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Place of Birth: Jahrom, Farse, Iran

Occupation: Writer

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Statement

1. My name is Mitra Lager. I was a supporter of the Mujahidin-e Khalq (MEK)¹ from 1978 to 1981. I left Iran in 1987. One year later, with the help of the UN office in Ankara, Turkey, I immigrated to Sweden as a refugee.

My First Arrest

2. My first arrest occurred in my home city of Jahrom, during the demonstrations of the June 20, 1981. The demonstrations on that day were organized by the MEK an organization I subscribed to and actively supported at the time.
3. On June 20, the MEK charged me with organizing a small demonstration on a side street in Jahrom. Sometime after the start of my demonstration, a group of plainclothes *Hezbollahis* attacked us with knives. The group turned towards me and chased me through the streets of Jahrom.
4. I ran away from my pursuers, looking for a way to escape their wrath. I thought I had found a sanctuary when I reached an open home and attempted to seek refuge in it. To my chagrin, I discovered the occupants of the home were themselves members of *Hezbollah*; when they discovered I was a member of the MEK, they promptly assisted in my arrest.
5. One of my attackers was a man named Haji Bashi. At the time, Haji Bashi was famous in Jahrom for being the leader of a ruthless *Hezbollahi* group that was responsible for a number of brutal murders. I could tell some of the men in Haji Bashi's entourage wanted to kill me. Thankfully, some of the more merciful *Hezbollahis* begged their counterparts to put away their knives and leave me be.
6. Ultimately, I was beaten by my captors and thrown into a taxi with an armed escort. The taxi took me to the central basement of the Revolutionary Guards in Jahrom. I was taken directly into an interrogation room. My interrogator was a young Guard in a military uniform who displayed an abrasive attitude towards me from the very beginning of my interrogation. It was clear from his demeanor that they planned to do more than just interrogate me. He asked sexual questions instead of political questions. For example he said "you are not political activist, you follow the sexual needs!"
7. The stress of the interrogation combined with my youthful exuberance for the cause made me extremely volatile. In a moment of rage, I attacked my interrogator and slapped his face. My interrogation ended immediately and I was thrown into a room. In the room, I saw seven of my friends who all were young females and had been arrested on the same day. One of them had been severely beaten and her entire face was bruised and swollen.
8. The next day, I was put in a car along with six other female prisoners and transported to Adel Abad Prison in Shiraz because our city (Jahrom) didn't have any prison especially for the females. Adel Abad Prison refused to accept us because they were already beyond maximum capacity. In the June 20 demonstration, most of members of the MEK were

¹ Mojahedin-e Khargh Organization

- arrested. We were transferred then to the Third Army Prison of Shiraz which also was known as Setad Square.
9. Upon entering the facility, the seven of us were stuffed into a small, dark cell. The cell had a simple layout; it was composed of a common room. We had to call them to come and open the door to go the bathroom. Conditions were very bad in our new facility and guards did little to help us. During our time there, we found ourselves constantly hungry, thirsty and restless due to lack of food, water and exercise. Furthermore, visibility within the cell was extremely limited, especially on nights when the electricity went out.
 10. We were actively discouraged from lobbying for better conditions. On one occasion, we complained a bit too much about the condition of the facility and a number of armed guards rushed into our cell and beat us. In response to their violence, I came forward and asked the men, "Why are you beating us?" The guards, sensing I held a leadership role within the group removed me from the cell and transferred me to solitary confinement. On my way to solitary, the guards tried to intimidate me by telling me that people who go to solitary never come out again.
 11. I was held in solitary confinement for two weeks; I was the only woman in the solitary ward during that time period. I was not interrogated during these two weeks.
 12. After my stint in solitary, they took me to the women's ward which held about 200 women. Most of the women in this ward were members of the MEK who had been arrested in the June 20 demonstration and also there were some leftist women and a few ordinary prisoners who had been arrested due to prostitution.
 13. Initially, in the ward we were given visitation privileges twice per week. Since my family didn't live in Shiraz, it was very difficult for them to come with that level of frequency. After a while, the prison changed its policy and visitors were only allowed to come once per week. The prison also shortened the average time and frequency of our outdoor time. When we complained about the changes in policy, we were attacked and beaten by guards. During this time, I still was not interrogated.
 14. After 2 months of detention, I was summoned to a room within the prison facility. Actually my name was paged by speaker that I should leave the room. Nobody informed me that it is my interrogation or my trial! I arrived at a dilapidated room and was ordered to take off my shoes before entering. Inside the room, three or four people including some clergy were sitting on the ground on a rug. I was wearing Hejab² but of course my eyes were not blindfolded and I was able to see everything. After I removed my shoes, they directed me to sit down.
 15. The clergymen asked questions about my womanhood. I was 17 years old. For example, they asked me why I had not yet found a husband. When I told them that I had not yet found an appropriate suitor, they laughed at me and asked me that why I didn't marry one of the MEK members? I was quiet! They laughed at me and said none of them is a real man! Not only was this line of questioning irrelevant to my charges, it was clearly designed to insult and embarrass me! Sadly, such questions remain typical for women detained in Iranian prisons.

