



### **Witness Statement of Amir Farshad Ebrahimi**

**Name:** Amir Farshad Ebrahimi  
**Place of Birth:** Tehran, Iran  
**Date of Birth:** August 14, 1975  
**Occupation:** Lawyer, Filmmaker and Military Engineer

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**Interviewing Organization:** Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

**Date of Interview:** September 9, 2008

**Interviewer:**

**Witnesses:**

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This statement was prepared pursuant to a telephonic interview with Amir Farshad Ebrahimi. The statement consists of 71 paragraphs and 18 pages. The interview was conducted on September 9, 2008. The statement was approved by Mr. Ebrahimi on September 18, 2008.

## Witness Statement

### My Kidnapping

1. I was first arrested on July 19, 1999. This arrest occurred exactly ten days after the events unfolded at the university dormitory. The arrest was based on a speech I gave during a student demonstration at the dormitory. At the time I was a student at Tehran University's school of law, and the political secretary and member of the central committee of *Ansar-i Hizbullah*. Immediately before the university dorm incident I was informed that the Law Enforcement Forces, *Basij* and *Ansar-i Hizbullah* have decided to quell the student protests. I resigned from *Hizbullah*, joined the students and supported their demands. The next day the newspapers ran a story entitled "A Former Member of *Hizbullah* Gives a Speech Supporting the Students."
2. At the time, I was living with my family in *Ghasr-i Firuzih*, which was a residential complex for Air Force officers. Around 8:00 a.m. on July 19, 1999 the door bell rang at our house. My mom opened the door and told me that a man had come to speak with me. It was Colonel Akbar Sharafi, an intelligence officer from NAJA's Greater Tehran office, located in Tupkhanih Square. I knew him from before.
3. When he saw me, he said "Come here, I want to talk to you." I knew what he wanted, so I replied, "I am busy. If there is an issue, you go and I will come [later]." He said, "No, come now." I pointed to the slippers I was wearing and asked, "Like this?" He replied, "Yes, it will be short and you'll return soon." My mother, who was listening in on the conversations looked worried. Her eyes suspiciously followed me as I exited the house.
4. I was agitated, but Sharafi assured me that it's nothing serious, and added that I should talk to him as I followed him to a back alley near our residence. When I turned into this street, I realized that a *Peykan* taxi was slowly approaching us. I also noticed a plainclothes individual turn towards me from the corner of the street. When the car came close, he grabbed me and forced me into the trunk of the taxi. My mom witnessed all of this and screamed, "Help – my child is being kidnapped!" She called the entrance guard of the residential complex, but my kidnappers crashed through the gate of the complex and continued on. When we reached Ahang highway, which was close to my home and empty during that time of day, my abductors took me out of the trunk. Another one forced me to lay down on his lap while he covered my head with a blanket. They took me to the Intelligence Protection Office of the Law Enforcement Forces.

5. Brigadier-General Mohammad Ali Najafi, commander of the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Law Enforcement Forces (who now heads the *Amaken* office) slapped me in the face. I was shocked at the way these former friends treated me with such violence. They directed me to the basement. There were others there as well. The basement had large solitary cells. Some of them measured 6m by 6m. Most of the people I saw down there had been convicted of drug offenses. The rest were street thugs. I was the only political prisoner among them. In Evin Prison I learned that Manouchehr Mohammadi was also being detained there.
6. I don't remember exactly, but I think they took me back to my home three or four days after they kidnapped me. Of course, the day after they detained me they rummaged through my house, but decided to return with me since they failed to find anything. Branch 209 of the Public Court in Tehran later provided the Article 90 Commission with a photocopy of a warrant allowing them to enter my home, but the plainclothes agents who worked for the intelligence office of NAJA failed to show anything to my mother and father that day. This was during the second house search. The first house search occurred in my absence, a day after I had been kidnapped. During the second house search they asked me where my room was and wanted to know where I kept my personal belongings. They took my computer, monitor and printer. They never returned any of these articles.
7. When they escorted me out of the house, my mom persistently asked the inspectors where she should go to see me. They told my mom she could go to the Ministry of Intelligence (MOI). I knew they were lying, so I tried to provide her with a hint as to where she should go. My aunt worked at the Department of Motor Vehicles, so I said to her: "Say 'hi' to my aunt – these guys are her colleagues."

