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Fear of imminent execution/ torture

IRAN	Sa'id Qanbar Zahi (m), aged 17]	
	Javad Naroui (m)]	
	Ma'soud Nosrat Zahi (m)]	
	Houshang Shahnavaizi (m)]	All members of Iran's Baluchi minority
	Yahya Sohrab Zahi (m)]	
	Ali Reza Brahoui (m)]	
	Abdalbek Kahra Zahi (also known as Abdalmalek) (m)]	

The seven people named above, including a boy aged 17, are at risk of imminent execution. Amnesty International fears that at least five of the group may have been tortured into "confessing" to involvement in a number of violent crimes carried out in the town of Tasuki, in Sistan-Baluchistan province, southern Iran, in March 2006.

Information provided to Amnesty International suggests that the seven may have been arrested on account of their family ties with those suspected of having been involved in blowing up a bus carrying security officials from the Revolutionary Guard on 14 February 2007, in which at least 14 people were killed.

According to media reports, Ali Reza Brahoui, Yahya Sohrab Zahi, Sa'id Qanbar Zahi, Houshang Shahnavaizi and Ma'soud Nosrat Zahi all made "confessions" on Iranian state television to a number of crimes which allegedly took place in Sistan-Baluchistan, including attacks and carjackings. The televised "confessions" linked an Iranian Baluchi armed opposition group, *Jondallah*, also known as the Iranian Peoples' Resistance Movement (*Jonbesh-e Moqavemat-e Mardom-e Iran*), to these crimes, and to the attack on the bus on 14 February. Unconfirmed reports suggest that the five who "confessed" have been tortured, including by having bones in their hands and feet broken; by being 'branded' with a red-hot iron and by an electric drill applied to their limbs, shredding their muscles.

According to a BBC report, Iranian state television said that Sa'id Qanbar Zahi was tried on 11 March 2006. Amnesty International has no other information concerning the legal proceedings faced by the seven, but there are concerns that they may have faced summary trials, and may not have had access to defence lawyers.

Amnesty International recognizes the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Moreover, Iran is a state party to international treaties which prohibit the execution of those under the age of 18 at the time of their alleged offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran's Baluchi minority lives mainly in the southeast of the country, and is believed to constitute between one and three percent of the total population of around 70 million. Mainly Sunni Muslims, they have for many years complained of discrimination by the Iranian authorities.

Jondallah, or the Iranian Peoples' Resistance Movement, has carried out a number of armed attacks on Iranian officials and has on occasion killed hostages. It reportedly seeks to defend the rights of the Baluchi people, though government officials have claimed that it is involved in drug smuggling and has ties to terrorist groups and to foreign governments. Amnesty International condemns unequivocally the killing of hostages and urges *Jondallah* to desist from this or similar practices immediately.

According to a BBC report on 15 March, Sistan-Baluchistan television has stated that at least two people have been hanged in connection with the attack on the bus carrying Revolutionary Guards. Five days after it took place, an Iranian Baluchi man, Nasrollah Shanbeh-Zehi, was executed in connection with the attack. He was shown on Iranian television "confessing" to the bombing on behalf of *Jondallah* and was executed in public at the site of the bombing. It is thought that the other man allegedly executed in connection with the attack may have been Ahmad Sariz, allegedly a member of *Jondallah*, who was reportedly hanged on 14 March. Reports indicate that at least 17 other individuals have either been sentenced to death or executed in connection with an attack in Tasuki in March 2006, in which up to 22 people were reportedly killed. In an interview with the Iranian newspaper *Ayyaran* on 17 March, Hossein Ali Shahryari, a parliamentarian representing the city of Zahedan, stated that prisons in Sistan-Baluchistan province hold more than 700 people under sentence of death. In 2006, at least 177 people were executed in Iran, including at least four women

and four people who were under 18 at the time of the alleged offence. Possibly as many as one-third of these were members of Iran's Baluchi minority.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Persian or your own language:

- stating that Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- calling on the Iranian authorities to commute immediately the death sentences of these seven individuals (naming them) and of anyone else facing execution in Iran;
- reminding the authorities of their commitment to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that "sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age", and calling on the Iranian authorities to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child by immediately stopping the executions of those who were under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged offence;
- expressing concern at reports that they may have faced torture, in contravention of Iran's own laws and its international obligations;
- expressing concern at reports that the men have been arrested for being related to those suspected of carrying out armed attacks against government security officials;
- seeking details of the charges and any trial proceedings that the individuals named may have faced.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Republic

The Office of the Supreme Leader, Shahid Keshvar Doost Street, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98 251 7774 2228 (mark "For the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah Khamenei")

Email: Via website, in English: <http://www.leader.ir/langs/EN/index.php?p=sendletter>

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying; send appeals by post or email if you cannot get through)

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: For the attention of Ayatollah Shahroudi)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Sistan and Balochistan province

Mr Dahmarde, Governor

Fax: +98 541 3231990

E-mail: info@sb-ostan.ir

Salutation: Dear Sir

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 3 May 2007.
