

STATEMENT

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CONTACT: (202) 661-4675

**Families of Political Prisoners Protest in Front of UN Office in Tehran
USADI Calls for Immediate Release of All Political Prisoners in Iran**

According to reports received from Iran and Iranian dissident groups, a large number of the families of the political prisoners held a protest gathering in front of the UN Office in Tehran last Sunday. The demonstrators shouted slogans like: "Referendum, Referendum, this is the people's demand", and "all political prisoners must be freed."

This gathering took place under the watchful eyes of Iran's security agents who had the area under their tight control. The roads leading to the UN office were all closed down.

Meanwhile disturbing reports have been coming from Iran concerning near-death and the very alarming health condition of many political prisoners, among them:

- 1-Akbar and Manuchehr Mohaamadi, two student activists, arrested following the student uprising of July 1999. The two brothers are reportedly in immediate need of medical treatment in a regular hospital. According to the Amnesty International, they both have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment.
- 2-Iraj Jamshidi, the editor of the Asia newspaper, arrested last summer for publishing a picture of an Iranian opposition figure in the front page of the Asia newspaper. A UN Special Rapporteur has reported that Mr. Jamshidi has been kept incommunicado and under horrendous conditions.
- 3-Siamak Pourzand, age 75, a freelance journalist who was last arrested in March 2003 recently had a heart attack while in prison. The prison authorities' refusal to let Mr. Pourzand receive required and timely medical treatment worsened his condition. He was reportedly transferred to a Tehran hospital where he is in coma, and is chained to his bed by his feet.
- 4-Hojjat Zamani, 27, is a political prisoner on the verge of execution. It has been reported that Zamni who has been subjected to severe torture is in need of urgent medical care. His father, two brothers and uncle have already been executed by the Iranian regime.
- 5- There are many other political prisoners who are in similar health condition requiring immediate medical care.

The murder of the Iranian-Canadian photojournalist Zahara Kazem last summer, should serve as a stark reminder to all international human rights organizations that nearly all of these cases are induced by, and are as a result of, torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners by prison authorities.

The 2003 annual State Department Human Rights report states that in Iran "The Government's poor human rights record worsened, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses... Continuing serious abuses included: summary executions; disappearances; torture and other degrading treatment, reportedly including severe punishments such as beheading and flogging; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention."

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran urgently calls upon the United States, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, international human rights organizations, and Iran's Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi to immediately inquire with the Iranian government about the health condition of all political prisoners and ensure that they would be provided the required medical treatment immediately.

The USADI calls for safety and protection of human rights of Iranian dissidents and political activists regardless of their political affiliation and demands the immediate release of all political prisoners and student activists in Iran. As Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) stressed recently: "Safeguarding the human rights of Iranians is a critical element of any policy to support Iran's democracy movement."

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