² "Hejab" is the traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women.

16. When the clergymen finally got around to asking me questions that were related to my charges, my task became very simple. From the beginning I denied any and all allegations of wrongdoing. The clergymen asked me if I had been present at the protests and I told them that I had not. I concocted a story where security forces had picked me up accidentally because they mistakenly believed that I was a protester.
17. Denying one's involvement in any wrongdoing was a proven MEK tactic. The MEK believed it had important work to do and that it could not afford to have its supporters sitting in detention facilities across Iran. Consequently, the MEK instructed its members to say whatever the interrogators' wanted to hear even to repent in order to get out of prison as soon as possible. Of course the leftist groups proudly held onto their dissent during interrogations. When asked if they were anti-Islamic Republic and if they would remain anti-Islamic Republic, they would plainly say that they were and they would. None of those people were released.

Release from Prison

18. Eventually, on the same day, my sentence was issued which was one year suspended imprisonment. This meant that I could be freed on bail but if I was arrested again, I would have to be imprisoned for at least a year and then I would be condemned again. I think it took about two weeks for my family to secure proper a document using a big garden as bail, so I could be released.

Aqueduct Group

19. During my time in prison, the political climate in my hometown of Jahrom had become significantly more dangerous. In my absence, *Hezbollah* created a terrorist group called Aqueduct Group. The Group was famous for disseminating an announcement that contained a list of names, including three female names and thirty male names, with a simple message, "Get ready for death." Residents of Jahrom told horror stories about Aqueduct group killing people by knife in the streets. The atmosphere had deteriorated to a point where a number of my friends told me that I was lucky to have been arrested and imprisoned in Shiraz.
20. During my incarceration, my cousin Hamid was killed by Aqueduct group. They stabbed my cousin and left him for dead. Upon finding him in the street, a contingent of community members took my cousin to the local hospital for treatment. It should be noted that the Aqueduct group was notorious for killing civilians who provided assistance to their victims.
21. Just as the doctors treated my cousin, Hamid, and he was healthy enough to leave the hospital the next day, Aqueduct group attacked the hospital. Armed forces raided each of the hospital's rooms, attacking and beating the patients, and even shooting one of them to death. When they entered my cousin's room, they took the serum syringe which was in his hands and push it into my cousin's eye. Then, they took him with his bed out of the hospital. When the doctors protested against *Hezbollah's* actions, the forces said, "You don't have the right to complain. We are *Hezbollah*. We are the Army of God."

