



Witness Statement of Mohammad Shams

Name: Mohammad Shams

Date of Birth: 1984 or 1985

Place of Birth: Tehran, Iran

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

Date of Interview: April 20, 2010

Interviewer: IHRDC Staff

This statement was prepared pursuant to an in person interview with Mohammad Shams. The statement was approved by Mohammad Shams on June 8, 2011.

Statement

1. My name is Mohammad Shams, I am 25 years old, and was born in Tehran. Prior to leaving Iran, I was self-employed in Tehran.
2. Before the recent presidential elections in 2009 I worked at the Mousavi campaign headquarters. During this time, I was arrested once prior to the election and again after the election. During my second detention, I was beaten so severely that I suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. I eventually left Iran for Turkey one month ago, in March 2010.
3. I have a father and mother and one sister and one brother who are younger than me, and we all resided in Iran. My father has owned a supermarket shop in Tehran for twenty-five years. He was also a veteran of the war and previously was a news reporter.

Prior to the Election

4. Prior to the election, officials allowed people to campaign for their desired candidates in a designated time period. I, along with my friends, campaigned for Mousavi at his campaign headquarters above the gas station on Niavaran Street in Tehran. I let the Mousavi campaign headquarters use my car; we painted it and attached a picture of Mousavi to it. We handed out green scarves and bracelets, and Mousavi campaign leaflets to people throughout the night.
5. In that same period of campaigning prior to the election, I was arrested one time. A few of us Mousavi supporters were campaigning on North Pasdaran Street at the crossroads of Shariati and were handing out green scarves to people. There were also Ahmadinejad supporters campaigning on the other side of the street. They were Basiji, wore white shirts and pants, and were equipped with radios. We were smiling when we encountered them but they got in front of us and started calling us "sissy boys." There were a few women who were present in our group and the Ahmadinejad supporters started to argue with and encroach upon these women, therefore, we got into a fight with them.
6. Then they used their radios to contact officials from the police station who arrived in the course of five minutes in green Mercedes Benz cars. The Ahmadinejad supporters portrayed us as the attackers and said we were Mousavi supporters, were savages, and had attacked them. Anyhow, we were taken to the police station.
7. At the police station, the officers welcomed us with a slap. Afterwards, they asked us if we wanted to campaign or if we wanted to create chaos. I said that our campaigning was peaceful but because they (the Basijis) wanted to raise a hand against a woman, I became angry.
8. Eventually at the police station, they told us our families would have to come and give guarantees in order for us to go free. Every one of us got word to our families and, with their guarantees; we were freed that same night.

After the Election

9. After the election, when it was announced that Ahmadinejad won the presidency, we again went out onto the streets to question why the peoples' votes had been stolen. We expressed our dissent with "Green Silence," meaning that the streets were calm and we just made our way peacefully down the street. We gathered from Imam Hussein Square to Azadi Square, and Haft Tir Square and Toopkhane Square where we demonstrated until the authorities could no longer tolerate our silent demonstration and ordered the riot guards to strike at the people.
10. Some of the forces were not Iranian. They were very dark skinned, of tall height and stature and said nothing at all. The authorities used tear gas against the people. As a result of the tear gas, I became short of breath for a while and used an inhaler for diffusing the lungs.
11. In June 2009 we were demonstrating on 16 Azar Street and, together with the crowd, were moving towards Enghelab Square. All of a sudden, riot forces with black motorcycles moved toward the people and attacked. There were two groups of forces and the second group was beating people with electric batons. People were fleeing in all directions.
12. At this moment, a woman fell to the ground and one of the motorcycles ran over her waist. After viewing this incident, we lost all control and before the individual on the motorcycle could flee, the crowd brought him down to the ground. They opened the gas tank and set the motorcycle on fire. Then we moved the woman who broke her rib and was unable to walk into a car and transported her to a hospital.
13. Along the way, I got out of the car and went to our store, which was located nearby. When I got to the store, I described the events that had taken place to my father. He said that I should not stay there so I went to my own house, which was separate from my family's house.

The Arrest

14. Exactly two days after these developments, I was sitting in my house when the doorbell rang at 11:30 in the morning. Before I could see who rang the bell, the door to the house opened and five officials from the Ministry of Intelligence entered the house. Two of the individuals stood below and the other three individuals came up. Before I could even speak, all of a sudden I felt my eyes burning. They sprayed tear gas on my face and started kicking and punching me.
15. I do not know what happened; then I came to realize I passed out in the trunk of a car. Once every ten minutes they stopped the car, opened the trunk, and sprayed tear gas in my face again. My eyes were swollen and would not open. My hands were bound behind my back.
16. After some time, they took me out of the trunk and immediately blindfolded me. They bound the blindfold so tightly that it felt like a weight on my eye sockets. Then, we entered a place where I heard the opening and closing of doors and we went down some stairs. In this area, I heard a high-pitched noise.
17. As soon as we entered that place, they began to question me and asked: What is your name? Who told you to create this chaos? Who was the person that encouraged you to rebel? Who is your leader? They asked other questions yet never gave me the opportunity to answer. During the questioning, they beat me severely with batons and boots.

18. During the entire time, my eyes and hands were bound and I could not even see my interrogator. The last blow I sustained caused my eyes to go black and I do not know what happened after that. A baton struck me on the skull behind my left ear and knocked me unconscious.
19. I was unaware of how much time passed and I found out later, when my father had told me, that he had no news of me for two to three days.
20. After knocking me unconscious, the authorities brought in a person by the name of Doctor Ramin for my medical treatment who, ironically, was one of my father's friends. He recognized me but did not tell the authorities he knew me. Then, he got in contact with my father and informed him of what had happened.
21. My father came there and was able to get me out of there with money and his friend acting as an intermediary. Then I went to the hospital emergency room.
22. When I opened my eyes, four hours had passed since I had been unconscious. I suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and blood was flowing out of my left ear. My father told me what happened after I was knocked unconscious—such as how Doctor Ramin told him about my situation. I was hospitalized for one week and then my father secretly took me out of the hospital. For a time, I stayed at my friend's home and did not go to my family's house or their store.
23. On the afternoon of Ashura, December 27, 2009, at the Valiasr crossroad, we were holding a rally when suddenly we were attacked again. We all fled toward Ferdowsi Square. I was on College Bridge when one of the Basijis caught me and, because it was only the two of us; I took revenge on him for every previous beating I endured. I fled for the second time and took shelter at my friend's house.

Leaving Iran

24. After that, a summons and a court letter were sent to my family's home address that ordered me to report to court for the crime of acting against the national security of the nation. My father told me there were authorities waiting outside the door of the house and the store to arrest me. Therefore, he said it would not be in my best interest to stay in Iran.
25. He asked one of his friends from his news reporting days to act as an intermediary and gather information from the passport office. This intermediary was able to determine that I was not prohibited from traveling abroad. Therefore, my father bought me a ticket and one morning I boarded a Caspian airlines flight to Istanbul, Turkey.
26. As a result of the blow I received, I am still not able to sit or lie down in one position for long periods of time. My head hurts and my eyes go black. My memory has become weak and I cannot recall many events. The doctor told me I was extremely lucky that, after my skull fractured and I sustained a cerebral hemorrhage, I started to bleed from my ear.
27. I had a good job and life in Iran and if these difficulties had not happened to me, I would never have left Iran.