



Witness Statement of Amir Atiabi

Name: Amir Atiabi
Place of Birth: Tehran, Iran
Date of Birth: 1957
Occupation: Senior Engineer

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

Date of Interview: June 13, 2009

Interviewer:
Witnesses:

This statement was prepared pursuant to a telephonic interview with Mr. Amir Atiabi. The statement consists of 77 paragraphs and 20 pages. The interview was conducted on June 13, 2009. The statement was approved by Mr. Atiabi on 17 November 2009.

Statement

My Arrest

1. I was arrested on March 5, 1984, around 8 in the morning. I was a member of the leadership committee of the Tudeh Youth Organization, an affiliate of the Tudeh Party of Iran. The Tudeh Party did not believe in using violence for political gain. We believed in legal and transparent political activity. We supported the revolution against the monarchy as an indication of the will of a majority of Iranians for change. Nevertheless, the regime banned the Tudeh Party in May 1983 and arrested its leaders. After that, they went after other party members, who were often placed under severe physical and psychological torture in order to obtain intelligence, force them to repent, or pressure them to cooperate with the regime.
2. I had been expelled from the school of engineering at Tehran University because of my political activities with the student union. I was expelled once during the Shah's regime in 1976 and a second time after the cultural revolution initiated by the new revolutionary regime, which began in 1980. During this time, all universities were shut down and all students and faculty members who did not support the new Islamic Republic were removed. Immediately after this, I noticed that I was under surveillance by a group of plainclothes agents. I tried to escape, but was unsuccessful. After entering a public building on the morning of March 5, I was surrounded by a group of agents. The commander drew his weapon and I was arrested. They communicated with their senior officer by radio and were instructed to transfer me to Evin. I was transferred to Section 209 of Evin Prison which was primarily used to interrogate and torture political prisoners.

Interrogations and Torture

3. The beatings and interrogations began while I was in the vehicle en route to Evin. Immediately after I was admitted to Evin, I was blindfolded and taken into an interrogation room, which was located inside a corridor. I could not tell how many people were present. They supplied me with some paper and asked me to write about myself, my connections and my rank. I only wrote my name and the fact that I had been expelled from the university because I supported the Tudeh Party's youth organization. After that, I remained silent. They then took me to a torture room located in the basement of the building. They ordered me to take off my pants and lie down on a bare bed in the middle of the room. I stripped down to my underwear. They forced me onto the bed, face-down, and then tied my hands and feet to the bed such that the soles of my feet were exposed. Then they began to whip me. They whipped me with a bunch of electrical cables. Sometimes they used hoses to ease the blood circulation. It was extremely painful—intolerable, in fact. I shouted every time they struck me so that I could take the pain more easily.
4. As they struck the soles of my feet, they asked me reveal my “paroles”¹ with other party members. But other than the shouting and groaning, I refused to say a word throughout the torture session. My interrogator, Rahimi, sat on my back and shoved a dirty blanket underneath my face and mouth. He pushed my head down on the bed so my voice would

¹ These are secret meetings between two members of an underground organization. Usually, the members do not know anything (i.e., full names, residence, etc.) about each other.

- be muffled. This made it very difficult for me to breathe. The whippings continued and were even more forceful than in the beginning. My feet became heavy and numb, and began to swell. After a while, they forced me to stand up and jump up and down, but I could not do so because of the severe pain. So they whipped my legs in order to force me to jump up and down. At the same time they slid wood strips and cables under my feet in order to stimulate the blood circulation and to make sure that open wounds were not exposed. I jumped up and down, and the blood that was causing the soles of my feet to swell moved to the other parts of my feet, causing my feet to turn reddish-blue. After a little while, they forced me to drink water, and continued the whipping.
5. Around noon, they finally allowed me to use the restroom. My interrogator watched me urinate and noticed that there was blood in my urine. If they continued to beat me like that, my kidneys would have stopped working altogether. So they tried injecting me with a drug stimulant for my kidney, but the nurse was unable to find a vein. My blood pressure had dropped dramatically. I was feeling weak and exhausted. After several attempts, the nurse (a male guard) succeeded in injecting the drug. The moment the nurse finished injecting me, they forced me to lie down again and resumed the lashing. I did not say a word, but continued my rhythmic shouting. I told them that they were efforts were in vain because I already considered myself dead.
 6. The beatings ended at night, and they decided to transfer me to another section of the prison. They gave me some sandals, but even the largest pair of sandals could not fit my feet because they had swelled up so much. I could not walk. My condition was worsening, but they were hell bent on getting information out of me. They took me to the prison hospital, which was adjacent to Section 209. I had to walk up the stairs, but I could not. I crawled and pulled myself up and eventually made it to the hospital room. The hospital was simply a cell with three hospital beds and a heavy-steel door. They had not removed the blindfold from my eyes I entered the hospital room. They wrapped my feet, ankles and knees with bandages. I do not know how many prisoners were being kept there in total, but I did see a corridor with several additional rooms. When they were bandaging me up, I noticed that my knees were also badly bruised and had turned black. There was one other prisoner in the room with me. He was a member of Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK). He had been severely beaten and whipped. He had received some sort of a skin transplant on the soles of his feet and could not get out of bed.
 7. I remained in the hospital for about a week. After my treatment, they took me directly to the interrogation room, which was located in Section 209. In the interrogation room, they made me sit on a chair in the corner of the room, facing the wall, and pulled up my blindfold just enough so that I could write. I was warned not to look around. They handed me a piece of paper and asked me to answer some written questions. I wrote short answers to some of the questions, but added few details to avoid giving them any new information. During the interrogation, I realized that they had begun monitoring the activities of general members of our branch, and had gone up the chain of command until they arrested me. They had already succeeded in gaining access to some information I was trying to keep secret. So I went ahead and paraphrased this information in my answers and handed my answer sheet back to the interrogator. As soon as he saw my answers, he slapped me so hard I saw stars. Then the interrogator commanded one of the guards to take me to the same torture room so they could continue lashing me.
 8. The guards told me to lie down on the bed again. A while passed, but no one came in the room. I just sat on the bed, until someone stormed in and ordered me to lie down. I did,

but they did not whip me. Instead, he threatened me and attempted to break me by applying psychological pressure. He left. Again, a while passed and then the interrogator came and asked if I was ready to provide him with further details. I remained silent. When he realized that I was not giving up very easily, he ordered some of the guards to tie me to the bed. They whipped my swollen feet, which were still in bandages. They continued beating me until blood began to drip from the bandages. Every once in a while they would allow me to get up and force me to walk on my feet in order to prevent further swelling. I was in pain and I did not want to do it, but they lashed the tops of my feet and forced me to jump up and down again. But I continued to resist. My feet were in horrible shape, so they took me to the hospital cell again. I could not walk—I crawled up the stairs and into the cell. I was not able to walk properly for six months after that incident. The lashing left permanent scars all over my feet. Although more than two decades have passed, the scars are still visible.

