

INTERNAL (for AI members only)

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To: All MERAN Coordinators for action
Iran Coordinators and Relevant Sections for information

From: Middle East Region, Research Department

Date: 20 January 1989

MERAN 01/89

Country: Islamic Republic of Iran

AI concern: Political executions

Attachments: Attached are the working papers for this action:

- . Iran: Political Executions (MDE 13/29/88, December 1988)
- . International News Release of 13 December 1988 (MDE 13/31/88)

Background:

In July 1988, before the ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war took effect, the National Liberation Army (NLA), a force led by the People's Mojahedine Organization of IRAN (PMOI), made a military incursion into western Iran, during which both the NLA and the Iranian Government forces appear to have sustained heavy casualties. In the wake of the incursion AI recorded a number of public executions in western Iran of people alleged to have fought or collaborated with the NLA. These were covered by the official Iranian press, which also carried statements by some leading government figures urging that supporters of the PMOI be summarily and harshly dealt with.

In August and September reports began to reach AI that a ban had been imposed on visits to political prisoners and that they were being executed in large numbers throughout Iran. These reports continued to arrive from many different sources, and towards the end of 1988 AI obtained first-hand testimony from relatives of execution victims. It became clear that Iran was undergoing the biggest wave of political executions since the early 1980s when thousands of prisoners were summarily and arbitrarily executed. At the present time the list AI has been able to compile of named political prisoners reportedly executed comes to a total of over a thousand and more names are reaching the organization all the time. Almost all the executions have taken place in secret, and AI believes their true number may run into thousands more.

The majority of those reportedly executed were members or supporters of the PMOI, but many other political groups have also been targeted,

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notably the various factions of the People's Fedayan Organization of Iran, the Tudeh Party, Rah-e Kargar, Peykar and the Kurdish group Komaleh. Many of those executed had been serving prison sentences and an unknown number were probable prisoners of conscience, such as high school pupils arrested for distributing leaflets; in other cases former political prisoners who had served their sentences and been released have been re-arrested and put to death. It is not known whether victims have been re-tried before the death penalty was imposed, and in any case AI's evidence is that trials of political prisoners in Iran are summary and unfair, and that there is no right of appeal against the death sentence. Among the victims AI has recorded the names of well over one hundred women, and there are fears that many more women may soon be executed. AI believes many prisoners of conscience may be among them, including women imprisoned solely because of their relationship to political suspects.

Although the general ban on visits to prisoners was supposed to have been lifted in October, many families have still not been able to gain access to prisoners, and are left not knowing whether their relatives are alive or dead. Even when families are informed of execution, most have not been given the victim's body to perform burial rites, and some have not been told where she or he is buried (see attached International News Release of 13 December 1988, MDE 13/31/88).

Along with the names of those already executed, AI continues to receive the names of dozens of political prisoners alleged to be facing execution, and is continuing its appeals on their behalf.

AI action:

Since August 1988, AI has issued numerous Urgent Actions and Updates on behalf of political prisoners of various factions feared to be in danger of execution, as well as a Medical Action and Update on behalf of two doctors, leading members of the Tudeh Party, now known to have been executed. A Rapid Response Action went to selected sections on 7 December and on 12 December AI wrote to the Iranian Government submitting a list of names of 325 execution victims and asking for comments and clarification on the execution reports. On 13 December the International News Release was issued, accompanied by the external document Iran: Political Executions (both attached). Sections are continuing with embassy visits and home government lobbying and in January, as well as further Urgent Actions, an action for Death Penalty groups has been issued. Iran is to figure as one of the "Category A" countries in the Death Penalty Campaign which will start at the end of April 1989. Until then, we hope to keep putting pressure on the Iranian authorities through continuous action by Death Penalty and MERAN groups in particular, as well as international publicity.

Recommended Actions:

IMPORTANT NOTE: MERAN Coordinators are asked to check with their section offices before beginning to organize their groups' activities on this action. Many sections are already involved in various kinds of action on the executions in Iran, and the action by the MERAN groups should be part of a coordinated programme of activity. It is possible, for example, that MERAN groups may be able to take part in actions being organized at national level, or that there may be extra groups available to work on MERAN 01/89 with you.

1) Letter-writing

Groups should start writing as soon as possible after receiving this action, and as many members as possible should write as many letters as they can. If you have received no reply after one month please write again; if there is no reply after two months, write a third time. This should take you up to the end of April, when the action is scheduled to end. If you receive any reply from the authorities, please copy it immediately to your MERAN Coordinator and to the International Secretariat.

Please try to send some of your letters in English and some in your own language. (We do not advise groups to send letters in Farsi, but if you wish you may enclose a copy of the general AI leaflet in Farsi, available from your section/co-group.) All letters should be courteously-worded and preferably typed, on AI headed paper. (Some appeals may also be sent in a personal or professional capacity (not on AI paper) - see Target Sector Work below.)

