

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 and MDE 13/035/2008, 7 February 2008) - Prisoners of conscience/Torture

IRAN Jelil Ghanilou (m) - Azerbaijani cultural and linguistic right activist

Jelil Ghanilou, an Azerbaijani cultural and linguistic right activist, was released on 27 February and is now at home with his family in the city of Zanzan in western Iran. Bail amounting to around US\$86,000 was paid for his release.

Jelil Ghanilou was arrested in Zanzan in February 2007 in connection with his participation in an event marking International Mother Language Day. He was released around 10 days later but on 28 May 2007 he was rearrested following demonstrations marking the anniversary of the publication in May 2007 of a cartoon seen by many Iranian Azerbaijani activists as offensive. Between June 2007 and his release he was repeatedly moved between Evin Prison in Tehran and a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Zanzan. Reports suggest that he faced continuous interrogation and ill treatment throughout the latter part of 2007 and into 2008. He was held in the Ministry of Intelligence-run Section 209 of Tehran's Evin Prison from 4 December 2007 until his release.

Jelil Ghanilou was permitted one family visit in September 2007, prior to which he had reportedly been deprived of sleep for long periods and had faced periods of 24-hour interrogations. Officials had threatened members of his family. He is reported to have required medical treatment several times. His family had irregular telephone contact with him in the latter part of 2007. If Jelil Ghanilou spoke Azerbaijani Turkic during their conversations, the line was sometimes cut, while conversations in Persian were allowed to continue. Guards watched over him during his telephone conversations.

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 six months and that he continued to face torture. Jelil Ghanilou allegedly added that he was no longer afraid to say over the telephone that the psychological pressures of uncertainty, misleading information; of repeated interrogations and threats from the authorities were wearing him down.

No further action is required. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.