-Hossaini**. He is reported to have suffered paralysis at the time of a previous term of imprisonment in 1988 when he was arrested in connection with the open letter to Ayatollah Khomeini. When seen in prison at the beginning of October 1990, he was in a wheelchair, something he had previously not required.

- **Abolfazl Mirshams Shahshahani**, aged 58, was a judge for many years and, following the 1979 revolution, was appointed the first Prosecutor General of Tehran. He was a central council member of ADFSIK. Abolfazl Mirshams Shahshahani is reported to be suffering from tubercular osteomyelitis.

- **Hormoz Momaizzi**, age not known, had formerly worked for Tehran municipality and was retired at the time of his arrest. He is reported to have problems with his lower limbs, but no further details are available.

- **Dr Noor-Ali Tabandeh** is a lawyer in his seventies. No details of his health are available, but reports indicate that his condition has deteriorated seriously during his detention. Dr Tabandeh's wife died of a heart attack after visiting him in prison; her distress at the state in which she found him is alleged to have contributed to her death.

- **Hassan Sabbaghian**, an engineer who served as Interior Minister in Mehdi Bazargan's government, is among those alleged to have been tortured. As a result, he is reported to have suffered a slipped disc and damage to his spinal column, and to be in urgent need of transfer to a hospital.

- **Dr Habibollah Davaran** is a pharmacologist in his seventies. He suffers from an eye-complaint and is in poor health.

Amnesty International has called for the immediate and unconditional release of all those held in this case and has sought assurances that they are being humanely treated. The organization has urged that they be granted immediate access to lawyers of their own choosing, relatives and doctors where necessary.

In August, Amnesty International wrote to Ayatollah Yazdi, the Head of the Judiciary, detailing its concerns about those detained in connection with this case and requested that, if these prisoners are to be tried, Amnesty International be permitted to send a lawyer as observer to their trial. There has been no response to this request.

[For further details on these cases see *Iran: recent arrests - prisoners of conscience*. AI Index: MDE 13/13/90, 2 August 1990]

INTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Middle East  
Date: 1 November 1990

## *MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

### ARRESTS OF PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE IN IRAN

#### Key words

Theme: ill-health/ill-treatment/POC

#### Summary

Amnesty International is appealing to the Iranian authorities for the immediate and unconditional release of several people arrested in June 1990 for having signed an open letter to President Rafsanjani critical of government policies. A number of those detained are elderly or in ill-health and there are fears that they may be subjected to ill-treatment in order to force them to make incriminating statements. Those arrested for their involvement with this open letter are regarded by AI as prisoners of conscience.

#### Recommended Actions

Courteous letters are requested from medical professionals to one or more of the addresses below:

- expressing concern at the arrest of more than 20 people in June 1990 in connection with an open letter sent to President Rafsanjani
- expressing concern at reports that some of those detained were beaten or ill-treated at the time of their arrest and seeking assurances that they are being humanely treated while held in detention
  - noting that some of the detainees are said to be in ill-health, seek details of their current state and of the medical attention available to them in prison
  - urging that those detained be released

#### Addresses

Hojatolislam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani  
President of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
Nahaad-e Riyasat-e Jomhuri [Office of the President]  
Palestine Avenue  
TEHRAN, Islamic Republic of Iran

[President]

**Addresses** (continued)

Hojatolislam Abdollah Noori  
Minister of the Interior  
Ministry of the Interior  
Dr Fatemi Avenue  
TEHRAN  
Islamic Republic of Iran

[Minister of the Interior]

**Copies of appeals to:**

Dr Iraj Fazel  
Minister for Health and Medical Education  
Ministry of Health  
Jomhuri Avenue, Youssufabad Junction  
TEHRAN  
Islamic Republic of Iran

[Minister of Health]

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran in your country.