

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### Iran: Kurdish human rights defenders at risk

Iranian Kurdish journalist and human rights defender Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, head of the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK) (<http://www.rmmk.net/enindex.aspx>), is reportedly being ill-treated in detention. Amnesty International fears that this ill-treatment may be intended to force board members of the HROK to present themselves to security officials, thereby risking arrest and the closure of the KHRO, and is calling on the Iranian authorities to halt any such ill-treatment immediately.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand has been detained since 1 July 2007 in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin Prison. Although he is believed not to have been formally charged, in mid-July he reportedly said that he was being accused of "acting against national security," "propaganda against the system" and "cooperating with groups opposed to the system." He also complained of poor detention conditions and that whenever he was interrogated he was blindfolded and bound hand and foot, His lawyer, Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, has not been allowed to meet with him and contact with his family has been limited.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand is said to suffer from high blood pressure, a skin disorder and a kidney complaint, the nature of which is not known to Amnesty International. He reportedly needs to be able to urinate frequently and failure to do so adversely affects his kidneys. He has been told that if he wants to go to the toilet, he must seek formal permission in writing.

Under current Iranian law, no one is required to present themselves before police or other security forces without first receiving a written summons. However, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand has also been told that if the three board members of the HROK currently at liberty present themselves voluntarily to the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj, he will be permitted to go to the toilet whenever he needs to. In response, Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand is believed to have insisted that the KHRO is an independent, human rights organisation and that 'we will simply not go away and we will continue our humanitarian works.' Amnesty International fears that if board members of the HROK present themselves for interview at the Sanandaj offices of the Ministry of Intelligence, they risk arrest and the HROK will effectively be closed.

The HROK was founded by Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand and others in April 2005 and currently has around 100 members. The authorities have never granted the HROK's request for official recognition as an NGO. A fourth board member, Ajlal Qavami, is in prison in Sanandaj in connection with another case relating to his work as a journalist.

The ill treatment of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand and the associated attempt to pressure board members of the HROK contravene international human rights standards which the Iranian authorities have committed to uphold, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The repeated harassment and imprisonment of human rights defenders by the Iranian authorities, however, calls into question their willingness to observe basic principles of respect for human dignity. The government should ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their important work – which has been recognised in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders - in a climate of respect and in accordance with human rights standards.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kurds, who are one of Iran's many ethnic groups, live mainly in the west and north-west of the country, in the province of Kurdistan and neighbouring provinces bordering Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraq. For many years, Kurdish organizations such as the Kurdistan People's Democratic Party (KDPI) and Komala carried out armed opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, although more recently they have abandoned armed opposition in favour of a federal solution.

The Iranian authorities continue to face armed opposition mainly from the Kurdistan Independent Life Party (PJAK), which reportedly began operations in 2004. The Iranian authorities have accused foreign governments of fomenting unrest among Iran's ethnic minorities.

Mohamad Sadiq Kabudvand was arrested on 1 July at his place of work in Tehran by security officers in plain clothes, the day the publication ban on his newspaper, *Payam-e Mardom-e Kordestan* (Kurdistan People's Message), reportedly expired. He is facing a one-year prison sentence in connection with articles published in this newspaper, but his current detention does not appear to be connected with this.

To take action on behalf of Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, please refer to our Urgent Action <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130812007?open&of=ENG-IRN> and follow up <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/ENGMDE130912007?open&of=ENG-IRN>