

PUBLIC

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18 November 2008

Further Information on UA 68/08 (MDE 13/047/2008, 12 March 2008) Fear of torture New concerns: Possible prisoner of conscience/ unfair trial

IRAN **Ebrahim Mehrnahad (or Mehrnehad) (m), aged 16**
Fazlorahman Jahras (m), aged about 16
Abdollah Salarzahi, (m), leading member, Voice of Justice Young People's Society (VJYPS)
Asadollah Shahbaksh, (m) student, VJYPS member

Ebrahim Mehrnehad, a member of the Baluchi minority in Iran, has been sentenced to five years' imprisonment, two of them suspended. Fazlorahman Jahras, Abdollah Salarzahi and Asadollah Shahbaksh, members of the Baluchi minority, have been released.

Ebrahim Mehrnehad was arrested in March 2008, and held in Zahedan Central Prison in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, south-eastern Iran. On or around 16 September, a court in Zahedan sentenced him on charges of 'acting against national security' and 'spreading propaganda'. These charges may relate to his public condemnation of the death sentence imposed on his brother, Ya'qoub Mehrnehad, who was subsequently executed in August. Ebrahim Mehrnehad was not given access to a lawyer and according to reports, he has been tortured, including by being burnt. He may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely on account of the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

Baluchi journalist and civil society activist Ya'qoub Mehrnehad was executed on 4 August 2008 (see UA 38/08, MDE 13/038/2008, 12 February 2008 and follow-ups). Ya'qoub Mehrnehad was the head and co-founder of Voice of Justice Young People's Society (VJYPS), which organizes events such as concerts and educational courses for young Baluchi people, and raises funds to help the poor. Ebrahim Mehrnehad was previously arrested after a meeting of VJYPS, in May 2007, and released after three months.

Fazlorahman Jahras was released in August. Abdollah Salarzahi, spokesperson and Central Council member of the VJYPS, and Asadollah Shahbaksh, a member of the VJYPS and geography student at Azad University in Zahedan, were both released at the end of August. Amnesty International has no further information relating to their cases.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran's Baluchi minority is believed to constitute one to three per cent of the country's total population of around 70 million. Most ethnic Baluchis live in Sistan-Baluchistan province, with smaller numbers in Kerman province. However, Baluchis have migrated elsewhere in Iran, particularly Tehran, to find work. Baluchis in Iran mostly speak Baluchi as a first language, with a minority speaking Brahoui. Most are Sunni Muslims, although the majority (around 90 per cent) of Iranians are Shi'a. An estimated 20,000 of the 1.7 million inhabitants of Sistan-Baluchistan province are said to be nomads. There has been an increase in human rights violations on the Baluchi minority by the Iranian government following a number of attacks on Iranian officials by the Baluchi armed group, the People's Resistance of Movement of Iran (PRMI), formerly known as Jondallah. This has included widespread arrests and concurrent marked rise in the number of executions of ethnic Baluchis, often after grossly unfair, summary trials.

For further information please see: *Iran: Human Rights Abuses against the Baluchi Minority*, MDE 13/104/2007, September 2007; at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/104/2007>.

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

- welcoming the release of Fazlorahman Jahras, Abdollah Salarzahi and Asadollah Shahbaksh;
- urging the authorities to release Ebrahim Mehrnehad if he is being detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association;
- asking to be informed in detail of the charges brought against him;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that any appeal procedure conforms to international standards for fair trial;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Ebrahim Mehrnehad has access to his family and a lawyer of his choice and to any medical treatment he may require;
- urging the authorities to ensure that he will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in detention;
- reminding the authorities that the use of confessions extracted under duress is prohibited by Article 38 of the Constitution of Iran.

APPEALS TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency 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**

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

Ministry of Intelligence, Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Governor of Sistan - Baluchistan province

Mr Dahmarde, Governor

Fax: **+98 541 3231990**

E-mail: info@sb-ostan.ir

Salutation: **Dear Sir**

COPIES 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**

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani

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

Fax: **+98 21 3390 4986 (there are problems with this line, please try three times)**

Email: 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 30 December 2008.