
amnesty international

IRAN - APPEAL CASE

Four Ahwazi Arab women and two children

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

17 May 2006

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At least four women and two children are currently detained by the security forces in Khuzestan province, south western Iran. They are all members of Iran's Arab minority and Amnesty International believes they are very likely to be prisoners of conscience held solely in order to force their husbands and fathers to give themselves up to the Iranian authorities or to cooperate with them and provide information about wanted Iranian Arab activists. If so, they should be released immediately and unconditionally. They are not known to have been granted access to legal representation.



Fahima Ismail Badawi © Ahwaz Human Rights Organization (AHRO)

According to reports, **Fahima Ismail Badawi** was eight months' pregnant when she was arrested at her home on 28 February 2006 along with her mother and taken to the Sepidar detention centre in Ahvaz city. Fahima's Badawi's husband had been arrested earlier the same day. Her mother was released a week later.

Fahima Ismail Badawi is a school teacher in Ahvaz city, in Khuzestan province. She studied mathematics at Dezfoul University, north of Ahvaz, where she became politically active. Her husband, Ali Matour-Zadeh, one of the founding members of Hizb al-Wifaq, an illegal political party in Iran, is being held incommunicado in an unknown place of detention where he is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

On 25 March 2006 Fahima Ismail Badawi

reportedly gave birth in prison to a daughter she named Salma', after which she was taken briefly to hospital.

According to reports, the Iranian authorities have set three conditions for her release: that the family pays a 3 billion Iranian rials bail (equivalent to about US\$344,000); that she divorces her husband *in absentia* and that she allows the Iranian authorities to name her newborn baby for her, instead of using the Arabic name chosen for her by her parents.

Fahima and her child, both said to be in poor health, were reportedly transferred to Karoun Prison in Ahvaz city in mid-May 2006. Salma' is reportedly suffering from newborn jaundice and Fahima has reportedly lost a lot of weight. Fahima Badawi's husband, Ali Matour-Zadeh, was also reportedly allowed to phone his wife in prison and told her his state of health was very poor.



Sakina Naisi © AHRO

Sakina Naisi, 40, a mother of five, was reportedly arrested in Ahvaz on 27 February 2006 along with her 19-year-old son Nahez and taken to the Sepidar detention centre. Nahez was reportedly released after about 10 days. Asthma sufferer Sakina Naisi was three months' pregnant. At the beginning of April 2006 she was reportedly taken to a hospital in Ahvaz after suffering blood loss, and apparently suffered a miscarriage which required medical intervention. Her husband, Ahmad Naisi, a prominent political activist, is said to be wanted by the authorities. Following Sakina

Naisi's arrest, the Iranian authorities reportedly destroyed her husband's family home in the Sho'aybiyeh district of Ahvaz with bulldozers.

Soghra Khudayrawi, aged about 27, and her four-year-old son **Zeidan** were reportedly arrested in Ahvaz on 7 March 2006 and taken to the Sepidar detention centre. Her husband, Khalaf Derhab Khudayrawi, was reportedly shot by the security forces on or around 2 March 2006 and was taken away. His family believed he had died in the shooting, but a few days later received a phone call from the authorities informing them that he had been transferred to the Sepidar detention centre, after which Soghra Khudayrawi was arrested.



Hoda Hawashemi © AHRO



Ahmad (aged 4) and Ossama (aged 2) © AHRO

Hoda Hawashemi, 24, was reportedly arrested at her home in Ahvaz on 1 April 2006, together with her two young sons, two-year-old Ossama and four-year-old Ahmad. Her husband, Habib Farajallah Chaab, is a prominent activist for the rights of Iran's Arab minority, and is wanted by the Iranian authorities. According to reports, Hoda Hawashemi's health deteriorated in detention and she was taken from the Sepidar detention centre to a hospital in Ahvaz on 6 May 2006. Her two children were subsequently released and handed back to the family.

In yet another case, **Ma'soumeh Ka'bi**, 28, the wife of another prominent member of the Hizb al-Wifaq, Habib Nabgan, was arrested along with the couple's four-year-old son at their home on 27 February 2006. They were reportedly held at the Sepidar detention centre from 8 March 2006. They were reportedly released on 28 April 2006 after payment of bail.

