

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN STUDENT LEADER AT RISK OF TORTURE

Student leader Majid Tavakkoli was arrested on 7 December after a demonstration. His whereabouts are unknown and he is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. Amnesty International considers that he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Majid Tavakkoli was arrested as he left Amir Kabir University of Technology in Tehran, where he had given a speech at a student demonstration marking Student Day in Iran, held on the Persian date of 16 Azar, the anniversary of the killing of three students by security forces in 1953.

The following day, Fars News Agency, which is close to the Revolutionary Guards and the judiciary, published pictures of Majid Tavakkoli wearing women's clothing, and said he had been wearing them at the time of his arrest in order to escape detection. Student websites and others, which have claimed that Majid Tavakkoli was beaten at the time of his arrest, have denied that he was wearing the clothes at the time, but suggested he was forced to wear them afterwards to humiliate him.

Dozens of students and others were arrested around the time of the 7 December protests, which took place in cities across the country. Many have been released, but an unknown number remain in detention.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Majid Tavakkoli, and any others detained around the 7 December demonstrations who are held solely for the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly,
- Expressing deep concern that Majid Tavakkoli has been subjected to an enforced disappearance and urging the authorities to disclose his whereabouts immediately,
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and grant him immediate and regular access to his family, a lawyer of his choice and any medical treatment he may require;
- Asking them to investigate promptly and impartially the reports that Majid Tavakolli was beaten during his arrest.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 January 2010 TO:

Head of the Provincial Judiciary in
Tehran

Ali Reza Avaei
Karimkhan Zand Avenue
Sana'i Avenue, Corner of Alley 17, No.
152
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: avaei@Dadgostary-tehran.ir
Salutation: Dear Mr Avaei

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran,
1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: Via website:
<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/75/Default.aspx>
First starred box: your given name;
second starred box: your family name;
third: your email address
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters
Mohammad Javad Larijani
Howzeh Riassat-e Ghoveh Ghazaiyeh
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave., south of
Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran 1316814737
Islamic Republic of Iran
Fax: +98 21 3390 4986
**Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject
line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)**
Salutation: Dear Mr Larijan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Majid Tavakkoli, a member of the Islamic Students' Association at Amir Kabir University, where he is said to be studying ship-building, was arrested in May 2007, with three others, in connection with student publications said to be insulting to Islam, which the students said had been forged. He was tortured; he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "propaganda against the system" and "insulting the Leader," reduced on appeal to 30 months. He was released in August 2008 and allowed to resume his studies.

He was arrested in February 2009, with around 20 other students, after he took part in a ceremony commemorating the life of the first prime minister to be appointed after the February 1979 revolution, Mehdi Bazargan. Most were soon released, but Majid Tavakkoli and three others were held without trial until June 2009, when they were released on bail. Majid Tavakkoli was the subjects of UA 113/07 and updates, and UA 70/09.

On his last Facebook entry, posted two days before his arrest, Majid Tavakkoli wrote:

"Only two more days [until Monday's demonstrations]. I have spent 10 exhausting days on the road with more than 100 hours of driving and now I have to leave for Tehran. Looking at my mother's tearful eyes and father's anxious glances and despite all the difficulties only the true wish for freedom can maintain my drive and steadfastness. And so once again I welcome and accept all the dangers, standing next to my friends with whom I am honoured and proud to be on 16 Azar [7 December] shoulder to shoulder we will shout against tyranny. For Freedom."

Speaking to the Prague-based Radio Farda on 16 December, Majid Tavakkoli's brother Ali said the family had had no news of Majid since his arrest and that his lawyer had not been able to find out any information either.

Since Majid Tavakkoli was pictured wearing women's clothes, many Iranian men have taken pictures of themselves with headcoverings, often holding signs saying, "We are Majid" and posted them on the internet as part of a solidarity campaign calling for his release. See for example http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=198929939029#/photo_search.php?oid=198929939029&view=all

Students have been at the forefront of continuing protests at the disputed outcome of the presidential election in June 2009 as well as at the widespread human rights violations committed as the authorities banned demonstrations and cracked down violently on protestors. Dozens of people were killed by security forces using excessive force, thousands were arrested, mostly arbitrarily and many were tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Scores have faced unfair trial, including some in mass show trials, with over 80 sentenced to prison terms, and at least five sentenced to death.

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