



Witness Statement of Ali Afshari

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Place of Birth: Ghazvin, Iran

Date of Birth: March 21, 1973

Occupation: Student, human rights activist and one of the former leaders of the Iranian students movement

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

Date of Interview: February 16, 2008; September 26; 2008 October 3, 2008

Interviewer:

Witnesses:

This statement was prepared pursuant to in-person and telephonic interviews with Mr. Ali Afshari, a human rights activist and one of the former leaders of the Iranian students movement. The statement consists of 83 paragraphs and 20 pages. The interviews were conducted on February 16, 2008, September 26, 2008 and October 3, 2008. The statement was approved by Mr. Afshari on October 29, 2008.

Witness Statement

The Iranian Prison System

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran does not have a unified and consistent system for managing its prisons. The system is marked by a lack of coordination, overlapping of duties, and divided jurisdictional authority, which often leads to confusion and interference between and among various agencies within the regime. On the managerial level, numerous agencies such as the Ministry of Justice and a number of security, intelligence and law enforcement units are responsible for administering a series of prisons.
2. In general, the prison system in Iran may be divided into two parts: public prisons and detention facilities.

Public Prisons

3. Public prisons are facilities wherein convicted prisoners are locked up. The prisoners' cases have already gone through the trial and appeals stages and a verdict and sentence have been issued. Public prisons are under the supervision of the State Prisons Organization, whose official is appointed by the head of the Judiciary. Public prisons have separate holding facilities for different criminal charges. Since political crimes have not yet been defined under Iranian law, political prisoners are divided based on the nature of the charges and penalties assessed against them and imprisoned in a related criminal ward.¹ Evin and Rajae Shahr are two well-known examples of public prisons in Iran.
4. Evin prison is one of the most well-equipped prisons in the Middle East. Despite the fact that it is a public prison, different [security and intelligence] agencies administer various wards or sections within the facility. This prison was built during the time of Mohammad-Reza Shah. Before the revolution, Evin prison consisted of two wards (a solitary confinement ward and a public ward) and was much smaller than it is today. It was solely used to hold political prisoners. After the revolution, new sections were added to the prison, including sections 7, 8, 240, special clerical section, and wards A and B of the Revolutionary Guards (previously ward 325). In addition to the public wards, this prison also contains a solitary confinement section known as Section 240, used to punish disobedient prisoners. Each solitary cell has its own bathroom. Evin prison also has a separate ward for women. After the formation of the Ministry of Intelligence in 1985, the ministry took control of the solitary confinement ward of Section 209 (which was built before the revolution) away from the State Prisons Organization.

¹ Examples of these wards include national security, financial/white collar crimes, moral crimes (a ward which is heavily populated by women), drugs and narcotics, murder, fraud, adolescents, family crimes (which includes crimes related to dowries) and others.

5. After serious protests erupted in 2002 in connection with the administration of secret prisons in Iran, the Revolutionary Guards also took over certain sections of Evin prison and administered their own wards there. The construction and administration of these wards by separate agencies caused a divide in jurisdictional authority within the prison. Parts of the prison remained under the administration of the State Prisons Organization, while other wards such as Section 209 are administered by the Ministry of Intelligence. Sections 325 and sections A and B fell under the supervision of the Revolutionary Guards.
6. Sections 209 and 325 are closed security wards and no one other than the responsible officials [of the agencies in charge] are allowed to visit them. In 2001, when United Nations representative Louis Joinet came to Iran to meet with political prisoners, I was being detained in Section A (previously Section 325) under the authority of the Revolutionary Guards. But I was later transferred to the general ward of Evin prison, where I met with the UN representative.

Detention Facilities

7. According to law, detention facilities are places where the accused are held during the investigation and interrogation phases of a criminal investigation. The accused are often held in detention facilities if there is a danger that they may flee or that evidence may be lost. For example, a group of people who are accused of security-related crimes (most political activists are lumped into this category) will be arrested by the Ministry of Intelligence and kept in detention facilities that are legally under the supervision of that ministry. Many political activists, journalists, individuals involved in political and civil movements, religious and ethnic minorities and even followers of sects that do not ideologically agree with the regime's views are arrested and interrogated by the Ministry of Intelligence in detention facilities under its supervision.
8. Sometimes agents of the Intelligence Protection Office of the Revolutionary Guards and the Law Enforcement Forces also engage in such activities. It is common knowledge that the agents of the Intelligence Protection Office of the Revolutionary Guards regularly arrest opponents of the regime who are engaged in armed or political struggle outside the country (and that some of these operations are military in nature). These agents also arrest supporters of these movements inside the country and interrogate them inside their own detention facilities. The Revolutionary Guards justify the existence of these special detention facilities by referring to the organization's founding principles, which require it to safeguard the Islamic Republic and goals of the Islamic Revolution. Of course, this justification does not have any legal significance pursuant to the Constitution or other established laws. Intelligence agencies such as the Intelligence Protection Office of the Revolutionary Guards, Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces (or NAJA), Intelligence Protection Center of the Judiciary, Intelligence Protection Office of the Ministry

of Defense and the Army, and other intelligence units affiliated with governmental organizations and ministries only have the authority to maintain special detention facilities for their own personnel. To the extent that personnel working for these agencies violate internal rules and regulations, the agency can detain and interrogate them. An example of this can be seen with respect to the military. The Army can detain soldiers accused of a crime in its special detention centers and surrender the individual to the judiciary of the Armed Forces after the end of the criminal investigation phase.

