

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/ fear of torture and ill-treatment

09 June 2006

IRAN

**Abed Tavancheh (m), student and web logger
Yashar Qajar (m), student**

Student activists, Abed Tavancheh and Yashar Qajar were reportedly arrested during or following student demonstrations that took place in Tehran. Amnesty International fears that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

According to press reports Abed Tavancheh and Yashar Qajar phoned their respective families on 5 June and said that they were held in Evin Prison but did not mention the charges they may face. It remains unclear which section of the prison they are held in. Some reports suggest that they are held in section 209 which is reportedly run by the Ministry of Intelligence, others that they are held in section 325, reportedly run by the Intelligence Branch of the Revolutionary Guards. Abed Tavancheh and Yashar Qajar have yet to be allowed access to their lawyers. Their cases are reportedly being investigated by Branch 14 of the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Tehran. Under Iranian law, detainees are not permitted access to a lawyer until the investigative stage is completed. There is no time limit as to how long detainees may be held during the investigation.

Prior to his phone call, Abed Tavancheh, a student at Amir Kabir Polytechnic University in Tehran, had reportedly not been in contact with his family and friends since 26 May and could not be reached on his mobile phone. He had reportedly taken part in the demonstrations that took place at his university about which he posted photos and reports on his web log (which can be found, in Persian, on: <http://beyade67.blogfa.com/>).

Yashar Qajar is the head of the Islamic Students' Association (ISA) at Amir Kabir University. He was reportedly arrested on 28 May by security forces whilst leaving the university. His arrest reportedly took place the day after the release of a letter written by the ISA addressed to the Office of the Supreme Leader's representative in Iran's universities. According to a report on the Rooz website, the letter stated: "The actions of the current cultural directors of the university have sparked angry reactions among students," and that "restricting the activities of the arts and cultural centres, the unfair distribution of opportunities, the implementation of unreasonable policies on campuses, and the increasing pressures on independent student publications" were among the students' grievances.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Two of Tehran's main universities were the scene of protest and clashes between students and police during the night on 23 May 2006.

Students in a number of university campuses across Iran held protests rallies during the week of 21-28 May 2006 and on several occasions clashed with the police from which injuries (including of police) and arrests were reported.

A variety of issues prompted the protests. The protests at Tehran University were reportedly against the recent appointment of new university heads and the forced retirement of nine professors and in support of the students in Amir Kabir University who, in turn, were protesting against the intervention of members of the Basij volunteer force in the election for members of the Islamic Student Association which operates on campus. In the city of Zenjan, northwest of Tehran, the demonstrations were prompted by the publication of a cartoon in the daily state-owned newspaper *Iran* on 12 May which offended many in the Azeri Turkish

community (who refer to themselves as Iranian Azerbaijanis). The newspaper was suspended on 23 May and the editor in chief and the cartoonist arrested.

According to reports, student activist Houman Kazemian was arrested, along with other students, on 27 May by security forces during a demonstration in front of the *Majles* (Parliament). Most, if not all, of them were reportedly released the next day. Houman Kazemian, however, reportedly disappeared on 29 May and his family and friends had no information about his whereabouts until 7 June 2006 when he was apparently released from detention.

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 Abed Tavaneh and Yashar Qajar;
- asking to be informed of the reasons for their arrest, including any charges against them, which should be made public and communicated to Abed Tavaneh and Yashar Qajar and their lawyers without delay. If they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, they should be released immediately;
- calling for them to be granted immediate and unconditional access to their lawyers, family members, and any medical treatment they may require;
- seeking assurances that they not being tortured or ill-treated in detention.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Please send emails via the feedback form on the Persian site of the website
<http://www.iranjudiciary.org/contactus-feedback-fa.html>

The text of the feedback form translates as:

1st line: name, 2nd line: email address, 3rd line: subject heading

then enter your email into the text box

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence

Second Negarestan Street

Pasdaran Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: iranprobe@iranprobe.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES 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 21 July 2006.