

EXTERNAL

AI Index: 13/01/98

UA 30/98 Death Penalty/ Possible Prisoner of Conscience 29 January 1998

IRANMorteza Firouzi, editor

Amnesty International is alarmed at reports that Morteza Firouzi, editor of the English-language daily newspaper, *Iran News*, has been sentenced to death on charges of spying for "a foreign country". A report by the official Iranian news agency, IRNA, on 28 January 1998 contained no information about when or where Morteza Firouzi may have been tried or the country for which he has allegedly spied. It did reportedly, however, cite a judiciary official as saying that the sentence would soon go before the Supreme Court for approval.

Morteza Firouzi "disappeared" for over 10 weeks following his arrest in June 1997. In October it was reported that he was being detained on charges of espionage. Amnesty International subsequently wrote to the authorities seeking urgent clarification of the reasons for his arrest and detention and any charges brought against him. The organization again raised his case with the authorities in January 1998 but no response has been received.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A pattern of human rights violations has existed for some years in Iran relating to the non-violent activities of journalists and writers. Faraj Sarkouhi, editor of *Adineh magazine* and former prisoner of conscience, was released on 28 January 1998 having "disappeared" more than a year earlier. Other writers targeted include Ali Akbar Saidi-Sirjani, who died in custody in November 1994, Mohammad Sadeq Javadi Hessari, Abbas Maroufi and Heshmatollah Tabarzadi (see UA 269/96, MDE 13/36/96, 20 November 1996 and follow-ups).

Amnesty International is currently following up the case of Akbar Ghanji, publisher of the literary monthly magazine *Rah-e Now* (New Way), who has reportedly been detained since 6 December 1997. No explanation has been given by the authorities concerning the reason for his arrest.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French or your own language:

- urging that the death sentence against Morteza Firouzi be lifted immediately;
- asking for his immediate and unconditional release if he is being held solely for his non-violent activities;
- seeking urgent clarification of the charges against Morteza Firouzi and details of any court proceedings that may have been held resulting in his death sentence;
- seeking assurances that he be granted immediate and regular access to a lawyer of his choice.

APPEALS TO:

Please note that fax numbers provided work very erratically and tones can therefore be difficult to obtain.

1) Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue

Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamanei, Tehran, Iran

Faxes: + 98 21 650203 (via Interior Ministry, ask for fax to be forwarded)

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) President

His Excellency

Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue

Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, The Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran

Faxes: + 98 21 674790 (via Foreign Affairs, ask for fax to be forwarded)

Salutation: Your Excellency

3) Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi

Ministry of Justice

Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Head of Judiciary, Tehran, Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

4) Minister of Information

His Excellency Qorbanali Dorri Najafabadi

Ministry of Information

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Information Minister, Tehran, Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

5) Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Abdollah Nouri

Ministry of the Interior

Dr Fatemi Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Interior Minister, Tehran, Iran

Faxes: + 98 21 899547/650203

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Faxes: + 98 21 674790

Chairman of the Islamic Consultative

Assembly's Human Rights Committee

Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far,

Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Commission

PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Faxes: + 98 21 204 0541

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 16 March 1998.