

PUBLIC

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UA 128/07 Death penalty/torture

IRAN **Hossein Forouhideh, also known as Khatibi (m)
Iraj Naji (m), his cousin**

Hossein Forouhideh, an advocate of linguistic and social rights for Iranians of Azerbaijani ethnicity, is reportedly facing imminent execution. He has allegedly been tortured. His cousin, Iraj Naji, is in solitary confinement and Amnesty International fears that he may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Hossein Forouhideh, from the Khoy region of Iran's West Azerbaijan province, was reportedly sentenced to death by Bench One of the Revolutionary Court in the city of Urumiye, in West Azerbaijan province. He was reportedly accused of spying for Turkey, but the charges of which he was convicted are not known. He has reportedly spent more than nine months in a detention facility under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence in the city of Urumiye. Torture has allegedly left him with extensive bruising to his torso and a number of broken ribs.

In March the authorities told his mother, who lives in Khoy, that he had already been executed, and that she should collect his body from the detention facility. When she got there, the guards told her that Hossein Forouhideh had not yet been executed. She recently visited the detention facility again, but was not allowed to visit her son, and fears he has been tortured.

Hossein Forouhideh's wife is a Turkish citizen who lives in eastern Turkey. She has reportedly stated that she has not been able to obtain information about her husband since at least September 2006. Hossein Forouhideh's father and a brother also live in Turkey.

Hossein Forouhideh's cousin Iraj Naji has reportedly been held in solitary confinement in Urumiye since around October 2006. He is said to be accused of undertaking actions on behalf of Turkey and inciting the people of Khoy to demonstrate, in May 2006, against the publication in the state-owned daily newspaper *Iran* of a caricature which many Iranian Azerbaijanis considered offensive. Its publication resulted in widespread demonstrations in areas of Azerbaijani settlement in which hundreds, possibly thousands, of demonstrators were arrested, and demonstrators were shot by the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iranian Azerbaijanis speak a Turkic language known as Azerbaijani Turkic. Mainly Shi'a Muslims, they are the largest ethnic minority in Iran, believed to constitute 25-30 percent of the population. They live mainly in the north and north-west of the country. As Shi'a, they are not subject to as much 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 Azerbaijani Turkic. A small minority advocate secession of Iranian Azerbaijan from the Islamic Republic of Iran and union with the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Iranian authorities view those who seek to promote Iranian Azerbaijani cultural identity with suspicion, and often accuse them of vague charges such as "promoting pan-Turkism".

The publication of the caricature in *Iran* led to waves of demonstrations broke out in towns and cities in north-west Iran, after the newspaper was suspended.. At first on a on a small scale, mainly among Iranian Azerbaijani students in universities in the city of Tabriz in East Azerbaijan province, and in the capital, Tehran, protests moved rapidly to other Iranian Azerbaijani areas. A huge demonstration took place in Tabriz

on 22 May and further demonstrations were held in other places in the following days. Most of these protests were peaceful, but some ended with attacks on government buildings and cars and were met, in places, by the use of lethal force and mass arrests. Some Iranian Azerbaijani sources have claimed these attacks were instigated by government agents.

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

- expressing concern that Hossein Forouhideh may be facing imminent execution;
- calling on the authorities to halt the execution;
- 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;
- expressing concern at reports that Hossein Forouhideh may have been tortured;
- seeking assurances that he and his cousin Iraj Naji are no longer at risk of torture or ill-treatment;
- seeking assurances that Hossein Forouhideh and Iraj Naji will be given access to their families and to all necessary medical care, outside the detention facility if necessary;
- seeking details of the specific charges against each man, and details of trials that they have faced.

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

Email: info@leader.ir

istiftaa@wilayah.org

Fax: +98 251 7774 2228 (mark FAO Office of His Excellency Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir

via website: www.president.ir/email

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of West Azarbaijan Province

Doctor Rahim Ghorbani

Email: via: <http://www.ostan-ag.gov.ir/contactus.asp> (write your name in the top line, your email address in the second line and the message in the larger box. Click right-hand button to send the message.)

Salutation: Dear Sir

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 6 July 2007.