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> Iran: Open Tehran trial to international observers, Amnesty International challenges

IRAN: OPEN TEHRAN TRIAL TO INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

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With more than 100 people now on trial before Tehran's Revolutionary Court for fomenting protests against the disputed official result of Iran's 12 June presidential election, Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan challenged the Iranian authorities to open up the court to international observers.

"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 sceptical world that Mahmoud Amadinejad was re-elected fairly for a second term as president," said 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."

Film of the trial proceedings shown on state TV in Iran, in which some defendants have been shown "confessing" or apologizing to the court, has heightened fears that many of them may have been tortured or ill-treated following their arrest and have made such statements to the court under extreme duress. Some are said by relatives to have visibly lost weight during their weeks of incarceration pre-trial, when they were denied access to lawyers or their families.

Further, compelling evidence of torture has been exposed by Mehdi Karroubi, one of the three rival candidates said to have been defeated by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is reported to have complained that both women and male detainees have been tortured, including by rape, by security officials.

Many torture allegations focus on the Kahrizak detention centre, outside Tehran, where many of those arrested in connection with the protests are believed to have been taken. On 29 July, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei order the closure of Kahrizak, acknowledging that detainees had been abused there, and the authorities say the head of the prison and three guards have been imprisoned as a result. Reports reaching Amnesty International shortly before the prison was closed described it as a place of great cruelty and suffering, with detainees held in grossly overcrowded and unsanitary conditions and subject to frequent abuse.

"As each day comes, more information emerges to indicate that the violence meted out against protestors on the streets, by the Basij and other so-called security forces, was mirrored by further

gross abuse of detainees, including some of those now on trial in Tehran, when they were held incommunicado at the notorious Kahrizak and other detention centres,” said Irene Khan. “The Supreme Leader and those around him must address this and ensure that all those responsible are held to account, not just a few officials.”

Background

Amnesty International wrote to the Head of the Judiciary in Iran, Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, on 6 August asking him to allow the organization to send an observer to the Revolutionary Court trial in Tehran, but has received no response. The Tehran authorities have not permitted Amnesty International to visit the country to investigate human rights violations since before the Iranian revolution 30 years ago.