

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 61/07 (MDE 13/027/2007, 09 March 2007) and follow-up (MDE 13/067/2007, 7 June 2007) – Prisoners of conscience/Torture

IRAN	Jelil Ghanilou (m)]
Released:	Esma'il Javadi (m), aged 31, journalist]
	Ebulfezl Alilu (m)]
	Ramin Sadeghi (m)] Azerbaijani cultural and linguistic
	Qahreman Qanbarpour (m)] rights activists
	Adel Allahverdipour (m)]
	Safar Ali Kho'ini (m)]
	Ja'far Haqazari (m)]

All of those named above, except Jelil Ghanilou have been released. Safar Ali Kho'ini was released on 11 March 2007 on bail totalling around the equivalent of US\$325,000. It is not known whether he has been charged or tried. Esma'il Javadi and Ebulfezl Alilu were released on 12 March and on 30 April respectively after a judge dismissed a case against them. Ramin Sadeghi was released on 15 March 2007. However he was sentenced on 20 October 2007 by Branch 14 of Ardabil Revolutionary Court to 50 lashes and a fine of the equivalent of, roughly, US\$325. It is not known whether the flogging sentence was carried out. Qahreman Qanbarpour, Adel Allahverdipour and Ja'far Haqazari have also been released. Amnesty International has no further information concerning them.

Azerbaijani cultural and linguistic rights activist Jelil Ghanilou continues to face torture and interrogation following six months' arrest and ongoing interrogation, while being moved between prisons in two different cities. He has neither been charged nor given access to legal representation. He has however been allowed to meet with and speak with family members. Amnesty International believes that Jelil Ghanilou is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Jelil Ghanilou was arrested in Zenjan in February 2007 in connection with his participation marking International Mother Language Day. He was released around 10 days later but on 28 May 2007 he was re-arrested following demonstrations marking the anniversary of the publication in May 2007 of a cartoon seen by many Iranian Azerbaijani activists as offensive. It appears that he was then moved to incommunicado detention, prompting a statement by the National Movement of Azerbaijan – Zenjan (*Harakat-e Melli-ye Azerbaijan – Zenjan*) on 2 June 2007, entitled "Where are Sa'id Metinpour [another Azerbaijani activist] and Jelil Ghanilou?" Amnesty International has now learned that from June 2007, he was repeatedly been moved between Evin Prison in Tehran and a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Zenjan and that he continued to face both interrogation and torture throughout the latter part of 2007 and into 2008.

Amnesty International has learned that Jelil Ghanilou was permitted one family visit in September 2007. By then he had reportedly been deprived of sleep for long periods and faced 24-hour interrogation. Officials also threatened that members of his family could be harmed. He is reported to have required medical treatment several times and when family members apparently tried to post the bail that officials demanded, they were turned away. They reportedly had irregular telephone contact with him in the latter part of 2007, though if he spoke Azerbaijani Turkic, the line was sometimes cut, when conversations in Persian were allowed to continue. Guards watched over him during his telephone conversations.

Jelil Ghanilou has been held in the Ministry of Intelligence-run Section 209 of Tehran's Evin Prison since 4 December 2007. On 3 February 2008, flanked by guards, he is reported to have said in a telephone conversation that he had been held in solitary confinement for 6 months and that he continued to face torture. Jelil Ghanilou allegedly added that he is no longer afraid to say over the telephone that the psychological pressures of uncertainty, misleading information; of repeated interrogations and threats from the authorities are wearing him down. Secret detention has been shown to facilitate torture and ill treatment. Prolonged incommunicado detention can itself be a form of cruel inhuman and degrading punishment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iranian Azerbaijanis speak a Turkic language and are mainly Shi'a Muslims. The largest minority in Iran, they live mainly in the north and north-west of the country, and in the capital, Tehran. Many Iranian Azerbaijanis demand greater cultural and linguistic rights, including implementation of their constitutional right to education in Azerbaijani Turkic. Article 15 of Iran's Constitution states that Persian is the official language of Iran and that "official documents, correspondence and texts, as well as textbooks, must be in this language and script." It adds that "the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian."

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

- calling on the authorities to halt any torture that Jelil Ghanilou may continue to face, and ensuring that any such reports are fully investigated and, if necessary, the perpetrators brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to promptly charge Jelil Ghanilou with a recognisably criminal offense and try him in a fair trial or release him;
- expressing concern that Jelil Ghanilou has been detained without charge or access to a lawyer of his choice for over six months, and that prolonged Secret detention has been shown to facilitate torture and ill treatment;
- pointing out that if he is detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience, and would call for his immediate and unconditional release.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

istiftaa@wilayah.org

Fax: +98 251 774 2228 (mark **FAO Office of His Excellency Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami, Baharestan Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 21 3355 6408
Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir

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 20 March 2008.