

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 13/08/97

31 January 1997

Further information on UA 269/96 (MDE 13/36/96, 20 November 1996) and follow-up (MDE 13/40/96, 23 December) - Fear for safety / Possible Prisoner of conscience

IRAN Faraj Sarkouhi, editor

and new names: Isma'il Sarkouhi, brother of Faraj
Parvin Ardalan, assistant to Faraj (f)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Faraj Sarkouhi, the editor of *Adineh* magazine, his brother Isma'il and his assistant at the magazine, Parvin Ardalan. The organization fears that they may be held as prisoners of conscience in unacknowledged detention and is seeking urgent clarification of their whereabouts.

The whereabouts of Faraj Sarkouhi and his brother Isma'il have reportedly been unknown since 27 January 1997. Parvin Ardalan is said not to have been seen since 24 January 1997.

Faraj Sarkouhi previously "disappeared" on 3 November 1996. The Iranian authorities maintained that he had travelled to Germany, but the German authorities were reported as saying that they believed he had never left Iran. Other sources at the time suggested that he was being held in unacknowledged detention by the intelligence services.

Faraj Sarkouhi reappeared at Tehran airport on 20 December 1996 and stated that he had indeed been in Germany, but had not contacted relatives there or in Iran. He was not at that time able to provide any proof that he had been in Germany, although Iranian officials continued to maintain that that was the case, providing Amnesty International in a letter dated 8 January 1997 with a photocopy of a page that they said was from Faraj Sarkouhi's passport, bearing an entry stamp into Germany, dated 3 November 1996.

On 30 January 1997, a letter reportedly in Faraj Sarkouhi's handwriting which appeared to have been sent clandestinely from Iran, was published in translation in German and Swedish newspapers. It has been published in other countries since. In that letter he said that he had been detained in Iran and tortured in order to force him to make a filmed confession that he was a German spy.

He said he was told that his picture had been removed from his passport and that someone else had been sent to Germany in order to ensure that his passport was stamped with a German entry stamp. When the German authorities did not confirm that he had personally arrived in Germany, he was released at Tehran airport, where he was told to say that he had been to Germany. In his letter, he also said that he had been condemned to death, that he was under constant surveillance, that he feared rearrest and that he believed that the "end [wa]s near".

Amnesty International wrote to the Iranian authorities on 29 January 1997 seeking urgent clarification of the situation of Faraj Sarkouhi and his brother Isma'il, including their whereabouts and their legal situation. No response has yet been received.

There are also unconfirmed reports that Faraj Sarkouhi's mother and brother-in-law were interrogated at home for four hours early in the morning of 28 January 1997. Other unconfirmed reports have suggested that other writers

in Iran who were among 134 signatories (including Faraj Sarkouhi) to an open letter published in 1994 which called for an end to censorship in Iran, have received threats from *Hizbollah*, an organization which has in the past carried out attacks against people and institutions considered to be "unIslamic". The writers are said to have been told to withdraw their signatures, or to risk the same fate as Faraj Sarkouhi. Several of the signatories have died in unclear circumstances since 1994.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French or in your own language:

- seeking urgent clarification of the whereabouts of these three people, and urging their immediate and unconditional release if currently detained in Iran as prisoners of conscience;
- seeking assurances that, if held, they are being humanely treated and are protected from torture, ill-treatment, enforced "disappearance" or extrajudicial execution;
- urging that, if held, they should in any case be granted immediate and regular access to relatives and lawyers of their choice;
- in the light of reports of threats made against other writers in Iran, urging the Iranian authorities to ensure the safety of all those who signed the 1994 open letter.

APPEALS TO:

1) Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam
Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue
Azerbaijan Intersection
Tehran, The Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: President Rafsanjani, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

3) Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi
Ministry of Justice
Park-e Shahr, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Head of the Judiciary, Tehran, Iran
Fax: +98-21-6465242
Salutation: Your Excellency

4) Minister of Information

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Ali Fallahian
Ministry of Information
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Information Minister, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Dr Ali Akbar Velayati

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: +98-21-674790Chairman of the Islamic Consultative Assembly's Human Rights Committee,

Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Hussain Farahi, Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Committee,

PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 March 1997.