

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/045/2006

03 May 2006

UA 115/06 Arbitrary arrest/ incommunicado detention/ fear for torture and ill-treatment/ possible prisoner of conscience

IRAN Saleh Malla Abbasi (m) aged 53, agricultural engineer

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Saleh Malla Abbasi is being held in incommunicado detention, where he is at risk of torture and ill-treatment. He is a possible prisoner of conscience, who may be detained solely on account of his peaceful activism for the rights of the Azeri Turk minority in Iran.

Saleh Malla Abbasi, an activist for the rights of the Azeri Turk minority community in Iran, who is married with two daughters, was arrested on 17 April at his home in the city of Ahar in Azerbaijan province. Police from the Ministry of Intelligence reportedly entered the family house from the front and the back door simultaneously. Saleh Malla Abbasi's wife and two daughters were ordered not to move while the house was thoroughly searched. The family's computer, satellite dish, and Turkish language books and CDs were confiscated. The police also took their personal telephone and address book, and a Turkish calendar that was hanging on the wall. The police reportedly remarked that the calendar proved that the family are "pan-Turks". They searched through the family photo albums, and took some of the photos with them. They then arrested Saleh Malla Abbasi.

Following his arrest, Saleh Malla Abbasi's whereabouts were unknown. After two days, he was able to call his wife, and informed her that he was being transferred to the Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in the city of Tabriz. His family have had no contact from him since, and he has not had access to a lawyer. Saleh Malla Abbasi had reportedly requested that no-one should try to look for him, or they too risked arrest. It is feared that he is being subject to torture and ill-treatment in detention.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Iranian Azeri Turks, who are mainly Shi'a Muslims, are the largest minority in Iran, believed to constitute between 25-30 per cent of the population. They are located mainly in the north and north-west of Iran. As Shi'a, they are not subject to the same kinds of discrimination as minorities of other religions, and are well-integrated into the economy, but there is a growing demand for greater cultural and linguistic rights, including implementation of their constitutional right to education through the medium of Turkish. A small minority advocate secession of Iranian Azerbaijan from the Islamic Republic of Iran and union with the Republic of Azerbaijan. Those who seek to promote Azeri Turkish cultural identity are viewed with suspicion by the Iranian authorities, who often accuse them of vague charges such as "promoting pan-Turkism".

At the end of June 2005, scores of Iranian Azeri Turks participating in an annual cultural gathering at Babek Castle in Kalayber were arrested. At least 21 were later sentenced to prison terms of between three months and one year, some of which were suspended, reportedly after conviction of charges such as "spreading propaganda against the system" and "establishing organizations against the system". Some were also banned from entering Kalayber for a period of 10 years. On 30 March 2006, Azeri activists Ebrahim Rashidi and Maharam Kamrani, who is the brother of Human Rights Defender Saleh Kamrani, were arrested. They were released on bail on 18 April, and are due to be tried on the charge of "acting against national security". (See UA 86/06, MDE 13/043/2006, 2 May 2006 and follow up)

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Saleh Malla Abbasi who is reportedly held in incommunicado detention at detention facility run by the Ministry of Intelligence in city of Tabriz;
- calling for him to be given immediate access to a lawyer of his choice and his family;
- seeking assurances that he are not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- expressing concern that Saleh Malla Abbasi appears to have been detained solely in connection with his peaceful activities for the rights of the Azeri Turk minority community;
- calling on the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Information

Second Negarestan Street

Pasdaran Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

**Email:** [iranprobe@iranprobe.com](mailto:iranprobe@iranprobe.com)

**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:** **via Judiciary website at [Iranjudiciary.org/feedback\\_en.html](http://Iranjudiciary.org/feedback_en.html)**

**Salutation:** **Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

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

**Email:** **[info@leader.ir](mailto:info@leader.ir) or [istiftaa@wilayah.org](mailto:istiftaa@wilayah.org)**

and 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 15 June 2006.