



Witness Statement of Alireza Kiani

Name: Alireza Kiani
Place of Birth: Mazandaran, Iran
Date of Birth: 19 December 1984
Occupation: Student Activist

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

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Interviewer: IHRDC Staff

This statement was prepared pursuant to an interview with Alireza Kiani. It was approved by Alireza Kiani on August 12, 2013. There are 73 paragraphs in the statement.

The views and opinions of the witness expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center.

Statement

Background

1. My name is Alireza Kiani. I was born on December 19, 1984 in Pol-e Sefid, in the Savadkouh region in Mazandaran, [Iran]. I entered a master's program in Political Science at Mazandaran University in 2008. Initially, I became a member of the Islamic Association¹; I later acted as the political chairman of the Islamic Association at Mazandaran University, and thus began my political activities within the university. My articles were posted on opposition websites and published in various academic journals. We also organized meetings and gatherings that I either chaired or lectured at. These were the types of activities I engaged in as a university student. I was also a member of the General Council of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity], and in 2010 I became a candidate for the Central Council of that Office, but that election collapsed due to interference by the security forces. Furthermore, since 2011, I have been a member of the *Daneshjooyan va danesh amukhtegan-e liberal-e daneshgahhayeh Iran*, or Iranian Liberal Students and Graduates.
2. I was arrested once in 2009 and was held in Mati Kalay Prison in Babol for one month, [I was arrested] a second time in 2010 and held for about one month in Evin Prison. I left Iran in early July 2011, because I had been summoned to serve a sentence that July. At the time, I also had another trial pending where I would most likely receive another sentence. Moreover, I was not able to defend my thesis for some security reasons; therefore, technically, my presence in Iran was pointless.

First Arrest in Babol

3. In spring 2009, during the period leading to the presidential elections, my political activities increased. At the university, we were supporters of Mir Hossein Mousavi. On June 14, 2009, two days after the disputed election—the result of which we objected to—two plain-clothes agents arrested me in front of Noushirvani University in Babol. Mazandaran University was in Babolsar, but in Babol people took to the streets to demonstrate. I was in front of Noushirvani University and intended to join the members of the Islamic Association who had assembled inside. As I tried to enter the university premises from the back entrance, I was attacked by plain-clothes agents and was arrested.
4. Prior to the arrest, I was with two other friends on a side street adjacent to the university and intended to enter from the back entrance, when, suddenly, I saw three or four heavy-set plain-clothes agents rushing towards me. One of my friends fled; the other tried to rescue me, but he too would have been caught had he stayed, so he also fled and was unable to help me. The agents increased in number to five or six and took me to the front of the university to the special guards. While the students from the inside shouted and challenged my arrest, I raised my hands, for

¹ For a description of the Islamic Association, or *Anjoman-e Eslami*, see e.g. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anjoman-e_Eslami.

which I was beaten and my glasses were cast away. The agents detained me in a police car with handcuffs.

5. The agents told the police to remove me, but the police refused, saying they were busy and could not take me right away; hence an argument ensued between the agents and the police. I was then put on an agent's motorcycle and taken to the police station. I am not certain if I was taken to police station no. 12 or not, but it was located by Noushivani University.

Police Station

6. At the station, there were a few students and other arrestees. There, a plain-clothes officer, who was short with a relatively large middle, beat us. He had a round face and short angular beard. He was about 36 or 37 years of age, balding, and had the typical appearance of a plain-clothes officer.² He held a long carved wooden stick with which he hit the head and stomachs of those who spoke too much, who complained about being arrested, or who demanded to be free. Therefore, I stayed quiet, knowing it was of no use; even so, sometimes when he hit the others, he would strike me as well—in an effort to be fair, I guess!
7. We spent an hour or two in a room at the Division, joined by new arrestees as they arrived. There was an office there for the police, but the plain-clothes agents mingled freely among them. It appeared that the two forces were collaborating, inasmuch as plain-clothes agents felt quite at home there. At the station, we were mostly beaten by the agents, and at times by the ranking uniformed officers. The simple uniformed officers who had no ranking were not involved in the beatings as much. I was kept at the station for an hour or two, and subsequently transferred to the detention center.