22. Three days later, the police found my cousin's body in one of the aqueducts outside the city. (This group was known as Aqueduct group because they left bodies of their victims in the aqueducts outside the city.) His body was brought home and laid in the bathtub to be cleaned. When they took a look at him, all signs pointed to torture. His body parts were separated from each other and there were cigarette burns all over. One of his eyeballs had been ripped from its socket and there were knife wounds littered across his back. It was terrifying to hear of the evidence of such inhumane treatment being found on the body of a loved one.
23. Upon my release from prison, I was horrified to learn that my name was on Aqueduct group's hit list. Upon hearing this information, my family and I realized that I could not risk a return to my hometown of Jahrom.
24. My family helped some of the other relatives who had been threatened and I go into hiding in one of our relative's house in *Bandar Abbas* in the south of Iran. I stayed in *Bandar Abbas* all summer, safe from the dangers awaiting me in Jahrom. At the end of the summer, my family contacted me to tell me that they had moved to Tehran. Tehran is a very large city where one can disappear quite easily, so I thought I could live there safely.
25. I couldn't continue to go to school in Tehran because the Revolutionary Guard had all of our education records from our schools in Jahram. Each of the wanted people, who wished to continue their education, had to get their education records from the Revolutionary Guard but it was just a trap. So I got a job in a lab in Tehran. I lived with my family in Tehran for about a year.
26. Imam of Friday prayer in my town Jahrom, Hossein Ayatollahi, issued an order to the Hezbollah of Jahrom to come to the large cities across Iran in search of escapees from my small town. Upon finding these escapees, he ordered Hezbollah to bring them back or kill them. After our move to Tehran, my younger brother Behrooz who was two years younger than me (he was 14 or 15 years old) was arrested by such Hezbollah and brought before the Revolutionary Guard in Tehran. Without informing his family of his arrest, he was sent to Evin prison. For our part, we had no idea what happened to him; we didn't even know whether he was alive.

Second Arrest

27. On June 27 or 28, 1982, five or six months after my brother's arrest, I was working in a hospital lab, when two men appeared in the waiting room. One of them seemed to have a broken hand. They stared at me intensely every time I crossed his path. At the time, I didn't know what they wanted with me and tried to ignore their behavior. Finally, one of the men confronted me and asked if I was Mitra. As soon as he said my name, I knew they had come to arrest me.
28. I told the man that I was Mitra and he informed me that he had orders to take me in. I told him that I couldn't go with him at that moment because I had to contact my father to let him know where I was going. The man retorted that I could not contact anyone and that I was obligated to go with him. Frantic, I told the man that I need to get my purse that I had to bring with me. By this point, other members of the hospital staff realized what was going on and came to my defense. As I approached the closet to pick up my purse, the

