News Service 17/96

AI INDEX: MDE 13/04/96
29 JANUARY 1996

IRAN: MAGAZINE EDITOR SENTENCED TO PRISON TERM AND LASHES

Amnesty International today called on the Iranian authorities not to flog a magazine editor sentenced to 35 lashes after being convicted of "publishing lies", insulting the former Leader of the Islamic Republic, and of publishing poems deemed "immoral".

"It is outrageous that Abbas Maroufi will be subjected to the cruel punishment of flogging -- and also faces six months' imprisonment -- for what appears to be simply the expression of his opinion," Amnesty International said today.

Abbas Maroufi was also banned from journalism for two years and the licence of his magazine *Gardoon* was revoked.

Amnesty International believes that cruel punishments such as flogging violate Iran's international obligations under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights ratified by Iran, which prohibit the use of torture or ill-treatment.

The organization also believes that no one should be imprisoned solely for exercising his or her right to freedom of expression and that it would be seeking full details of his trial to assess whether or not this is the case.

According to newspaper reports, the charge of "publishing lies" related to the publication of a survey in *Gardoon* which concluded that depression was common amongst Iranians.   The insult charge reportedly related to an article allegedly comparing Ayatollah Khamenei to the late Shah of Iran.   Abbas Maroufi has the right to appeal against the sentence.

Other journalists in Iran have also been sentenced to lashes and prison terms.   For example, in November 1995 Mohammad Sadeq Javadi Hessari, the editor of *Touss* magazine was reportedly sentenced to 20 lashes and six months' imprisonment on charges of slander and divulging secrets after he had reportedly criticized a court order temporarily suspending the magazine, particularly for the lack of information about the charges against it.   It is not known whether the sentence has yet been carried out.

ENDS\