Iran's Intelligence-Gathering System

9. Generally, all intelligence gathering activities by security agencies in Iran must be coordinated with the Ministry of Intelligence. The Ministry of Intelligence retains primacy in determining the proper course of action regarding all intelligence gathering operations, and other security organizations must coordinate their intelligence activities with this ministry. Intelligence organizations affiliated with legal agencies such as the Army, the Judiciary and the Law Enforcement Forces have limited authority and are only allowed to conduct investigations regarding that agency's operations and the protection of confidential documents and information related to the agency's work. For example, the Intelligence Protection Center of the Judiciary is solely responsible for investigating the conduct and performance of judges and employees of Iran's justice system. Similarly, the Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcements is responsible for investigating violations committed by NAJA personnel.
10. Despite the existence of a general division of labor among Iran's various intelligence gathering agencies, the regime does not always see itself as bound to this formal structure. In fact, it is political circumstance [and expedience] that often determines the specific roles and responsibilities of Iran's intelligence gathering agencies. Before Khatami's time (during which the system generally worked in a unified manner), officials selected intelligence gathering operations based on the expertise and functions of a particular agency. During the reformist government of Mohammad Khatami, however, this practice changed and officials no longer selected agencies based on their area of expertise or legal mandate, but rather on their [political] connections [and capabilities]. The agency that was closest to the official in charge was the one that was selected [to do the job.]
11. This type of relationship between the Judiciary and law enforcement units became more commonplace during the time of Khatami's presidency. Under Iranian law, several organizations such as the Ministry of Intelligence, judicial police and the Law Enforcement Forces are considered to be "agents of the Judiciary." Although the Judiciary, which was under the control of conservative forces during the reform period, had several different options for arresting the accused at its disposal, it often relied on agencies that shared the political views of the commanding officer (such as the Law Enforcement Forces). Of course, the most important decisions were always made by the Office of the Supreme Leader.

After events leading to the Chain Murders were exposed and changes occurred within the Ministry of Intelligence, the Supreme Leader was disappointed by the fact that this ministry was no longer under his control. He decided, therefore, to establish the parallel intelligence apparatus. Given that a good working relationship existed between the Office of the Supreme Leader and the Intelligence Protection Center of the Judiciary (and the judicial branch was responsible for investigating and prosecuting national security and political crimes), a new parallel intelligence structure was created under the guise of the Judiciary. This structure included the intelligence protection offices of the Revolutionary Guards, Law Enforcement Forces, Army and the Judiciary. This prevented the government of Khatami from criticizing the actions of the parallel intelligence apparatus on legal grounds, because these apparatus were essentially hiding behind the Judiciary and taking advantage of the legal channels at their disposal.

12. On another front, different groups within the ruling elite competed with each other in an effort to outperform their rivals when it came to crushing political dissidents. Individual groups within the parallel intelligence structure arrested dissidents and forced them to confess to serious but false charges in order to prove their effectiveness and elevate their status in the eyes of the Supreme Leader.
13. Following its establishment and consolidation of authority over intelligence gathering operations in 1985, the Ministry of Intelligence began to play a prominent role in the silencing of the regime's critics. From 1985 to the reform period, there was little dissent within and amongst regime elements, and the intelligence gathering community was able to work together and coordinated their activities accordingly. But Khatami's victory following the 2nd of Khordad elections led to a bifurcated system. The Ministry of Intelligence went through structural changes and the political dynamics of the intelligence community transformed. These changes worried the Supreme Leader, because Khatami's victory limited the [political] options available to the conservative establishment for the targeting and silencing of the opposition. Despite this, these events failed to seriously challenge the Office of the Supreme Leader because, as I previously mentioned, the [intelligence gathering] system permitted different [intelligence gathering agencies] to interfere in each others' affairs. The system's failure to delineate the responsibilities of the various intelligence agencies (or specifically describe them) effectively institutionalized the parallel structures that eventually resulted. The conservatives used this structural loophole to ultimately reach their [political] objectives and slowly tighten the noose around the reform movement.
14. In an effort to weaken Khatami, the conservatives first launched a systematic attack against [several reformist] mayors, including Karbaschi who was accused of embezzlement. The executor of these attacks was the Intelligence Protection Office of Law Enforcement Forces, which was under the leadership of Commander Naqdi at the time. The Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces interrogated and harshly mistreated the mayors at the Vesal

detention center. Vesal is one of many secret detention facilities in Iran. No official documents exist regarding the existence of this facility. Later it became evident that Vesal was not a newly-built detention center used for interrogating and mistreating the mayors, but was a detention facility used by the Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces during the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani. Of course, during Rafsanjani's presidency there were rumors that the secret prisons were used to blackmail rich merchants and wealthy individuals. These wealthy individuals were forced to sell their equity to the Ministry of Intelligence and security forces in these prisons or safe-houses. It was also [believed] that during the time of Rafsanjani hotels were commonly used to interrogate and threaten intellectuals and dissidents.

15. Next, the chain murders happened. The regime announced that rogue elements in the Ministry of Intelligence were responsible for these murders. This change provoked the reformists and deepened the gap between the Ministry of Intelligence, the Supreme Leader and the Judiciary.
16. As a response to the actions of the reformists, the Judiciary began a widespread campaign to shut down newspapers. It also arrested and tried Akbar Ganji, Emad Baqi, me and several others for participating in the Berlin Conference. For the first time, the Judiciary began to rely on personnel from the Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces and the Revolutionary Guards for arresting the accused. Instead of using the Ministry of Intelligence as it did before, the Judiciary turned to security channels that were [ideologically] closer to it. For example, they started using Section 240 of Evin for interrogating and obtaining confessions from the accused. Baqi, Ganji and I, who were among the participants of the Berlin Conference, spent some time being interrogated in these solitary cells at Evin Prison.