- men pulled out guns and aimed them at me. I think they were afraid that I had hidden something in the closet to injure them with.
29. The men led me out of the hospital at gunpoint and corralled me towards a car that was waiting for me in the parking lot. I was thrust into the back seat between two armed guards, and the driver pulled away. At a nearby location, my escorts ordered me to put my head down and look at the floor.
 30. Upon arriving at our destination, I was blindfolded and taken to a dirty hallway with a number of other prisoners. The only thing I could see were the bandaged feet of other prisoners. The guards maintained a culture of fear. Prisoners had to sit completely motionless. I remember some of the inmates whispering that we were in Evin.
 31. At Evin, the culture of fear extended beyond mere physical beatings. In many ways the sounds of torture remain more haunting than any of the beatings I received. Prison guards sat inmates outside of the various torture chambers and made them listen to strangers begging for mercy. I was subjected to this treatment on my first day in Evin. I heard children screaming throughout the day, crying for their parents and begging for water.
 32. In the early evening, the guards collected some of the prisoners including me. They made us stand in a line and hold onto the chador of the woman in front of us while a guard led us to Ward 246, which was the female ward.
 33. On the third day, I was called for interrogation. Interrogation at Evin was a very frightening experience. Before my interrogation, I was blindfolded and placed on the ground. Despite my blindfold, I could sense there were other people being tortured around me. I knew, for example, that there was a group of interrogators suffocating a young man directly behind me. He was so close to me that I could hear him struggling to breathe and begging his captors to let him go. The man was so close to me that some of the interrogators kicks hit me.
 34. Then I was forced to sit on a school chair in front of a wall. My interrogator was behind me. He told me to lift up my blindfold a little bit and write my specification. I did as he requested and wrote that I was not privy to the information that he was looking for. Upon reading my response, my interrogator became very angry with me..When I reiterated my innocence, he pushed my chair and threw me into the wall across the room. He told me that everyone who came through there said they were innocent. Some of the other men in the room laughed, "Now it starts," one of them exclaimed, "after a couple of hours with her, she will tell us everything we want to know."
 35. I realized that my interrogators didn't know anything about me; they didn't even know why I was in Evin to begin with. Despite their lack of knowledge about me or my case, my interrogators pushed me on the floor and whipped me. Then, they laid me over a bed on my stomach, tied my feet and started whipping my feet. He whipped me until he tired and didn't have any other questions to ask me.
 36. After a while, a female guard came and took me to the bathroom, and brought me back. I don't know why they brought us to bathroom after torturing us. When she brought me back into the room, my interrogator told me that he was going to send me back to my hometown because he didn't know what to do with me in Evin. Although I knew the political climate was extremely dangerous for me in my hometown, I also knew getting

- out of Evin was nearly impossible and that I should jump at the chance. Thus, despite the risk of torture and execution in Jahrom, I acted strategically to be sent there.
37. I assumed my interrogator would believe that the place I feared the most was the appropriate venue for my interrogation. Consequently, I begged my interrogator not to send me back to Jahrom. I told him that my entire family was in Tehran. The more I begged my interrogator to keep me at Evin, the more he insisted that he would send me to Jahrom.
 38. After one month, I was called to pack my belongings; when I packed my belongings, I was escorted into what seemed to be an abandoned building. Once I was inside the building, the guards escorted a male prisoner into the building and sat him down next to me. Then, they left the room, closed the doors and left me alone with the male prisoner. We sat there, blindfolded, for several hours without looking at one another; neither of us could muster the courage to look up and see if we were truly alone.
 39. After 2 or 3 hours of sitting there in silence, someone came back into the room and whispered, "You can hold this boy's hand – he is your brother." I could not believe it! He had been arrested six months before me. I ran into my little brother in an abandoned building at Evin prison. It was absolutely surreal. We were so happy to see each other; we embraced and cried in each other's arms. After that, they took my brother's hand and I took his hand, and we marched towards the car that would take us back to our hometown.
 40. My brother and I were both terrified to return to Jahrom because we were afraid of what the Aqueduct group would do to us upon our return. Due to my gender, I thought they might spare my life but I knew there was a very real danger that they would kill my little brother.
 41. Before I was taken to prison I had heard rumors that upon hearing about the situation they had created in Jahrom, Ayatollah Montazeri had become incensed with the Aqueduct group and had set off to take care of the issue himself. Seeing how nervous my little brother was, I told him not to worry because I didn't think the Aqueduct group was around anymore.
 42. Upon our arrival in Jahrom, I was taken to a make-shift detention facility in town. The detention facility was a broken down building with a hall, a bathroom and two or three holding cells. There were no individual locks on the cells and I was free to wander within the building as I pleased. I could even go to the bathroom whenever I felt the need. There wasn't any other prisoner there. There was a cook on site who made the prisoners the same food as the guards. In short, it was a much more comfortable existence than Evin. I was kept for a few days in this facility.
 43. I was interrogated a few times in that facility; it was the first and only non-violent interrogation I've ever experienced. I sat at a table facing my interrogator. My eyes were not blindfolded. When my interrogator asked me questions, he did so calmly. When I answered his questions, he simply wrote my answers down. There was no screaming, no beating and no torture. I suspect my interrogator was acting so civilly towards me because of pressure from higher ups to treat people from Jahrom with civility, (due to the Aqueduct group fiasco).
 44. At one point during my interrogation, my interrogator told me to pick up the phone and call my family. Although my mother and father were living in Tehran, my aunt was

