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Amnesty urges Iran to allow observers into trials

Wed Aug 12, 2009 6:28am EDT

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Featured Broker sponsored link LONDON (Reuters) - Rights group Amnesty International on Wednesday urged Iran to allow international observers to monitor trials of more than 100 people accused of involvement in protests following June's presidential election.

"The trial now going on in Tehran appears to be nothing but a "show trial" through which the supreme leader and those around him seek to de-legitimize recent mass and largely peaceful protests and convince a very skeptical world that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was re-elected fairly for a second term as president," said Amnesty Secretary General Irene Khan.

"It is vital, therefore, that there is an international presence to observe the proceedings at this trial and uphold the rights of the defendants, and I urge the Iranian authorities to allow this," she added in a statement.

Amnesty said compelling evidence of torture had been exposed by Mehdi Karoubi, a moderate candidate who ran against Ahmadinejad in June's election.

Many torture allegations focus on the Kahrizak detention center, outside Tehran, where many of those arrested in connection with the protests are believed to have been taken.

Last month Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered the closure of the "sub-standard" detention center at Kahrizak. Iranian authorities have acknowledged some protesters were tortured at Kahrizak and said its director had been jailed.

Amnesty said reports reaching it shortly before the prison was closed late last month described it as a place of great cruelty and suffering, with detainees held in grossly overcrowded and unsanitary conditions and subject to frequent abuse.

Iran's speaker of parliament on Wednesday rejected as "baseless" Karoubi's accusation that some moderates had been raped in jails.

Iran has charged dozens of people with spying and aiding a Western plot to overthrow its system of clerical rule. Those on trial include Iranians who worked for the French and British embassies and a French teaching assistant.

(Editing by Jon Hemming)

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