

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### Iran: Threats against Kurdish human rights defenders must stop

Amnesty International is alarmed at reports that human rights defenders in Sanandaj, Iranian Kordestan, working on children and women's rights are facing threats in connection with their human rights work. It is feared that such harassment may increase towards International Women's Day on 8 March.

The organisation appeals to the Intelligence Section of the Law Enforcement Forces (LEF, or *Hefazat-e Ettela'at-e Nirou-ye Entezami*) in Kordestan to stop its apparently unjustified interference with these activists and to work towards protecting human rights.

In recent days members of the legally recognised non-governmental organisation (NGO), Association for the Defence of Children's Rights (ADCR, or *Kanoun-e Defa' az Hoquouq-e Koudekan*) and the unrecognised Association of Kurdish Women Defending Peace and Human Rights (AKWDP&HR or *Kanoun-e Zanan-e Kord-e Modafa' Solh va Hoquouq-e Bashari*) have endured summons, interrogation, telephone threats and harassment, apparently in connection with their human rights work.

Azad Zamani (m), a member of the ADCR, has stated that the activities of the group, which received legal recognition as an NGO from the Ministry of the Interior around two years ago, have been carried out in the open and have concerned all Iranians without regard to race or religion. The organisation has raised concerns about the administration of criminal cases of minors and expressed opposition to the use of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment on children. Referring to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Iran is a state party, it has called for the prohibition of the use of the death penalty on juveniles and, latterly, the total abolition of the death penalty.

It has been reported that the Intelligence Section of the LEF in Sanandaj, which issued the summons and carried out the interrogations of Azad Zamani, Diba Alikhani (f) and other board members of the ADCR, may seek to have the organisation's license revoked, possibly in advance of International Women's Day on 8 March, when the ADCR is expected to take part in events marking the day.

The Association of Kurdish Women Defending Peace and Human Rights has had its application for NGO status rejected (*rad-e salahiyat*) by the Intelligence Section of the Sanandaj LEF, although the grounds are not clear. Amnesty International has repeatedly campaigned against the use of vague *gozinesh*, or selection and approval criteria which are frequently used to limit citizens' freedom of association. Activist Doctor Roya Tolou'ie, a founding member of the organisation has also faced summons in connection with her activities.

### Background

According to a report on the internet news site, *Payk-e Iran* on 2 March 2005, Diba Alikhani has been summoned and interrogated in connection with her defence of women's and children's rights. It also said

that over the past month, the frequency of the summons, interrogations and pressures on civil society activists has increased.

In an unrelated incident in Tehran, in the evening of 1 March 2005, a fire bomber attacked the premises of Roshangaran Publishers, which publicises works on women's issues. The director, Shahla Lahiji, is a former prisoner of conscience. She was detained, charged and imprisoned in connection with her participation at a conference on Iran, which took place in Berlin, in April 2000.