How were the Parallel Intelligence Apparatus Formed?

17. The third phase of this development occurred with the establishment of the Parallel Intelligence Apparatus (PIA). The PIA is an unofficial, unlawful organization that was established by conservatives to oppose the reformists. Its goal was to silence reformist demands in Iran. Khamenei, who was disappointed in the failure of the Ministry of Intelligence to put an end to the reform period, called for the establishment of the PIA. This intelligence group includes other intelligence organizations such as Intelligence Protection Office of the IRGC, the Intelligence Protection Center of the Judiciary, the Intelligence Protection Office of the Supreme Leader, the Intelligence Protection Office of Law Enforcement Forces, the Intelligence Protection Office of the Army and expelled conservative members of the Ministry of Intelligence. The PIA worked directly under the supervision of the Supreme Leader, and its numerous and scattered components were brought together and coordinated by him. The leading members of these intelligence organizations consulted with each other, and decisions were made pursuant to a general strategy aimed at defeating the reform movement.

Responsibility for executing this strategy was given to the intelligence organization best suited to implement the plan.

18. At this point, conservatives within the regime began to [suspect the possibility of] a “silent overthrow.” This coincided with a period wherein the media had gained more freedom, the student movement had grown stronger and reformist demands had intensified within civil society. Ezatollah Sahabi and I were arrested by the PIA during November 2000.
19. After the formation of the PIA the encounters started. The first encounter involved the Religious-Nationalists; the second the bloggers; and the third involved Siamak Pourzand, which was known as the “artists’ project” and was implemented by the *Amaken* Office. The PIA worked on project-to-project basis, acted outside the scope of the Ministry of Intelligence and carried its projects under the supervision of the Judiciary.
20. Each of the organizations included in the PIA administered its own detention facilities. For example, detention centers 59, Vali Asr and 66 (Afsariyih) belonged to the IRGC; detention centers *Jay* located close to Mehrabad Airport, and 36 (Jamshidiyih) and Hishmatiyih were connected with the Intelligence Protection Office of the Army; detention centers Amaken, Mullahadra, Vuzara and Tupkhanih were under the supervision of the Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces; detention centers *Tawhid* and Section 209 of Evin Prison belonged to the Ministry of Intelligence. From 2000 to 2003, a great number of reformists were persecuted in these detention facilities, and suffered various forms of physical and psychological torture.
21. The PIA also had other detention facilities, such as Khatam-ul-Anbiya and ward A of Section 325 of Evin Prison, which was the most modern detention facility built in the Middle East. These detention facilities are not controlled by the State Prisons Organization.
22. In addition, the PIA used military detention centers for non-military purposes. An example of this is detention facility “Jay,” which is actually used for military affairs and is better equipped than the other facilities [discussed above]. I was held in this facility for 19 days, between late March and early April 2001. I was always blindfolded. I had a blindfold every time I was escorted somewhere by a guard. [This practice] was incredibly troubling for me. I will talk more about this later.
23. The Ministry of Intelligence also has its own special detention centers that are often located in private residences. The Ministry uses these houses on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, it can be said that the Ministry of Intelligence’s policy of using these houses as detention facilities depends on the specific case at issue.

24. After the wave of protests against secret detention facilities in Iran, the regime established detention centers in Evin Prison: Sections A and B. These two facilities – Sections A and B (previously Section 325) and Section 209 of Evin operate outside the jurisdiction of the State Prisons Organization and are run by the IRGC and Ministry of Intelligence.
25. The regime no longer sees a need to rely on a separate and parallel system since the intelligence organizations have been working in unison for the past two years. It must be noted, however, that the Iranian regime does not see itself as bound to or limited by a particular system of rules, and is generally not restricted by the rule of law. Its policies change according to changing political needs. Under normal circumstances, the Ministry of Intelligence will assume a leadership role in intelligence-gathering operations, but if [in the future] the leadership of this ministry does not see eye to eye with the Supreme Leader the regime will once again rely on the PIA.
26. The first time I was arrested was by the Ministry of Intelligence, which first sent me to the Tawhid detention facility and then transferred me to the quarantine section of Evin Prison under the supervision of State Prisons Organization.

Arrest and Detention

The First Time

27. The first time I was arrested was by the Ministry of Intelligence in July 1996. I was kept at the Tawhid detention facility, which was one of Ministry of Intelligence's main detention centers.
28. They had already arrested my friends and I expected that I would be next. I was in the office of the Islamic Students Association building at Amir Kabir University when an officer from the Protection Office² came and said he wanted to talk to me. After we walked for a while, I realized that I was surrounded by several people. (Later they grabbed and arrested one of my student friends from the university dormitory.) They inconspicuously escorted me out the back entrance of the university so no one would notice. The person who initially summoned me was plain-clothed. They forced us in a car that was parked outside the university and blindfolded us as soon as we entered. Inside Tawhid they registered us and provided us with and prison uniforms. They threw me inside a solitary cell. The interrogations started two hours later.

² The Protection Office (or *Idarihyiyh Hirasat*) is the name of an intelligence organization that has offices in all government agencies and coordinates its activities with the Ministry of Intelligence. This organization, which operates under the guise of the Ministry of Intelligence, is responsible for protecting the security of all universities. The head of the Protection Office of the Ministry of Science is appointed by the Minister of Science, Research and Technology and confirmed by the Ministry of Intelligence. Every affiliate office has a security head who is appointed by the Ministry of Intelligence.