9. While inside the hospital cell, I felt as if I was dying. It was hard for me to breathe, all my muscles were cramped, I was paralyzed, and I could not move or speak I could only cry and mumble. Later, I found out that my cellmate had violently knocked on the door and informed the guards that I was seriously ill. I had apparently gone into shock. The nurse came in and gave me some injections. I was on IV for a couple of days. I was in the hospital for another week, after which I was discharged. My feet were still in bandages and swollen. From the hospital, I was transferred to a solitary cell in Section 209. The cell had an open area toilet. Though the cell was normally used for solitary confinement, I actually had a cellmate. Whenever one of us used the toilet, the other one would turn his face toward the wall. My cellmate was leftist *tavvab*² who prayed regularly. My guess is that my interrogator chose to detain me with a *tavvab* so that they could put pressure on me to disclose more information. Yet, I was cautious and did not speak with him about my political activities. We were together in one room for more than two weeks.
10. I was not taken back to the interrogation room for some time. Apparently, they were no longer in urgent need of the information I had. I think the interrogator realized that those I had connections with had already discovered that I had been arrested because I had not attended my “paroles” for two weeks. They probably suspected that my colleagues had already gone into lockdown mode, or perhaps they had simply arrested people who had more current information than I did. In any case, some time passed. Then one day they took me to the interrogation room. They asked me a few questions and I provided them with some answers. There was no mistreatment this time, but they warned me that I should count my days as I would soon be executed. Later, I learned that most of my colleagues were able to escape, but a few had been arrested. My Internal Committee colleagues who had important leadership roles generally escaped arrest (in part because I refused to speak under torture), but some of the rank-and-file members below me were already under surveillance. Several of them, such as Mohammad Javad Lahijanian, were arrested and executed during the summer of 1988.
11. After a while, I was transferred to another solitary cell in Section 209, but this time they assigned four inmates to a room. I cannot clearly remember the names of all of my cellmates, except for two of them—Manoochehr Sarhaddi and Khalil. Both were members of the Fedaiyan (Majority) and were executed in the summer of 1988. The cell we were detained in measured 2.5m by 2m. I learned from some of the other prisoners

² A *tavvab* is anyone who has engaged in the act of *tawbih*, or penitence. It usually refers to “reformed” political prisoners who agreed to cooperate with the regime while serving out their prison sentences.

that during the peak of arrests in 1981, they used to keep six to twelve prisoners in one such cell. In the cell, we neither had access to fresh air nor a sufficient amount of food. They allowed us to shower occasionally, but not more than once a week. We were almost always hungry. I did not have any visitors and my family did not know my whereabouts at that time. I was in the same set of clothes for more than a month. After that, I received clothes and some money from my parents. I did not meet them in person—they sent me the clothes and money. I remember they allowed me one short phone call to my parents toward the end of my time in Section 209. Despite these conditions, the four of us were relieved that there were no *tavvabs* in our cell. In total, I spent about three-and-a-half months in Section 209 of Evin prison, including two weeks in the hospital.

12. While in the cell, I witnessed the harsh and cruel treatment of prisoners at the hands of the prison authorities. I saw prisoners who were handcuffed to a door and forced to stand there for days. These prisoners endured sleep deprivation, exhaustion, and accumulation of blood in their legs and feet. It was very difficult to witness these things. They were no longer able to stand, but their hands were locked to the door so they essentially hanging off the doors and railings. Some of these prisoners seemed to have lost their sanity after spending long periods of time in such conditions.
13. As I mentioned previously, I had one main interrogator whose name was Rahimi. He was a special interrogator assigned to members of the Tudeh Party and the Fedaiyan (Majority). There were also clerics in Evin prison who specifically authorized the mistreatment of prisoners. They authorized and justified torture. The clerics acted as quasi-judges in prison and had religious authority to authorize harsh interrogation techniques for the purposes of extracting information from prisoners. In fact, we were told by some of the interrogators who conducted the torture sessions that they had previously secured permission from the responsible cleric to do what they were doing. The clerics often gave permission to subject the prisoners to whippings after the interrogator requested permission to torture. The religious reason often given for the lashings was that the prisoners were lying.³ Of course, I never witnessed such an exchange taking place between a cleric and an interrogator.
14. After three-and-a-half months, I was transferred to another ward inside Evin. This ward was located toward the north end of the prison, near the foothills of the Alborz mountains. It was referred to as the prison's Amoozeshgah.⁴ The Amoozeshgah was a three-story complex that had a wing on either side of the main entrance. Each wing constituted one ward, and each level had two wards. Overall, the building had six wards and three yards. After I entered this building, I was asked a few questions such as whether I was ready to repent, pray, or submit to a video interview. I said "no" to all of these questions. As a result, I was assigned to Ward 3, which was set aside for non-repenting leftist prisoners. From what I could remember, the room numbers in our ward began with 61 and continued to 73. The rooms were large, and measured about 4m by 6m. Some had shelves and a window that had fixed steel blinds on the outside. The blinds were designed to allow fresh air in but prevent us from seeing the outside.
15. Most of the time there were forty to forty-five prisoners in one room. After my first year of stay there, the numbers decreased to about thirty to forty prisoners per room, and then

³ Pursuant to Shari'a law, judges may prescribe discretionary punishment (known as *ta'zir*) for individuals who refuse to tell the truth.

⁴ In Persian, this building was referred to as the *Amoozesh-gah* (literally, a 'teaching institution' or 'academy').

increased again to about forty or so. Even though the prisons were not as populated as they were in 1981, there was no space for all of us. We could not sleep properly. We were sleeping head and toe. There were someone's feet on either side of us. We could not sleep on our back—only on our side. The prisons were still very populated. We were allowed visits with family once a month (and sometimes once every two months).

16. Overall, I believe there were about 400 to 500 prisoners in our ward. We were imprisoned in closed-door rooms and banned from stepping outside the room. Many prisoners in this ward were members of the Tudeh Party. Some had been arrested long before the organization was banned, and others had been arrested after the organization was declared unlawful. Some openly identified themselves as political activists for their respective parties. Almost all the prisoners in our ward refused to repent, give interviews, or pray.