### **The First Secret Prison**

8. From that day on I never returned home, nor did I hear from my family for months.
9. This time they did not take me to the detention facility at Tupkhaneh. We turned off Vali Asr Square and into Keshavarz Street. Two private patrol cars were waiting there. They took me out of one car and placed me in the other. The car had tinted windows. As soon as we entered the next street they blindfolded me. One of the agents who was sitting next to me forced my head down onto his lap. They took me elsewhere. I don't know where; maybe it was north of the city (only once one of the interrogators accidentally let is slip when he said that he swears that if I don't talk he won't let me leave 110 alive).
10. We entered a yard through a large gate. I was blindfolded, but I could tell that the door was big. They took me inside the building. At first they kept me in one of three bathrooms. In the first bathroom there was a washing machine, and in the

- second one a bunch of dirty prisoner uniforms. They took me to the third one. The bathrooms locked from the outside. I was there for about half an hour until someone came and took me with him.
11. My new detention center, to the extent that I could tell from under the blindfold, appeared to be a private residence. From the [style and condition] of the building you could tell that it was not a government facility. You could tell from the stairs, closets, kitchen, rooms, furniture and other things in that were assembled in the house that this was a private residence. Inside one of the rooms, which was used as an interrogation room, there was a table and a mirrored wall. The wall was essentially a one-way mirror – you couldn't see the outside when you were inside the room, but they could see you from the out there. There was a microphone and a table cloth on the table, along with a steel cup and pitcher.
  12. A man who was not wearing a military uniform came after half an hour and took me. None of the people who worked there were wearing military or official uniforms. They were all plainclothes. The guy who took me was wearing Kurdish pants and an under shirt. They made me go upstairs. There was a closet against the wall. They threw me inside the closet. The closet was suffocating. There was no room for me to lie down or breathe comfortably. When I would lean on one side I would hit the other side. When I stood my head hit the top of the closet. There was no space; it was like a casket. I spent seven or eight months there, from the end of July 1999 to March 19, 2000. No one informed me of my charges, no one visited me, and no one provided me with [a change of] clothes. I was not allowed to contact anyone – not even one phone call. During the end of my detention my clothes were all torn up. My clothes reeked of sweat. I had been tortured. I stank. But there was no one to give me a change of clothes. The only other clothes I wore during this time were the ones that I had after I was released from the hospital.

### **Physical Abuse**

13. During the first interrogation session Najafi wanted me to confess to having relations with foreign intelligence services. He insisted that they already knew that I was in contact with them, but wanted to hear it from me. I asked them which foreign intelligence service they were referring to. He said “you know.” Najafi interrogated me for three to four days. He used a white board to indicate the different places in and around Tehran in which I allegedly contacted these foreign intelligence agencies (which included hotels and restaurants). Sometimes he even provided specific times and dates! I looked at him in disbelief and explained my history on the war front, with the *Basij*, and with the Revolutionary Guards and *Ansar-i Hizbullah*. I told him that even he didn't believe the nonsense he was spouting! When he realized that he was getting nowhere, he resorted to torture.