Disciplinary Forces of the Islamic Republic (NAJA) Detention Center in Babol

8. The detention center belonged to the Intelligence section of the disciplinary forces. I don't know the location, since we were transferred there in blindfolds. The officers blindfolded us when they transferred us into a black police vehicle. I saw the black color of the vehicle from beneath the blindfold. It was a marked SUV. Two other detainees and I were put in the back seat. One of the detainees had long hair; I recall that back at the Division, the authorities lifted him up by the hair and threw him back on the ground. He suffered great pain.
9. The three of us sat in the back and the same short officer, whom I previously described, sat in the front. We were told by the guards to hold our heads down during the ride. On the road, another car, heavy in size, perhaps a Blazer or a Land Rover, kept hitting our car. I remember that the person who was sitting in the front—the one who had the long stick I mentioned earlier—was

² By this the witness is referring to what, in Iran, is a manner of dress typically understood to be that of a plain-clothes officer, e.g. a manner of simple dress including an untucked long sleeve shirt with a buttoned collar and a beard.

continuously shouting profanities, both at us and the car that was hitting us. Our driver was distressed and scared. The driver was quiet, but the officer who was sitting in the front was shouting profanities. He was also swearing at the driver, asking him to note the plate number of the other car. Ultimately, we were handed off to the Intelligence Section of the Disciplinary Forces.

10. I don't know the location of where we were, because when one is transferred to the offices of the Ministry of Intelligence, or the Intelligence Section of the Disciplinary Forces, one is always blindfolded. The authorities are also very careful to keep the locations secret.
11. Thus, I was transferred to this detention center, and sent to, I believe, either the fourth or fifth floor, because I recall hearing the sounds of moaning and groaning at night from the floors below. The detention center was an old building with broken mosaic stairs. We—the other two detainees and I—were blindfolded and led upstairs to a 4 x 6 meters room occupied by 10 to 15 other people. The authorities removed our blindfolds in the room. I did not know anyone there well; some, but not all, were university students, none of them were well-recognized activists.
12. An hour or two later, I was blindfolded and taken for interrogation. In the interrogation room, I asked permission from my interrogator to pull my blindfold up to scratch my nose. In response to my request, the interrogator asked me to remove my blindfold entirely, which I did. When he saw my face, he began to speak with me calmly and gave me advice, saying that I was too good to engage in these kinds of activities, etc. He asked me to provide written information about myself, my activities, and what I was studying. He would write a question on a page and I had to provide the answer. He looked like a typical agent of the Islamic Republic, with a full, but well-groomed beard; ordinary hair that was combed to one side; fair skin and a round face. He was about 40 years old, and had relatively big eyes.
13. The interrogator asked if I knew Mohsen Barzegar. This was one of the questions. Mohsen Barzegar was one of the well-known student activists at Noushervani University in Babol. I knew I would be in greater trouble if I confessed that I knew Mohsen; therefore, I lied and said I did not know him. The interrogator turned to me and said that I had been in touch with Mohsen twice that day. He was right; I had been in touch with Mohsen twice on my mobile [phone], but did not think that they had been monitoring my calls. I think when I was arrested they must have checked my mobile; I am not saying that they were intercepting my calls. In any event, I was taken back to the room. I believe they wanted to identify the individuals and hold on to the most active people among the 10-15 detainees.
14. I was held for two days at that detention center. During these two days we were only given a piece of bread and warm water. Some of the detainees were released and a few of us remained. There was an old man with a white beard there who I believe was the janitor. Out of the kindness of his heart, along with a piece of dry bread, he brought us some of his own meat outlet, albeit it was so bad that it was inedible. The air circulation system in the room was very bad, but the old man took a chance and left the door slightly open so as to allow some cool air to come in. What he did was against the regulations and he would have gotten into trouble for it, if the guards found out. The door was made of metal.

15. During these two days they beat us too. The next day, two detainees were released and three of us remained. The guards came in to beat us for no reason and then leave. We were allowed to contact our families with our mobile phones during the two days, so I informed my family that I had been arrested. I was interrogated once during these two days, and was asked to provide all my personal information, [to explain] the reason I was on the street at that time, and so on.