My Initial Trial

17. In the spring of 1985, I was told to put on my blindfold and leave the room. They took me to a building near Section 209. I was blindfolded and could not see the surrounding area, but I remember that I was not taken outside the Evin campus because the minibus only drove for a few minutes and then stopped. At the time, I do not believe any prisoners were taken out of Evin prison for their trials. When I entered the court room, I was told that I was present at my trial and ordered to remove my blindfold. I was not expecting to be tried that day. I knew nothing about my trial before this, nor was I aware of my charges. Nothing was ever given to me in writing.
18. Inside the court room, there were two people seated behind desks. One of them was Hojjatolislam Nayyeri, and the second was Eshraghi. Nayyeri was the religious judge of Evin prison, and Eshraghi acted as the prosecutor. Nayyeri had on a turban—Eshraghi did not. I sat on a chair in front of them, across from the desks. There was no guard in the room. Eshraghi read a long list of charges, including accusations of being a *mohareb*⁵ (because I continued my political activities long after the party had been declared unlawful), membership in the Tudeh Party, distributing fliers, newspapers and texts, believing in Marxism, paying party memberships dues, and so on. I do not remember all the charges. They did not give me much time to defend myself. After reading each charge, the prosecutor would pause and ask what my response to the charge was. Basically, they read the charges and I only had time to say a few sentences in response to each charge. I told them that I never fought against the regime, that the party was still lawful at that time that I was paying party membership dues, and that I did not have any knowledge that the Tudeh Party had infiltrated the army. Eshraghi, the prosecutor, did not rebut my arguments. There was no discussion. Judge Nayyeri occasionally asked some questions, but overall he remained silent and listened to the conversation between Eshraghi and me. After about fifteen minutes, the trial ended and I was sent back to my room.
19. I was waiting to hear the outcome of my trial. It was a difficult period, because many prisoners who had already been tried were sentenced to death and executed. I was very worried. Three or four months passed. One day, a guard came and told me to come to Ejrayih Ahkam, which was the office officially charged with informing prisoners of their sentences. I was told to put on my blindfold. I did, and a guard escorted me to the office.

⁵ A *mohareb* is someone who is "at war with God." In Shari'a law, the punishment for a *mohareb* is death.

Once I got there, they handed me a paper and told me to sign it. I read the paper and realized that I was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. The sentence began from the day the decision was announced. I signed the verdict and returned to my room. I was relieved that I was not to be executed.

Transfer from Evin to Qezel Hesar and Gohar Dasht

20. In 1985, I was transferred to Qezel Hesar prison in the city of Karaj, situated west of Tehran. Qezel Hesar was administered by Maisam. I was there for less than one year. Prison conditions in Qezel Hesar were not as stressful as they were in Evin. The ward's cell doors were open; we could walk around and chat with other prisoners. We were also allowed to go out and get fresh air in the ward's yard. Sometimes we stayed out for hours and exercised, played games and walked. We were relatively better off there than in Evin. But in 1986, all of the political prisoners were transferred from Qezel Hesar to Gohar Dasht prison. After that, only non-political prisoners remained in Qezel Hesar.
21. In Gohar Dasht, I was placed in Ward 1. It was a large ward that housed around 100 to 200 prisoners from all political spectrums, including leftists, Mojahedin and other Islamic organizations. This ward had two major differences from the wards I was detained in at Evin. First, all the prisoners in this ward had verdicts. There were no *mellikesh*⁶ prisoners or prisoners awaiting their trial (or those who had their trials but were waiting for their sentences). Back in Evin, *mellikesh* made up approximately thirty to forty percent of the inmate population in our ward. Evin was mainly a prison for those who had been sentenced to capital punishment or life imprisonment, did not have a sentence, or were awaiting their verdicts. Some prisoners in Evin had been waiting for their verdicts for years. After sentencing, they were usually transferred to Qezel Hesar and then to Gohar Dasht.
22. Also, *tavvabs* did not represent the inmates in our ward at Gohar Dasht. We elected our own ward representative. In 1986, I became the ward representative and was responsible for organizing daily schedules for the prisoners, as well as contacting the guards and prison authorities on behalf of the prisoners. The prisoners in our ward had varied prison terms. Some had lower prison terms, such as two or five years imprisonment, while others had higher prison terms (such as twenty or twenty-five years). We had regular access to fresh air and family visits in Gohar Dasht, although breaks were in generally much shorter than those at Qezel Hesar.
23. In 1987, we were occasionally summoned for interrogation. Interrogations were a usual occurrence. Prison authorities regularly questioned us about our beliefs and political stances. During these interrogations, they almost always asked whether we would denounce our party, give a video interview, cooperate with the regime, repent or pray. We could not understand why they persisted with such interrogations. Sometimes, these regular interrogations were accompanied by violence. Looking back, I think they were identifying the prisoners based on their positions to determine who was repentant, who would potentially repent, and who was steadfast and committed to their cause (and thus posed a potential danger to the establishment after release).

⁶ *Mellikesh* is a term used by the prisoners to identify prisoners whose sentences had ended, but continued to endure imprisonment because they were uncompromising in their ideological or political views, or refused to accept the prison authorities' preconditions for release. *Mellikesh* were also referred to as *Azadi-ha*.

Prisoners are Reorganized

24. In late 1987, Gohar Dasht administrators divided up the prisoners based on the length of their sentences. Prisoners sentenced to more than fifteen years of imprisonment were transferred to Evin, and prisoners convicted to fifteen years or less remained in Gohar Dasht. A while later, close to the beginning of winter, leftist prisoners were separated from the Muslim prisoners (including the Mojahedin). We remained in Ward 1, and the Mojahedin prisoners were transferred to other wards in the same prison. Toward the end of winter, in early 1988, the determined non-repentant prisoners were separated from those who were more flexible in their stance. Generally, prisoners in the former group were those who did not give up under any pressure and remained unshaken in their purpose, despite the threats to their life. They continued their protest against the cruel, restrictive rule of the prison, raised their voices to high-ranking prison administrators, and in the face of danger, openly expressed their concerns to delegates who visited the prison every now and again. I was among the determined prisoners who were transferred from Ward 1 to a smaller ward called "Far'i" (or supplementary). The cells in the supplementary ward were located at the entrance of the main wards. They were initially designed to house the prison guards. The ward had three rooms, a corridor, a shower and a toilet. The rooms were different sizes. One was very small, the second was large, and the third was larger still.
25. There were around fifty-five headstrong leftist prisoners in our ward at the time of the transfer and reorganization of prisoners. We did not have enough space and our freedom of movement was severely limited. They had categorized prisoners based, in part, on the answers they provided to questions, and in part on their conduct throughout their years in prison. They essentially considered the prisoner's behavior—whether he was an obedient prisoner or a person who constantly protested against prison rules. Members of the Tudeh Party made up close to ninety percent of the prisoners in this ward; the remaining ten percent were from the Fedaiyan (Majority). There was one person from the Organization of the Iranian People's Fedaiyan Guerrillas (Minority) with us as well. When they initially began to separate us from our original wards, the guards allowed several of the brothers to stick with each other at their request. Three brothers requested to join us. I remember that Mr. Mahmoud Behkish's brother, Mohammad Ali Behkish (from the Fedaiyan (Minority)) joined us. Sadly, both brothers were executed later in the massacre. All the prisoners in this ward had sentences of three to fifteen years of imprisonment.
26. As time went on, the guards increased the pressure on us, put up more restrictions, limited access to facilities and the yard, and gave us less space. They treated us very badly and gave us less time to go to the yard for fresh air. We continued to have family visits, but they tried to isolate us from the rest of the prisoners in the ward as much as possible. Nonetheless, we tried to establish a means of communication with other prisoners in this ward. When the guards discovered our efforts, they transferred us to a different place. After that, they moved us from place to place for a while, but they did not mix us with prisoners in other wards because everyone had already been divided up based on the previous determination of the prison authorities.
27. Gohar Dasht has two kinds of wings (each wing has two or three stories or wards that are stacked on top of each other)-large and small. The larger wings have large rooms like Ward 1 and Ward 2. There is also a large hall or amphitheater located at the far end of the larger wards (at the end of corridor). The wards situated close to the amphitheater are among the largest wards at Gohar Dasht. The smaller wards (often called "solitary