- living in Jahrom and she was extremely excited to hear from me. I told her that I was in prison in Jahrom, that they were taking me to the Fasa facility in a few days and that they could visit us there.
45. Two or three days after our arrival to Jahrom, my little brother and I were taken to the Fasa facility designed to house political prisoners in that area of Fars province. Upon arriving at the new facility, they took my little brother to the Revolutionary Guard prison where the male prisoners were housed and took me to the local police detention where the female prisoners were housed. The basements of the Revolutionary Guard and the police were close together.
 46. The local police force was very kind and respectful towards me. I suspect this was because of the rift that existed between the Revolutionary Guard and the local police forces at the time. The Revolutionary Guard thought the local police were loyal to the Shah and the local police generally didn't approve of the Revolutionary Guard's actions. For whatever reason, the local police did their best to make my stay as comfortable as possible. They were extremely upset about the fact that we were prisoners. "You guys are innocent children," they said. Some of my female relatives were imprisoned in the same place. In another section of the facility, there were thieves and murderers. The local police protected us very well. They even prepared a small section for me and the other female prisoners. The officers would go out during the day and bring us food so we could fix lunch for ourselves. It almost felt like a home. Our families could visit us whenever they pleased.
 47. I was housed in the local police prison for about five or six months. One time at the end of summer of 1982, I was called to court. The court was a short distance from the police prison and two officers escorted me there. I was not blindfolded or shackled by the officers and I walked a good distance behind them, so onlookers would not suspect that I was their prisoner.
 48. The court was small and very simple, including some chairs on which three men sat: a judge, an interrogator and a guard. The judge who I think was a clergy made a number of general requests of me at my trial. For example, he asked me to defend the statements I made during my written interrogation at Jahrom. When the judge asked me whether I repented, I told him yes I did. I told him that the moment the MEK picked up arms; I lost all interest in their cause and refused to associate myself with them. My trial was finished but I was not informed of my sentence and I was returned to prison.
 49. One hour after returning to my cell, I was told to collect my belongings because I was being transferred to the Revolutionary Guard prison. Since the Revolutionary Guard prison did not have a female ward, I knew that I was being sent to solitary confinement. It was strange for us!
 50. They transferred me to the solitary confinement in the Revolutionary Guard prison. After a while, a girl that I knew from the MEK was brought to my cell. She had been condemned to death but she had repented. They brought this poor girl from a prison in Shiraz to try and trick me into saying something incriminating about my activities.
 51. The court was unable to build a case solid enough to hold me and I was released. The Revolutionary Guard couldn't find any evidence of any wrongdoing on my part or my brother's part. In essence they imprisoned a 17 year old girl for a year and a 15 year old

boy for a year and a half without any evidence or due process. There was never a warrant or charge in either of our cases.

Life after Second Release

52. Upon being released from prison, my brother and I returned to Tehran to live with our family which included our parents and four other children. My mother worked tirelessly to get my educational document from our hometown. I had fallen behind in school by 1-2 years and when I was eventually let back into school I only attended for a short period of time in Tehran.
53. Sometime after I was released from prison, I married a young man from my hometown. Although my husband was not in favor of the Islamic Republic, he did not take part in any political activities and we got along well. Due to issues with his job, my husband and I had to return to Jahrom. I knew that the Aqueduct group had been disbanded and that I had already been acquitted, so we went back to Jahrom.
54. I lived in Jahrom with my husband for quite some time. Like any young couple, we had issues with money but with time we were able to resolve most of our issues and we simply got on living our lives. About one year after getting married, in April 1985, I gave birth to my son. My life became focused entirely on him and my husband. I did my best to forget about my tumultuous past and started a new life with my family in Jahrom.