Mati Kalay Prison in Babol

16. After the initial two days, the authorities separated us based on the information they had gotten from us during the interrogations. I was then put in a car with an armed guard and was transferred to Babol's Mati Kalay Prison. I believe this prison had just been opened. Mati Kalay Prison was outside the city of Babol, but I am not sure which direction, as I was blindfolded during the transfer. The prison had a large iron gate, next to which was an entrance room. To enter the facilities, one had to pass through this room (on the other side of which was a yard), then another metal door leading to the interiors. I remember this information from the time I was released, as I was not blindfolded then.
17. Initially in Mati Kalay Prison, I was taken to the quarantine, which was an unnerving experience inasmuch as there was no one there I could talk to. In the quarantine yard, there was an eerie feeling when other prisoners found out that I was a political prisoner. They were making disturbing comments and remarks. The prisoners [in the quarantine ward] were there on drug, robbery, or murder charges. I suffered a great deal emotionally during that time.
18. The quarantine section of Mati Kalay Prison had a short hallway, to the left of which were rooms and beds. The hallway led to a metal door behind which was a large yard—the quarantine yard. I was in quarantine for less than two hours.
19. Then I was taken to a room. The man in charge of the ward was a clergyman, I later found out; but I don't know why he was imprisoned. He himself claimed he was a political prisoner, but later we found out this was not the case, but we never really found out the truth. He assigned me to a bed and treated me kindly. When he found out about my charges, he advised me to not worry. He also read poetry to me. A couple of hours later, the Intelligence Security of the prison called me. I was blindfolded and transferred by a guard to the special ward.
20. At the entrance of the special ward in Mati Kalay Prison were the quarantine room and the warden's room, and then the main interiors. Solitary rooms were adjacent to the quarantine.
21. A metal door opened up to a 6 or 7 meters long hallway in the special ward at the end of which was another metal door that opened into the yard. On the left hand side of the hallway there were 10 or 12 beds. The beds were set up around a 2 x 2 meters carpeted seating area. Across were two showers and two toilet facilities, the doors of which were always open, but the door to the yard was kept closed at nights. There were two or three water taps inside the facilities as well. Inside the ward, there were also two public phones, but they did not work. The special ward in Mati

Kalay was unofficially designated for security and political prisoners, as well as regular inmates who were being disciplined. Unlike regular wards, there were no amenities in this ward.

22. When I entered the ward, I encountered a prisoner sentenced for crack [cocaine]. He told me he was sentenced to be executed. He was about 23 or 24 years of age. The day after my arrival, I was sitting alone in the hallway when the door opened and my friends Milad Hosseini, Ali Nazari and Siavoush Safavi were brought in. They, too, were members of the Islamic Association and had been arrested during a riot on the 15th and 16th of June at Mazandaran University in Babolsar along with about 150 others, 13 of whom—including the above three—had been separated and brought [to Mati Kalay]. Needless to say I was happy to see them.
23. Two individuals charged with murder were also brought to the special ward for discipline. I was in the special ward for two days. After the first night, the guard told us that the head of the prison would come to visit the next morning. The next day, the head of the prison along with the head of the Intelligence Security, and a few other Intelligence officers came (I am quite certain that one of those officers later became my interrogator). They asked us to choose a spokesman within our group so that the prison head could speak with him. I was chosen as the spokesman, but when I went to speak with the head of prison, I encountered an officer—who, I am sure, was my interrogator later on—who rudely shouted at me saying, “Who are you and what right do you have to speak!,” at which point I was removed to solitary confinement.
24. I spent ten nights in solitary. The solitary ward had a large metal door that opened to a long corridor that ended at another metal door. Solitary cells were located on both sides of the second corridor behind the second metal door. I think the size of solitary cells varied. There were two or three bathroom facilities in the second corridor as well. I was held in the first corridor so my situation was worse because in order to use the facilities, we had to knock on the door for the guards to come and take us out, but it was very difficult, because the corridor was long and the guards did not easily hear our call. I usually waited until the guard brought me food and then I asked to use the facilities.
25. At times I heard the sounds of regular prisoners who had been brought into those solitary confinements to be disciplined. To use the shower and facilities, I was taken to the special ward, where I could see my friends. I remember one time when I was out of my cell, I saw a regular prisoner who had been laid on the ground face down with his hands and feet chained together. He was left in that awkward position for hours.
26. Luckily, the wardens in the solitary ward were nice and treated me well. For instance, they gave me books to read. During the ten days there I read the ten volumes of *Kelidar*³ as well as two other novels. Having access to books made the solitary experience bearable for me.
27. In the ten-day period, I was interrogated four times. I don't remember the exact times of interrogation, but the first session was about photographs. Mazandaran University has a lot of

³ The witness is referring to *Kelidar*, a novel by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, a prominent Iranian contemporary author. See: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kelidar-novel>

secret closed circuit cameras that take photographs during assemblies. During the interrogation, the authorities showed me these photos and asked me to identify the occasions, or the individuals. The pictures were high quality and accurate. The photos were both from the fixed cameras above and at hand-held standing level. I had to provide information about these photos.

