



Witness Statement of Shima Asaadi

Name: Shima Asaadi
Place of Birth: Sanandaj, Iran
Date of Birth: August 3, 1986
Occupation: Student Activist

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)
Date of Interview: April 16, 2010
Interviewer: IHRDC Staff
Witnesses: NONE

This statement was prepared pursuant to an in person interview with Shima Asaadi. The statement was approved by Shima Asaadi on April 4, 2011.

Statement

1. My name is Shima Asaadi, I am 24 years old and from Sanandaj. Prior to leaving Iran, I worked as a pool lifeguard. I was also an expelled student. In 1387 (2008), after my fourth semester of study in the field of agricultural engineering, I was expelled from the Azad University of Sanandaj for supporting the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran. Also, in that same year, I intentionally left Iran for Turkey. In addition, I converted from the Muslim faith to Christianity.

Becoming a Christian

2. Our family is comprised of five sisters, one brother, my father and my mother. Two of my sisters lived in Canada for the past eleven years and my two other sisters lived in Iran. My brother also lived on his own in Tehran. Every year, for the summer and New Year holiday, I travelled from Sanandaj to visit my brother in Tehran. In Tehran, I had a Christian friend. One time, I asked this friend to take me to church. This friend took me to a big church on Karimkhan Street. When we got there, they would not give me permission to enter the church because they found out I was a Muslim. After I insisted that I only wished to see the church, I was allowed to enter. Entering that location gave me an interesting feeling.
3. From that time on, I began to research the Christian faith. I also read the gospel and learned the path it preached. One night I heard the voice of Jesus during a dream so that when I woke up the next morning I was crying in intense joy. When I described my dream to that friend, the friend told me that Jesus had invited me to believe in him.
4. When I returned to Sanandaj, I joined a home church and went there on Sundays. By home church, I mean there were approximately ten to fifteen of us that gathered at one of the members' houses every week. Late in 2005, I was not able to go to church one Sunday. It just so happened that on that very same Sunday, agents arrested all of the members of the church. After that, I did not go to that church again and was obliged to pray on my own at home. In Iran, apostasy from Islam is a crime and is punishable by death.

Supporter of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran

5. I am a Sanandaj Kurd but I cannot write or read in Kurdish. I can speak the language but there are still some words I do not understand. We requested that the authorities allow instruction in the Kurdish language at least in schools within the Kurdistan province of Iran. We also wanted to wear Kurdish clothing but were not successful in either request. If an individual in Kurdistan attempted to do such activities, they would be faced with assaults and beatings.
6. I do not want to be subjugated. Why must we close our mouths! I paint, recite poetry, write stories. The content of my work revolves around women and the injustices and oppression they

face. Why is it that a married man can have four women while his wife is still alive! Why is it that only a man has the right to divorce and not a woman!

7. My sister's husband has a sister who works as an assistant for the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. I was very happy that she was fighting for me and for the people. When I was seventeen years old, when I had one year remaining until I finished high school, I traveled to Sulaymaniyah, Iraq and asked her if I could become a member of the Democratic Party. However, she did not allow me to join. She said membership in the Party would be dangerous because I was only seventeen.
8. Therefore, I was only a supporter of the Kurdistan Democratic Party. However, through the introduction of our same family, I became a member of the Azar Mehr Women's Organization of Sanandaj in 1385 (2006). The head of this organization was "Nagishe Khorasani." My job in the Azar Mehr Women's Organization was to help gather small amounts of money to give to the families of martyrs of the Democratic Party. We also launched a signature campaign for the prisoners of the Democratic Party of Iran and gathered signatures from the internet to prevent the execution of those prisoners. For example, we launched a signing campaign for Adnan Hassanpour, who received a death sentence and eventually, with our pressure, his sentence was changed from death to life imprisonment. In addition, we distributed CDs of information related to the Democratic Party to the people of Sanandaj in areas where the Democratic Party website was filtered.

Arrests

9. The first time I was arrested was in the summer of 2006 by the moral police in Sanandaj. They told me that my *maghnaeh*¹ was pulled back too far. However, I was not overly made up nor was I wearing inappropriate clothing. They transferred me to the Social Corruption Office for interrogation.
10. A lot of other girls and boys that were arrested were in the office. The authorities took me to another room for interrogation. A man, whom everyone else called Colonel Jafari, interrogated me. He was a sturdily built man with grizzly hair and stubble. He wore eyeglasses. Throughout the interrogation, he asked questions about my activities that connected me to the Kurdistan Democratic Party. I denied everything and said I did not know what he was talking about. I told him I was busy with books and my studies and did not know anything about a Party. At the end of the interrogation, he said he did not have any incriminating evidence against me and only wanted to better understand my involvement. I was eventually freed.
11. After that, the authorities arrested me a few more times, also for no reason. For example, agents said: we see that your pants are up to your knees, do you have stockings on your legs or no! One time they ripped up the boots I was wearing. Another time, they cut up my *manteau*² since it was

¹ A *maghnaeh* is one form of *hejab*—or mandatory Islamic covering for women in Iran. *Maghnaeh* is a tightly fitted headscarf that covers all the hair. All women wear the *maghnaeh* in the workplace and on college campuses.

