

TAKE ACTION: Please cut and paste this letter onto your personal or Institutional letterhead protesting death sentence handed down to Adnan Hassanpour

August 3, 2007

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street, Qom, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@leader.ir or istiftaa@wilayah.org

Excellency,

I wish to add my name to this appeal from PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the international writers' organization, International PEN. PEN Canada is writing strongly to protest the death sentence handed down to Iranian Kurdish journalist, writer and human rights activist **Adnan Hassanpour**, as well as the arrests of numerous independent journalists in Iranian Kurdistan and the closure of several newspapers.

According to PEN Canada's information, Hassanpour, journalist and advocate of cultural rights for Iranian Kurds, was detained on 25 January. He was reportedly held incommunicado without charge in a Ministry of Intelligence facility in Marivan, and transferred to Marivan prison on 26 March. He appeared before the Islamic Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj on 12 June, in the presence of his lawyer.

Hassanpour was reportedly taken from Marivan prison to an unconfirmed place of detention, possibly the detention facility run by the Ministry of Intelligence in Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan province, early in the morning of 15 July. On 16 July he was told that he had been sentenced to death on charges of espionage and Moharebeh (being at enmity with God). If confirmed on appeal, the sentences would then have to be further confirmed by the Supreme Court.

In April 2007, the Mehr News Agency, which is said to have close links with Iran's judiciary, apparently alleged that Hassanpour had been in contact with Kurdish opposition groups and had helped two people from Khuzestan province, who were wanted by the authorities, to flee from Iran. However, in an interview carried by the online publication Rooz, Hassanpour's lawyer, Saleh Nikbakht, said that the charges related to a phone conversation he had with a staff member of Radio Voice of America.

Hassanpour is a former member of the editorial board of the Kurdish-Persian weekly journal, "Asou" (Horizon), which was closed by the Iranian authorities in August 2005 following widespread unrest in Kurdish areas. He had previously been tried in connection with articles published in the journal. He is a member of the Kurdish Writer's Association. Hassanpour's cousin, environmentalist Abdolwahed (known as Hiwa) Butimar was also tried with Hassanpour on the same charges, and handed down the death penalty.

The death sentence follows a wave of newspaper closures and arrests that has taken place in Iran during recent months. "Ham Mihan," an Iranian daily, was suspended on 4 July at the request of Tehran prosecutor general Said Mortazavi, who argued that it was illegal because there were procedural "errors" in the trial in 2000, when it was suspended for an improvement in relations between Iran and the United States. The day it resumed publishing, on 13 May 2007, it ran a front-page story about the US-Iranian talks in Baghdad. It also defied a government ban on reporting the disturbances that followed the introduction of petrol rationing on 27 June. The next day, another judicial decision confirmed the definitive closure of "Moshareket", a daily which had also been suspended since 2000. The former mouthpiece of the pro-reform Participation Front, it was suspended during a judicial campaign against the opposition press.

The pattern of repression of journalists and human rights in Iranian Kurdistan is ongoing, and can be seen in the multitude of arrests since December, 2006. **Ejlal Ghavani** of "Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan", a weekly that was suspended in 2004, was detained on 9 July of this year after being convicted by a court in Sanandaj of "inciting the population to revolt" and "activities against national security." **Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand**, "Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan"'s editor and the founder of a human rights organization, was arrested on 1 July and transferred to Evin prison. He has not been officially charged. **Kaveh Javanmard** of the weekly "Karaftu" was arrested on 18 December, 2006, and was sentenced on 17 May, 2007. He is currently serving a two-year prison sentence. He was not allowed access to a lawyer during his trial, which took place behind closed doors. On 23 July, four Kurdish intellectuals were arrested for their activities in support of Hassanpour and Butimar, including journalist **Ako Kurdnasab**, a board member of the weekly "Karaftu", **Behzad Kordestani**, a well-known poet and writer from Marivan, and **Bakhtiyar Rehim**, a journalist from Marivan. Behzad Kordestani was released without charge on 24 July, but Ako Kurdnasab and Bakhtiyar Rehim will reportedly remain in jail for at least two months, and are feared to be held incommunicado.

PEN Canada strongly protests the death sentence handed down to journalist Adnan Hassanpour, and fears that he is being held in violation of Article 19 of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which Iran is a signatory. PEN Canada is also concerned about reports that Adnan Hassanpour has been ill treated in detention, and seeks reassurances from the Iranian authorities that his wellbeing is guaranteed.

PEN Canada is outraged by the apparent crackdown on Iranian-Kurdish journalists, writers, and newspapers, and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all journalists and writers detained in Iranian Kurdistan solely for the peaceful expression of their views.

Sincerely,

[Your name and address]

Copies To:

Head of the Judiciary

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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