28. I had two interrogators; the first was the person who shouted at me rudely when the head of the prison came to visit. He was short and fat with a large round face covered almost completely with a white beard, and thinning hair combed to one side. At the time he wore a blue shirt over his pants. He spoke with a thick Baboly accent.⁴ He was my interrogator in my first, second and fourth interrogation sessions. I believe in the third session I was interrogated by someone else, who treated me relatively kindly.
29. In the first interrogation, I greeted [the interrogator] as I entered, even though I was blindfolded. In response, he insulted me and said sarcastically, “Oh, you know how to say hello!” Other than my first interrogation—which was about the photographs, and which lasted two or three hours—there were three other sessions that lasted two to three hours each, where I had to respond verbally to questions, after which, for another two or three hours, I had to write down answers to those same questions as well as some other ones. There were also short answer questions, i.e., he would list a name of individuals, such as my professor Dr. Ali Karimi Maleh, and I had to write down any information I had about him. It was interesting that the interrogator’s writing was full of spelling and grammatical errors, which he asked me to correct. They just asked me questions.
30. After ten nights in solitary, I was transferred to the special ward again. Two days after my return to the special ward I was joined by a group of other friends from the Islamic Association of Noushirvani University, including Mohsen Barzgar and Reza Arab. Reza Arab was the Coordinating Officer of the Islamic Association at Mazandaran University and a close friend.
31. During the two weeks I spent in the special ward, I spoke with my parents once and had one cabin visit⁵ with my elder brother. The Intelligence security officer at the prison, who we had become close to, told me that because my interrogation was finished I would be released on bail on July 9th. He [later] told me that I was not released on that date because there was a fear that I would join the activities on that day. My friends and I were released on July 15, 2009.

Release from Prison

32. [As I mentioned above] I was arrested on June 14, 2009. I spent two nights at the Intelligence Office of the Disciplinary Forces, two nights in the special ward at Mati Kalay Prison in Babol, ten nights in solitary, another two weeks in the special ward, and then I was subsequently released on July 15, 2009. I believe I was released on bail, because after my release my father did not want

⁴ By “Baboly accent” the witness is referring to an accent associated with the city of Babol in Mazandaran province in northern Iran.

⁵ A “cabin” visit refers to a type of visit permitted in detention whereby an inmate is permitted to visit with their family but can only see them through a glass window and speak with them via a telephone receiver.

me to speak about my prison experience at all, and in fact he never spoke to me about it. My father is self-employed.

33. Following my release, and after I returned to university, there was a rumor that I would be expelled. In autumn of 2009, I was summoned to the Disciplinary Committee⁶, where the Mazandaran Sepah⁷, and the Deputy of Student Affairs, Mr. Morteza Alavian, insisted that Reza Arab and I should be expelled. However, one of the university professors, the legal representative of the Disciplinary Committee, did not yield. The Disciplinary Committee has two legal representatives who are law professors. [This university professor] was active in the Faculty of Law, and since I was a political science student, I knew him from both the Faculties of Law and Political Science. He was one of those professors that had a close relationship to his students. He later explained to me that they [the Committee] wanted to expel us, but he told them that we were not active at the university and thus there were no legal grounds for our expulsion. He also told me that the Committee then considered suspending us, but he advised them that there were no grounds for suspension either. We [Reza and I] waited two hours behind closed doors while they discussed our future. Owing to the professor's defense and protection of us, we were able to continue our education.

Trials

34. Considering that I had been released on bail, I knew there would be a trial to follow. I believe it was that same autumn 2009 that I was summoned to court.
35. My first trial was held in the autumn 2009 at the Public Court in Babol. I received a written summons to appear in court on a particular day to be tried on charges of destruction of public property, and [acts of] sedition at Mazandaran University. The judge was Mr. Bahmani. I did not have a lawyer and did not request one either. I went to court and the judge explained my charges—that on the 15th and 16th of June 2009 I committed the offense of sedition at Mazandaran University and that I engaged in vandalism and destroyed public property. I told him that I had been arrested on the 14th of June and therefore it would have been impossible for me to have engaged in these alleged offenses on the 15th and 16th of June.
36. I vividly recall that I was sitting in a chair [during my trial] and Justice Bahmani, who was an old man, was sitting in a chair [that was positioned] higher [than mine] behind his desk. He held up a piece of paper and said: this report from the Intelligence Office in Babol tells me that on the 15th and 16th of June you engaged in sedition at Mazandaran University, and you must be convicted for it. I said: you could ask the Intelligence Office of the Disciplinary Forces in Babol and verify that I was arrested on the 14th of June where I was kept overnight, and what you suggest would be physically impossible. He told me if I were telling the truth, I would be acquitted. I told him I had

⁶ Disciplinary Committees in Iranian universities were formed at the beginning of the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution. These committees include deputy Student Affairs, a representative of the Leadership Office, deputy research, one of the faculty members, and a student. This committee is in charge of disciplining any threats, insults, harassment, academic violation or moral violation that occurs at the university, however, according to activists, they have also been used to police the behavior of student activists and other politically active students on campus. See: <http://alef.ir/vdcccxsqsi2bq418.ala2.html?180312>

⁷ *Sepah* is another name for the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

no reason to lie. Luckily, I was acquitted, because Judge Bahmani made an independent inquiry. These were the events of my first trial.