Third Arrest

55. About a year and a half after my son was born, I was alone at home with him when I heard a knock on the door. I opened the door to find a number of guards standing on my doorstep. The guards told me they had orders to bring me in to answer a few questions. I could not understand what kind of questions these men could have for me. I had not been in contact with the MEK for years. I told the men that they did not have the right to come to my home and take me like this. I told them that I had a son and a husband and that I had done nothing to deserve such treatment. They insisted that I come with them. I asked them let me bring my son as well. They said No! Don't bring your child. Their response made me nervous because if I were truly going to answer just a few questions, they would have undoubtedly let me bring my son with me. The fact that they wanted me to leave my son at home told me that they had no plans of letting me return home for quite some time.
56. I left my son at a neighbor's house. I told my neighbor to leave my son with his father when he came home. I also asked my neighbor to tell my husband that the authorities had taken me for interrogation.
57. Upon arriving at the Revolutionary Guard's basement, my escorts placed a bag over my head. I had dressed full Islamic clothing including a scarf, a black long sleeve shirt and *Chador*³ I wore a red blouse under my long sleeve shirt. The blouse's sleeve was slightly visible when I brought my hands out from my *Chador*. In the interrogation room, the first

³ "Chador" is the traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women.

- thing the interrogator asked was, “Why have you come to your interrogation dressed in stylish clothing like this? Don’t you have respect for Islam? Don’t you have respect for God?” From that point forward, I was shocked and wondered, why they are asking these kinds of questions if this was a political interrogation.
58. I quickly hid my blouse and asked the interrogator for forgiveness. I tried to explain to him that I had been taken from my home by the guards and that I happened to be wearing the red blouse at the time. I told him that I was alone with my son at my home and there was nobody else around to be offended by the blouse, which is why I felt comfortable wearing it. Unfortunately, he refused to leave the issue.
59. He claimed that there were anti-Revolutionary pamphlets being spread around my town and that I was responsible for disseminating them. He said, “To the average person, it might seem like you’re innocent but we know what you’re up to. You don’t fool us.” He told me that I had gotten off very easy for my previous crimes. He said that I should have received at least 10 years imprisonment or the death penalty. He told me that this time would be different; this time they wouldn’t let me go so easily. I did not know what to do. I was innocent. Over the past year I had done nothing but raise my child and take care of my husband. My life had been very normal.
60. I was taken to the prison section which didn’t have any ward. It was just some solitary cells and I was placed in one of them.
61. My interrogators brought up issues that I had forgotten about entirely. They asked me about a type writer. When I was involved with the MEK, we had been given a type writer by the MEK and I kept it for awhile. I had given it to someone else. I couldn’t believe that, after all these years, they were just bringing this up. My interrogators also said that they had traced some phone calls from my home to France and that it was clear I was still communicating with the MEK. When I thought about it, I remembered that on their specific date, we were not in Jahrom at all. We had gone to Tehran. It was clear from their questions that they were trying to build a case against me.

Threatening rape

62. My interrogators often told me that if I did not speak, they would do something to me that was so bad, my husband would spit on me, my father wouldn’t allow me into his home and my brother would spit on me. Initially, I had no idea what they were referring to. I thought to myself, “This interrogator knows me and knows that almost everyone in my family has gone to prison at some time or another. What could he possibly do to me that would make my family members spit on me?” I thought he might have meant that he would leave marks of torture on my face and that my husband would spit on me in disgust. Still, I didn’t think anyone would spit on me if they knew I had been tortured. If anything, I thought they might feel sorry for me and treat me with compassion. At that time I didn’t understand that he was threatening to rape me.
63. One night, I was sitting in solitary confinement when it finally hit me. These men were talking about raping me. They didn’t come out and say, “We’re going to rape you.” but it was suddenly obvious what they meant. I, like many people in Iran, had heard stories of raping female prisoners as a form of torture. Typically, those targeted for rape were in one of two categories: married women and women set for execution. Married women are

