



Witness Statement of Reza Azad

Name: Reza Azad
Father's Name: Khosrow
Place of Birth: Tehran, Iran
Date of Birth: 1958
Occupation: ICT Specialist

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)
Date of Interview: May, 2009
Interviewer: IHRDC Staff

This statement was prepared pursuant to an in person interview with Mr. Reza Azad. The statement consists of 129 paragraphs and 22 pages. The interview was conducted in May, 2009. The statement was approved by Reza Azad on August 26, 2010.

Statement

1. My name is Reza Azad and I am 51 years old. After the establishment of the Islamic Republic. I was imprisoned twice in Iran.
2. I was first arrested for my political activities with the Organization of the Iranian People's Fedai Guerillas (*Fedaian-e Khalq*), although I was no longer an active member at the time. I was arrested a second time after I tried to illegally cross the Iranian border.
3. I have many physical and psychological difficulties stemming from the torture I endured while in prison in those years.

Political Activity at University

4. I started my studies at Shiraz Pahlavi University, which later became Shiraz University after the fall of the Shah, in the year 1977. I was a student at Shiraz University when the Cultural Revolution began.¹
5. During my years at university, I was deeply involved in student activism against the Islamic Republic.
6. When the universities closed in 1359, I left Shiraz and went to live in Tehran. I began to work as a teacher in two very poor neighborhoods in the south of Tehran. I worked in this job for two years.

First Arrest

7. The first time I was arrested was on 27 *Mehr* 1361 (19 October 1982). A group of persons that I later came to realize belonged to the Islamic Revolutionary *Komiteh*² came to my house in Tehran unannounced and put me in their car. They did not have an arrest

¹ The Iranian Cultural Revolution was a period following the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran when the government attempted to purge academic institutions of Western and non-Islamic influences to bring it in line with Shia Islam. The Cultural Revolution began in 1980 (1359) and resulted in the closure of universities for three years from the summer of 1980 until 1983 (1359-1361).

² *Komiteh* is a Revolutionary Committee, and can sometimes refer to the officers themselves. *Komitehs* were Islamic groups organized around mosques in communities throughout Iran. From the year 1978, *Komitehs* carried out governmental, as well as police and internal security duties. They gradually extended their authority over many areas of Iran and sometimes clashed with parallel power structures like the Revolutionary Guards.

warrant. The agents did not even allow me the opportunity to change my clothing or put on shoes.

8. The agents did not reveal their identities, where they were from, or why they had come for me. Then they told me that my arrest warrant has been issued by Evin and took me to Evin.
9. The agents did not explain why I was being arrested and sent to Evin. However, from the questions the agents asked me, I gathered what the motivations were for the arrest. It seemed that they were investigating cases of students who might pose a threat to the Islamic Regime.
10. The information that these agents had only covered the years I was in university in Shiraz. From the questions the agents were asking me, I realized that I had been identified t by one of my fellow students at Shiraz University.
11. Fortunately, since the source of their information appeared to be limited to only my university years, the agents seemed unaware of my political activism in Tehran. Had they known of my political activities in Tehran since the closure of the universities, I would certainly have been in even deeper trouble.
12. Later when I arrived at Evin, I heard that one of my classmates at university who had been arrested was the source of the information the authorities had about me. After his arrest, he was subjected to torture during interrogation. During this brutal questioning my classmate revealed my name to his torturers.

First Stop: *Komiteh*

13. The first place I was taken after my arrest was the local *Komiteh*, or Revolutionary Committee.³ There I was tortured many times and witnessed the torture of others. I realized that torture there would have no limits, and that the deaths of prisoners would not be questioned.
14. I was *kept blindfolded* in all the common areas, but not in the cell. The prison guards blindfolded all political prisoners – they prevented us from seeing anything outside our

³ See footnote 4 *supra*. *Komiteh* is a Revolutionary Committee, and can sometimes refer to the officers themselves. *Komitehs* were Islamic groups organized around mosques in communities throughout Iran. From the year 1978, *Komitehs* carried out governmental, as well as police and internal security duties. They gradually extended their authority over many areas of Iran and sometimes clashed with parallel power structures like the Revolutionary Guards.

cells by making us close our eyes and keep our heads down. The cells in that place were so small that there was hardly room to move. We were never brought out of our cells except to interrogate us.

15. I heard, and once or twice I saw, other political prisoners who were returned to the *Komiteh* to entrap others. The authorities would set up “appointments” in which current prisoners would be used to entrap other wanted individuals who had not yet been arrested.

16. One case involved a young male prisoner who had been severely tortured all over his body. He was in the cell next to me so I could hear the sounds of the authorities torturing him. Before they began beating him with a cable, I heard the torturers ask where they should hit him because he was injured all over. The torturers proceeded to hit him with cables and interrogate him. There was a sense of urgency to make arrests, and entrap remaining wanted individuals. The authorities were not about to let any opportunity for arrests pass them by.