29. I was not roughed up at Tawhid this time around. My interrogators yelled, cursed, and kept me up for hours, but the sleep deprivation did not reach the point of torture yet. The interrogators intimidated, insulted and cursed me repeatedly. They called me stupid, retard, imbecile, idiot, etc.
30. I was accused of creating turmoil among the masses and acting against the national security. My interrogators claimed that I was infiltrating the student movement on behalf of the Freedom Front. This accusation was based on the fact that the clashes between the Polytechnic (Amir Kabir University) students and *Ansar-i Hizbollah* coincided with the opening of the railroad project between Sarakhs and Tajan. These clashes between students and *Ansar-i Hizbollah* occurred as a result of a speech that was being given by Abdol-Karim Soroush at the university, which just so happened to be on the same day the government wished to publicize the Sarakhs-Tajan railroad project. My interrogators alleged that the clashes were pre-planned, and that our group was under the influence of a person who was in contact with *Mujahidin-i-Khalq* organization and wished to undermine the government's accomplishments. They asked me to officially apologize to the authorities. In addition, my interrogators wanted me to confess to the structural links [between our group] and the Freedom Front. I resisted because all of these charges were false and unfounded. My interrogators threatened me and said that if I did not confess I would stay in prison for years. But I didn't give in.
31. The judge assigned to my case was Judge Moqaddas, who was in charge of Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Courts. The judge was also the head interrogator. They took us to Judge Moqaddas (of Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court) on the 10th day [of my arrest] and a discussion ensued between me, my friend Ali Reza Siasirad and the Judge wherein he insulted Shariati and Bazargan. The Judge claimed that Shariati and Bazargan were the founders of a deviation within religion. We rejected the idea and defended them. The Judge got annoyed and said that we hadn't learned our lesson. He ordered that we be taken to the quarantine ward of Evin Prison. I was in Evin for one night. The next day we were taken back to court. We didn't argue and were released on five million *tooman* bail. My trial never convened and my case remains open.

The Second Time

32. I was arrested by the Ministry of Justice two nights before the 1997 presidential elections. I was charged with using a government facility in support of one of the presidential candidates, Khatami. They took me to the basement of the Judiciary. I was released after two days.

The Third Time

33. The third time I was imprisoned after [participating in] the Berlin Conference. Judge Moqaddas summoned me to Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court yet again.

- The summons stated that I should appear in court to explain some of my activities. As soon as I went the questioning started. Judge Moqaddas issued my arrest warrant in his office, after which I was immediately placed under arrest. They sent me to Section 240 of Evin Prison. I spent 19 days in solitary confinement at Evin and 35 days in the special clerical ward of Evin Prison.
34. I was charged with participating in the Berlin Conference. The interrogations all took place in Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court. I was not blindfolded. My interrogators charged me with attempted overthrow of the government and anti-revolutionary acts. They also questioned some of my student activities.
35. The tone of the interrogators was insulting and intimidating. They interrogated me from morning to night. Sometimes in order to punish me they sent me to a glass room that became unbearably hot and stuffy as a result of direct sunlight. The interrogations sometimes lasted seven to eight hours.
36. The third time I stayed in prison for less than two months and was released after posting fifty million *toman* bail. My trial was open to the public and I defended myself. I was charged under Articles 458³ and 500⁴ of the Islamic Penal Code.
37. The judge in my first trial considered both my charges valid and sentenced me to 5 years in prison. This sentence was reduced by one year in the appeals court and I served my time in prison.

The Fourth Time

38. I was again interrogated in November-December 2000 by Judge Haddad of Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court. He was a prominent and influential figure connected to the PIA. Haddad had sent a summons to my home approximately ten days after a speech I gave during a student gathering at Amir Kabir University. During the speech I had criticized the Supreme Leader. Just like before, the summons ambiguously requested that I go to Branch 26 in order to explain my activities.
39. Judge Haddad carried out the interrogation process. He played a tape of my speech from the beginning and respectfully asked questions. He said that I had insulted the position of the Supreme Leader and [falsely] accused the Minister of Justice. The Judge argued with me and I provided the reasons for my position. He said that I was extremely opinionated and that I shouldn't be so radical as to offend others and create trouble for myself. The second question and answer session between Judge Haddad and myself was similar to the first. During the third session (at which Mr. Sahabi was also present), Judge Haddad was not

³ Article 458 addresses the establishment of a political or military group with intent to jeopardize national security.

