

Hunger Strike by over 100 Kurdish Prisoners of Conscience

Kurdish National Congress of North America Press Release

September 23, 2008
News from the KNCNA Public Relations Committee
Inquiries: 818-434-9692
Contact: Azad Moradian
Contact email: moradianazad@yahoo.com

Day 28 and Counting - An "Unlimited" Hunger Strike by over 100 Kurdish Prisoners of Conscience

On August 25, 2008 Kurdish prisoners in the Islamic Republic of Iran's prisons of Evin Tehran, Gohardasht Karadj, Urumiyeh, Sanandaj, Saqez, Marivan, Bukan, and Mahabad began an "unlimited" hunger strike to demand the Iranian authorities grant the following rights:

The end to arbitrary arrests and reform within the Iranian legal system
The right to have a representative attorney present, and the nullification of the crimes they have been accused of in their absence and without a just trial

The nullification of execution sentences for prisoners of conscience, and the freedom of those detained for years without a reason or trial
International and National organizations granted the right to inspect Iranian prisons and report news about the conditions of the prisoners

Iranian authorities' compliance with the International Human Rights Protocols which they are signatory to

The end to discriminatory treatment due to their Kurdish heritage and minority religion
The end to all torture and maltreatment of prisoners, and the separation of political prisoners from criminal prisoners, and family visitation rights

Although the exact number of those on hunger strike is not known, this ensemble of brave men and women make up more than a hundred of the Kurdish prisoners in Iran. The group is made up of human rights activists, women's right activists, civil rights activists, journalists, writers, intellectuals and professionals - all seeking democratic justice through peaceful and non-violent means.

Within this group, eight have already been sentenced to death without a just trial. All eight have been subject to harsh treatment, torture, accusation without evidence, and are currently awaiting execution without a set date.

The following are those awaiting execution: Mr. Farzad Kamangar , Mr. Arsalan Aoliaei,

Mr. Anwar Hossainpanahi, Mr. Habib Latifi, Mr. Farhad Vakili, Mr. Adnan Hassanpoor (An Appeal has been opened on his case), Mr. Mehdi Ghasemzadeh, and Mr. Abdolvahid (Hiwa) Butimar.

Another group of the hunger strikers have been sentenced to long prison terms for supporting human rights and/or being women's right activists. The following is a short list of names of prisoners and their sentences, ranging from life in prison to several months under severe conditions: Mr. Jahangir Badozadeh (life in prison), Mr. Raeof Ebrahimi, Mr. Sasan Babaei, Mr. Yasser Parvizi, Ms. Hana Abdi, Ms. Fatemeh Goftari, Mr. Fardin Mohammadi, Mr. Jahandar Mohammadi, Ms. Sarwat Azarnoosh, Mr. Adel Ashia'ni, Mr. Bakhtiar Ashrafi Kia, Mr. Abdolrahman Changali, Mr. Ali Rashidi, Mr. Ramazan Saa'idi, Mr. Hamid Shaban, Mr. Khalil Mustafarajab, Mr. Aref Abdola Zadeh, Mr. Abdolah Hosaini, Mr. Hedaiet Ghazali, Mr. Sabah Nasri, Mr. Mohamad Saa'at, Mr. Solaiman Amoei, Mr. Toufiq Naojavan, Mr. Javad Hajilu, Mr. Gholamhosain Khanabdi, Ms. Zainab Baizidi, Mr. Mohamad Sedigh Kaboudvand, Mr. Massoud Kordpour, Mr. Abdola Ghasemzadeh, Mr. Sahand Alimohamadi, Mr. Bakhsh Alimohamadi, Mr. Younes Aqakhan, and Mr. Khezer Rasoumrout.

There is yet another group of hunger strikers who have been in prison for many months, and have neither been tried nor given a reason for their imprisonment. Many were originally arrested on minor violations and arbitrary reasons. These include Mr. Ali Shakeri, Mr. Farid Abdi, Mr. Yaser Goli and Ms. Ronak Safarzadeh. Also detained are Dr. Arash Alaei and Dr. Kamyar Alaei, both well known international physicians and leading experts in the fields of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. They have been detained since June 2008 without an internationally recognized crime, a just trial, or information about a release date.

Twenty-eight harrowing days have passed since the hunger strike began and there is no end in sight. The Islamic Republic of Iran's authorities have neither listened to the prisoners' demands nor paid the slightest attention to the international communities' plea for the lives.

Instead they have moved most of the prisoners to solitary cells, continued torture and forced confessions, separated prisoners on hunger strike, banned routine visits from the prisoners' families, and blocked news broadcasts about the hunger strike. The regime threatens families of the prisoners and their attorneys with imprisonment, threatens to impose the death penalty sooner than previously planned, and refuses medical treatment to those prisoners who have fallen severely ill from torture and/or the complications of the hunger strike.

The Kurdish National Congress of North America is severely concerned about the lives that are at stake in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We fear that if the international community, the governments of the world, Human Right organizations, and supporters of human rights do not act promptly and effectively, a great tragedy is inevitable. The authorities of Iran have a horrifying history of massacre, and we do not want history to repeat itself.

We condemn the Islamic Republic of Iran for the flagrant violations of human rights, for imprisoning and torturing civilians, and for not allowing access to information about these prisoners of conscience. The government of Iran is responsible for the well being of all the prisoners, including those on hunger strike, and we demand that first and foremost they ensure the prisoners are taken to medical facilities without any further delay, and gain visitation rights with their families, attorneys, and the media.

We ask Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, President George W. Bush, Navi Pillay, United Nations Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, The European Union, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and all Human Rights Supporters to take this situation very seriously. We ask you all to demand an end to the violations of Human Rights taking place in the prisons of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

We ask that the International community put pressure on this government to release these Kurdish prisoners, that they hold Mr. Ahmadinejad, President of The Islamic Republic of Iran, personally responsible for the atrocities taking place in the prisons of this country, and that they insist he promptly comply with International Human Right standards that Iran has agreed upon.

Date published: Tuesday, September 23, 2008