37. For my second trial, (which I think was in winter 2009), I was again summoned to the Public Court in Babol, on the charges of destruction of public property in Babol. I was tried by Judge Bagherian, who was a clergyman. He told me that I was charged for having come to Babol where I engaged in sedition and destruction of public property. I denied the allegations and said that I had not destroyed any property. I said that I was entering the university premises when I was arrested. I felt the judge was not willing to listen to me. The hearing felt like a show trial. I believe an argument ensued between us as well, but I cannot recall the details of it now.
38. Subsequently, I was sentenced by Judge Bagherian to one year of imprisonment and 70 lashes under Ta`zir law.⁸ A year later, the Court of Appeal changed my sentence to a suspended sentence on both convictions. That is to say, my one year of imprisonment under Taz`ir law and [70] lashes for sedition and destruction of public property were both suspended.
39. My third trial was at the Revolutionary Court in Babol and presided over by Judge Razian, who was also the head of the judiciary in Babol. My charges included activities against the regime as well as 16 other counts, including writing inflammatory articles, coordinating a “velvet revolution” at Mazandaran University, organizing assemblies, insulting [the Supreme Leader] Mr. Khamenei, giving an interview to VOA, managing a weblog, maintaining a connection to the *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity], amongst other charges. I believe my third trial was also held in 2009. For all three trials, I received a written notice to appear.
40. Judge Razian read the charges one by one and I defended myself accordingly, but he wasn't really listening to my statements. In conclusion, he sentenced me to eight months' imprisonment under Ta`zir law, which was later upheld by the Court of Appeal. The appeal decision was issued in 2010. During this period I continued my studies.

Second Arrest

41. I was arrested and detained again in November 2010. The *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity] decided to hold a new election for its central council, and I was one of the candidates. The election was held and I became an elected Council member. I was arrested in front of Mazandaran University two days before the names of the new central council members were announced. I was with my girlfriend at the time. We got into a taxicab when another person got into the front passenger seat of the cab. We drove about 500 meters when the man in the front asked the taxi driver to stop, and then he asked me to get out. I knew this was an arrest. At that moment, five plain-clothes officers surrounded me and attacked me. They put me in a Xantia and drove off. This time I was arrested at the boulevard outside the university.

⁸ Chastisement or punishment of which the nature and amount has not been prescribed by Shari'a law, and instead is left to the discretion of the judge.

42. The arresting officers did not blindfold me, but as we approached the Intelligence Office in Sari, they told me to hold my head low. At the Shahid Kachoui Intelligence Office in Sari, I was initially taken to a room and made to wait for one hour. The authorities explained that my charges were collusion and assembly with intent to act against national security. At 12 a.m. or 1 a.m. after midnight, the authorities called me [out of the room] and asked for 70 million tomans [approximately \$ US 70,000 in 2010] to release me on bail. I told them that I could not provide 70 million tomans then, and I had to call my family, and that they, too, would not readily have access to such a large amount [of money] at that time of the night. Thus, I was told that I would be transferred to the detention center.
43. Then they blindfolded me and transferred me to the detention center. The authorities at the detention center stripped me naked. They did a complete body search. They even checked inside my ears to make sure I did not have anything on me. Then they dressed me and took me to the cell. I spent two nights in solitary. After the two nights, when I was brought out, I saw that Mosen Barzgar was also there. He, too, had been arrested because of the *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* elections.
44. At the detention center, I was asked about the identity of the girl whom I was with at the time of arrest. I gave them false information. Then they handcuffed Mohsen and I together and put us in a Samand car with another man and told us we were not allowed to speak to each other until we reached Tehran. They treated us very badly. On the way, we got hungry. I asked them to give us some food, since I was unwell, but they refused.

