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UN experts deplore alleged torture of inmates in Iran

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* Allegations that hundreds mistreated to obtain confessions

* UN envoys say evidence under torture not admissible

By Stephanie Nebehay

GENEVA, Aug 13 (Reuters) - U.N. human rights experts said on Thursday hundreds of Iranians accused of taking part in post-election protests have been tortured to obtain confessions according to detainees and people close to them.

Any evidence extracted by mistreatment should not be admitted at their trials, as it would violate international law, the United Nations investigators said in a joint statement.

Iran has charged dozens of people with spying and aiding a Western plot to overthrow its system of clerical rule following June's presidential election.

"The trials seem to be show trials ... I'm afraid people will be convicted on the basis of forced confessions," Manfred Nowak, U.N. special rapporteur on torture, told Reuters.

Moderates say the poll was rigged to secure the re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Iranian authorities say the vote was the "healthiest" since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Nowak said he had brought more than 300 cases of alleged torture and ill-treatment to the attention of Iranian authorities.

"Primarily they are allegations of beatings, electric shock, physical and psychological pressure primarily aimed at extracting confessions about anti-government behaviour," the Austrian law professor said in a telephone interview.

The allegations came from ex-detainees, as well as relatives and lawyers of people still being held, he said.

Most involved alleged torture at Evin prison in Tehran or Kahrizak detention centre, outside the capital, Nowak said.

"But they also concerned police stations and all kinds of security officials that are alleged to be involved in torture," he said. "They are consistent and plausible enough to trigger an obligation for the government to investigate and report back to me. So far I have not received any answer."

Iranian authorities have acknowledged some protesters were tortured at Kahrizak detention centre, where many of those arrested were taken, and said its director had been jailed. At least three people died in custody there.

GOVERNMENT MUST INVESTIGATE

Nowak also said he had reiterated his long-standing request to visit Iran so as to investigate torture allegations himself.

"No judicial system can consider as valid a confession obtained as a result

of harsh interrogations or under torture," he said in the joint statement by the independent experts.

Mehdi Karoubi, a moderate defeated candidate, said on Sunday that some protesters, both men and women, were raped in prison. The abuse allegations were rejected by authorities, including the speaker of parliament and Tehran's police chief.

No foreign media have been allowed to cover the trials and the U.N. investigators said it was not clear whether the defendants had adequate legal counsel.

Many detainees remain in incommunicado detention without being charged and are denied family visits, legal assistance or medical treatment, they said.

"Reports of people who have died in custody continue to be received, and their families are given false or contradictory information regarding the cause of their deaths," they said. (Editing by Jon Hemming)

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