

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/079/2008

11 June 2008

**Further Information on UA 151/08 (MDE 13/076/2008, 30 May 2008) – Fear of torture and ill-treatment/
Possible prisoners of conscience**

IRAN	Mojtaba Hussein (m), aged 21]	
	Mahmoud Matin (m)]	
	Arash (m)]	Christian converts
	Two others, one of them a woman]	
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	New name: Mohsen Namvar (m), aged 44]	

Mojtaba Hussein was released on bail on 2 June. Two others, now known to be a married couple, who had been arrested in April in the city of Amol, have also been released. Another Christian convert, Mohsen Namvar, was arrested on 31 May. Like Arash and Mahmoud Matin, who are still in custody, he appears to have been detained solely because of his religious beliefs, which would make him a prisoner of conscience.

Mohsen Namvar was arrested at his home in Tehran by eight police officers who refused to tell him why he was being arrested. They took his computer, printer, CDs, books and money. It is not known where he is held. Mohsen Namvar had been arrested in 2007 for baptising Muslim converting to Christianity. He was tortured with electric shocks to his back which left him unable to walk. After his release, he had surgery to his back. Although he is now able to walk, prolonged sitting or standing causes him pain.

Mojtaba Hussein was charged with "activities against the state's religion," and his bail was set at US\$20,000. No date has yet been set for a trial. He has now returned home, where he is under strict surveillance. He had been arrested at his home on 11 May, along with his father, one brother and one sister, who were released later that day. All the family's books, CDs, computers and printers had been confiscated when they were arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 11 May eight other Christian converts had also been arrested in Shiraz and later released. They are awaiting trial, two of them charged with "acting against Islam" and the others with "acting against state security."

Christianity is a recognized religion in Iran, but evangelical Christians, some of whom have converted from Islam, often face harassment by the authorities. Converts from Islam risk arrest, attack or even the death penalty. Conversion from Islam (apostasy) is forbidden under Islamic law, which requires apostates to be put to death if they refuse to go back to Islam. There is currently no specific provision in the Iranian Penal Code for apostasy, but judges are required to use their knowledge of Islamic law to rule on cases where no specific legislation exists in the Penal Code.

A new version of the Iranian Penal Code is currently under consideration by the Majles (Parliament) and prescribes the death penalty for those considered to be apostates.

Article 23 of the Iranian Constitution states: "The investigation of individuals' beliefs is forbidden, and no one may be molested or taken to task simply for holding a certain belief." Under Article 18 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party, "Everyone shall have the right to

freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching."

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

- expressing concern that Mahmoud Matin, Arash and Mohsen Namvar appear to have been detained solely on account of their religious beliefs, in which case they would be prisoners of conscience;
- calling on the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally, or charge them promptly with recognizably criminal offences and give them a fair trial;
- asking why they have been arrested, what they have been charged with and where they are held;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they are not being tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and all three have access to legal assistance of their own choosing, their families and any medical treatment they may require;
- reminding the authorities that freedom of religious belief is guaranteed by the Iranian Constitution, and by Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a party.

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**

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 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

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani
Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Iran

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

Email: fsharafi@bia-judiciary.ir (In the subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)
int_aff@judiciary.ir (In the subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani**)

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 July 2008.