

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/037/2005

19 July 2005

Further Information on UA 164/05 (MDE 13/025/2005, 14 June 2005) and follow-up (MDE 13/034/2005, 14 July 2005) - Medical concern/ Prisoner of conscience

IRAN Akbar Ganji (m), aged 45, journalist

Akbar Ganji was rushed to the Milad Hospital in Tehran on 17 July. He had been on hunger strike for 37 days, and so was in very poor health, but Tehran's Chief Prosecutor has reportedly said he was hospitalised in order to have surgery on his knee.

The news agency Reuters quoted his wife, Massoumeh Shafii, who was not allowed to see him, as saying that he had been taken to the Milad Hospital because of health problems caused by his hunger strike, but she did not elaborate. According to the Iranian News Agency, Tehran's Chief Prosecutor said that after the prison physicians had examined Akbar Ganji, he was transferred to the hospital to have surgery on the meniscus of his knee.

In an interview with the BBC on 18 July, she said that she had been badly treated by police guarding her husband's hospital room: she waited there for three hours in the hope of seeing him, but was pushed out of the hospital. She also said that she was worried because nobody was telling her why her husband had suddenly been hospitalised. Akbar Ganji's family was finally allowed to visit him at 10.30 that night. He was being fed and medicated intravenously.

Akbar Ganji has reportedly lost 23kg during his hunger strike, which he began in protest at being denied access to medical care for chronic asthma, despite specialist recommendation that he be treated outside prison. He is also demanding to be released unconditionally. According to his wife, the judicial authorities are pressuring him to "repent" for his writings as a new condition for release. Akbar Ganji has already served five-and-a-half years of his six-year sentence. On 14 July, he was put under medical surveillance in the prison hospital, with the prison physicians reportedly examining him two to three times a day. After visiting him that day his wife told Iranian newspapers that her husband would keep up his hunger strike until he was freed from prison unconditionally. She added that his blood pressure had fallen very low and doctors in prison believed he was in danger of cardiac arrest or coma.

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

- expressing concern for the health of Akbar Ganji;
- calling for Akbar Ganji to be granted regular access to his family and confidential meetings with his lawyer;
- calling for Akbar Ganji to be released immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, arrested solely for the peaceful expression of his beliefs.

APPEALS TO: (It may be difficult to get through to Iranian fax numbers, but please keep trying)

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei

The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 649 5880 (please mark 'For the attention of the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei)

Email: info@wilayah.org

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: irjpr@iranjudiciary.org (mark 'Please forward to HE Ayatollah Shahroudi')

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Speaker of Parliament

Gholamali Haddad Adel

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami (Parliament)

Imam Khomeini Avenue,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 646 1746

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 30 August 2005.