⁴ Article 500 addresses propaganda and lies against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- present and his assistant took the responsibility of interrogating us. He then signed and issued my temporary arrest warrant and I was sent to prison.
40. I was in the public section of Evin Prison for 10 days along with Mr. Sahabi, but was transferred to the solitary confinement ward in Section 240 after about a week. Then the interrogations were different this time around. My eyes were always closed during interrogation sessions. The insults, threats and curses were worse and more obscene. They threatened that they would investigate every aspect of my life and “make me pay.”
 41. The interrogators first informed me of my charges. They alleged that I had insulted the Supreme Leader during my speech in Amir Kabir University, and that I had propagandized against the regime. I agreed to respond only to those questions related to these two charges. But they proceeded to ask me unrelated questions to which I refused to respond.
 42. The first two days of interrogation were in Section 240, but the third interrogation took place in Evin Prison’s third building (which did not have a particular name but was located near the quarantine ward and later became a part of Ward A under the supervision of the IRGC).
 43. From that point on the interrogations were accompanied by sleep deprivation. My interrogators wanted me to apologize to the Supreme Leader and ask for forgiveness from the head of the Judiciary. They also wanted me to respond to questions about charges for which I had already been convicted and spent time in prison.
 44. This time the interrogations were accompanied by violence, insults and intimidations. Once an interrogator got tired of asking questions he was replaced by another one. They forced me to stand and face a wall while blindfolded. I felt sick, but they were not concerned in the least. They threatened that if I did not give into their demands they would send me to the “Dungeon of Ghosts.” “Dungeon of Ghosts” was a reference to the group responsible for carrying out the Chain Murders. My interrogators explicitly told me that that if I were sent to the “Dungeon of Ghosts” I would never return alive. They advised me to admit to the charge of attempting to overthrow the government or I would remain in prison and rot.
 45. The interrogations promptly started at sundown. At dawn they returned me to my cell, only to be taken back for interrogations again at night. My interrogators constantly played the role of good cop and bad cop. One of them constantly threatened to beat me and torture me, but the other interrogator would prevent him from doing so and asked me to cooperate. They played their roles. One of them made big promises, while the other threatened and accused me of serious crimes such as the attempted overthrow of the government or the stockpiling of arms. The good cop told me that I was a capable man and that if I cooperated I would be

- appointed to leadership roles in important government agencies such as the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, and that I could have a good life and a bright future. He also told me that if the regime is attacked it will fall apart. I was shocked. I thought there was a *coup d'etat*. My interrogators indicated that some of Khatami's deputies had been arrested. They insulted him. I thought that perhaps the country had gone through big changes during my detention, and that I was unaware of these changes. It was during one of these long evening interrogation sessions that one of my interrogators threateningly informed me that I have one hour to decide whether I would cooperate with them or go to hell.
46. They wrapped me in a blanket at 9 a.m. and put me in a car. I was blindfolded. The car circled around, and since I hadn't slept at night for a week, I vomited in the car. Eventually, that afternoon at 3 or 4 p.m., they took me to Prison 59 at Eshratyab, which was under *Sipah's* supervision. I didn't know anything about this prison previous to that point. I gathered information about Prison 59 later.
47. I was very sick when I entered Prison 59. The prison was stuffy and hot. They registered me in the yard while I was blindfolded and threw me in a solitary cell. They brought me food. Early in the evening they took me to the interrogation room. I heard a lot of noise before that. [Upon entering], my interrogator's first sentence to me described the difference between this facility and the previous prisons [in which I was detained]. My interrogator told me that "[Prison 59] isn't like the other prisons [you have been to]. You will not be pampered here. Do as you're told or die." My interrogators asked questions unrelated to my charges, and I complained. The beatings started. There were two of them. They punched and kicked my head and sides. By this time the parallel intelligence apparatus had already been formed. One of my interrogators engaged in a philosophical discussion with me. He wanted to prove his amazing knowledge of philosophy. The interrogator asked whether actions are inherently motivated to be good or bad, or whether it is one's perception and behavior that defines the nature of these actions. I was familiar with such discussions. The interrogator couldn't compete with me, so he resorted to violence. Then the other interrogator changed the subject and said that we've become tools of the Americans and are working to overthrow the Islamic Republic. He said I have two options: one ends at Behesht-e Zahra (the name of a well-known graveyard in Tehran), and the other results in my surrender. He repeated my charges and said that I am guilty of treason and that I had insulted the Supreme Leader. I didn't accept either charge. Two large interrogators approached me. I was blindfolded and my interrogators threatened and said that I am nothing more than a sissy; that I am nothing to them. They told me that here, big shots like Kianouri and others had confessed and that I wouldn't last long.
48. From that night onward the sleep deprivation began, continuing until the morning hours. Sahabi and I were in that prison at the same time. The solitary cells were very humid and stuffy. This prison had about 30 to 34 cells, 10 of which were used for interrogations. One of the interrogation rooms was larger than the rest.

- They interrogation rooms were usually cold. Since I didn't wear anything other than the prison clothes, I often felt cold during the course of the interrogations.
49. The interrogation questions didn't just cover my two charges. They also questioned my beliefs and ideas. They told me to give them my views about the reformists and describe my (and the other students') positions regarding current events. Or they asked what I thought about the Chain Murders. They always had their own preconceived notions and ideas, and wanted to force them on me. For example, they said that the students had Molotov cocktails at the university dormitories and that they used them against the Law Enforcement Forces and the Revolutionary Guards. I resisted and tried not to give in.
50. In this prison, sleep deprivation was practiced severely and extensively. Loud cursing was commonplace. Once they kept me up for four consecutive nights. Sleep deprivation and the lack of proper food had completely disabled me. Sleep deprivation was such that they kept me standing all the time. As soon as I would fall asleep someone would pull my hair and lift me up and make me stand. I was dizzy and confused. I was completely disoriented. During this time, one of the interrogators came and began to describe different forms of torture, including beatings and sexual assault. For example, he would whisper in my ear that in case I didn't surrender and confess, they would rape me. Then he started to describe how they would do it. He said that they would insert a bottle in my anus, or hang me from the ceiling by my head and whip me until I'm close to death. Or he'd tell me that they will pull out my finger nails and toe nails and keep me in prison for 20 years. They created a very horrifying environment for me. They did all this after they deprived me of sleep and increased the interrogation sessions in an attempt to break me. They wanted me to confess to serious charges and accept their version of what happened. I stayed in that prison for a month.
51. I had one head interrogator and three regular ones. The head interrogator was called Ta'ib. One time during an interrogation Ta'ib slapped me hard. I'll never forget that blow. Ta'ib previously worked for the Ministry of Intelligence, but was kicked out for his bad behavior and had joined the PIA. It was rumored that he had in fact been expelled for wiretapping Hashemi Rafsanjani's residence.
52. After a month they returned me to Evin again. I was transferred to a cell in Section 240, which was underground and was equipped with a bathroom. It was cold – Evin is located close to the mountains and the area is usually colder than other parts of Tehran. Evin's basement was particularly cold. They had given me just one blanket and the prison outfit I had was [made of] very thin [material]. I felt extremely cold.
53. During this time the violent encounters (insults, sleep deprivation, beatings, etc.) were very common. The guard would not allow me to cover my head with the blanket. When I entered the cell the guard made me put my hands behind my neck and stand facing the wall until he had a chance to bring me food and leave. He

