

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/31/00

10 November 2000

**Further information on UA number EXTRA 43/00, MDE 13/07/00, 25 April 2000 -  
Torture/ill treatment/prisoner of conscience**

**IRAN Akbar Ganji**

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Prisoner of conscience Akbar Ganji has reportedly told a court that he has been beaten and tortured in prison, and that he is going to start a hunger strike in protest.

Journalist Akbar Ganji was brought before Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on 9 November. He reportedly stated to the judge that he had been kicked and punched by four prison guards and the warden of Evin Prison, and that he had been brought to the court by force (he reportedly does not recognise the validity of the court and the charges against him). He reportedly stated that before he was brought to court he had been hung upside down in a cell while four guards kicked him in the head and stomach. He reportedly stated that he was going to go on hunger strike in protest at the treatment he had suffered, which included 80 days in solitary confinement, without access to family or his lawyer.

The judge reportedly requested that Akbar Ganji produce witnesses to substantiate his claims.

Akbar Ganji reportedly faces charges in connection with statements he reportedly made at a social and cultural conference entitled "Iran After the Elections" held at the Heinrich Böll Institute in Berlin, 7-9 April. The charges reportedly involve "threatening national security", "dissemination of propaganda against the Islamic system", and insulting religious edicts and figures, such as the former Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

All of the other participants at the April conference, including two translators and assistants, are facing charges. Together in court with Akbar Ganji was translator Khalil Rostamkhani, who has been denied bail since he was arrested on 8 May. It has been reported that journalist Ezzatollah Sahabi and novelist Maniru Ravanipur are reportedly to go on trial on 14 November.

Fourteen of the 19 people charged in connection with the conference have so far appeared in court. These are: the lawyer Mehrangiz Kar (f) and publisher Shahla Lahiji (f); publisher Shahla Sherkat (f), *Majles* (parliament) member Jamileh Kadivar (f), journalist Alireza Alavitabar, novelist Mahmoud Dolatabadi, poet Mohammad Ali Sepanlu, journalist Hamid Reza Jalaipour, academic Fariborz Raisdana and environmental activist Khadijeh Moqaddam (f). If any of them have been imprisoned solely because of statements they made at the Berlin conference, Amnesty International will consider them prisoners of conscience.

There are reports that researcher and journalist Hojjatoleslam Yousefi Eshkevari may be facing the death penalty, after he was tried in the Special Court for the Clergy in connection with statements he made at the conference in Berlin. A verdict has reportedly been issued but it has not been made public.

The Iranian authorities have been clamping down on freedom of expression since before the conference. In April around 20 newspapers were closed by the Press Court and in an unprecedented move on 6 August, the Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, called upon *Majles* members to halt debate concerning reform of the existing Press Code, which limits freedom of expression in Iran. Other journalists, including Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, Emadeddin Baqi and publisher Hojjatoleslam Abdollah Nouri have been imprisoned in connection with newspaper articles. Attacks on the press and journalists have been condemned by the Secretary of the government-approved Islamic Human Rights Commission, Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far.

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

- calling for an immediate halt to the torture and ill-treatment of Akbar Ganji and the immediate and public investigation of his allegation that four prison guards and the warden of Evin prison beat him;
- seeking guarantees from the authorities that Akbar Ganji will be treated humanely in detention;
- urging that Akbar Ganji and all other prisoners of conscience be released immediately and unconditionally;
- seeking urgent clarification of the charges faced by Akbar Ganji and other participants at the conference in Berlin;
- seeking assurances that Akbar Ganji will be granted immediate and regular access to his family and lawyer.

**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 22 December 2000.