BACKGROUND

Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the

province of Khuzestan which borders Iraq. It is strategically important because it is the site of much of Iran's oil reserves. Historically, the Arab community has been marginalised and discriminated against. Tension has mounted among the Arab population since April 2005, when scores of Arabs were killed, hundreds injured and hundreds more detained during and following demonstrations. The demonstrations were undertaken in protest at a letter which came to light allegedly written in 1999 by a presidential adviser, who denied its authenticity. This appeared to set out policies for the reduction of the Arab population of Khuzestan, including resettling Arabs in other regions of Iran, resettling non-Arabs in the province, and replacing Arabic place names with Persian ones. The text, with an English translation, can be found at <http://www.ahwaz.org.uk/images/ahwaz-khuzestan.pdf>; the reputed author's denial that he wrote the letter, along with an explanation of the contents, can be found (in Persian) at <http://www.webneveshteha.com/>. The security forces appear to have used excessive force in stopping the demonstration resulting in unlawful killings, including possible extra-judicial executions. Following the unrest, 180 members of the Majles (Iran's Parliament) wrote to the then President, Mohammad Khatami, urging the release of detainees who were found not to have committed any crime and criticizing officials who had not taken sufficient measures to address the socio-political problems of Khuzestan. They also called for civil rights to be respected.

Since then, the cycle of violence has intensified in the province. Scores of Arabs were arrested following four pre-election bomb blasts in Ahvaz and two others in Tehran in June 2005 which killed up to 10 and injured at least 90 people. Other bombs in October 2005 and January 2006 killed at least 12 people and were followed by waves of arrests. Arrests have also followed demonstrations on culturally significant occasions such as the Muslim festivals of 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Adha. Amnesty International has received the names of around 500 Iranian Arabs detained since April 2005, some repeatedly, although the true number of detainees is likely to be much higher. Two men, Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, were executed in public on 2 March 2006 after they were convicted of involvement in the October bombings. Their executions followed unfair trials before a Revolutionary Court during which they are believed to have been denied access to lawyers, and after their "confessions" were broadcast on television. Others are feared to be at risk of execution.

Amnesty International recognizes that there have been acts of violence in Khuzestan province which

have led to injuries and deaths among the civilian population. It also recognizes that the Iranian government has a responsibility to bring to justice those who commit criminal offences. However, in doing so the Iranian authorities must abide by relevant international human rights law and standards.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Please send faxes/ e-mail letters in Persian, Arabic, English or French:

- expressing concern that the four women and two children named above are very probably prisoners of conscience, held solely in order to force their husbands and fathers to give themselves up to the Iranian authorities;
- calling on the authorities to release all six immediately and unconditionally unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- expressing concern for their safety and seeking assurances that they are not being tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- calling for all the detainees to be given immediate access to lawyers of their own choosing, their families and medical treatment as required.

PLEASE SEND YOUR 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

Salutation: Your Excellency

President

His Excellency Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan
Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: Via foreign affairs: +98 21 6 674 790 and ask to be forwarded to H.E Ahmadinejad
Email: dr-ahmadinejad@president.ir
via website: www.president.ir/email
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Intelligence

His Excellency Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Information
Second Negarestan Street
Pasdaran Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: Via foreign affairs: +98 21 6 674 790 and ask to be forwarded to H.E. Mohseni Ejeie
E-mail: iranprobe@iranprobe.com

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: + 98 21 6 646 1746

COPIES TO:

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi
Shahrudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Please send emails via the feedback
form on the Persian site of the website:

<http://www.iranjudiciary.org/contactus-feedback-fa.html>

The text of the feedback form translates as:
1st line: name, 2nd line: email address, 3rd
line: subject heading, then enter your email
into the text box.

Salutation: Your Excellency

Islamic Human Rights Commission

Mohammad Hassan Ziai-Far
Secretary
Islamic Human Rights Commission
P.O. Box 13165-137
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +9821 2204 0541

Governor General of Khuzestan Province

His Excellency Amir Hayat-Moqaddam
The Office of the Governor General
Felestin Street, Amanieh, Ahvaz,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 611 336 7313

Salutation: Your Excellency