14. During the second week of interrogation the same guy (who wore Kurdish pants, had a thick accent and was frequently responsible for escorting me to the restroom and to interrogation sessions) took me to the basemen of the secret detention facility. (I later informed the [Article 90 Commission] of these events.) Two large ventilation machines were located in the basement. The guard turned the machines on. The sound coming out of the machines was very loud; it drowned out nearly all the surrounding noise. The [Article 90 Commission] concluded that this machine was turned on in order to drown out the cries of individuals who were subjected to torture.
15. It was dark. They forced me to stand facing the wall. Someone put a plastic band in my mouth. This band pulled my lips in opposite directions; its strings passed behind my ears and were tied behind my neck. Then they put a bag over my head that reached down towards my neck. This bag was suffocating because they tied the open end. After that they ordered me to take off my clothes. I could not believe it. To be honest, I was terrified. I thought they were going to execute me. Thousands of horrible thoughts came to me. Are they going to execute me by a firing squad? What other type of torture are they planning to do to me? They tied my hands behind my back with handcuffs, and ordered me to stay in that position.
16. About ten minutes passed. I cannot explain my emotions with words. I just can't. All of a sudden, without any warning I was punched and kicked. Several guys – I think there were at least three of them – attacked me. They punched and kicked me. They kicked my back and I hit the ground. They didn't care where the kicks and punches landed. What if they had blinded me? They struck my head and face – no indication as to why they were doing this. One of them said, "You think you are strong that you can resist us? We can get anyone to talk." Then they cursed at me and my family. I was shocked. I asked myself why? I was drowning in pain and agony. The [beatings] went on for half an hour. After that the torturers left. They didn't say a thing. I could not breathe and was in pain. All I was wearing was underwear. Otherwise I was completely naked. Then someone came and told me to get up. I had no energy to get up. I could not get up. My body hurt. Two people grabbed me and lifted me off the ground. I couldn't tell who they were because I was still wearing the bag over my head. I could not go up the stairs, so the two of them dragged me up. My shins kept hitting the edge of the stairs and making noises. It hurt so much that I told them to leave me be – I wanted to climb up on my own.
17. They took me to the same interrogation room. They tied my hands, but untied the bag on my head. From underneath the blindfold I was able to see the reflection of Commander Masoud Sadr-Al-Islam's face off the steel [water] pitcher. He was seated behind me. Najafi was seated across from me. He reminded me not to resist. Commander Sadr-Al-Islam left half an hour into Najafi's interrogation without saying anything. Najafi followed him a bit later. He came back and ordered them to take off my blindfold. I began to worry. Najafi quoted from the

*hadiths*<sup>1</sup> and Imam Jafar Sadiq. I couldn't take it anymore. Najafi knew me – how could he allow me to be tortured so mercilessly? My belief system had been broken, my head hurt and my nerves were on edge. I began to cry. I begged them to let me go back to my coffin-like cell. They let me go. I went back to the dark and stuffy cell and moaned from the psychological and physical pain. Before that I rejected the claims of anyone who alleged that torture existed in the Islamic Republic. Because I believed that the Islamic Republic was founded on Islam, and Islam forbids torture. How could the authorities torture anyone in prison? What was most painful to me at that time wasn't the physical torture, but the loss of my faith – a faith which had taken me to foreign lands and for which I was willing to give my life. They let me in there for the next four to five days.

18. They fed me a set type of food during the seven or eight months that I spent in the secret detention facility.
19. My breakfast consisted of a piece of bread along with some small and cheap butter or cheese packets. They also gave me a cup of tea every morning. The quality of the tea was poor, and the water used had never been properly boiled.
20. I think the lunch they gave us was similar to the one they ate (one time during a session I noticed that my interrogator was busy eating the same food I had eaten). My dinner was usually a piece of bread with potatoes and a tomato.
21. I was often cursed when I went to the restroom. When I had to go to the restroom I would knock on the coffin-like cell. Someone would come, but he would swear and curse.

### **The Interrogation Sessions**

22. After four or five days they continued the interrogations. The interrogations took place in the same room that I described before (the one with the one-sided mirror). My interrogators' demands were clear this time around. They wanted me to go in front of a television camera and confess to taking orders from several leaders of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of Khordad front. They also wanted me to admit that the events that unfolded at the university dormitory amounted to a conspiracy that was planned by individuals such as Hajjarian. I had never seen Hajjarian in my life. I told my interrogator that he, too, knew that I was not familiar with Hajjarian. But he insisted that I confess to the charge, and said that Hajjarian had confessed to the same. They threatened me; they wanted to scare me. Things got heated, but I refused to give in to them. This happened during my second month of detention.
23. Early one morning during the second month of my detention, the door of my closet-like cell opened and someone ordered me to come out. They put me in an ambulance and transferred me to the headquarters of the Intelligence Protection Organization of the Law Enforcement Forces – the same place which was headed

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<sup>1</sup> The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