17. About a week after I was first brought to the *Komiteh*, I was finally taken to Evin prison.

Arrival at Evin

18. Upon arrival at Evin, prisoners were taken to the central office. There, prisoners were divided up and sent to different units in Evin.

19. I was taken to Ward 209 Unit 6 of the prison. In that unit, the revolutionary prosecutor of Evin interrogated members of groups alleged to be *muharib*, or enemies of God.⁴ Unit 6 was designated for members of the *Fedaian*, the Combatant Organization God. In sum, the Unit 6 was responsible for interrogating groups with leftist political leanings that wanted to overthrow the Islamic Republic.

20. For instance, Unit 5 was largely for interrogating members of the *Hizb-i Tudeh-i Iran* (The Party of the Iranian Masses) or Tudeh Party.⁵ This Unit did not have torture equipments.

⁴ *Muharib* means “waging war on God”.

⁵ The Tudeh party was a political party formally established in the 1940s in Iran. The party subscribed to Marxist-Leninist ideology and presented itself as democratic, anti-colonial and anti-fascist. The Tudeh party initially threw its support behind Ayatollah Khomeini in the lead-up to the Islamic Revolution, but later came into conflict with the Islamic Regime.

21. Unit 7 contained members of the *Mojahedin*. The worst torture in Evin was said to occur there. There were so many members of the *Mojahedin* in prison that it was necessary to place them in other units in the prison as well for lack of space in Unit 7.
22. Later in my stay at Evin, Units 11 and 13 opened up in the prison to interrogate student activist.
23. I was interrogated in Unit 11 in 1984. While I was there, I was questioned about the activities of different professors and students.
24. After my first day in the main building of Evin, I was sent to “solitary confinement” in Section 209 of Evin. I say “solitary confinement”, but in truth I was not in there alone. Section 209 was called “solitary confinement” because when it was built during the reign of Shah Reza Pahlavi it was meant to hold only one detainee per cell. But in 1361, the prison was overcrowded and so Section 209 was forced to house more detainees than it had capacity for.

Conditions at Evin

25. Evin was overcrowded because of an overly broad and arbitrary detention policy. As a result of this policy, people were arrested off the street for merely looking suspicious or wearing a moustache.
26. Also, family members of persons who were already detained were targets for arrest. They were frequently apprehended for no reason other than their familial association. For instance, my cellmate’s family members were arrested in order to make him confess.
27. When I was brought to Section 209, the guards placed me in a cell intended for one person but three other persons were already in there. Eventually we became five persons total in the cell.
28. There was one door leading into the cell. The cell was cramped and contained only one water faucet and one glass window that was high up on the wall. The only light in the cell came from that small window. The cell was especially cramped after we became five people. There was little space to move. In order to have enough room in the cell to sleep, one person would be forced to lay their head near the toilet, for lack of other available space. For privacy’s sake, we held a newspaper in front of ourselves while using the toilet.

29. Still the discomfort of our living conditions was just a minor irritation. When we were locked away in our cell we felt a sense of security. Evin was very chaotic and being locked in the cell gave us the feeling that the guards would not come harass us.
30. Unfortunately our feeling of security was a false one. Just two days after I arrived, the guards started calling prisoners' names one-by-one. I noticed that the guards only used first names, not surnames. I later realized the guards did this so that detainees would not recognize the names being called out of others imprisoned there with them, whom they may have known previously.
31. The average age of prisoners was around 22 or 24 years old. At some point we realized that the cells were becoming segregated. Those prisoners that were singled out for capital punishment and badly tortured would be put in certain cells. As for the rest of the prisoners, the guards divided them up according to whether they had leftist or religious ideological leanings.

The detainees shared a strong mutual bond and helped one another get through the many hardships in prison. Strong networks of communication had formed behind bars. The Regime realized this and in a speech Lajevardi⁶ said that if he could build a cell of solitary confinement for each one of us, he would. In time, such a cell was built and was named "Amoozeshgah". However during my first stint at Evin, it was still under construction. We heard that the prisoners were made to work like slaves.

32. One day, one of the young people in our cell was taken out for interrogation. He returned and told us that the guards were asking about every individual in the cell to get a better understanding of each person's identity. The guards wanted to know the divisions among the prisoners housed together in the same cell, who were from different political parties and affiliations, in order to use this to their advantage in later interrogation.
33. During the time I was in the common cell, there were 70 prisoners packed into a cell that had been designed for only seven people. Funnily enough, in the Shah's era, when there were eight people in the same type of cell, the prisoners protested for lack of space.
34. However having these 70 to 100 people housed together was actually a good thing. The close physical proximity fostered a sense of unity among the prisoners and we supported one another. If we had been housed in solitary cells from start to finish, we would never have formed the alliances we did.

⁶ Sayyed Asadollah Lajevardi was the warden of Evin Prison in Tehran from June 1981 until 1985 when he was replaced due to complaints of other clergy.