² A *manteau* is a long or short coat worn by women as part of appropriate *hejab*—or mandatory Islamic dress.

somewhat short. During this arrest, the man and woman agent both hit and slapped me but I was not tortured.

12. Another time after I arrived at university one morning in 2006, a policeman yelled out of his police car: pull your *roosari*³ forward! There was nothing wrong with my *hejab*⁴ therefore I responded by asking what right he had to say something. He again yelled at me and said: if you do not pull it forward, I will come over there and pull it forward! Since policemen in Iran are not allowed to touch women, I responded: if you have courage come here and put your hands on me! He got out of his car and started to beat me. People immediately gathered around and as soon as they saw what was going on, began heckling the policeman. They urged me to leave the area.
13. In early 2007, the Police-110 unit⁵ stopped their police cars in front of me and, because I was wearing boots, arrested me.⁶ They said they had to punish me so that I would not wear this type of clothing again. I became extremely angry. I said to a woman sitting in the police car next to me: you yourself are a sister sitting in this car and what is your relationship to these brothers! Is *hejab* only the wearing of a chador! Because you yourself are wearing a chador, does that mean you do nothing wrong! Do you want me to show you my lineage so that you can see which one of us is inept! In response to what I said, she cursed at me and struck me with the back of her hand so forcefully that it broke my nose. When we speak of the police in Iran, this is what we are dealing with. If a typical police officer in Iran approached me and asked me for an address, I would run away because I have no confidence in them.
14. One time in 2007, six or seven of my classmates and I were standing in front of Azad University of Sanandaj exchanging information from our course booklets when all of a sudden the guidance patrol arrived and agents, who were all wearing military clothing and berets, stormed upon us and arrested us. They hit us and yelled out bad obscenities. I had been arrested before; therefore, I was scared and did not want to get into the car. I resisted—they used the force of a baton to get me into the car. People gathered in front of the door to the university but there was nothing they could do.
15. They took us to the police station and said that we had not observed the Islamic standards of dress and conduct and that boys and girls had been standing together in front of the University door! They wanted us to contact our families to come to the station and give a pledge in order to free us. Thus, we all contacted our families and with their pledges, we were all freed.

Expulsion from the University

³ A *roosari* is a headscarf for women. One form of appropriate *hejab* (mandatory Islamic dress).

⁴ *Hejab* refers to mandatory Islamic dress for women.

⁵ The Police-110 unit is a police unit in Iran that specializes in rapid response activities in urban areas and dispersing gatherings deemed dangerous to public order.

⁶ The wearing of high boots tucked into pants on women was formally banned by Iranian law enforcement authorities in December 2007.

16. In January 2008, when I was in my fourth term at Azad University of Sanandaj, I received a letter from the University's security administration ordering the suspension of my study. I was surprised because until then I had never been on probation or had any academic problems; therefore, I went to the University's security administration. They told me that the reason for my suspension was my connection to the Kurdish Democratic Party! I denied my link but they had obtained documents like a picture of me with another KDP member and information pertaining to the CDs about the Kurdistan Democratic Party that we distributed to the people of Sanandaj. I do not know how they were able to obtain this information. Perhaps they had infiltrated us.
17. They told me that the Sanandaj intelligence office previously requested that the university expel me if I continued my activities with the Kurdistan Democratic Party. The University security office obtained information evidencing my continued support for the Kurdistan Democratic Party; therefore, they issued an order for my suspension and I was expelled from university.

The Threat of Rape

18. After the expulsion from the University, they summoned me a few more times under different pretexts. For a period of approximately two months, I received regular threatening telephone calls two to three times a week. They told me through the telephone that if I continued to support the Kurdistan Democratic Party, they would rape me and do other things that would cause my father and mother extreme grief. They said that I was garbage and that they had to rape me. They told me I had no family and that we (i.e. the Kurds) just wanted a free excuse to throw mud on the nation.
19. During that time, my father and mother went to visit my sisters who reside in Canada. My job became answering the threatening telephone calls of the agents everyday! Every time I would hang up on them but they just called again or called the house phone, or they called one of my acquaintances. Whenever they called, a bizarre number appeared on the caller ID.
20. Perhaps if I stayed in Iran I would not ultimately have gone to prison, however I was under the threat of rape. I love my country yet I was scared of losing my chastity. I did not want to be violated. The consequence of this in Iran is very grave. I was not just worried about myself rather; I was also concerned for my family. This fire would have also burned them.

Leaving Iran

21. I legally left Iran in 2008 and entered Turkey. After three days, I presented myself to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. After I left Iran, the agents learned of my whereabouts from my family in Iran and instructed my family to tell me I should return to them—and that the intelligence agents did not intend to harass me, that they only had a few questions for me. My family told them they had no news from me whatsoever.

