
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 145/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - IRAN

PLEASE NOTE: CORRECTION: This relates to point 2 in the Haiti Q&A sent out in news service 144/94. See line 16 of the point 2 answer, the correct line is: "However, the organization is concerned that such persons may not now be accorded any opportunity of a hearing of their asylum claim."

The situation regarding US policy towards the Haitian asylum seekers seems to be still under discussion, so if you get any queries relating to point 2 please check with the Haiti research team at the IS before speaking to the media. Thanks - Dina

NEWS INITIATIVES - INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

****United Kingdom - ON HOLD** DO NOT USE THIS DOCUMENT, SEE NOTE ABOVE**

Pakistan - 27 July - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 81/94

Myanmar - 20 July - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASE SEE NEWS SERVICE 99/94

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 129/94

Kosovo - 20 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - second week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Lusophone Summit - 27 June - PLEASE NOTE - This summit has been postponed. Hold on to the news service item, we will let you know when the summit is rescheduled. SEE NEWS SERVICE 124/94 for item

North and South Korea - 21 July - SEE NEWS SERVICE 135

****Sri Lanka - 15 July** - The item on Sri Lanka enclosed is embargoed for 15 July. It is being sent to Sri Lankan media only.**

Brazil - 14 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

FORTHCOMING NEWS INITIATIVES

Annual Report - 0600 hrs GMT 7 July 1994 - SEE NEWS SERVICE 51/94

News Service 145/84

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7 JULY 1984

IRAN: TWO MORE CHURCH LEADERS FOUND DEAD, OTHERS MAY BE AT RISK

In the last few days two more church leaders have been found dead in Iran, following the death of a Christian leader in January this year.

"In light of these recent deaths we fear that other leaders of the Iranian Christian community may be at risk and we have serious concerns about their safety", Amnesty International said today.

Reverend Tatavous Michaelian, a 62-year-old Armenian Christian and Chairman of the Council of Protestant Ministers had not been seen since leaving his home on 29 June. His body was discovered on 2 July with several gun shot wounds to the head.

Three days later, while the police were reportedly conducting investigations into the murder of Reverend Michaelian, they found the body of Reverend Mehdi Dibaj in a forest in West Tehran. He had not been seen since 24 June.

In a letter sent today to President Hashemi Rafsanjani, Amnesty International said it was extremely concerned about these deaths and urged an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding them and for the conclusions and methods of the investigation to be made public.

"We are calling on the Iranian Government to ensure the protection of religious minorities in Iran, including the right to life", Amnesty International said.

Reverend Mehdi Dibaj was released from prison earlier this year where he had been detained as a prisoner of conscience since 1984. Apparently no reason was ever given for his arrest, but while in prison he was sentenced to death by an Islamic Revolutionary Court on charges of apostasy -- referring to his conversion from Islam to Christianity some 45 years ago. Although Mehdi Dibaj was released on 16 January 1984, the charges against him were reportedly not dropped.

Amnesty International previously wrote to the Iranian Government in January, following the death of Reverend Haik Hovsepian Mehr, Superintendent of the Church of the Assemblies of God, who had campaigned for the release of Mehdi Dibaj. Although the human rights organization urged the government to investigate his death, it has not yet received any response from the Iranian authorities.