- watched me all the time. I was never at peace. During the day I could not sleep because it was too cold, and during the evening I was forced respond to my interrogators' threatening questions. The sleep deprivation had totally destroyed me. The interrogations took place in the same building where they used to take me before transferring me to Prison 59.
54. The physical torture included beatings. They kicked my back and ribs. For example, during the interrogations there would suddenly be two or three people punching and kicking my head and back from behind. One day I was sitting on a chair when one of my interrogators, Sabeti, kicked me on the side. When I fell to the ground they lifted me from my hair and continued with the interrogation.
55. Psychological torture was extremely severe. They threatened to arrest and torture my family members and said that they will arrest my dad, sister and friends. Once they announced my arrest warrant. One of my interrogators who was playing the role of the bad cop said that I should get ready to be executed. He took me out of the cell and dragged me to the courtyard of Evin Prison so that he could carry out the execution. At the same time, I heard another interrogator (who played the role of the good cop) beg the judges on the phone to show mercy on me. Then someone else said, "No, that's not possible. The execution has to be carried out." Again the interrogator who played the role of good cop approached the bad cop and asked him to show mercy on me. And again the bad cop said, "No, this guy is a lost cause." Then the good cop came to me and begged me to think about my parents and confess – otherwise I would be executed by firing squad. The back and forth between the two interrogators lasted half an hour. I was completely broken. This mock execution was the first real [psychological] blow that made me vulnerable.
56. After this event I decided to cooperate with them. But they wanted me to confess to horrible things – things that would facilitate my execution. For example, they wanted me to say that the Tahkim Vahdat office had a munitions room, or that I intended to assassinate the governor of Khorramabad. They also wanted me to falsely testify against certain individuals. I refused.
57. Later they laid me on a bed, tied my hands to it and pretended that they wanted whip me with cable wires. They showed me the cables. I felt like a lonely and vulnerable child who had lost his parents and was left among a group of strangers. I surrendered out of fear that I may be forced to confess to grave crimes, especially in connection with others. As a result, I accepted some of their allegations regarding the smuggling of Molotov cocktails in the university dormitories. They then untied me from the bed.
58. I was not whipped with cable wires, but was constantly reminded that it would happen.

59. I endured these harsh conditions for a month and a half. Every day the physical and psychological pressure got worse, and their demands increased. I resisted and tried to preserve my dignity, but I was also aware that they were committed to breaking me and forcing me to confess about the activities of others. I couldn't take it anymore. I gave in and confessed.
60. They forced me to confess to lies. After I surrendered I stayed in Evin for another week. A week after that they once again took me to Prison 59. The number of detainees had increased from the last time I was there. A month passed. Judge Haddad came to visit me again. He took off my blindfold. I told him that my confessions were lies and that they were obtained under duress and torture. Judge Haddad left and the horrible encounters started anew. My interrogators were bent on securing more false confessions out of me, especially regarding others. I could no longer resist, but I decided it would be better to give them information about myself rather than others. I was worried that if I continued resisting I would eventually be forced to provide false confessions about others. It was this fear that forced me to agree to a televised confession.
61. The interrogators and I came to an agreement on several key points regarding my staged television interview. The first was that my confessions would only involve me and my activities. And the second was that my confessions would take place in front of a camera. I accepted. From this point on my interrogations turned into bargaining sessions between me and my captors regarding the text of my confession letter.
62. My interrogators wanted me to talk about the following issues:
- a) First, that the student movement had deviated and is engaged in illegal political and destructive activities against the regime. I argued that this was not the case, but my arguments made things more difficult and prompted the interrogator to increase his pressure on me.
 - b) Second, that the student movement was under the leadership of the reformists and took orders from them, and that it was fighting to fulfill the reformists' plan to take over. Obviously, this was not true. But the interrogators wanted me to reflect their opinions, in my own words, in front of the camera.
 - c) Third, they wanted me to acknowledge that I was manipulated due to my lack of experience and youth, and that I now know that my actions were wrong.
63. I told them that the issues [above] were not true, but they disagreed. Eventually the text of my interview was finalized after several exchanges between me and my interrogators. My interrogators submitted the text to a committee called the "Experts Committee" (I don't know who belonged to this committee, but I am certain that the many of the leaders of the PIA were its members). The committee made changes to the text and returned it to my interrogators. My interrogators