- wards”) have solitary cells, but the length of corridor is the same as that of the large wards. Authorities sometimes lift the doors of these solitary cells open, thus converting these solitary wards into one large ward. They usually kept one or two such wards vacant, however, and would place prisoners whom they wanted to punish there for long periods of time. Prisoners who were under interrogation were kept for months, or in some cases, over a year in these solitary cells. The interrogators usually sent them so they would break and cooperate with the regime.
28. They eventually moved us from our supplementary ward into one of these solitary wards. Some time later, they changed our location again and moved us to another solitary ward just for one night. They moved us from one place to the next in search of a place that allowed the maximum isolation. Each time they did this, we were forced to clean and wash the whole ward before being moved in. Finally, they moved us to a solitary room in Ward 20. This happened about three to four months before the massacre began. Ward 20 was located on the ground floor of one of the two wings, at one end of the main corridor of the prison.
29. As they were moving us around from one solitary ward to another, they took us to another block/wing that was on the other side of the prison for very comprehensive questioning. This happened several times. The closer we came to the summer of 1988, the more intense the interrogation sessions. These interrogations were unlike any I had experienced before. The interrogations were comprehensive, tense, regular and very organized. I call those series of questionings “inquisitions,” because they did not interrogate us; rather, they asked us about our political and ideological beliefs and contemporary political issues. They gave us long questionnaires to complete. It took us hours to complete them. I think we completed these questionnaires two or three times in the spring and the summer of 1988. The first time they gave us a questionnaire was around the time the prison authorities separated us from other leftist prisoners. The questionnaires had questions like, “Do you pray?”, “Do you repent?”, “Would you give a video interview?”, “What is your opinion about the Iran-Iraq war?”, “Do you believe in *Velayat-e Faqih*?” Some answers were in “Yes” and “No” format and we had to choose and circle our answer. The last series of comprehensive questionnaires were provided to us about two months before the beginning of the summer executions. In addition, the prison staff/guards came to the wards several times and completed a series of statistical tables in the spring and early summer of 1988. These statistical tables included information identifying the prisoner, and were completed by guards in front of them. This type of statistical information-gathering regarding the prisoners' status was conducted regularly throughout our period of imprisonments, but it occurred far more frequently in the months before the start of the massacre.

The Lockdown Phase

30. Ward 20 actually occupied approximately half a solitary ward. By erecting a wall in the middle along the ward's corridor, they made two perfectly equal solitary wards. This had been done long ago, when they used the cells for punishment. Because of this, the doors of our cells opened to a wall in the corridor (unlike normal solitary cells that had cells on both sides of a wide corridor). The windows of our cells opened onto an open field at one end of the prison building. For the prison authorities, this was a perfectly isolated location in which to detain us. There was neither a way for us to get in touch with other prisoners, nor to communicate with them. We occasionally had access to fresh air. The only opportunity we had to see or to speak briefly with other prisoners was when we visited

- the dentist or the general practitioners in the hospital. Another way was to attempt Morse code via the window.
31. A couple of weeks before the beginning of the prison lockdown at Gohar Dasht, a new wave of prisoners arrived in the prison. We saw them arrive by minibus before they were taken upstairs. We heard their footsteps through our metal door, which opened to a staircase that led up to the two upper floors. The newly arrived prisoners were placed on the first and second (top floor) of the wing (Ward 20 was on the ground floor). The upper floors, as well as the adjacent three-floor wing, belonged to the prosecutor and interrogator offices of the city of Karaj. The prisoners were also interrogated there. On several occasions when we were taken outside for fresh air, we heard screams, shouting and the earnest pleas of prisoners requesting compassion coming from the third floor wards. We were very disturbed by these noises. Some of my comrades shouted out slogans in protest of the torture that was being committed by the guards. In fact, for most of us, the screams of the tortured prisoners revived the abhorrent scenes of our own tortures. One night we heard the scream of a woman who was crying for her child. Her wailing continued for hours that night. We also heard the voice of a young girl screaming and wailing. We did not understand why. Around the same time, a prisoner fell from the top floor. I think he was attempting to commit suicide because there was no way he could escape. Every prisoner knew that the field surrounding the prison was protected by two heavily fortified and high walls, which were regularly monitored by guards in towers. We used a mirror to see the ground floor through our window and saw the injured body of the moaning prisoner squirming on the ground. Later we found out that he was a recently arrested Mojahedin prisoner. He had managed to break the steel window of his cell and jump out.
 32. Regardless of these limitations, we still had regular access to news outlets. We received newspapers, listened to the radio and watched television. We were in our rooms when we heard that Imam Khomeini had accepted the UN 598 resolution and ceasefire. We had predicted that this would happen. The regime had no choice but to accept the ceasefire. The country was in chaos; the war with Iraq was not going well, the regime had suffered severe casualties on many fronts. In addition, there were growing tensions among the top leadership over the handling of the war. We knew that Khomeini would sooner or later be forced to drink the cup of "poison."
 33. We were happy when the regime accepted the ceasefire, particularly when we heard Khomeini say that he would drink the cup of "poison"—after poisoning the people of two countries for more than eight years by rejecting several peace offers. The Tudeh Party had urged the Islamic Republic to accept the ceasefire a long time before when the Iraqi troops were pushed out of Iran, less than a year after the Iraqi invasion. The Tudeh Party also urged the government not to cross the border. But the clerics did not accept our pleas. The war had completely devastated the two countries. While we were in the supplementary ward, an Iraqi missile exploded near our prison. The shock waves from the explosion shook our ward. There were no precautions for air attack and long-range missile inside the prison. Despite all of this, they wanted the war to go on. They said that they would eventually occupy Iraq's holy Shi'a cities, and push forth towards the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.
 34. After the regime accepted the ceasefire, we tried to reach the Mojahedin in the ward across from using Morse code. They informed us that the Mojahedin army had launched

an attack against the regime from the west. They believed that the Mojahedin were moving toward Tehran.

