

URGENT ACTION



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14 October 2008

UA 280/08 Arbitrary arrest/Fear of torture

IRAN Negin Sheikholeslami (f), human rights defender, journalist, aged 34

According to the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK), Negin Sheikholeslami, a human rights activist from the Kurdish minority in Iran, was arrested at her home in Tehran by members of the security forces at about midnight on 4 October 2008. She is at risk of torture or other ill-treatment and needs medical attention for her respiratory problems. A guest who was staying with her was also detained for about an hour, and then released.

Negin Sheikholeslami's initial whereabouts were unknown, but her husband was told on 9 October 2008 that she was being held in Section 209 of Evin Prison, which is controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence. He was not told the reasons for her arrest and was informed that she would not be allowed to meet anyone until the investigation into her case was complete.

Negin Sheikholeslami is the founder of the Azar Mehr Women's Social and Cultural Society of Kurdistan, which was founded in Sanandaj in Kordestan Province in 2000. It organizes training and sports activities for women in the city of Sanandaj and elsewhere in Kordestan Province. She is also associated with another human rights organization, the HROK, which reports on human rights violations against Kurds in Iran.

According to the HROK, a month before Negin Sheikholeslami was arrested, she underwent heart surgery and was still recovering from the operation at the time of her arrest. She also has respiratory problems and is in need of medical treatment.

Negin Sheikholeslami has previously been arrested in February 2001 for participating in a demonstration in front of the United Nations office in Tehran, and was released two months later. She was also arrested in January 2002 and was released three months later.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several prominent Iranian Kurdish human rights defenders are currently detained or imprisoned in Iran after being charged or sentenced on vaguely-worded "security" charges in violation of their right to freedom of expression and association. The founder of the HROK, prisoner of conscience Mohammad Sadigh Kabudvand is serving an 11-year sentence in Tehran. Another activist associated with the HROK and with the women's movement, Zeynab Beyezidi, was arrested in July 2008 and sentenced to four years' imprisonment to be spent in internal exile. Her sentence was confirmed on appeal on 23 August 2008. Two other members of Azar Mehr, Ronak Safarzadeh and Hana Abdi, have been detained since October and November 2007. Hana Abdi was sentenced to five years' imprisonment to be spent in internal exile; this was reduced on appeal to 18 month's imprisonment to be spent in Razan, Hamedan province. Ronak Safarzadeh is still awaiting the outcome of her trial.

Iran's Kurdish population live mainly in the west and north-west of the country, in Kordestan and neighboring provinces, bordering Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraq. They have long suffered extensive discrimination. Iranian Kurdish human rights defenders, including community activists and journalists, risk arbitrary arrest and torture.

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

For more information on human rights violations against the Kurdish minority in Iran, see AI report: *Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority*, at:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/088/2008/en/d140767b-5e45-11dd-a592-c739f9b70de8/mde130882008eng.pdf>

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- asking to be informed of the reasons for Negin Sheikholeslami's arrest and the current place of her detention;
- calling for her to be allowed immediate and regular access to **all necessary medical treatment, and to her family and a lawyer of her choice;**
- urging that she be protected from torture and other ill-treatment while in detention;
- calling for her immediate and unconditional release unless she is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried promptly and fairly.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Intelligence

Gholam Hossein Mohseni Ejeie
Ministry of Intelligence
Second Negarestan Street, Pasdaran Avenue
Tehran
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St., Vali Asr Avenue, south of Serah-e
Jomhouri
Tehran 1316814737
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In subject line write: FAO Ayatollah Shahroudi)
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani
Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh
(Office of the Head of the Judiciary)
Pasteur Street, Vali Asr Avenue, south of Serah-e
Jomhouri
Tehran 1316814737
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Fax: 011 98 21 3390 4986 (please keep trying)

Email: int_aff@judiciary.ir (In the subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad Larijani)

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street –
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Email: info@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

*Iran does not presently have an embassy in the United States.
Instead, please send copies to:*

Iranian Interests Section

Embassy of Pakistan
2209 Wisconsin Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
Phone: 202 965 4990
Fax: 202 965 1073
Email: requests@daftar.org

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.

Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 25 November 2008.