35. The prison guards were clued into the structures and rules of the prison cells. It got to the point where even the guards knew they had to respect the organizational structure of prisoners in each cell. When the guards would open the cell door, they would ask which prisoner was in charge of the cell. The prisoners held informal elections to decide which cellmate would be in charge. The guards would also ask who was responsible for operation of the television in the cell. There was a small television in each cell and we used to listen to the news. Also, the last channel on the television was that of Evin's prison. This channel broadcast the confessions extracted during torture so as to destroy morale among the prisoners.

First Interrogation and Torture

36. After two days in Section 209, not knowing my fate, the guards brought me to a room for my first interrogation. I guessed my interrogator was a young man around my age,.

37. I was blindfolded when I was in the interrogation room so at first I could only see the feet of my interrogators. But when I thought no one was paying attention, I raised my head a bit and glanced around the room from beneath my blindfold. In those brief glimpses I saw that the room measured roughly 3 square meters. It had white walls and chairs that faced the walls.

38. The interrogator started by immediately accusing me of massive crimes. From beneath my blindfold, he showed me a paper filled with criminal allegations against me. I denied all the allegations.

39. On the sheet were allegations of assassination, carrying arms and other capital offences. There is a saying in Persian that "when faced with death, you will accept a fever." This came to mind because when accused of crimes that carry capital punishment, you are more willing to accept guilt, however false, for crimes that carry a sentence of imprisonment, but not death.

40. After I read through the allegations, I realized that the government had limited intelligence about me. For example, the sheet read that I was a member of the Minority faction of the *Fedaian* party even though I left the party years back, at the time it split. Under the prison regime of (Asadollah) Lajevardi⁷ and (Ayatollah) Gilani, this activity would incur capital punishment.

⁷ Sayyed Asadollah Lajevardi was the warden of Evin Prison in Tehran from June 1981 until 1985 when he was replaced due to complaints of other clergy.

41. In the room, there was one interrogator and what appeared to be two *tavvabs*, or repenters. I think the *tavvabs* were former political activists. The *tavvabs* were effective in interrogation for this reason -- because they possessed insider knowledge of the political activities of opposition groups.
42. The interrogation and torture went like this: at first, the torturers showed me the accusations from beneath my blindfold. Then they threatened me with a cable whip and knocked my head with it a bit.
43. When they really wanted to start, they forced me to drink three very large jugs of water. At the time I did not know what the purpose of this was. Then they forced me to lie on my stomach on a bed that was made of metal with wooden legs.
44. They tied my ankles to the metal parts of the bed. Then the blows from the cable whip started. The torturers would whip me, question me, whip me, and question me again, with no break in between. It was very painful. My feet began to throb and then the pain traveled all the way up to my brain. They kept whipping me, one lash after the other, giving no chance for the pain to subside. The bottoms of my feet did not go numb, so I could feel the pain of each lash.
45. Human skin does not easily break under the lash of a cable whip. But with repetitive, strong lashes, injury is inevitable. Many prisoners who were whipped suffered from serious infections of their wounds. Prisoners had foot infections and back infections in the places on the skin where they had been lashed.
46. After I was whipped in the interrogation room, my torturers led me down some stairs to another room. I was blindfolded at the time so I could not see my surroundings. However I knew from our movements that we were walking down steps. Since my incarceration, maps of the torture chambers in Evin have been published in books and are available on the internet, and show the location of what I am describing now.
47. We reached a place that contained two or three more beds because I could hear the sound of a boy and girl being whipped on beds. The first time I was interrogated and tortured, there was a girl in one of the beds next to me, getting hit by a cable. In another bed, there was a boy who was moaning but I did not hear the sounds of them hitting him. The sound of a cable hitting a body is like a piece of wood or a club hitting a mattress -- it is a low noise and not very clear. The mouths of the persons being hit were usually gagged but the interrogator continued to stand above them and ask them questions. I could hear

the questions the interrogators were asking those next to me. As the boy and girl were being hit, I could hear their screams escaping from beneath the mouth folds.

48. After a while of hitting me with a cable, the interrogators put a blanket over my head. Someone started hitting my back with the cable, while someone else used the cable on the soles of my feet. The third person was who the prisoners called the “sar-shekanjegar”, or head torturer, and he asked me questions
49. During the beating and interrogation, I lost consciousness once or twice. After my torturers removed the blanket from off my head, I realized that I was not conscious for part of the beating. I felt acute pain throughout my whole body and back.
50. I cannot say for sure how long my beating and interrogation lasted. I guess my torture session was not as long compared to other prisoners who I saw chained or hanging from the ceiling for days at a time. They never did that to me.
51. Still this first torture session felt long. It was painful. It was very hot in the room and the air felt suffocating. I had a slender build as a young man and my slight frame made the torture more difficult to bear.
52. My torturers kept hitting me. After countless blows to my back, the chief torturer said: *take him away now so he does not die until later when I have business with him again.* They removed the rope restraints on my leg. The places where I had been bound tightly were badly bruised.