- then demanded that I incorporate the changes made by the committee. This back and forth went on for a while until the text was finalized.
64. They sat me in front of the camera and reviewed the script with me. They videotaped me four times in Prison 59, and went over the script with me 7 or 8 times before that. The purpose of these review sessions was to ensure that I would act comfortably and naturally in front of the TV camera. Occasionally I would let them know that I refused to read a certain line, at which point they would transfer to me solitary confinement and I'd have to deal with those aggressive interrogators yet again. One time I remember rejecting [their claim] that the students movement wished to overthrow the regime, and merely acknowledged that they may have unwilling and unknowingly been under the influence [of the reformists].
65. One day in May of 2001 they gave me a hair cut, shaved my face, allowed me to take a shower and gave me a change of clothes. I was then blindfolded and driven to another facility. After I arrived they removed my blindfold. I realized that I was inside the Vali Asr military base under the control of the IRGC air force (which was part of the Prison 59 complex). They sat me in front of an Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) camera. My interrogators arrived and informed me that they were going to interview me. Before the filming they promised me that they would not publicly broadcast the footage, and assured me that the previously taped sessions had not been filmed by professionals. They told me that this time a professional camera crew was present so that they could tape a better interview. I wanted to protest, but my interrogators threatened me and told me not to do anything that would force me to return to my previous condition. I couldn't endure the torture and abuse any longer, so I sat in front of the camera and read the prepared script. I had memorized most of it. The whole thing took half an hour. The interview was highly analytical in nature, and scrutinized many of my previous activities. During the first filming session the interrogator took the place of the IRIB interviewer and the camera was focused solely on me. Later the IRIB interviewer, Mr. Fallah, interviewed me for another hour. He asked me questions and I answered them pursuant to the understanding I had with my interrogators. After that I returned to the detention facility and my solitary cell. Despite their assurances, the film was eventually broadcast on one of the TV channels. The broadcast was in fact a montage of two previous taping sessions. The broadcasting of the tape was a huge psychological blow.
66. After two and a half months I met with my family for the first time in February 2001. It happened three months after my arrest and in the presence of an interrogator in the Revolutionary Court. I had lost 25 kilograms. It was a bad visit. As soon as my family asked about my condition, the visit was terminated. These visits didn't occur regularly. On average my family visited me once every two months. I became aware that my taped session had been broadcast during one of the family visits that occurred towards the beginning of May 2001. Overall I met with my family five times, and each visit lasted anywhere from ten to thirty

- minutes. One of my meetings occurred in court at the request of my interrogator. My interrogators wanted my father to convince me to confess to my wrongdoings and dissuade me from exposing the fact that they had forced me to confess.
67. During the time I was reviewing the script for the televised interview they transferred me to larger cell. The psychological pressure on me was intense and I felt terrible. I felt as though I had turned my back against the student movement and the [Iranian] people. I went mad and started banging my head against the wall. I decided to commit suicide, but I had nothing with which to kill myself. I tried to kill myself with the electrical wire in my solitary cell, but I couldn't reach it. I became withdrawn. I thought to myself: if I wanted to end my life, why not just go ahead and expose [these guys in the process]? Let them kill me. This realization dramatically changed my outlook. My spirits lifted; I changed. I was no longer the same person who obsessed over committing suicide. I was resolute and driven. From that moment on I found myself again and continued my resistance.
68. Then I received a letter from the judge asking if I accepted my confessions. I responded that all of my confessions had been secured under duress and that I did not accept any of them. I indicated to him that if he observed my fingerprint next to my signature it meant that I had accepted the confessions, and if not then it meant that I had rejected them. I let him know that the interview was staged, that it took place pursuant to the orders of my interrogators and that the content [of my confession letter] was dictated by them.
69. One day the head of the Revolutionary Court, Mr. Mobasheri, came to Detention Center 59 in my solitary cell and asked if I accepted my confessions. I was still afraid. I suggested that I didn't. But when I met with my judge I openly told him everything. Instead of throwing out my confessions, he warned me that I would create difficulties for myself and my condition would worsen, but that the decision was up to me. He refused to accept responsibility and claimed that he wasn't involved in the interrogation process.
70. My interrogators approached me and the same old question and answer sessions resumed. Before the taping of the interview on April 7, 2001, they had transferred me from Prison 59 to Prison "Jay" (which was located on one of the Defense Ministry's military bases and is near the runway of Mehrabad airport). The planes' takeoffs and landings bothered me a lot. I couldn't sleep. I was kept in this facility for 18 days.
71. After I regained my confidence I informed my judge that I would no longer answer my head interrogators questions. My head interrogator introduced himself as Alavi. After I broke, they removed my blindfold and I was able to see his face. Later I learned that his name is Seraj. These days Seraj occasionally writes for Pars News Agency. He is also currently in charge of the students' Basij force of

- the Revolutionary Guards. I did not answer any of Seraj's questions. I requested another interrogator.
72. Later someone by the name of Musavi (who was Mr. Sahabi's interrogator) arrived and began interrogating me. He threatened me and told me that he would do things to me that would make me forget about the past torture sessions. He belittled me and told me I was nothing more than a little sissy to them. He told me to either confess or stay in prison for another 10 years.
73. I was taken to the Revolutionary Court again. The meeting with my family took place here. I told my family that my TV confessions were extracted under duress, and that the interview was essentially a movie in which my interrogation team played the role of director and I merely acted out the predetermined script.
74. The Court secretary warned me to shut up, but I caused a raucous. All the court employees witnessed these events. They returned me to the detention facility. My interrogator approached me and told me that I had tried to be a hero and that I would spend many years in jail for pulling this stunt. He then presented me with my confession letter and several white sheets of paper (with the Revolutionary Court's letterhead on them), and told me to write down the confessions which I claimed were false. I indicated all the [sections] which were taken by force. During detention I also wrote several letters to the judge in which I reminded him that they had extracted forced confessions from me in violation of the Criminal Code of Procedure. My complaints were intended to counteract the [effect] of the forced confessions.
75. I was held in solitary confinement in Prison 59 until December 6, 2001. I was released after posting a two hundred million *toman* bail. My family paid the two hundred million *toman* bail for my release in June 2001. Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court had issued the order for my release, but I remained in solitary confinement for an additional six months.

