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Public Statement

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Iran: Five years of injustice and impunity

Amnesty International today renewed its calls to Iran's judiciary to undertake an independent and impartial judicial review of the trials of demonstrators convicted after their arrest during the July 1999 student led demonstrations, known in Iran as the 18 Tir events, after the date in the Iranian calendar. The organization also calls on the authority to carry out investigations of allegations of torture made by these prisoners and ensure that anyone found responsible for the torture is brought to justice.

In March 2000, in letters from Tehran's Evin prison sent to the Head of Judiciary -- printed by local newspapers -- Akbar Mohammadi stated that he had been ill treated while in custody. He claimed to have been "violently beaten"; suspended by his arms, and whipped on the soles of his feet with electric cables. Prison guards reportedly beat him until he was on the point of losing consciousness, saying that all he had to do was blink to accept the charges [relating to national security] made against him. Another student, Ahmad Batebi wrote that soldiers bound his hands to plumbing pipes; beat his head and abdominal area with soldiers' shoes, and held him under a drain full of excrement for so long that he was unable to breathe.

To Amnesty International's knowledge, no open, independent investigation has ever been conducted into the allegations of ill treatment and torture made by Akbar Mohammadi, Ahmad Batebi or any of the students detained in July 1999. Some of whom later were granted asylum in European countries, where they received treatment for a range of incidences of torture, including instrumental rape.

Amnesty International renews its call to Iran's judiciary to:

- Conduct an open and independent enquiry into allegations of torture carried out on Akbar Mohammadi, Ahmad Batebi and other students during the events of 18 Tir
- Bring to justice anyone found responsible for torture and ill-treatment of Akbar Mohammadi, Ahmad Batebi and other detainees;
- Carry out a judicial review of the case of Akbar Mohammadi and others arrested in connection with the demonstrations;
- Immediately release all those found to have been imprisoned solely for the expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

Background

In early July 1999, a small number of students in Tehran gathered to protest against increasing restrictions on freedom of expression. Following the forced closure of the newspaper Salam (Hello) on 7 July, demonstrations swelled into the hundreds. As the days passed, exchanges with security forces became increasingly angry. On 8 July, peaceful demonstrators were attacked by members of the organization Ansar-e Hezbollah, a semi-official organization which opposes political dissent against the

state. Security forces at the scene reportedly failed to intervene to protect the students.

In the following days the size and nature of the demonstrations changed dramatically, leading to an escalation in violence. Despite calls for calm from some student leaders, and an official ban on demonstrations in Tehran, demonstrations continued and spread to other towns and cities. Hundreds of people were arrested throughout the country, most of whom were held without charge or trial. Dozens faced torture and ill-treatment in incommunicado detention, followed by manifestly unfair trials and imprisonment.

The unrest, which has become known as the events of 18 Tir (the date in the Iranian calendar during which the events took place), was also marked by a raid carried out by plain clothed (called in Persian the *lebas shakhsy*) members of the Ansar-e Hezbollah and members of the security forces into the student dormitories. This resulted in the killing of Ezzat Ebrahim Nejat. The attack was strongly condemned by both President Khatami and the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and two senior police officers were later arrested and removed from their positions as a result of an official investigation. No one associated with the Ansar-e Hezbollah was charged in connection with the raid or the death of Ezzat Ebrahim Nejat.

Iranian non-governmental human rights organizations, such as the Association of Human Rights Defenders (AHRD, or *Kanoun-e Modafe'an-e Hoqouq-e Bashari*) have repeatedly called for an investigation into the raid on the dormitories and killing of Ezzat Ebrahim Nejat, and for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Their calls have gone unheeded.

Amnesty International has been campaigning on behalf of students who have been convicted and imprisoned after trials which failed to meet international standards for fair trial. The organization has also been calling for the investigation of allegations of torture made by the prisoners and for those found responsible for the torture to be brought to justice. Please see the following case sheet on Akbar Mohammadi:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130272004>