Methods of Torture at Evin

53. I cannot remember exactly how many times I was tortured, in part because I often lost consciousness during torture sessions. For years I have been haunted by these memories and have tried to escape them.
54. However if I try to estimate the number, I know I was placed in solitary confinement five times, and each time I was tortured. This occurred over the six to seven months from when I first arrived at Evin until the day I went to court.
55. Fortunately some time passed in between my torture sessions, so my wounds had a chance to heal. Only two torture sessions were so close in time that my injuries from the earlier session were still fresh.

56. While my torture sessions were spaced apart, some of my cellmates did not fare as lucky. The guards hit them relentlessly on their fresh wounds.
57. When I was led out of my cell to be tortured, I saw horrible sights in the hallway outside of the cell. I was blindfolded in the hallway but managed to catch glimpses of my surroundings from beneath my blindfold, if the guards were not paying attention. I saw prisoners tied to torture beds in the hallway who seemed to have been lying there for days. Other prisoners were strung up by their wrists and hanging from the ceiling. Still others were handcuffed to water and heat pipes and unable to move.
58. When the guards led us to the torture chamber, they refused to take our hands. No guard touched us because they said we were “najes” or unclean, the term for non-believers that did not practice Islam. Instead the guard held out an ink pen for the prisoner to grab onto and follow his lead. The guards were extremely disrespectful and rude to us.
59. The main method of torture used on me was whipping the soles of the feet. Not only was the actual lashing painful, but the cuts from the whip would often become infected. Many prisoners suffered from skin infections because they walked on the dirty floors of Evin 209 with open wounds.
60. After the first time I was tortured, I was placed in a cell with four other prisoners who had been tortured previously. Since they endured similar things as I had gone through, they advised me on what to do and what not to do. For this reason, when I arrived to this cell I felt very safe.
61. When I came back to the cell after being beaten on the feet, my cellmates told me that I should not drink water for up to 24 hours. The guards had not told me or any other prisoner about the dangers of drinking water.
62. There was a Kurdish man in our cell who was taken out in the middle of the night and was shockingly tortured. They tortured him to a point where his entire body was harmed. They tortured him in various ways. One way in which they tortured him was by blindfolding him, leading him to an area and telling him it was an area of gunfire. At the same time they would hit him with a cable or kick him with their boots – so as to emulate the force of a bullet. On another occasion this Kurdish man asked to go to the bathroom before being tortured. While in the bathroom he drank a lot of water. He did not realize how much worse the blows would be if he drank water. On this occasion, when they brought him to interrogation, we did not see him for one month or more afterwards. During that time the guards had brought him to the infirmary in Evin and hooked him up to a dialysis machine.

63. At that time, in Evin, there were only three dialysis machines in the infirmary. Many prisoners had developed serious kidney infections because of brutal lashings and beatings but there were only three machines in all of Evin to treat them. If it was important for a particular prisoner to stay alive then the guards would perform dialysis on him three times. If the dialysis did not work however then they would simply send that prisoner to solitary confinement to die. When kidneys are not working properly, the infection could eventually develop into a sepsis and spread to the brain.
64. Later I saw the Kurdish man in another cell. He had recovered after receiving dialysis three times in the infirmary.
65. To avoid this fate, I followed the advice of my friends and did not drink water before I was sent to be tortured. I experienced a severe sense of thirst. My thirst reached a point that even if I was told that I would die if I drank water, I would still feel like taking a drink. However if you drink water, your feet turn red and start to swell. Since the feet are so swollen, it is difficult to wear shoes, even plastic sandals, because your feet will not fit into them. But, nonetheless, you would be forced to walk by the guards, even if barefoot.

Trial at Evin

66. The sign that your interrogation and torture had ended was that your interrogator gave you a form, or he filled it out himself and asked you for information about your family – father, mother, brother – and asked if anyone could post bail for you. This procedure was the sign that a detainee was going to court. Those who were scheduled for court assembled in a room for release and awaited trial.
67. Sometimes, the authorities summoned detainees to go to the Central Office for notification of sentences. The Central Office had three stories. The top floor housed the courts. The middle level was very large with many small rooms. This floor contained the torture place and the holding cell for the *Mojahedin*. The first floor was the place of entry and exit for the prison. Prisoners came there to complete the necessary paper work for release.
68. From what I saw (even with the blindfold) the third floor – in contrast to the rest of the prison -- was extremely quiet, clean and decorated beautifully. The third floor was split up into different sections. The floor had small court rooms where the sentence for a detainee's "crimes" was read out. Section One was primarily Ayatollah Gilani's

territory. , Lajevardi was the general prosecutor. Lajevardi would bring a hundred people or so forward and denounce them all as *mohareb* and sentence them to execution by hanging or death by firing squad.

