

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 13/38/97

UA 292/97 Medical concern / Legal concern / Fear of death  
penalty

4 September 1997

IRANFaraj Sarkouhi, editor

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Amnesty International fears that Faraj Sarkouhi may be about to face an unfair trial at which he could be convicted on charges possibly solely relating to his non-violent political activities and sentenced to death. There is also considerable concern for his health after seven months in detention.

Faraj Sarkouhi is reported to have been allowed to receive a family visit for the first time since his detention in February 1997. Eight members of his family, including his mother, were reported to have visited him on 31 August in a prison in Shiraz, central Iran. The family members were reportedly separated from Faraj Sarkouhi by a glass pane and allowed to have a conversation with him for less than 10 minutes.

However, it appears that Faraj Sarkouhi has still not had any legal assistance.

This, coupled with Amnesty International's concerns about the fairness of trials in Iran, raises the organization's fears that Faraj Sarkouhi may not receive a fair trial.

The prisoner is said to be in poor physical condition. Amnesty International is concerned that he may not have received adequate medical attention.

Despite the reported charges against him (see below), Amnesty International believes that Faraj Sarkouhi may be a prisoner of conscience, held for non-violent activities.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

According to reports, Faraj Sarkouhi, without legal representation, was charged on 23 June 1997, amongst other things, with "spying for a foreign country and attempting to illegally leave the country". Earlier, at the end of May, when there were reports that his trial was due to start imminently, Amnesty International sought to send a delegate to observe the trial proceedings.

However, the organization was informed by the Foreign Ministry that 'it was not an appropriate time' for an Amnesty International delegation to visit Iran, but assurances were given that the trial was almost certain to be held in public.

Subsequent reported statements by the Head of the Judiciary that the trial may be held *in camera* at the discretion of the judge have raised fears that the authorities may be trying to conceal the details of the proceedings.

Amnesty International has called on the Iranian authorities to provide full details of the charges against Faraj Sarkouhi and the evidence against him, and to allow the court proceedings to be scrutinized by independent bodies. The authorities should also ensure that his trial meets the minimum standards for fair trial laid down in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party.

This case has already been the subject of UA 269/96 (MDE 13/36/96, 20 November 1996) and follow-ups (MDE 13/40/96, 23 December 1996; MDE 13/08/97, 31 January 1997; MDE 13/09/97, 6 February; MDE 13/10/97, 10 February; MDE 13/16/97, 15 April). However, the UA Network is once again being asked to take action in view of Amnesty International's renewed fears about Faraj Sarkouhi's situation.

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

- welcoming the family visit allowed to Faraj Sarkouhi on 31 August 1997, but expressing concern at reports that he remains without legal assistance and that he is in poor health;
- urging that, while in detention, Faraj Sarkouhi be humanely treated and granted regular access to family members and doctors and lawyers of his choice;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release if he is held as a prisoner of conscience because of his non-violent activities;
- continuing to seek full details of the legal status of Faraj Sarkouhi, and urging that any trial proceedings be carried out in accordance with international standards of fairness;
- urging that the death penalty not be invoked against Faraj Sarkouhi.

**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**  
**Faxes: +98 21 650203 (via Interior Ministry, ask for fax to be forwarded)**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

2) President

His Excellency  
 Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami  
 The Presidency, Palestine Avenue  
 Azerbaijan Intersection, Tehran, The Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Iran**  
**Fax: +98 21 674790 (via Foreign Affairs, ask for fax to be forwarded)**  
**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**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

4) Minister of the Interior

His Excellency Abdollah Nouri  
 Ministry of the Interior  
 Dr Fatemi Avenue  
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Telegrams: Minister of the Interior, Tehran, Iran**  
**Fax: +98 21 899547/650203 (note:it can be difficult to obtain fax tone)**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi  
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue  
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Fax: +98 21 674790**

Chairman of the Islamic Consultative  
Assembly's Human Rights Committee  
Imam Khomeini Avenue, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far,  
Secretary, Islamic Human Rights Committee  
PO Box 13165-137, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Fax: +98 21 204 0541**

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 October 1997.