35. On Friday, July 29, 1988 (I have marked these events in my calendar), the guards came and took out our television set and cut the electrical wires that were connected to the loudspeakers. We were pleased when they disconnected the loudspeakers, because they usually broadcast government propaganda on them. For instance, they broadcasted the interviews of the prisoners who had broken and repented. They also played religious songs, Koran recitals, news of government successes on the battlefield, news regarding the crushing of opposition groups, etc. We were tired of listening to this propaganda.

Mojahedin Prisoners are Summoned

36. On Saturday, we were scheduled to have family visits, but they did not allow it. Usually, at the beginning of every week, the guards took two prisoners from our ward to the dentist. That week, they did not take any prisoners from our ward to the dentist. We sensed that something extraordinary was occurring, but could not figure out what it was. The next day, we noticed that a guard pushed the trolley with food inside our room without exchanging a word with us. Before that, non-political prisoners, mostly Afghans, were responsible for delivering food to us. After that day, I did not see any Afghans working in prison anymore. Around evening, I saw several guards coming from the Husseiniyih Hall.⁷ I saw them with prisoners' clothes and blindfolds in hand, but within a few seconds they set fire to all of them. Again, we knew something strange was happening, but we did not have enough clues to connect all the dots.
37. Late Saturday night, July 30, 1988, we heard the sounds of footsteps coming from our corridor. Prisoners were being sent downstairs from the upper floors. The sounds continued for some time. We became suspicious and went to the window to see what was going on. We saw that prisoners were being transported by a minibus that drove up the road in the field, around the prison building, and to Husseiniyih Hall. Those prisoners never came back. From that night on, prisoners were taken out of the building from the upper floor of our ward on several consecutive nights. We kept hearing their footsteps. We never saw any of them come back.
38. At midnight on Sunday, July 31, 1988, we heard some strange sounds coming from the Husseiniyih Hall. It seemed like someone was throwing cooking gas into a covered, metallic container. It produced a strange kind of sound which was repeated over and over again throughout the evening. That night, I marked my calendar with the number of sounds I heard. I counted fifty-five that first night. One or two nights later, I saw a truck with a covered container moving back and forth from the Husseiniyih Hall. It was the kind of truck used for transporting meat. These trucks usually had refrigerators used for keeping the meat fresh. After seeing the truck, we heard similar sounds coming from the outside. Again, I began to count the thuds I heard. I counted fifty clear drops. After that, the frequency and volume of the sounds reduced. There may have been more of them, but I could no longer hear anything.

⁷ The Husseiniyih Hall was located at one end of the prison building at the end of the main corridor. It was on the ground floor. From the outside, it looked like an industrial building with a large trussed roof and a gate to the surrounding field and the circular road around the prison building.

39. In the early days of the lockdown, we listened in on a conversation taking place between members of what, we later learned was, the "Death Committee." The Death Committee initially met in a room in the supplementary ward that was on the first floor above the ground floor (above our ward). This room was perpendicular to our ward. It was summer and the weather was warm. They had left the windows open. We peeked up and listened to their conversation from the cell closest to their meeting room. We heard the Committee members discussing a *fatwa*⁸ and how to implement it. We did not know what they were talking about. We were wondering which *fatwa* they were referring to. (We came to know about Khomeini's Fatwa years later). They were discussing what to do if the prisoners lied about their real beliefs, and how to render proper judgment under these circumstances.
40. I do not remember what they agreed upon, but I did manage to listen in on a trial session in which a Mojahedin prisoner was being interrogated. Someone asked the Mojahedin prisoner if he was still committed to his political beliefs. He said he was not. Then he was asked whether he would agree to go to the front line and fight against the Iraqi government if he were set free. He said he would. After that he was asked if he had repented for his past activities. He said he had. Next, they asked him if he would reveal the identities of prisoners who pretended to be *tavvabs*. He said that he did not know anybody who was a pretender. Finally, he was asked if he was ready to execute his non-repenting wardmates. He said that he could not do this. They sent him out of the room. They wanted him to prove that he was a true *tavvab*. I could not believe my ears when I heard this exchange.
41. Another time, I overheard a discussion on the logistics of hanging prisoners. One of the members of the Death Committee explained his experience using a crane to hang several prisoners. I later learned from one of the few Mojahedin survivors that prisoners were called six at a time to come forward to be hanged. Several survivors miraculously returned from the gallows after they had been taken there by mistake (and after they had already written up their wills and put their personal belongings (i.e. watches and glasses) in plastic bags). After listening to these conversations, we realized that Mojahedin supporters were being executed in droves. We also realized that many prisoners did not know what was about to happen to them until the very last minute. Even when they faced the gallows, some believed they were simply being threatened with mock executions in order to soften them up for further interrogations.
42. Around the time of these conversations, a senior prison officer came to visit our ward. We guessed that he had been sent to check our mood and determine whether we had a clue as to what was going on around us. He went to each cell and looked at the windows. I will never forget this—as he was checking up on the prisoners, he looked at one of our older ward-mates who was somewhat heavy-set and said: "You have the appropriate weight." When he said this, we all knew what he meant. He was referring to the impending hangings. I believe the prison guard may have known that we had been exposed to the Death Committee's conversations. After that, they changed the Death Committee's meeting location.
43. After the officer's visit, I started recording extraordinary events on my calendar. I kept the calendar's existence a secret, and managed to sneak it out with me after I was released from prison. Every time I saw trucks in prison or heard strange sounds, I coded

⁸ A *fatwa* is as religious edict issued by a high-ranking cleric.