69. When I was taken to one of the rooms on the third floor I was surprised by the quiet atmosphere. Unlike in the rest of Evin prison, where the sounds of screams and the cable whip hitting prisoners was a constant, here there was calm silence.
70. There was a mullah and a secretary sitting down in the room I was brought to. They told me to remove my blindfold and then they read my charge sheet. I knew that these charges were completely fabricated. But instead of getting angry, I stayed calm. My friends in prison had advised me that in order to stay alive, I should not lose my temper when hearing the charges against me. I heeded their advice. Instead of yelling and shouting when I heard the false accusations against me, I calmly told the judge that none of the charges were true and asked him to let me explain myself.
71. The judge was a middle aged, dark colored clergy man. He told me that he knew I had bad friends at university and for that reason I would have to stay at Evin for a while to be “trained”. Then he sentenced me to one year in prison.
72. Later, my friend told me that if my file contained information that I was deeply involved in leftist politics, the authorities would have kept me longer in prison in order to continue interrogating me and gain further information.
73. Since I had a relatively light sentence, I was allowed to call a family member about once a month. The prisoners at Evin that were serving lighter sentences relative to the rest of the prison population could ask the guards for a telephone call of a couple minutes. After my sentencing, I took the opportunity and called my father to let him know I was alive.

Imprisonment at Evin

74. After my sentencing, I officially began serving my prison term at Evin. Fortunately for me, I was credited the time I had spent in detention before trial. In this respect the enforcement of my sentence differed than other prisoners who were not credited the time they spent in detention, even if they had been detained for two years prior to trial and sentencing. Since my sentence ran from the time I was detained, not convicted, I actually had less than a year left to serve once I was sentenced.
75. During the remainder of my time there, I heard and saw horrible mistreatment and torture of prisoners. I will describe some of what I witnessed until the year 1363, when

Ayatollah Montazeri was given control over the prison system and changed conditions in prison.⁸

76. There was a special cell in Evin Called “Farmuniha” or the cell of the insane. Some people in the *farmuniha* cell had become so insane that it was a wonder they had not died yet. They were not sentenced to execution – otherwise the guards would have gotten rid of them sooner. Communication with these severely mentally ill persons was very difficult. Many prisoners in the cell of the insane were brought there by extreme force. The guards restrained them by beating them harshly and putting *pills that* had sedative effects in their mouth to swallow. *Some prisoners* were so mentally and emotionally damaged that they did not even scream when whipped – it seemed like they did not even realize what was happening to them.
77. In addition to the cell of the insane, there was also at least one cell housing minors under the age of sixteen. Some of the minors were also placed in the cell of the insane, maybe because of lack of space. I met some of them when they spent short periods of time with me in the cell of the insane.
78. There was a kid around 16 years of age who was brought into this cell from the insane cell. He was quiet and appeared to suffer from psychological abnormality. He spoke to no one and ate nothing. We did not see any marks of torture on his body. I do not know if he was raped. I heard that rapes occurred in the cell of minors under the pretense of interrogation. This is one way in which the guards transformed the minors into seriously mentally disturbed and dangerous people.
79. Why they brought him to stay in our cell I still do not know. Not everything in Evin was organized and orderly. While the kid stayed in our cell, we noticed that sometimes the guards called him outside, only for him to return shortly after. We later realized that the guards were giving him pills.
80. At first, this youth did not talk about anything. But after a while, usually myself or the others softly started talking to him. It was in these conversations with him that I learned what had happened while he was in the cell of the minors.
81. He told me that one night in the cell for minors several guards came calling his name around midnight. This was unusual since typically at that time of the night the guards did

⁸ In 1982, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini transferred much of his power to Ayatollah Montazeri (who was his close confidant prior to their rift in 1988). Among other powers, Ayatollah Khomeini also transferred powers of effective control over the revolutionary courts to Ayatollah Montazeri.

not call out names of prisoners, unless they were kept in solitary confinement and marked for specific torture. In any event, they called out his name and the names of several others to follow them out to the Evin Hills.

