

URGENT ACTION

HUNGER STRIKE TO PROTEST TORTURE IN DETENTION

Eight detainees from Iran's Gonabadi Dervish minority began a hunger strike on 27 March in protest against the torture and other ill-treatment to which they say they are subjected. One of the men, Abbas Dehghan, has allegedly been threatened with his wife being raped in front of him if he does not "confess". The men require medical care for injuries sustained at the time of their arrest on 19 February.

Abbas Dehghan, Javad Khamis Abadi, Kianoush Abbaszadeh, Ahmad Mousavi, Nour Ali Mousavi, Mehdi Eskandari, Amir Labbaf, and Mir Sadegh began a hunger strike on 27 March in protest at their treatment in detention, which they allege involves torture. The men are held in Shapour detention centre in Tehran, run by the Investigation Unit of Iran's police (Agahi), which is notorious for extracting "confessions" through torture. Commonly reported methods of torture include kicking and punching; beatings with plastic pipes, cables or whips; prolonged binding; and various forms of suspension including one known as the "chicken kebab", in which the person is suspended from a pole with their arms bent back and tied to their ankles and then flogged.

The men were arrested on 19 February 2018 for participating in a protest which turned violent after security forces resorted to beatings and the use of firearms, water cannons and tear gas to disperse the crowd, arresting over 300 people. The men were initially taken to Fashafouyeh prison near Tehran and then transferred to Shapour detention centre for interrogations and, in some cases, families were not informed about their whereabouts for several weeks. The authorities have said the men are not allowed to access their lawyers until the interrogations are complete. Information received by Amnesty International indicates that Abbas Dehghan is under pressure to "confess" that he killed a plain-clothes Basij militiaman by deliberately driving a car into him during the clashes following the 19 February protest. This accusation has been denied by members of the Dervish community who claim that he was shot by the police after being mistaken for a protester. Pictures of the dead militiaman published by state media show bullet marks on his body. According to information received by Amnesty International, Abbas Dehghan has been threatened with his wife being arrested and raped in front of him if he does not "confess".

Please write immediately in Persian, English or your own language calling on the Iranian authorities to:

- Release Abbas Dehghan, Javad Khamis Abadi, Kianoush Abbaszadeh, Ahmad Mousavi, Nour Ali Mousavi, Mehdi Eskandari, Amir Labbaf, and Mir Sadegh immediately and unconditionally if they are held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of association and assembly;
- Ensure that, while in detention, they are granted access to their lawyers, provided with any medical care they need, and protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Order a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in detention centres run by the Investigation Unit of Iran's police (Agahi), and allow international monitors to conduct inspection visits;
- Conduct an independent and effective investigation into the reports of the excessive use of force by security forces to suppress the protest held by Gonabadi Dervishes and bring those suspected of responsibility to account in fair trials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 MAY 2018 TO:

High Council for Human Rights
 Mohammad Javad Larijani
 Esfaniar Boulevard, Niayesh Intersection
 Vali Asr Avenue, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of Agahi
 Mohammad Reza Moghimi
 Vahdat Eslami Street, Molavi Street
 Molavi Square, Tehran, Iran
Salutation: Mr.

And copies to:
President
 Hassan Rouhani
 Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
 Tehran, Iran
 Twitter: @HassanRouhan

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. H.E. Hamid Baeidinejad, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209 Email: iranconsulate.lon@mfa.gov.ir

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Several hundred Gonabadi Dervishes, both men and women, gathered outside the residence of their spiritual leader Noor Ali Tabandeh in an area of Tehran known as Golestan Haftom on the night of 19 February to protest against the authorities' intensified persecution of their community and prevent the possible arrest of their leader. Those present at the protest reported that police and plain-clothes Basiji forces resorted to beatings with batons, electric cables and sharp objects, and the use of tear gas, water cannons and live ammunition to disperse the crowd, arresting over 300 people, including at least 60 women. Those present reported that security forces raided a nearby five-storey apartment building to which the protesters had escaped, released tear gas into the staircases of the building, formed a "tunnel" of batons and struck protesters repeatedly on their backs, heads and faces as they violently dragged them down the stairs and into police vans. Pictures and videos from the incident show protesters with lacerations and other wounds to their faces and bodies and bandaged heads and other body parts.

Amnesty International understands that about 170 of those arrested, many of whom had fallen unconscious, were transferred from the scene of the incident to hospital to undergo emergency treatments. In the days that followed, some of them were released while others were taken to Fashafouyeh prison near Tehran even though their medical treatment had not been completed. In the next several days, some detainees were transferred from there to solitary confinement in Evin prison or Shapour detention centre for interrogations. There are serious concerns that they are facing torture and other ill-treatment, including through the denial of medical care for their injuries, and are under pressure to "confess". On 15 March, Tehran's Chief Prosecutor stated that 20 indictments have so far been issued against Gonabadi Dervishes for national security and that number may increase to 100. The charges brought include those related to national security.

On 4 March, the family of one of the detainees, Mohammad Raji, was informed by the police that he had died from the injuries caused by repeated blows to his head. The details concerning the exact manner, place and time of death and all of the surrounding circumstances remain unclear. The authorities have only stated that he was fatally injured during the clashes and he died either during his transfer to hospital or after his admission to hospital. His family have emphasized that Mohammad Raji was injured but alive at the time of his arrest on 19 February and expressed outrage at the concealment of his fate and whereabouts for 15 days following the arrest, and the authorities' refusal to clarify the sequence and timing of events that led to his death. In addition to the Basij militiaman, three police officers, Reza Emami, Mohammad Ali Bayrami and Reza Moradi Alamdar, were also left dead on 19 February after they were run over by a bus. On 19 March, a Dervish man, Mohammad Salas, was held responsible for the fatal incident and sentenced to death for intentional murder. He had denied the charge during his trial and argued that his act was not intentional. In his defence, he stated the accident was due to his poor eyesight, the disorienting effect of his injuries which included a fractured skull and a broken arm, and his panicked rush to escape the area to avoid further beatings. Prior to his trial, on 20 February, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) aired a video "confession" from Mohammad Salas that was filmed while he was lying on a hospital bed severely injured. This violates the presumption of innocence and raised concerns that the statement may have been taken in coercive circumstances.

Gonabadi Dervishes in Iran consider themselves Shi'a Muslims. However, because of their Sufi beliefs and practices, the authorities have persistently subjected them to discrimination, harassment, arbitrary arrest and detention and attacks on their prayer houses. On 6 March 2018, the spiritual leader of Gonabadi Dervishes, Noor Ali Tabandeh, revealed in a video statement that the authorities were preventing him from leaving his house. He did not provide further information about his circumstances.