- them on my calendar. For example, I marked my calendar two times on August 3, 1988, which means I saw two trucks that night around Husseiniyih Hall. Some days in my calendar are not marked at all, which means that I did not see any activity or hear any strange sound.
44. Increasingly, we became more and more suspicious about the strange happenings that were going on around us. But we kept silent most days. We were afraid, and extremely worried. At the same time, however, we tried to find more clues that would help us figure out the big picture. Then, we came across something that made things painfully clear for all of us. It was the night of August 3, 1988. We saw a truck that was not covered in front of the Husseiniyih Hall. We went to the bathroom which located at the far end of our solitary ward. The windows there were situated just under the ceiling. For access to the windows we needed to do a bit of climbing. Through the window, we could get a good look at what was happening in front of the Husseiniyih Hall. This is because Ward 20 came out from the main building to form an "L." The toilet and showers were on one end of the "L," so we could clearly see across the field to the amphitheatre.
45. In any case, we helped each other climb up to see what was going on out there. What we saw there, through the steel blinds, completely shocked us! It was absolutely unbelievable. We had never witnessed such a scene during our time in prison. We saw guards loading dead bodies onto the truck. These were the bodies of the executed prisoners who had been hanged in Husseiniyih Hall. We understood there and then that those prisoners who had been marched down from the upper stairs and transported by minibus toward the Husseiniyih Hall were being executed, one by one. We saw the guards pushing dead bodies toward the front of the truck, and rearranging corpses in order to make room for more dead bodies. We realized that the strange sounds we had heard were the dropping of corpses in an empty truck. Once the floor of the truck was covered with dead bodies, the sounds would disappear. The dropping sounds we had counted throughout the evenings corresponded to the number of prisoners that had been hanged that day.
46. In addition to that horrific sight, we were disturbed by the cruel behavior of the guards who handled the bodies. They held the corpses by their hands and feet, swing them while counting from one to three, and then throw them inside the back of the truck. Some were laughing; others made fun of the dead bodies. Some of them were smoking cigarettes while the others were piling the corpses in the truck. The echo of their hysterical laughter in the dark of the night still rings in my ears. How could a human being be reduced to this level of cruelty and senselessness?
47. The marks on my calendar show that on August 3, 1988, two trucks were loaded with dead bodies. On August 4 and 5, there were no trucks. On August 6, 1988, one truck was loaded with dead bodies. On August 8, two trucks were loaded. On August 9, again, there was no activity. On August 10, two trucks; August 11, no activity; August 12, two trucks; August 13, one truck; August 14, one truck; August 15, one truck; and August 16, two trucks. After that, there was no activity until late August.
48. We, the leftist prisoners, were not summoned during the first phase of the execution. At that time, we tried to reach out to the Mojahedin prisoners who were living on the second floor (in a supplementary ward) and whose window was perpendicular to our window, and let them know what was going on. We communicated with them via Morse code.

They responded that they already knew about the executions, and told us that they expected to die soon. A few of them tried to give us their names.

49. Some prisoners have also testified that they had seen a lorry that was stuck in the corner of the Husseiniyeh Hall and the prison ward. This lorry could not be seen from our side, but was visible from the opposite wing on the opposite side of Husseiniyeh. In fact, there was a narrow turn around there. Apparently, the truck was stuck in the mud there. The prisoners noticed a stench and witnessed some guards spraying the truck with something. I never saw this truck, but I believe their testimonies are credible.
50. I do not know for certain what method the regime employed to kill such a large number of prisoners. I am positive prisoners were not shot at Gohar Dasht, since we never heard any shootings. I believe that all the prisoners in Gohar Dasht were hanged with rope.
51. There was a period of inactivity for a week or two toward the middle of August. It seemed that prison authorities had been satisfied with their slaughter of the Mojahedin prisoners. We were somewhat relieved. Nobody checked in on us during this time. We did, however, hear the sound of helicopters on several occasions. We guessed at the time that they were shuttling officials from one prison to another prison. But the silence did not last for long. In late August, it was our turn.

Leftist Prisoners are Summoned

52. Once we realized that the killings had not come to an end, we began to discuss how we would respond if we were summoned to go before the Death Committee. We did not come to a conclusive result. We simply decided that each individual should make his own decision. We did not know what the Death Committee members would ask us, but most of the prisoners I spoke to had decided to hold on to their beliefs. In fact, I think most of us had decided not to give in to them after witnessing the horrible events surrounding the massacre of the Mojahedin members.
53. Then on Saturday, August 27th, they summoned two of the prisoners in our ward to the dentist. Initially, we saw this as a sign that things were quieting down. But immediately after they summoned them, Davood Lashkari (the head of security at Gohar Dasht) and several guards entered our ward and ordered everyone to drop what they were doing. Some people were still sleeping, others were washing up. The guards did not care. They began beating and insulting us as they hurried us out of our cells and emptied the place out. Some of the prisoners did not even have time to put on their pants—they were taken out in their underwear and pajamas.
54. We were among the first group of leftists that was summoned to go in front of the Gohar Dasht Death Committee. Generally, they summoned prisoners to the Death Committee based on the answers we had provided on the previous questionnaires, and on a review of the prisoners' case files. They sorted prisoners according to their beliefs and activities in prison. Naserian (the ruthless head of Gohar Dasht prison) and Davood Lashkari (the head of security) were also responsible for determining who was summoned to go before the Committee from each ward. In our case, they emptied the entire ward.
55. When we exited our cells, we realized that the two prisoners they had summoned earlier were standing out in the corridor. Before we exited the cell, they forced us into a queue. Those whom they believed were party leaders or were more respected inside the prison

were sent to the front of the line. Several prisoners who were particularly hated by the guards, Naserian and Lashkari, were also sent to the front of the line. What was very apparent was that they were in a real hurry—it was as if they were quickly running out of time and they wanted to kill as many prisoners as possible.

Going Before the Death Committee

56. They directed the line down the corridor and toward the room where the Death Committee was convening. I believe this room was in the middle of the corridor on the ground floor. When we reached the middle of the corridor, they began summoning us into the room one by one. There were about fifty-two of us. I was somewhere in the middle of the line. Several people were sent into the room before I was. Then it was my turn. I was summoned into the room a little before noon. As soon as I walked in, I recognized Nayyeri. I knew him from before. He was present during my first trial, when the court sentenced me to ten years. I also recognized Eshraghi, who was also present during my first trial. The third person was another cleric. I did not recognize him. I had never seen him before. Later, I realized (from the information I had gathered) that it was Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi. These individuals were also joined by Naserian. Naserian went in and out of the room and provided his vengeful comments regarding the prisoners before the Committee. He did not, however, play any direct role in the issuing of the final verdicts.
57. Pour-Mohammadi turned to me and said that the regime no longer wished to keep any political prisoners. The war had ended and they had decided to question prisoners to see whom they could release. After this short introduction, they began questioning me. They asked me which party I was affiliated with, and I answered: "Tudeh Party." Then they asked if I still believed in the Party. I answered: "Yes I believe in the Party's political, economic and social plans for equal opportunity and social justice." They asked me questions regarding my religious beliefs, such as "Are you Muslim?" I said, "Yes, I am Muslim." I had said so before in the questionnaires they had passed out to us and throughout my imprisonment and interrogation. Then they asked, "Do you pray?" I said, "No." They asked, "Why don't you pray?" I said, "I did not pray before I was imprisoned, and I think if I pray in prison then that means I am pretending and not really praying. I don't want to pretend that I am what I was not outside of prison. I don't want to pray because I am in prison. This type of praying by force has no value before God." Then they asked: "Do you believe in God?" I said, "Yes." They asked: "Do you believe in the Prophet?" I said, "Yes." They asked: "Do you believe in Judgment Day." I said: "Yes." I did not want to be punished or executed for any reason other than my political beliefs and activities.
58. Nayyeri finally interrupted and said: "Take him out of the room and beat him until he prays." Naserian forced me out of the courtroom. He then gave me a piece of paper. The paper included a list of questions—the same questions we had answered in front of the Committee (and many times before). This time, however, the questions also asked whether I accepted the main principles of Islam (i.e. that there is one God, that Muhammad is his Prophet, and that there is a Judgment Day). One of the questions asked if I believed in Marxism. I answered, "I believe in the political and economical ideals of Marxism. I know nothing about philosophy." I answered all the questions in the same manner I had answered them before.
59. We waited for a while in the corridor until one of the guards came and took us to perform our ablutions prior to prayer. When they asked if I would pray, I refused. Several others