82. The Evin hills surround the place where the Evin prison was built during the time of the Shah. One of those hills was where the firing range to execute prisoners was located. Later on a soundproof firing hall was built in the prison, but before that we heard the sound of gunfire and the sounds of single fatal shots. Believe it or not, some nights when we would count the number of fatal gunshots, it was more than a hundred in number. On that night, this kid and the others in the minor cell were brought out to witness the firing squad.
83. The youth recounted to me that he saw many young boys and girls tied to poles on the slope of the hill. Lorry trucks that were waiting to take the corpses away were parked nearby. The firing squad first read out sentences against the boys and girls before shooting them all to death.
84. The kid also told me about what his interrogator subjected him to at the shooting range. His interrogator, or the person who had been given the task of bringing the minors to witness the executions, brought the kid to the side and put a gun in his hand. Then someone else put a gun up to the kid's forehead and brought the kid's head over in the direction of those who were lined up to be shot. The guards then told the kid to shoot at the young boys and girls to avoid being shot to death himself.
85. This experience had made the kid mentally unstable. He told me that the guards smacked him around and beat him while this was all happening. In the end, I do not know whether he pulled the trigger and was forced to kill anyone. All I know is that he was driven to insanity by what his captors made him do.
86. The behavior of this kid showed me he was not right in the head. In our cell, we only received a little bit of rice to eat and were always hungry. When the kid was brought to our cell, we set aside our food ration to give to him. But he did not touch any of it. Instead, he huddled in the corner and told us that no one had the right or permission to enter his space.
87. Sometimes the guards came in the cell and gave him medicine with force. I did not know whether these pills were to drug him or help him heal.
88. This young kid was not the only one who witnessed atrocities like the execution range. I had heard of other cases like his – young prisoners that were made to witness and/or

participate in the torture and killing of others. In most instances, the kids that were forced to witness and/or participate in these horrific crimes, would later “disappear” -- perhaps so that they could not bear witness to what they were subjected to and what they had seen.

89. I heard the story of the firing squad in even more graphic detail from an older male prisoner who came to stay in our cell for a period of time. The fact that just in our own cell I heard several of these stories shows how widespread the reality of this form of psychological torture was. My cell was only one of many, and similar stories were probably being recounted in other cells as well.
90. As for this older man, he was under severe psychological strain on account of the things he experienced. When he told us stories of what happened to him, his face contorted in crazy ways. He was in such anguish over what he had experienced. Perhaps he was put in our cell so that we would learn by example and be scared.
91. The old man told us that one night he was taken out to the shooting range. He told us how the guards made him a torturer and how he wanted to kill himself because of it. He always blamed himself for what happened to him. The majority of suicides at Evin were people like him, who had been forced to participate in mass killing of other prisoners.
92. The old man told us that one night they took him out to what was called “hill number four”. Floodlights surrounded the area and lit up the location where the firing squad was situated. The hill overlooked *Melli* University, or what is now called University *Shahid Beheshti*.
93. The executions happened behind the hill number four. This old man told me that the executioners turned on the floodlights and lined up the blindfolded and handcuffed prisoners to get them ready for the firing squad. The girls and boys faced imminent death. They started singing hymns together and chanting slogans against the Regime. Then the executioners fatally shot the prisoners.
94. Next to the firing range was a medium size eight or ten wheeled truck. The old man was told that the others who had been brought to witness the firing squad were repentants, even though many of them were not and had only been brought there to drive them insane. The old man and the others were instructed to put the corpses in the back of the truck. A curtain covered the back of the truck, so as to obscure the pile of corpses from outside view. After the corpses were piled in, the old man was forced to take a high pressure water hose and clean all traces of blood off the truck. The truck was parked on a slight uphill slope and the slanted angle caused blood to stream out from the corpses piled

up in the back. The man and others washed the truck a few minutes with the hose to make sure no trail of blood was left on the road. Then the driver took the truck out to mass graves in the outer plains of Tehran.

95. Participating in the execution of his fellow prisoners had caused the old man to go insane. When he stayed with us in the cell of the insane he only spoke infrequently to me and a few others. He always seemed to be upset, and alone with his thoughts.
96. The story of another prisoner in the cell of the insane is fresh in my memory. One day, the guards dragged in a young, tall man, threw him in the corner like a limp doll and left. At first, it looked like there was nothing wrong with this young man. Later I realized that his eyes were unfocused and that he was reluctant to talk. The bottom of his left foot had a deep wound with no bandage. The wound was infected but he did not seem to be in pain.
97. Later I realized what the cause of the wound was. The young man had an aggravated behavioral pattern of scraping his left foot on the floor with such force that it caused injury. Any slight mental disturbance would trigger this behavior. He scraped his foot so frequently that the bottom of his foot was raw and torn. The guards in our cell never treated his wound.
98. Over the course of the next few days, the guards took the young man out of the cell periodically to give him pills. He acted like a robot and followed whatever instruction the guards gave him. After several times of this happening, we convinced the guards to give us the pills and let us administer the medicine to the boy ourselves. Once the guards gave us this control, we began lessening the dosage on our own initiative. We decreased the amount of medicine given to this boy because we did not know whether the pills were drugs meant to slowly kill him or drive him insane. After one or two weeks of lessening the pill dosage, the boy began to talk. He told us that the treatment he received from his torturers caused him to slip completely out of consciousness. When he regained consciousness he did not know where he was or what he had been forced to reveal about his loved one, including his fiancée.
99. Of course, we did not tell the guards that we decreased the boys' medicinal dosage. We always told the guards that we gave him the proper dosage. Despite our reassurances, the guards often barged into the cell to take the boy outside and force pills down his throat. But slowly the boy started to heal. He began to talk and interact with people and stopped his aggravated behavior of abruptly getting up and dragging his foot on the ground.

