

AI Index: PRE 01/306/2009
15 August 2009

Iran: Supreme Leader must act on torture, says Amnesty International

Torture allegations now emerging in Iran must be urgently and independently investigated, Irene Khan, Amnesty International's Secretary General said today, as she urged Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to institute an immediate, independent inquiry and to invite international experts to help carry it out.

"Reports emerging from Iran allege that both men and women detainees have been raped and tortured in other ways, in some cases causing their deaths," said Irene Khan. "The forms of abuse described appear to have been intended to degrade and humiliate the victims in the most extreme way, and if the allegations are well-founded those responsible must be brought to justice without delay."

On 12 August, Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Iranian Parliament (Majles-e Shoura-ye Islami), said that an investigations conducted by the parliament had found no evidence of rape or other torture of detainees, although the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had earlier ordered the closure of Kahrizak detention centre and announced that the prison's chief and several guards there had been dismissed for abuse of prisoners.

"We note Speaker Larijani's denial but if it is to have credibility, we need to know the details of the investigation to which he refers, including who carried it out and whether it could be considered independent," said Irene Khan. "We are urging the Speaker to make the details known and publish the full findings of the investigation so that the world can assess whether it can be considered credible, or is merely an attempt to deflect criticism and to cover up the truth."

Yesterday, Mehdi Karroubi, one of the four candidates permitted to stand in the 12 June presidential election, alleged that a number of detainees held for protesting against the disputed official result of the election, had been beaten to death in detention. Previously, on 9 August, he alleged that detainees, men and women, had been tortured, including by being raped, in detention and called for an urgent inquiry. It was shortly after this, and in the face of mounting expressions of international concern, that the Speaker announced that the allegations had been dismissed by a parliamentary inquiry.

Mohsen Rouhalamini, son of a top aide to presidential candidate Mohsen Rezaei, is reported to have died of cardiac arrest and bleeding in his lungs two weeks after he was detained on 9 July. He is believed to have been held at Kahrizak and to have had serious facial injuries as well as other injuries. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei reportedly ordered an investigation into his death and it was soon after this that he ordered the closure of Kahrizak detention centre.

"The Supreme Leader must act, and act now, to address the spiral of abuse," said Irene Khan. "Official denials are not enough. What is needed is a root and branch investigation into the allegations of torture, including rape, and other abuses, and the Supreme Leader should invite international experts – such as the

UN special rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions – to visit Iran and participate in the investigation, if it is to have credibility at home and abroad.”