Transfer to Evin Prison

45. Since our warrant had been issued by Branch 5 of the Revolutionary Court that was located in Evin, Mohsen Barzgar and I were transferred to Tehran. I believe that it was the Intelligence Office that pressured Branch 5 of the Revolutionary Court in Evin to arrest me. In effect, we were only “guests” in Sari, and the authorities had to take us to Tehran as early as possible. Other than Mohsen Barzgar and I, who were from the north, Mr. Ali Qulizadeh from Mashhad, Siavoush Hatam from Tehran, and Mohammad Haydarzadeh from Shahr-e Kurd had also been arrested. Mohammad Ilkhanizadeh who was a Kurdish student at the University of Tehran was also on the list, but because he had fled and gone towards Kurdistan, he was arrested a month later and brought to Tehran. All these arrests were made in connection to the election of the Central Council of the *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*. With the exception of Siavoush Hatam, who was not a candidate, but was involved in organizing the election, the rest of us were candidates such as Ahmad Ahmadian, who fled.
46. On the way to Tehran, the guards made sarcastic remarks saying that they were taking Mohsen Barzgar and me to ‘Hotel Evin.’ As we got closer to our destination, they blindfolded us.
47. In Evin [prison], we were made to wait for a while before we were processed and given light blue outfits [to wear]. We were hungry. The guards told us to stand facing the wall, with our blindfolds on, and they gave us some food to eat. They then took us to the health clinic where we were

treated respectfully by the physicians. We were asked if we had any specific health issues, or if we were on any medication, and so on. In Mati Kalay Prison I had a problem with accessing my medication, but in Tehran I never had that problem and my medication was always provided to me on time.

48. Mohsen Barzgar and I were then transferred to ward 240 where we spent some time in what they called, 'Suite' 57. The interrogators called it a suite, because it was in fact a room for three people. I was there with two other individuals, one of whom was replaced [by another prisoner] after awhile. One of my cellmates was a Kurdish [man] from Kermanshah who was accused of collaboration with Al-Qaeda. The other one was accused of espionage, and removed after a day or two and replaced with a millionaire charged with money laundering. The latter was charged on security matters, and that is the reason he was brought to our room. I was then transferred to solitary confinement in the same ward where I was held for some time; I was told that the judge had ordered it. I was held for a total of about one month in Suite 57 and in solitary confinement.
49. In total, I was interrogated three times during this period in custody. The first interrogation concerned my background and activities, i.e., who I was and what I had done. The other interrogations had to do with the *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* and political discussions. Each interrogation session, both in Mazandaran and Tehran, took about five to six hours in total. All three sessions were conducted by the same interrogator.
50. One day I was called out and asked to call my family to bring a 70-million-toman-bond. I called my family and told them. The authorities wanted a property deed in Tehran, but we did not have any properties in Tehran. The authorities, however, had insisted that the property must be in Tehran—my family told me these things later. My family had to get a property deed from a friend in Tehran to post as bond. Later, we had an appraisal done and our house in the village was valued at 90 million tomans. We then exchanged the property deeds, and, in fact, the authorities continue to hold our deed. I was released on bail on the strength of the property deed sometime before December 7, 2010. I cannot recall the exact date.
51. I believe I was in custody for 28 days. I am certain, however, that I was released before the 7th of December, because I was told by my friends that they had warned the Intelligence Office that if we were not released, they would demonstrate on that date—the 7th of December. I later noticed on some news websites⁹ that many warnings to that effect were sent to the Intelligence Office. This is how I was released on bail.

⁹ *Bayanie Anjoman Eslami-e Daneshgah-e Olum va Fonoun-e Babol: Ejaze Mosaderey-e Rouz-e Daneshjoo ra Nemodahim.* [Islamic Association statement of Babol University of Science and Technology: We won't let Student Day be hijacked.] Kaleme, 16 Azar 1389 [December 7, 2010] see: <http://www.kaleme.com/1389/09/16/klm-40179/?theme=fast>