100. After some period of time, the guards took the boy away. I never knew what happened to him after that.

Transfer to Ghezelhesar Prison

101. Usually those prisoners that had sentences of less than one year would serve out the whole term at Evin. However this was not the case with me. One day a guard told me that I was being transferred to Ghezelhesar prison because Evin had become filled with Tudeh party members and there was no more room to house me.
102. I was transferred to Ghezelhesar under cover of night. The guards put all the prisoners marked for transfer to Ghezelhesar on a bus with curtains drawn over the bus windows. I was blindfolded but managed to see the bus and curtains. It is possible that other buses leaving Evin transferred prisoners that night.
103. Ghezelhesar prison had three units. Unit Two was for pedestrian crimes, while Unit One and Unit Three housed political prisoners. There was a very long corridor in each unit. The wardens needed bicycles to travel from one side of the prison to the other because of the long distances.
104. I was informed that I would serve the remainder of my sentence at Ghezelhesar. After a beating, I was sent to one of the units of correction, unit 7 in ward 3. There were four units on each side of the ward. The four on the right hand side were large and crowded with prisoners. The four on the other side were smaller and intended for the “correction” of prisoners like myself, who had relatively short sentences of a year or less but did not pray and had not repented.
105. At the time I was at Ghezelhesar, Haj Davood Rahmani, one of the deputies under Lajevardi, started running the prison. He systematically forced prisoners to repent. The goal of the Regime differed from that of the SAVAK under the Shah’s rule.⁹ During the Shah, if a prisoner was singled out, the guards could okay that prisoner’s release. The goal of the Regime though was either to turn the prisoner into a mental case and strip them of personality or to extract whatever information possible from the prisoner.

⁹ Stands for Sazeman-e Ettela’at va Amniyat-e Keshvar, or the National Intelligence and Security Organization. SAVAK was the domestic security and intelligence service of Iran from 1957 to 1979 under Reza Shah Pahlavi.

106. The regime exerted severe mental pressure on prisoners and drove them to repent due to extreme duress not because of a true shift in ideological belief.
107. As part of this repentance process and its attendant religious indoctrination, the guards forced prisoners to pray. This was a personal hardship for me. I was forced to join the prayers and watch other prisoners pray.
108. Those prisoners who had repented treated the non-repenting prisoners with unrelenting harshness. During my one year sentence, the attitude of the repentants progressively worsened with encouragement from the prison administration. The prison administration brought repentants who were formerly Mujahedin, Tudeh party members and from other political leftist groups to help threaten and control the non-repenting prisoners. The repentants really wanted to show the wardens that they were not like the rest of us “normal” prisoners. They cursed at us, insulted us, reported on our movements and even told lies about our political activities. Non-repenting prisoners were forced to stand all day on our feet and suffer beatings at the hands of the repentants, who did the dirty work of prison guards.
109. The prisoners far outnumbered the guards but we did not dare to challenge them because we were scared of what they might do. Ten guards with boots and batons could beat us to death.
110. The prison administration received reports from the repentants about those prisoners whose sentences were about to end. Rahmani asked the repentants whether they “approved” of the character of each individual prisoner or not. As expected, the repentants often answered with a NO.
111. Occasionally, we were asked to watch in groups TV confession show of repentants. There was a large hall in ward one and ward three that occupied 3000 prisoners. A number of closed circuit televisions were installed every few meters in that room. We were instructed to come to the front of our ward and sit on the floor facing TV. Then repentants gave interviews that were broadcasted to the big room.
112. For the prisoners that received unfavorable reports, their interviews were akin to a trial. The interviewer attempted to break the person down in front of the camera and in front of all the prisoners watching in the other ward. In contrast, prisoners who had cooperated with the repentants and received favorable reports were treated differently. In front of the camera, they accepted everything their interviewer said about them. In turn, the interviewer declared that the prisoner was free and took them to a separate room to be released.

113. The guards told me that I was included in the names that would be called out. What happened is that names were called out, one-by-one, and Haj Davood Rahmani cursed these prisoners and put them on trial. The repentants rose and made false and ridiculous allegations against you. Their accusations consisted of nonsensical charges, for example that a prisoner ate food with a Communist on a particular date. During the questioning, Rahmani paced across the big room with his guards, only sitting down at intervals to personally interrogate or accuse a prisoner.
114. When Rahmani came up to me, I stood up and said: *Haj Agha¹⁰, I am not going to give an interview, who said I should give an interview?* He responded very loudly and said: *So don't give it. You will stay here forever and I will ask you how you are doing later.* He continued to yell at me. Then Rahmani finished his interviews, without calling my name.
115. From that night onward, the repentants began to make life for us non-repenting prisoners even harder than before. They placed the more hot tempered prisoners at the end of the ward where the toilets were located. The toilets smelled awful. My cell measured four by four meters with metal bars in place of a door. I saw through the bars into the neighboring cells. The repentants came to my cell in middle of the night and kicked and punched me until the sun came up. I was barefoot and had two blindfolds covering my eyes, one doubled over the other, so I had no idea when or from which direction I would be punched or kicked, which made the beating even more painful because I could not ready myself for the blows.
116. These sorts of treatments went on until [Ayatollah] Montazeri took over the courts and introduced prison reform.

