

March 2007

Further Information on UA 273/06 (MDE 13/118/2006, 11 October 2006) Arbitrary arrest/ Prisoners of conscience/ Fear of torture and ill-treatment

IRAN

Mostafa Evezpoor (m), aged 25
Mohammad Reza Evezpoor (m), aged 15, his brother
More than 13 others

Mostafa Evezpoor and his 15-year-old brother Mohammad Reza Evezpoor, both members of the Iranian Azerbaijani community, were released on or around 12 October 2006. They had been detained incommunicado since 21 September. Mostafa Evezpoor remains at liberty despite being convicted of "membership and co-operation with 'pan-Turkic' groups", and spreading "propaganda against the system".

Mostafa and Mohammad Reza Evezpoor, along with their brother Morteza, aged 16, were arrested on 21 September at their home in Tabriz, Azerbaijan province, northwestern Iran, by Ministry of Intelligence officials. They were among more than 15 people reportedly detained before and after a boycott, called by Iranian Azerbaijani activists, of the first day of the school year, and demonstrations calling for the right for Iranian Azerbaijani children to be educated in their own language. Morteza Evezpoor was released on or around 9 October. All others reportedly detained in connection with the school boycott are also believed to have been released. No further details are known about their cases.

Mostafa Evezpoor was detained in a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Tabriz for 10 days and was then transferred to Tabriz prison, where he was detained until his release. During his detention he was held in solitary confinement and was subject to physical and psychological torture. He reportedly undertook a hunger strike in protest at his treatment. Mohammad Reza Evezpoor was detained in solitary confinement in a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Tabriz for 13 days, where he was also reportedly physically and psychologically tortured. He was then transferred to Tabriz prison, where he was allegedly detained in a cell with people convicted of serious criminal charges. Mohammad Reza Evezpoor has been charged with spreading "propaganda for 'pan-Turkic' groups", and his case has been referred to a juvenile court.

At the end of November, some weeks after his release, Mostafa Evezpoor received notification by mail of a court verdict, dated 1 November 2006, issued by Branch One of Tabriz Revolutionary Court. The conviction is believed to relate to his arrest and detention in April 2006. Mostafa Evezpoor had previously attended court on two occasions and did not have access to a lawyer, once on 9 April 2006 during a previous period of detention, and following his arrest in September 2006 when was not informed of any charges against him. He was notified that he had been sentenced to six months imprisonment for "membership and co-operation with 'pan-Turkic' groups" and five months imprisonment (taking in account the time he had already spent in custody) for spreading "propaganda against the system", under Articles 499 and 500 of Iran's Penal Code. As evidential basis for the conviction, the verdict lists his activities as a "racist nationalist" within and outside Azad University, his studies of the Turkish language (both in Latin and Azeri handwriting), and Turkish history; and his attendance, participation and "active role" at Iranian Azerbaijani cultural events. It is possible that further charges will be brought against him in relation to his arrest in connection with the school boycott and demonstrations. Following an appeal by Mostafa Evezpoor's lawyer, on 17 December, Branch 2 of the of the Appeals Court of East Azerbaijan Province reduced his sentence to six months' imprisonment, stating that there was no evidence that Mostafa Evezpoor was involved in "propaganda against the system". He is currently at liberty, but may be forced to serve this sentence in the future. Amnesty International believes that, should Mostafa Evezpoor be re-detained in connection with this sentence, he would be a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of his peaceful exercise of his internationally-recognized right to freedom of expression and assembly.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. No further action is required at present. Amnesty International will continue to monitor the cases of the Evezpoor brothers, and will take further action as necessary.