Subsequent Release

52. When I was released, I had to go to court to submit my final defense. The court had to call me for my final defense, but I was not called until 2011. They had called Mr. Qolizadeh and Siavoush Hatam, but not me.
53. In December 2010, when I was released I quickly returned to university, took the January exams, and immediately began working on my thesis. I finished my thesis in five months, and in July I declared my readiness to defend my thesis—inasmuch as I had to go to prison in August. At that time I had no intention to leave Iran. I went to the university three times to set a defense date for my thesis, and each time the university authorities postponed the date. I asked why they were changing the dates, and explained to them that I had to go to prison in August. I went to see the President of the University, who sent me to see the Educational Deputy, who kept saying: it is going to be alright.
54. I went to see my thesis supervisor, Dr. Ali Karimi Maleh, who was a reformist and served as the Governor's Political Deputy in Mazandaran during the reformist period [during President Khatami's term]. He told me that a number of non-educational institutions were blocking me from defending my thesis. I then went to see the Director of Continuing Education who told me that the university did not want me to graduate. My supervisor, Dr. Karimi, also told me that the University of Mazandaran did not want me to complete my master's degree. I asked Dr. Karimi what all this meant. He said it basically meant that the university would not let me defend my thesis.
55. I went to the Head of Education and asked for my transcript. He said the transcript cannot be issued until I defend my thesis. I had to go to prison in August. If I were to be imprisoned for eight months, I would have lost my three-year term in university and would have been expelled. In this case the security forces would reach their goal.
56. I believe they wanted me to go to prison so that I would exhaust my time limit and then be expelled based on university policy. Short of the four defense credits, I had completed all my course work. Furthermore, my thesis was ready, and had been approved by my advisor and Dr. Ghazal Sofla, a member of the Political Sciences Educational Council at the university. The examiner had also been appointed. I even called the examining professor and asked him to be present on the given dates. I invited my fellow students to attend my defense on three different occasions, but in the end the authorities did not allow me to complete [my defense].
57. As a result of this turn of events, I became depressed and also realized that my prison term of eight months was fast approaching. Furthermore, I was facing another trial for my second arrest. I realized that if I went to trial, I would most likely be convicted, which also meant that the one year suspended sentence would then be enforced. Cumulatively, I would be looking at two or three years in prison. I basically saw my future destroyed before my eyes. Therefore, I concluded that there was no use [in staying] and that I should leave the country. Since I had not done my mandatory military service, and since I had no passport, I had to leave illegally. One month after

my departure from Iran, my family informed me that I was sent a notice to appear for my final defense in court.

Function of the Islamic Associations at Universities

58. Islamic Associations were established in the 1940s and 1950s in universities across Iran. These associations were established lawfully for the purposes of advancing discourse—a discourse that changed and developed over time. For instance, during a particular period, there was an intellectual movement built around an interest in Mr. Bazargan and the *Nehzat-e Azadi* [Freedom Movement].¹⁰ Then when Khomeini rose to influence, interest shifted to him and the revolution. In the 1990s, particularly towards the end of the decade, there was a great attraction to religious intellectualism. At the turn of the century, there was disapproval of government and reforms.
59. From 2005, when the *Allameh* branch of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*¹¹ was proclaimed illegal, the Islamic Associations also were gradually deemed illegal. I believe the Islamic Association of Mazandaran was declared illegal in 2006 or 2007. In 2008, when I entered university, the Islamic Association was illegal. All of us—including my dear friend Reza Arab and others—tried to establish a new founding council for the Islamic Association. To this end, we even spoke with the representative of the Minister of Science [Research and Technology] at the university. At that time the Minister of Science [Research and Technology] was Dr. Zahedi. We met with his representative and told him that we will do our best to cooperate [with university authorities] and not engage in too much sensitive activity.
60. Even for our assemblies, we tried to negotiate with supervising elements at the university so that they would let us be and let us run our own affairs. For instance, *Herasat* mandated that we not make any insulting remarks towards Mr. Khamenei, and in exchange they would not disrupt our illegal assembly. We agreed to their conditions and thus we coexisted. We were happy to invest in this relationship, given that our association was illegal after all.
61. The fact that the association was illegal did not mean that it was unpopular. On the contrary, the association was quite influential at the university. We published our own journal, albeit that too was illegal. In some faculties, such as the Faculty of Chemistry, Faculty of Basic Sciences, and the Faculty of Law, the directors took away the Islamic Association's access to their rooms, but the Association had three rooms at the Faculty of Humanities and one room at the Faculty of Economics. However, after June 2009, when we returned to the university, we saw that all the rooms belonging to the Islamic Association at the university had been raided and plundered, and all its contents, including computers, books, tapes, files, and other items, were removed.
62. Prior to the Islamic Association being declared illegal, it was considered an institution and its possessions lawfully belonged to it. The university provided the equipment belonging to the

¹⁰ For more information about the Freedom Movement of Iran see: <http://www.princeton.edu/irandataportal/parties/nehzateazadi/>

¹¹ *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity] is a student organization in Iran that was formed in 1980 and formally established in 1982. The organization led the student movement in Iran in the 1980s. In 2002, the organization was divided into two branches, the Shiraz branch (minority branch), and the Allameh branch.

Islamic Association, and the Association's members contributed other materials such as tapes and books. Those computers held confidential files, all of which had been confiscated.