- no longer virgins so it is impossible for a married woman to claim that she was raped in prison by showing that she went in as a virgin and came out a non-virgin. Furthermore, a married woman wouldn't dare speak of such events upon her release, at least not if she cared about her husband's dignity. Similarly, women on death row never get a chance to accuse their captors of rape because they are not allowed visitors. The two-fold theory of rape was confirmed by my own experience. When I was a virgin prisoner, nobody threatened to rape me. Once I became a married prisoner, however, the threat of rape was present, even if it wasn't obvious.
64. On several occasions throughout my interrogation sessions, my interrogators suggested that they would not hesitate to torture me in order to get the information they desired. They told me that if I didn't speak freely, they would make me speak. When they finally took me to the torture chamber, they removed my blindfold and put a bag over their own faces so I could see the instruments they would be using.
65. After all of my years in prison, I was well versed in torture tactics and the best ways to escape them. I knew that guards were more likely to show mercy towards pregnant women than non-pregnant women. I also knew that if they whipped me, they wouldn't let me out of prison until my bruises healed as they didn't want any of the signs of torture escaping the prison facility. Since I wanted to get out of prison as soon as possible, I knew that I could not afford to be whipped or beaten in any way.
66. Before the guards strapped me down to the bed to whip me, I forced myself to cry. I told the guards that I was pregnant and that the past few days in prison had put a great deal of stress on my body and that I felt very sick from the experience. I told them that I thought my unborn child was at risk and begged them for a short break from interrogations in order to see a doctor.
67. The guards believed me. They gave me a week-long furlough to see a doctor, provided my husband sign a piece of paper promising to bring me back to prison. I spent my week at home contemplating what to do about my predicament. I thought we needed to escape the country, but my husband did not feel comfortable with the plan. By the end of the week we had not taken any significant steps towards escaping the country and I was forced to go back to prison with the plan of obtaining another furlough from the guards.
68. I was able to secure one more break. Yet again, my husband and I took no significant steps towards escaping the country during my second break and I was forced to go back to prison. By the third time, the guards did not want to give me another break. My husband was forced to tell my captors that my child needed to have a special operation in Tehran and that I had to go to Tehran with him. This time the guards made it very difficult for us. They made me sign a piece of paper saying that if I didn't come back, they would be within their rights to seek me out and kill me. They made my husband sign a piece of paper that said they could take him in my place if I didn't come back. He also had to submit a land document as a pledge.

Escape From Iran

69. Eventually the guards gave me my furlough. It was about early 1986. This time, I knew I could not afford inaction. We went to Tehran. Originally we wanted to get a visa and fly out of the country but we realized that obtaining a visa would take longer than a month.

After some debating, we decided that our only option was to use our passports and travel through Turkey. We had obtained our passports in Shiraz some years before and had not yet used them. In those days, the system wasn't computerized like it is now. There was no way, for example, for authorities in Shiraz to contact my hometown to determine whether or not I was on a no travel list. We used our passports to board a plane for Istanbul.

70. When the authorities in my town understood that we had escaped, they went to all of the homes of suspects and ex-convicts in Jahrom and rounded up their collective passports. I guess they hadn't thought of the possibility that people could escape through Turkey with just their passports and no visas. We were very lucky to be the first family to have tried it.

Life in Turkey

71. On several occasions in Turkey, the MEK approached me and asked me to go with them to Iraq to work on bringing down the Iranian regime. I flat out refused. Since they had picked arms, I refused to get involved with them anymore. Despite my misgivings with the regime, I had lost all interest in political activity; I only wanted to have my life and raise my son. By that point, however, I didn't even believe in religion anymore. The praying and fasting were not meaningful for me anymore. So I couldn't go back and work for them because I didn't believe in it anymore.