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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHR Criticizes Iran for Trying AIDS Doctors on Secret Charges

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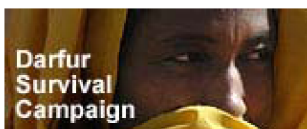
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The Iranian government's December 31 trial of Dr. Arash Alaei and Dr. Kamiar Alaei - Iranian brothers who are known worldwide for their work as HIV/AIDS physicians - denied

fundamental requirements of due process because, according to reports received by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), the prosecutor refused to disclose all the charges against the accused and denied their right to confront and defend themselves against their accusers. The trial today also sends an ominous signal regarding the Iranian Government's crackdown on international scientific exchange.

The doctors have been held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison since late June 2008. They were indicted in December on charges of communicating with an "enemy government" according to their attorney, Masoud Shafie.

On December 31, the Iranian prosecutor tried the brothers in Tehran's Revolutionary Court on these charges, and also informed the court of additional, secret charges which the brothers' attorney had no opportunity to refute, because the prosecutor did not disclose either the charges or the evidence on which they are based.

"Iran's failure to reveal the nature of the secret charges against the doctors makes it impossible to determine if the charges have any factual basis," stated PHR's CEO Frank Donaghue. He added, "To all appearances, the arrest and now the trial of these two prominent and widely-traveled AIDS doctors seem to be an effort to shut the door on medical and public health collaboration on global health crises...a policy that is dangerous for the well-being of the Iranian people and for global health."

Sign the petition at
IranFreeTheDocs.org

PHR stated that the publicly announced charges are illegitimate and without credible foundation. PHR noted that there are clear violations of due process in this case. In order to have a fair trial according to the standards of international human rights law, Iran must safeguard the doctors' right to know the evidence against them and their right to confront and cross-examine their accusers. A defendant's right to hear and confront witnesses against him is a fundamental guarantee of life and liberty. Without knowing the evidence or even the charges against him, an accused person has no opportunity to help his attorney make his defense or challenge the evidence's relevance or reliability.

"Iran should free these brothers immediately, so that they can continue their life-saving public health work for the benefit of the people of Iran and the world," stated Donaghue.

The brothers have already been detained two months longer than Iranian penal code allows, Shafie said earlier this month, in an exclusive interview with the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran. According to Shafie, Articles 30-34 of the Code of Penal Procedure of the Islamic Republic of Iran allow for detentions but require that the investigating judge issue such detention orders for one month at a time and for no longer than four months.

The brothers are also legally eligible for bail, but the judge in the case has not issued bail nor held a bail hearing.

Over 3,100 doctors, nurses and public health workers from more than 85 countries have [signed an online petition](#) demanding their release, which can be viewed at IranFreeTheDocs.org. Leading physicians and public health specialists and numerous medical and scientific organizations have [publicly called for the brothers' release](#).

Dr. Kamiar Alaei is a doctoral candidate at the SUNY Albany School of Public Health in Albany, New York and was expected to resume his studies there this fall. In 2007, he received a master of science degree in Population and International Health from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

Dr. Arash Alaei is the former director of the International Education and Research Cooperation of the Iranian National Research Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. Since 1998, the Drs. Alaei have been carrying out HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs, particularly focused on harm reduction for injecting drug users.

In addition to their work in Iran, the Alaei brothers have held training courses for Afghan and Tajik medical workers and have worked to encourage regional cooperation among 12 Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries. Their efforts expanded the expertise of doctors in the region, advanced the progress of medical science, and earned Iran recognition as a model of best practice by the World Health Organization.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) mobilizes the health professions to advance the health and dignity of all people by protecting human rights. As a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, PHR shared the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

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