

PUBLIC

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UA 38/08 Death sentence/Unfair trial/Torture

IRAN Ya'qub Mehrnehad (m), aged 28, member of Iran's Baluchi minority

Baluchi cultural and civil rights activist Ya'qub Mehrnehad was sentenced to death in early February, for an unknown offence, after an unfair trial conducted behind closed doors. He has allegedly been tortured. His appeal before the Supreme Court has been scheduled for 17 February, denying him the minimum 20 days normally given in Iran for him to prepare his appeal.

His trial began on 25 December 2007 before a court in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Baluchistan province. This may have been a special court set up in the city in May 2006, and it is unclear if it operates as a branch of the Revolutionary Court it would be governed by the General and Revolutionary Court procedures, but it may be operating outside that framework. Furthermore, in June 2006 it was announced that a "special judicial complex for security affairs" had begun work and that a recommendation had been made to the Judiciary to establish a branch of the Supreme Court in the complex in order to expedite the implementation of sentences and to reduce the time between the commission of crimes and the implementation of sentences. Amnesty International is concerned that Ya'qub Mehrnehad may be in imminent danger of execution.

Ya'qub Mehrnehad is the head of a government-registered NGO, The Voice of Justice Young People's Society, which specializes in organising events such as concerts and educational courses for young Baluchi people. He was arrested in early May 2007 along with five other members of the association after they attended a meeting in the Provincial Office of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which the Governor of Zahedan reportedly attended. The five other men were later released. The exact reasons for his arrest are not known although some newspaper reports in July 2007 mentioned that a man identified as Ya'qub M. was being detained on suspicion of "aiding Abdolmalek Rigi", the head of a Baluchi armed group, *Jondallah*, also known as the Iranian Peoples' Resistance Movement.

Five months after his arrest, Ya'qub Mehrnehad was allowed visits from his lawyer and his family, who said afterwards that he had been tortured, had lost about 15kg and was unable to keep his balance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran's Baluchi minority live mainly in the south-east of the country, and are believed to make up between one and three percent of the total population of around 70 million. Mainly Sunni Muslims, they have for many years complained of discrimination by the authorities.

Jondallah has carried out a number of armed attacks on Iranian officials and has sometimes taken hostages and killed them. It reportedly seeks to defend the rights of the Baluchi people, though government officials have claimed that it is involved in drug smuggling and terrorist activities and has ties to foreign governments.

Attacks by *Jondallah* have been followed by widespread arrests of members of the Baluchi minority. According to a 15 March 2007 BBC report, Sistan-Baluchistan television said that at least two people had been hanged in connection with a 14 February 2007 attack on a bus carrying Revolutionary Guards. At least 17 other people are reported to have been either sentenced to death or executed in connection with a March 2006 attack in Tasuki, in which up to 22 people were reportedly killed. In an interview with the Iranian newspaper *'Ayyaran* on 17 March 2007, parliamentarian Hossein Ali Shahryari said prisons in Sistan-Baluchistan

province held more than 700 people under sentence of death. In 2007, at least 312 people were executed in Iran, and the true figure may be considerably higher. There was a marked rise in the number of Baluchis executed.

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

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

- calling on the authorities not to carry out the death sentence against Ya'qub Mehrnehad;
- asking for details of the charges against Ya'qub Mehrnehad and his trial;
- expressing concern at reports that Ya'qub Mehrnehad has been tortured, and has lost 15kg and cannot keep his balance as a result, and reminding the authorities of their responsibility to ensure that he has access to adequate medical treatment;
- stating that Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

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**

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie

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

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/

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 (Ask for your message to be passed to the Article 90 Commission)

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 25 March 2008.