Arrival of Ayatollah Montazeri and Release from Prison

117. In the year 1363, a group of clerics and some youths from the government arrived at Ghezelhesar and gave speeches to everyone. These men did not talk like thugs. They used a different tone than their predecessors and did not curse or use foul language. They said they were from Ayatollah Montazeri's Board.¹¹

¹⁰ A man who has visited Mecca. A respectful salutation in Iran.

¹¹ Reference to those persons commissioned by Ayatollah Montazeri to implement reforms in Iran's prisons after 1983.

118. Their whole approach differed from Rahmani and the thugs who worked for him. We heard that they brought kinder and gentler *Pasdaran* to work in the prisons.¹² These newly hired *Pasdaran* clashed with the previous *Pasdaran* affiliated with Rahmani and Lajaward over treatment of the prisoners.
119. Even after I had served my sentence of one year, I spent an additional 13 months in prison as a *mellikesh*.¹³ At Ghezelhesar, the members of Montazeri's Board came and spoke with the *mellikesh* prisoners about their case files.
120. I spoke twice with representatives of Ayatollah Montazeri about my case file. Shortly thereafter I was informed that I would be released. I found this news hard to believe since I was not repentant, nor had I pretended to be for the sake of release. Nonetheless, the prison authorities bluntly instructed me to gather my belongings because my file had been reviewed and the decision had been made to release me. The authorities told me that my release was pittance from Montazeri for having been jailed longer than my sentence.
121. Three days after I was given this news, the prison authorities summoned me and asked me for all my possessions. Their command to collect my things was an indication that I was returning to Evin.
122. I was among the prisoners that Montazeri and his people freed. They took us back to Evin in a bus that was much more comfortable than the bus that earlier brought us to Ghezelhesar. We returned to Evin and after two days of sleeping in the hallways of the main building, my brother posted bail for me and I was released.
123. The prison administration drove us to a nearby park in minibuses. Normally children played in this park during the day. But then it became a place for release of prisoners from Evin. After I was dropped off at the park, I, along with three other persons, got in a pick-up car. Each person got off in the direction of the south of the city and returned to their old life.

¹² Informal name for members of the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution, or the *Sepah-e Pasdaran e Enghelab-e Eslami*, also known as the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, a branch of Iran's military, founded after the Iranian revolution in 1979.

¹³ *Mellikesh* refers to prisoners who had served their sentences but remained in prison because they refused to publicly confess to crimes or retract their views.

Second Arrest

124. In the year 1366, I wanted to leave Iran illegally. I had no choice but to exit the country surreptitiously because the government would not grant me a visa for lawful exit because I had a conviction on my record.
125. However things did not go as I had planned. I was arrested by Ministry of Intelligence and ended up in prison and Evin again.

Attempts at Suicide

126. At Evin I was interrogated about my connections with leftist groups. My interrogators asked me whether I had executed any favors for these groups, whether I had served as a messenger for them or otherwise participated in their illicit activities. After only one week or ten days however I was taken to solitary confinement. This is where I endured even worse torture than what I had been subjected to during my first time at Evin.
127. One night, three or four men came into my cell around midnight and attacked me with rug cutters. Some held my arms down to restrain me while the others cut my stomach with these knives. I do not remember what happened right after that. I later woke up in the infirmary of the prison with bandages all over my stomach and a unit of blood being pumped into my arm.
128. If I had died, the guards would likely have said that I committed suicide. When prisoners died from torture, the guards would often say that this person died by his own hand – either by hanging himself or taking an overdose of medicine. In fact, the torture that I was subjected to during this stint at Evin did drive me to attempt suicide. I remember how I felt when I was lying in the infirmary after the knife attack. I wanted to end my life my ripping out the tubes in my arms. However nothing happened when I did this, I only felt some shortness of breath. I attempted suicide a second time as well during my stay at Evin. When I was lying down in my cell I saw an electric outlet on the wall. I fantasized about taking a piece of metal and sticking it into the outlet to electrocute myself when no one around. However I could never find a spare piece of metal to use for this purpose so my plan never came to fruition.

Second Release

129. In *April or May of 1997* the chief at the Ministry of Intelligence Section at Evin told me that Evin did not have jurisdiction over my offense. He said that my file was now an ordinary offense of unauthorized exit from the country. I would be returned to my place of arrest, and my case would be dealt with there, since they had jurisdiction. After a while I was released.