did as well. We waited around a bit more and were taken to the top (second floor above the ground) floor of the prison. It was late evening. There, they again asked us whether we would pray. I still refused. Some of the others agreed to pray. I and those who refused to pray were then taken to a few beds and ordered to lie down. They tied us to the bed posts. Next, they began whipping us. Ten lashes for every prayer session missed. Only two of us, me and Jalil Shahbazi, were actually whipped for both the early evening and late night prayer sessions—we received twenty lashes each. (The rest of the prisoners agreed to pray after the first ten lashes.) It felt as if the guards whipping us were in competition with each other. When they grew tired, they switched hands to ensure that we received the maximum blows.

Waiting to Die

60. The lashings finally came to an end. Those who accepted prayer after the first series of lashes were taken to rooms in a large ward. Jalil and I were taken to a different room. It was empty. Naserian accompanied us. When we got there he said, "There's a rope in this room. There is also some glass. If you want to kill yourself, help yourself." Jalil did not really understand what was going on, so I explained things to him after Naserian left.
61. Jalil Shahbazi had been in prison since 1979. He had never received a sentence since his arrest, and was one of the longest serving leftists in prison after the revolution. (He believed in the ideology of the Fedaiyan (Majority) and Tudeh Party.) They had kept him in prison since 1979 because he had refused to repent. He had suffered greatly through the torture and executions of the early 1980s. Many prisoners had broken during this time and agreed to cooperate with the regime. On several occasions, he had told me that he could not tolerate going through another such period of mass killings and torture. When he went before the Death Committee, he admitted to being a communist and thought he would be executed.
62. Jalil and I had decided that it was best to put an end to the torture and simply be executed. I told him that even if we tolerated the torture for not praying, they would execute us after three days anyway based on Shari'a law.⁹ We decided to tell Naserian to take us to the Committee again. We wanted to let them know that if this is what it means to be a Muslim, then we do not wish to be Muslims. Early next morning, the guards came after us. But there was no sign of Naserian. There was no use in telling the guards about our decision, so we endured ten more lashes because of our refusal to pray. After the beatings, we were taken back to the room. Both of us were shaking and shivering from the extreme pain we felt.
63. Naserian came for us at noon. We took the opportunity and asked him: "Why do you bother beating us? Take us to the Committee. We want to tell them that we are not Muslims." He told us to shut up. Then we were whipped again for refusing to perform our noon prayers and, again, taken back to our room. We repeated our request before he left. Our feet had swelled from the forty hard lashes we had received since the previous evening. Naserian came back after a while. He ordered us to run to the Death Committee. We were in immense pain. Then he escorted me to the room and informed the Committee that I had told him that I was not a Muslim. Once I was in front of the Death Committee

⁹ According to some survivors, male prisoners who were considered apostates were given three opportunities (in three days) to renounce their apostasy and become Muslim. If they still refused to renounce their apostasy, they would be executed on the fourth day.

members, I showed them my feet and said, "If this is your Islam, I am not a Muslim." I told him that forced prayer was meaningless. Eshraghi turned to me and said, "I know your family is Muslim, Don't do this to yourself. Go and pray." I think he knew our family was Seyyed,¹⁰ perhaps from my identification and father's name. I told him that I would continue to refuse prayer because I was being forced to do it. Nayyeri interrupted and ordered that I be sent to the left side of the room. The guards then escorted me out of the room and placed me in a queue of prisoners who were to be sent to their deaths.

64. As we were waiting, the guards came up and read the names of individuals who were to be directed toward the Husseiniyih Hall. Here, I will have to explain something. When I entered the large room with the members of the Death Committee, I noticed that there was a black curtain that separated them from the other side of the room. Behind the black curtain I could see (because I am tall) a lot of activity. There were lots of intelligence officials and investigators working feverishly. I think they were reviewing prisoner case files, trying to determine who should be executed and who should be spared. When I realized this, I told several of the other prisoners who were waiting in line with me what I thought was going on. Each prisoner reacted differently to the news. A younger prisoner could not bear to hear it, while another middle-aged prisoner smiled and stood up proudly.
65. In any case, every time they came and read the names of prisoners, I listened for my name. During this time, I asked one of the guards to take me to the bathroom. He obliged and escorted me to the bathroom blindfolded. When I got there, I quickly wrote my name on my underwear. I did this because I expected to be executed within minutes, and wanted to be identified after burial. It sounds silly to me now, but when you are in such circumstances, you resort to desperate measures.
66. I went back and waited in line until late afternoon. Then someone came, pulled me out of the queue, and took me to a room which was adjacent to the Committee's room. This time, the only person there from the Committee was Eshraghi. There were others there too—they were dressed like guards and I guessed they were intelligence officers and interrogators, but they kept quiet. Again, Eshraghi tried to convince me to accept prayer. Again, I refused. So they escorted me out of the room and back into the queue of prisoners waiting to be sent for execution. A little while later, my former interrogator, Rahimi, paid me a visit (while I was still waiting in the queue). He asked me several questions similar to the ones they asked me on the questionnaires. I do not remember all of them, but he did ask whether I had stopped praying and rejected God after I entered the university. (When I entered university back in 1974, I considered myself a Muslim and performed some of the rituals. But by the second year, I had given it all up. I think my interrogators had gathered this type of information from university students who previously knew me and now were working with the regime.) Regardless, Rahimi kept asking questions so he could definitively prove that I was no longer a Muslim and deserved to be executed.
67. I continued to wait in line, but my name was never called. Finally, late evening arrived and there were still several of us remaining. All of a sudden, the Death Committee came out of the room. Nayyeri said: "Take them upstairs—we will deal with them tomorrow." So they took us back upstairs. Jalil Shahbazi accompanied me. When we arrived at the top floor corridor, the guards asked all the remaining prisoners whether we would agree

¹⁰ A *seyyed* is someone who is believed to be a descendent of the prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Imam Ali.

