

PUBLIC

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15 May 2008

UA 128/08

Arbitrary arrests/ Prisoners of conscience

IRAN

Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi (f),]
Jamaloddin Khanjani (m),]
Afif Naeimi (m),]
Saeid Rezaei (m),] members of the Baha'i community
Behrouz Tavakkoli (m),]
Vahid Tizfahm (m),]
Mahvash Sabet (f)]

Six leaders of a group managing the Baha'i community's religious and administrative affairs in Iran were arrested at their homes by officers from the Ministry of Intelligence on 14 May and are now detained in Evin Prison in Tehran. A seventh person, acting secretary for the group, Mahvash Sabet, has been in detention since 5 March. They may all be prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their religious beliefs or their peaceful activities on behalf of the Baha'i community.

The six Baha'i leaders, Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Jamaloddin Khanjani, Afif Naeimi, Saeid Rezaie, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Vahid Tizfahm, were arrested following raids on their homes by officers from the Ministry of Intelligence in the early hours of 14 May. Their homes were extensively searched for about five hours.

Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, Behrouz Tavakkoli and Jamaloddin Khanjani have previously been arrested for their activities on behalf of the Baha'i community. Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi and Behrouz Tavakkoli were arrested in Mashhad in Khorasan Province, north-eastern Iran, on 26 July 2005 after they arrived at the city's bus station from Tehran in order to meet some other Baha'is and discuss community affairs. Fariba Kamalabadi Taefi, who was released on bail on 19 September 2005, is a member of a coordinating group that supervises course work for Baha'is in Iran who wish to study their religion. She had previously been arrested on 25 May 2005 and released on bail on 28 June. Behrouz Tavakkoli was released on bail on 15 November 2005.

Mahvash Sabet, who lives in Tehran, was summoned to Mashhad by the Ministry of Intelligence as part of its investigation into the burial of an individual in the city's Baha'i cemetery. She was arrested on 5 March and later transferred to Evin Prison, where she remains.

Three other Baha'is are also currently detained in unclear circumstances in Shiraz and may also be prisoners of conscience (See UA 25/08; MDE 13/017/2008, 25 January 2008).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Baha'i faith was founded about 150 years ago in Iran and has since spread around the world. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Baha'i community has been systematically harassed and persecuted. There are over 300,000 Baha'is currently in Iran, but their religion is not recognized under the Iranian Constitution, which only recognizes Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Baha'is in Iran are subject to discriminatory laws and regulations which violate their right to practise their religion freely, as set out in Article 18(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party, and which deny them equal rights to education, work and to a decent standard of living by restricting their access to employment and benefits such as pensions. They are not permitted to meet, to hold religious ceremonies or to practice their religion communally. Since President Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005, dozens of Baha'is have been arrested because of their faith.

Members of the Baha'i community in Iran profess their allegiance to the state and deny that they are involved in any subversive acts against the government, which they state would be against their religion. For further information, please see the report: *Iran – New*

government fails to address dire human rights situation (MDE 13/010/2006, 16 February 2006):
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/010/2006/en/dom-MDE130102006en.html>

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

- asking why the seven individuals (please name them) have been detained by the Ministry of Intelligence;
- stating that Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience if they are detained because of their Baha'i faith or their peaceful activities managing the religious or administrative affairs of the Baha'i community in Iran;
- calling for their release if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial promptly and fairly;
- calling on the authorities not to torture or ill-treat them;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they are given immediate and regular access to their relatives and lawyers of their choice.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Office of the Supreme Leader, Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh / Office of the Head of the Judiciary

Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In 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

Fax: + 98 21 6 649 5880

Email: via website: <http://www.president.ir/email/>

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani

C/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs

Ministry of Justice,

Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

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 26 June 2008.