My Trial

76. My trial convened in 2005. I had requested an open court session and informed my lawyer that if my trial were closed I would refuse to defend myself. But Judge Haddad ordered a closed court session. My trial convened and I refused to put up a defense. The prosecutor relied on a 300 page charge sheet which included my confessions and documents provided by others against me. The judge refused my Confessions because my complaints were well publicized and it was no longer possible to accept the legitimacy of my confessions.
77. Out of the 9 charges brought against me, Judge Haddad of Branch 26 of Revolutionary Court only approved two of them and rejected the rest. My charges included actions against the national security in an attempt to overthrow the regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Muharibih*, conspiracy and collusion with

several groups and individuals such as the Religious-Nationalists in an attempt to foment armed resistance against the regime (the bases for this charge were the student gatherings at the universities of Amir Kabir and Khorramabad), propaganda against the regime in favor of foreign groups, insulting the leaders and officials of the regime, publishing lies in an attempt to disturb the public mind, espionage and the transfer of [sensitive] information to foreign elements,⁵ inciting the armed forces to rebellion and insubordination.⁶ Judge Haddad merely accepted two of these charges: conspiracy and collusion pursuant to Article 610 of the Islamic Penal Code and propaganda against the regime. He found me innocent of all remaining charges. I was given a 5 year discretionary sentence pursuant to the Article 610 charge, and a 1 year discretionary sentence in connection with the Article 500 charge (related to propaganda against the regime). In total I was condemned to 6 years in prison, but because I had already spent a year of this sentence in temporary detention I was sentenced to 5 years. The judge also deprived me of all my social and political rights during those five years in accordance with articles 18 and 19 [of the Islamic Penal Code].

78. My trial was closed and I did not defend myself. Judge Zargar, who was in charge of my case in the appeals court, affirmed the lower court's ruling in Branch 36 of the Revolutionary Court.
79. There is room to argue why a judge like Haddad who is one of them didn't consider all the charges valid. Part of the reason for this is the lack of coordination between the judge and the interrogator. Judge Haddad gives orders from behind the scene and instructs them to be harsh, but he doesn't approve the methods used. This results in the occasional disagreement between these two officials regarding the nature of the interrogations, even though they are essentially allies. On the other hand, the purpose of this harsh treatment against government critics is to defeat and terrify them. The interrogator and the judge are both in agreement that the deprivation of human rights and the rule of law in these cases serve a higher political purpose. Once this objective is reached, there is no reason to continue imprisoning the accused. Also, I cannot ignore the discretionary role of the interrogator. For example, my interrogator (Mr. Seraj) used to tell me that they are the ones who instructed the judges regarding decision-making and what needed to be done, not the other way around. Having said that, we should not overlook the difference in opinion that often exists between high-ranking authorities regarding the treatment of a particular case. There have been many times when there was a difference of opinion between Shahroudi, head of the Judiciary, and Mortazavi, the Prosecutor General, on the proper method of treatment of an individual in custody. Also, the extensive criticism regarding my case, which in turn influenced

⁵ This charge was baseless. I had a meeting with officials at the Canadian embassy regarding the elections for the Sixth *Majlis*. It was a very ordinary meeting. They wanted to know what changes the Sixth *Majlis* would make.

⁶ The basis for this charge was a letter sent by the public council of *Tahkim-i Vahdat* to the Revolutionary Guards requesting that the latter avoid entering the political fray. I was not responsible for this letter – the *Tahkim-i Vahdat* office was.

[the judge's] decision to reject the charge of attempted overthrow of the government. In general, though, let's not forget that six years of imprisonment was a very harsh sentence for a student activist and a representative of Iran's student community.

80. Even though Islamic Shari'a law forbids torture, it allows punishment in cases where the crime has been witnessed and the accused refuses to confess. During the early years of the revolution [the government] relied on this justification against guerrilla groups such as the *Fada'iyān-i Khalq*, *Mujahidin-i Khalq* and other leftists groups. Later they abandoned this method and adopted "softer" torture tactics. These methods included psychological torture, sleep deprivation and lengthy and structured interrogation sessions. Nowadays they rely on brainwashing the accused, which is yet another kind of psychological torture used against individuals.

The Meeting with Siamak Pourzand

81. In 2003m I was being detained in the public ward of Evin Prison. I heard that they had transferred Pourzand to our ward (Hall 3, Number 7). I knew him from before. I went to meet him in person. After our meeting I brought him back to my room. I think it was March of 2003.

82. Pourzand was extremely quiet and disoriented. He didn't talk and seemed very terrified and shocked. We tried to lift his spirits. When we spoke, he shook and often remained quiet. He was stressed and was very reluctant to talk about his time in detention.

83. I sympathized with his condition. I had gone through similar circumstances. I had been kept in solitary confinement for a while. I had experienced sleep deprivation. I had been abused. And, as I indicated before, I had been forced to give a televised confession.