- to pray or not. I started thinking that it was no longer necessary to endure lashes if I was to be executed the next day anyhow, so I decided to let them know that I would agree to pray. That night, I finally told them that I would pray (with the full belief that I would be sent to the gallows the next morning). Jalil continued to refuse to pray.
68. Jalil and several other prisoners who refused to pray received an additional ten lashes for the evening prayer session. Then Jalil and another prisoner received a second round of ten lashes. They were escorted to the same room where Jalil and I were kept the night before. I was put in a larger room with about fifteen to twenty others. I later found out, from the prisoner who shared the room with Jalil, that the next morning when they took him to the bathroom he slashed his stomach open using a glass jar he had found in his room. He did not survive the suicide attempt.
69. They transferred the rest of us, those who had finally agreed to pray, to one of the large wards in the top floor (Ward 2, or perhaps Ward 3). Those of us who sustained repeated lashes were in pain and had swollen feet. They kept us in separate rooms. There were no accommodations. Nothing. When they brought us food, we did not have anything to eat with. We could not wash our hands. Most of us were still in our underwear. Some did not have any sandals on. At some point, the guards came in and escorted all of us to the hall at the end of the ward's corridor. One of the guards went up to the front and began praying. The guards asked us to follow his lead. Many of us did not know how to pray.
70. During the next several days, I kept waiting for my name to be called. Some of the remaining members were eventually summoned and executed, despite the fact that they had agreed to pray. Others were transferred to solitary cells. On the third day, Naserian and the guards came to our rooms and asked those of us who still believed in our respective parties and political organizations to come forward. I told Naserian that I still believed in the ideals of the Tudeh Party. They took all those who came forward into a room and began beating us with steel cables. There were about ten or fifteen of us there. Ten lashes for each of us. They asked us again if we believed in our parties. This time, no one said anything. This was the beginning of the end of our resistance in prison. After so much killing and torture, after so many shattered lives, we could not continue on any longer. After they took us back to our rooms and closed the door, I burst into tears. I cried nonstop for a long time while my cellmates tried to comfort me. I have never cried like that in my life.
71. They kept transferring us from one ward to another. They also told us to take our belongings and get rid of anything that was not absolutely necessary. Afterwards, they placed all of us in a large ward together. We realized that from the fifty-two people who were originally with us in Ward 20, about twenty-six were no longer with us. We knew they had been executed. Among those executed were individuals who had agreed to pray or were flexible in their attitude towards the regime. There were also those who regularly practiced Islam during their time in prison, such as Keivan Mahshid, a Tudeh Party member who genuinely believed in Islam but refused to allow the authorities to take advantage of his beliefs. Some were military officers who were secretly Tudeh Party members and had participated in the war against Iraq as field commanders. And others were executed because of the answers they provided the Death Committee. They were all executed because of their party history or political activities. I think all of these individuals would have been sent to the gallows regardless of what they told the members of the Death Committee. On the other hand, there were some prisoners who informed the members of the Death Committee that they did not practice Islam, or were communist or

brought up in communist households. These inmates were spared, probably because the committee members did not believe they held important positions within their organizations (or would pose a threat to the regime in the future).

The Aftermath

72. I believe we were finally allowed visitation on October 11, 1988. The executions came to an end a little before this date. They continually moved us around the prison, but we were kept separate from the very few Mojahedin members who survived the massacre. I believe we were allowed our second visitation rights on the October 31, 1988. After this second visit, they transferred all of us to Evin prison. I believe the transfer occurred sometime in February 1989—I think it was on February 15. The transfer took place after the officials announced a pardon in response to the growing international campaign to free political prisoners in Iran. Just before the transfer, they allowed all the remaining prisoners to visit with their families. These visits occurred in the very place where the executions happened—in the Husseiniyih Hall.
73. After things quieted down, many of us cried for all those who had perished. We could see their faces—their last few moments before they were summoned out of their cells and marched off to the gallows. We also cried for all of those families who visited the prison gates day after day to catch a glimpse of their loved ones. Many of them would never again see the faces of their loved ones—whether alive or dead. The visits we had with our families after the massacre were some of the most painful moments I experienced while in prison.
74. At Evin, they informed us that we would be released if we agreed to attend a demonstration in front of the United Nations building at Argentina Square, Tehran. The demonstration was planned to show the United Nations that the Islamic Republic is merciful and compassionate toward its prisoners, despite rumors that thousands had been executed over the past several years. They also required us to attend an indoctrination ceremony prior to being released. The ceremony was held inside one of the halls at Evin. There, they informed us that we needed to sign our repentance letters prior to release. It was clear that they wished to stage and publicize the release as some sort of amnesty for prisoners who had supposedly agreed to repent.
75. We were finally released on February 23, 1989. I believe we spent less than two weeks at Evin prior to our final release. Our release was only secured after our families posted bail for us. In addition, prison authorities required a guarantor other than family members. Even after we were released, we were required to regularly report our activities to special police stations. If we refused, they would threaten our personal guarantors with arrest. It is important to note that our releases were conditional. If we did anything to annoy or irritate the regime, they could summon us back to prison and force us to serve out our prison sentences.
76. Some of us signed the repentance letters, while a handful refused and remained in prison. In the end, they hauled all of us into buses and took us to the pre-planned demonstration in front of the United Nations building. There they made a big show out of granting amnesty to former prisoners. It was a surreal experience. We resembled the walking dead, and were accompanied by *tavvabs* and guards who were assigned to make everything go as planned. Several former high-ranking leftist and Mojahedin party members who had

survived the executions, such as Nouroddin Kianoori (Tudeh Party) and Saeed Shamsavandi (Mojahedin), gave speeches.

77. I believe they finally released us the day after the staged demonstrations in front of the United Nations building (and a follow-up seminar conducted by Ayatollah Jannati at Vahdat Hall). They requested that all the family members assemble in front of the Parliament building on Imam Khomeini Street. Here, they arranged yet another publicity stunt. A high-ranking Parliament member addressed the prisoners and their families. We were only allowed to join our families after the speech was over. I will never forget that moment—when I looked up at the sky, a few black crows were going after a white dove just above the Parliament building.

The End