63. If one wanted to join the Islamic Association at a university, one would first have to join the general council as member, and then announce one's readiness to join the central council, and await elections [to be elected to the central council]. However, because the Islamic Association had been declared illegal, the university would not allow the Association to hold elections. Therefore, we had to do it clandestinely. I know how it was done at Mazandaran University, but other universities conducted their affairs differently. We also had a network of unofficial supporters. Since the university did not provide us with a hall, we convened at the university's grounds on the grass, or assembled chairs in the Association room so that everyone could gather there. We also had to appoint a central council, because we did not have the space to carry out an election, but other faculties still conducted elections, since they had access to proper facilities.
64. Since the University of Mazandaran in Babolsar was central in the province, the Mazandaran division of Sepah exerted a lot of influence there. There was a member of Sepah [Revolutionary Guard] at the *Herasat* [a protection office in Iranian universities] by the name of Col. Rezvan, who called Reza Arab once to make death threats. The University of Mazandaran was a security hub, and became even more so after 2009. The unknown martyrs [of the post-June 2009 election violence] were buried there. The University of Mazandaran's campus and its administration offices are in Babolsar, thus making it the "mother" university [or premier university] in Mazandaran Province.
65. I was a member of the Islamic Association from 2008 to 2010. Given that the Association was branded illegal, we were not very formal, but we hosted opposition forces to gather informally. I must also note that various Islamic Associations in universities across the country had agreements with Marxist and Communist groups. The leftist groups had their own divisions. The members of the Islamic Association were usually liberals, or were inclined towards liberal religious intellectualism. Nonetheless, they were all critical of the regime. At the Association, we held gatherings to analyze plays, and review novels and poetry. Mr. Milad Hosseini was the cultural director of the Association. That is to say, our meetings were not always political. Nationwide, there were about 40 or 50 Islamic Associations.
66. In 2010, an Independent Islamic Association was established at Mazandaran University. This Independent Islamic Association was in fact formed by the Intelligence Office in Mazandaran aimed at establishing a presence in Mazandaran University. Another branch of this Independent Islamic Association was also set up at Amir Kabir University. The members of the Independent Islamic Association were the Basijis of Mazandaran University who had branched out from the student's Basij group and started the Independent Islamic Association. This was a scheme of the Intelligence Office.

***Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [Office for Strengthening Unity]**

67. In 2010, I was nominated as a candidate for the Central Council of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*. We were planning to elect six or seven individuals as new council members, and two alternates. The election was conducted online, due to security restrictions that prevented us from gathering in one place; otherwise we would have surely been raided and [our members] arrested. However, in the process, because there were many people involved, I think a couple of emails had leaked and that is how the Intelligence Office was alerted and we were arrested.
68. Anyone who wishes to become a member of the Central Council of *Tahkim-e Vahdat* Office had to initially become a member of its General Council. Student members of the General Council who participated in at least one election of the *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* could be nominated for the Central Council. For instance, I had voting rights at Mazandaran University.
69. In 2010, the election of the Central Council of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* was held, but did not amount to much, since two days before [the announcement of the results] we were arrested. Ultimately, we were declared as elected council, but never actually formed the Central Council. At the moment, the fate of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* remains unclear; therefore, we cannot really claim to be members of its Central Council. Currently, Bahareh Hedayat, a former member of the Central Council of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*, is in prison.
70. Furthermore, *Advar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* [the Organization of University Graduates of Islamic Iran] is in fact a political party, whose membership is comprised of former members of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*. This political party was also declared illegal after the 2009 elections. Mr. Ali Akbar Mousavi Khoeini, Mr. Ahmad Maddadi, Mr. Mehdi Aminizadeh, and, later, Mr. Abdollah Momeni, are among its founding members. However, *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* is a student organ; in fact, it is the hub of the Islamic Association at universities.
71. *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* was in fact established after the Cultural Revolution in 1980, but at the start of the 1990s the group adopted a critical position towards the government and leaned towards religious intellectualism. This position was reinforced and strengthened by individuals such as Mr. Ali Afshari who joined the organization. In early 2001, *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* was divided into two branches: *Allameh* and *Shiraz*. The *Shiraz* branch was aligned with the government, but the *Allameh* branch continued its opposition status; Mr. Ali Afshari was associated with the latter. In 2004-5 the *Allameh* branch was declared illegal. I was a member of the General Council of *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* from 2008 until I left Iran.

Iranian Liberal Students and Graduates

72. In autumn of 2011, I became a member of the Iranian Liberal Students and Graduates. This is a political student group with liberal tendencies and a liberal manifesto, which is available online.¹² This group functions as a political organization.
73. Since this [liberal] group is banned in Iran, it cannot have an administrative set up. It functions through personal contacts or via the Internet. This group includes a central council, a supreme council, and a general council. Fortunately, at this time, no one from this group is in prison, and they are active in Iran—and prefer not be named, given that they are considered to be [political] opposition.

¹² Manifesto of Iranian Liberal Students and Graduates. See (in Persian): <http://bamdadkhabar.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/manifest%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%87-.pdf>