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Medical staffs challenge revolutionary courts after firing squad 'murder' Iran doctors call strike over colleague's execution

From Robert Fisk
Tehran, July 1

Iranian doctors challenged the country's religious leaders today by calling a one-day national strike in hospitals and clinics to protest at the summary execution of a colleague in the southern city of Ahwaz.

In spite of an ominous warning from the Health Ministry that doctors on strike will be dismissed "and handed over to the appropriate legal authorities", medical staff at Tehran's largest hospitals were wearing black armbands. An eight-point demand that those responsible for the "murder" of the doctor in Ahwaz be brought to justice, was pinned to doors and noticeboards.

Dr Esmael Narimisa was put before a firing squad four days ago after being declared guilty of conspiring to free prisoners and of promoting violence during riots at the local university in April.

The revolutionary court before which he appeared refused Dr Narimisa a defence

lawyer and an appeal. The trial, like many held in Iran every day, was in secret.

While anxious to preserve their anonymity, most doctors interviewed in Tehran today seemed determined to go ahead with their strike. They will look after emergency admissions tomorrow but will otherwise refuse to work.

Medical staff in the city of Shiraz are said to be supporting the strike call which, if fulfilled tomorrow, will constitute the first organized opposition to the revolutionary courts which have ordered the executions of well over 1,000 men and women since the revolution last year.

The photocopied strike call posted in hospitals gives a warning that if the authorities do not meet their demands, doctors will not be responsible for what happens afterwards—an obvious warning that a work stoppage could be made indefinite.

However, if the doctors' strike is a warning to the present regime that it should proceed no further with its ruthless

series of purges and executions, the lesson has clearly not yet gone home.

In the past three days alone a total of 1,637 employees in Government ministries, universities and regional education departments have lost their jobs in a purge by revolutionary committees.

In the last 24 hours, women working for the Iranian Ministry of Defence were also ordered to wear "Islamic clothing" and Court today forbade women who were dressed "improperly" from entering military bases.

"The limit of Islamic clothing", the court announced, "consists of a long loose overcoat with long sleeves, trousers and scarf".

Throughout this period, Ayatollah Khomeini has increased the volume of his own demands for further purges in Government and educational establishments and today he went so far as to suggest that prostitutes worked in some Tehran ministries.

Speaking to civil servants

from provincial education departments in his north Tehran residence this morning, the Ayatollah questioned the morality of Government employees.

"Some ministries are very bad", he said. "I do not want to name them but if the relevant ministers have heard what was said about their ministries, they should correct things."

"Ministries should not be centres of prostitution. Universities should not be centres of prostitution. They must be centres of education and training."

The Ayatollah's peroration included a few of his now familiar aphorisms: "A learned man who is not cleansed is more dangerous than an ignorant man. If an ignorant is corrupt, the corruption is limited only to him. But if a learned man is corrupt, he will corrupt the whole world."

Universities, the Ayatollah said, "must be purified of individuals who are trying to pervert our youth. Our offices must be cleansed of things

which corrupt our youth and ruin them... these devils... exist everywhere, in universities as well as other places".

The Ayatollah's advice has been followed in several state institutions. A total of 388 teachers, students and engineers have lost their jobs in the past three days while the Oil Ministry has purged 435. Tehran university has fired 69 members of staff.

In Fars province alone, 104 people have lost their jobs in the local education department, 44 of them being members of the Bahai faith which is not recognized by the constitution.

A particularly unpleasant aspect of the purges, for those who lose their jobs, is that in some cases, employees also lose their pension rights and back pay when they are deemed to have been counter-revolutionary. Other groups, however, are allowed to keep their pensions because of "special need".

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