Your letters should include the following:

- a brief introduction of AI and its work. Explain in your own words our organization's total opposition to the death penalty, pointing out how AI has campaigned against it in many countries, citing some varied examples from your own campaigning experience. You should stress that AI does not take any position on any religious creed or political system, but bases itself on the belief that the basic human rights within its mandate are universal and should be applied by all governments, all over the world. The organization has national sections in more than forty countries, with an increasingly high level of activity in Latin America, Africa and Asia, where many sections and groups have been established. This includes an increasing number of Muslim members in countries such as Tunisia, Senegal, Egypt and Sudan.
- Express the deepest regret and concern over the hundreds of executions that have taken place in Iran since July 1988 and urge an immediate end to them. Stress that AI has received numerous reports of these executions from many different sources, political and non-political, including first-hand testimony from relatives of execution victims, and that we believe the evidence of these executions is too substantial to be dismissed as mere fabrication by political opponents of the Iranian Government.
- Ask for details of the charges on which these hundreds of political prisoners were executed, whether they were tried and under what procedures. Cite as an example the list of 325 names submitted to the Iranian authorities in December 1988 (a copy was sent to H.E. Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani on 12 December with a letter asking for comments and clarification signed by AI's Secretary General, and further copies have been submitted by AI sections during embassy visits.)
- Urge that any ban on family visits to political prisoners be lifted immediately and that the families of all those who have been executed be promptly officially informed of the charges against their relative, the judicial procedures followed, the date of execution and the place of burial.
- When the Shah was in power, AI worked on behalf of hundreds of people in Iran who were imprisoned, tortured and in some cases executed

because of their opposition to his regime. Among them were members of the present government, including Hojatoleslam Rafsanjani and Ayatollah Montazeri, designated successor to Ayatollah Khomeini. Express your regret that those who have themselves been the victims of serious human rights violations should now allow them to be inflicted upon others.

In your second and third rounds of letter-writing, you should refer to your previous letters and may vary the content by raising other points based on the attached papers and the Background above, such as the execution of possible pocs, of people already serving prison sentences and of former prisoners who had already served their sentences and been released.

Your letter should be addressed to the following officials, all of whom should be addressed as "Your Excellency":

Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi RAFSANJANI
Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
Majles-e Shouray-e Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Ayatollah Abdolkarim Musavi ARDEBILI
Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Judicial Council
Ministry of Justice
Park-e Shahr
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Hojatoleslam Mohammad Musavi KHOENIHA
Prosecutor General
Ministry of Justice (as above)

Please send copies of your letters to diplomatic representatives of Iran in your country and to:

Ayatollah Hossein Ali MONTAZERI
Qom
Islamic Republic of Iran

Dr Ali Akbar VELAYATI
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ferdowsi Avenue, Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

A number of AI sections have already been asked to lobby their own governments with regard to the executions; in support of this, we suggest you send a copy of the attached external documents (perhaps with copies of some of your letters to Iran) to your local parliamentary representative, to draw his/her attention to the gravity of the current human rights situation in Iran. Groups in Europe may also draw attention to a resolution on the executions passed by the European Parliament on 15 December.

2) Publicity

The attached external paper and news release may be used to seek publicity and to answer enquiries as to AI's current position on Iran. There has already been considerable media coverage of the executions at international level, and your sections are responsible for publicity at national level in

your country. However, we would suggest you send your local media (newspapers, radio stations, etc.) a copy of the 13 December News Release accompanied by a letter based on the Background section above, quoting AI's current estimate of executions and stressing that our concern continues, and explaining what your group is doing.

3) Target Sector Work

AI/MERAN group members who themselves come within the categories below are encouraged to send some appeals in their personal or professional capacity.

- Legal

Please bring the attached external documents to the attention of members of the legal profession (lawyers, judges, local bar association, etc.) in your area. Point out that AI has amassed a body of evidence over the years that political trials in Iran fall far short of internationally recognized standards for fair trial, being often summary in the extreme, with no counsel for the defence and no right of appeal. Many of those being executed now were already serving prison sentences and some were re-arrested long after completing prison sentences and being released; it is not known whether they were tried or re-tried, or whether formal charges or new evidence were brought against them. Ask those you approach to write expressing their concern as legal professionals to:

- . Ayatollah Abdulkarim Musavi ARDEBILI (address above)
- . Hojatoleslam Mohammad Musavi KHOENIHA (address above)
- . Dr Hassan Ebrahim HABIBI, Minister of Justice
(address at Ministry of Justice as above; "Your Excellency").

- Women

Please bring the attached external documents to the attention of local women's groups, prominent women in the community or others with a special interest in women's issues. Point out that AI has recorded the execution of well over a hundred women since the end of July 1988 and believes many of them to have been pocs, arrested because of their non-violent expression of their political beliefs, or in a few cases even simply because of the political beliefs or activities of their husbands or other relatives. You may also refer to the ordeal of women relatives trying to find out what has happened to prisoners (see account of woman searching for her husband in the 13 December News Release). Ask those you approach to write expressing their concern to:

- . Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Hashemi RAFSANJANI (address above)
- . Mrs Marzieh Tahereh HADIDCHI-DABAG ("Dear Mrs Hadidchi-Dabag")
Member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
Majles-e Shouray-e Eslami
Imam Khomeini Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
- . Mrs Maryam BEHROUZY ("Dear Mrs Behrouzy")
Member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
and Delegate to the Interparliamentary Union of Women
Majles-e Shouray-e Eslami

Imam Khomeini Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Both Mrs Hadidchi-Dabag and Mrs Behrouzy are members of parliament who have replied to appeals from AI members in the past; Mrs Hadidchi-Dabag was herself a political prisoner under the Shah.

With regard to the above it would be useful if, as well as writing to the authorities in Iran, those who agree to participate could send copies of their appeals to Iran's diplomatic representative in their country. We would also appreciate it if they would forward copies of any reply they receive to you, so you will be informed and can also send them on to us and to your MERAN Coordinator.