

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/07/98

Further information on UA 30/98 (MDE 13/01/98, 29 January 1998) and follow-ups MDE 13/05/98, 9 February 1998, and MDE 13/06/98, 18 March 1998 - Death penalty/Fear of imminent execution/Possible prisoner of conscience 11 May 1998

IRAN Morteza Firouzi, aged 43, former editor-in-chief of the English-language daily, the Iran News

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at press reports that Iran's Supreme Court has upheld the death sentence against Iranian journalist Morteza Firouzi following a final review of his case. Amnesty International fears that Morteza Firouzi may now face imminent execution. Unconfirmed reports have suggested that Morteza Firouzi may be stoned to death. His sole chance of escaping the death penalty rests with the possibility of a pardon by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei.

Morteza Firouzi was sentenced to death in January 1998, reportedly on charges of "spying" and "adultery", after a secret trial. An appeal against the sentence was rejected by the Supreme Court in early February. Reports in March, however, suggested that Morteza Firouzi's death sentence may have been lifted following intervention by the President of Iran, Mohammad Khatami, and the Head of the Judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi. Further reports then indicated that his case would instead be returned to the Supreme Court for reconsideration.

Amnesty International is dismayed by the Supreme Court's latest and apparently final decision upholding the death sentence against Morteza Firouzi. The organization has written on a number of occasions to the Iranian Government seeking full details of the charges against Morteza Firouzi and of the proceedings of his trial, but no response has been received. In the absence of clarification from the Iranian authorities, Amnesty International is concerned that the charges brought against Morteza Firouzi may be politically motivated and that, if this is the case, he may be a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Morteza Firouzi, a political analyst, is founder and editor-in-chief of *Iran News*, an English-language newspaper. He has been held in custody since his arrest in June 1997. His arrest and death sentence have triggered a wave of anxiety among Iranian journalists.

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

- expressing concern that Morteza Firouzi may be at risk of imminent execution and urging that the death sentence against him be lifted immediately;
- seeking urgent clarification of the charges against Morteza Firouzi and details of the trial proceedings that resulted in his death sentence;
- asking for his immediate and unconditional release if he is being held for his non-violent opinions or beliefs.

APPEALS TO:

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 Khamenei, 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 the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

4) Deputy Head of the Judiciary and Head of the Clemency and Amnesty Commission

His Excellency Ayatollah Karimi

Office of the Deputy Chief Justice, Bab Homayoon Ave,

Dadgostari (Justice) Palace, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Deputy Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran

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

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