- by Sadr-al-Islam at the time. My clothes stank and I was handcuffed. I entered the building. Two members of the clergy, commander Sadr-al-Islam, Brigadier-General Najafi and several other members of the Intelligence Protection Organizations of the Law Enforcement Forces and Revolutionary Guards were present.
24. They repeated the same talks, linking me to foreign intelligence organizations. I said that I never had any contacts with these organizations. Then the threats and intimidations started. They said that I should have become wiser, so that they wouldn't have to repeat what they'd done to me for the past two months again. They promised that if I cooperated, they would help me.
25. That session lasted for about an hour. The Brigadier-General of the Revolutionary Guards approached me and insisted that I confess to having links with foreign agencies. He said they had sentenced some students to death. He said four people had already been executed, and that I shouldn't do something stupid to increase that number to five. I really could not understand. Our discussion took about two hours. They put me back in the car [and sent me off] after they realized they weren't getting anywhere.

### **Torture and Hospitalization**

26. I spent another month in that condition in the closet. It was the third month when they took me to the basement again. I knew that they were going to beat me again. I got weak in the knees and fear filled me.
27. This time they tied my legs with ropes and made a strong knot. There were two people. I knew one of them, Colonel Akbar Sharafi of the Intelligence Office of the Law Enforcement Forces. Some minutes later, they turned on a tape of Holy Quran recital (or was it a radio that was telling the news of the provincial areas – I do not recall exactly?). Then they hung me upside down. I was really scared and thought that I would definitely die or suffocate. I begged them to stop. He pulled my legs up high to the point where my hands reached the ground. I was in that position for several hours and other than a few kicks and slaps they left me alone. Around evening time they released me and laid me down. I asked for water, and they brought me water. After fifteen minutes, I vomited everything that was in my stomach. I don't know if it was because they had put something in my water or it was a reaction to my being hung upside down.
28. Again they took me out to be interrogated in the middle of the night. This time the session lasted until the morning. Brigadier-General Mohammad Ali Najafi commander of the Intelligence Office of Law Enforcement Forces, personally beat me with punches and kicks. He cursed at me. He insulted my mother and sister. These insults caused me great pain and humiliated me more than the physical torture I endured. Five to six hours had passed and it was now morning. Light entered the basement from the entrance. When I refused to give into their

- demands they took me to the underground room again. They put an elastic band in my mouth and a bag over my head and started beating me with a wooden stick. I think 3 or 4 people were hitting me at the same time. One of the first blows hit the left side of my head. Blood gushed out of my head. I could not scream because there was an elastic band in my mouth. Another blow hit my chin, and my chin exploded. Soon the bag over my head was soaked in blood. When the blood poured out of the bag, they became alarmed and stopped beating me. They dragged me out of the basement.
29. They sat me in one of the bathrooms. I didn't even have the energy to shriek. Someone came to stitch up my head and chin. He was very rough, and stitched violently. He didn't use anesthesia, nor was he gentle with the stitching. He wiped off my face with my own dirty clothes and then started stitching up the wound. I started screaming, but to no avail. During those first moments I remember having told the stitching guy to at least give me anesthetic to numb the pain, but Najafi, who was standing next to me told me that they will only do so once my brain is smashed into my skull. I finally passed out from the pain and continuous bleeding from my head. I don't know what happened next. When I awoke, I saw that my arm was attached to an IV and I was back in my coffin-like cell.
30. Over time the pain and wounds on my chin and head healed. In the meantime, though, I had not left that dark and tight cell for two weeks. After I came out of the closet for the first time I couldn't see anything – my eyes were extremely sensitive to the light. I couldn't open my eyes, and I couldn't focus on anything. I was terrified. I thought I had gone blind.
31. I had lost track of time. I didn't know what month it was. They summoned me for interrogations again. It wasn't an interrogation – it was a repetition of the same previous demands. This time I gave in. I told them that I was ready and to tell them whatever they wanted to know. I think there was a woman present during the back and forth that went on regarding what I should say in front of the camera. But I can't be sure because I was blindfolded.
32. I said: "Tell me what you want?"

They said: "You know. Have you seen the taped confession of other prisoners?"

I said: "No I don't know, tell me."

They said: "First you should introduce yourself. Then you should say that I would like to clarify certain things for everyone, because I want people to know and be aware. And then confess that you have been in contact with the British and Canadian Embassies for a long time, and that you joined *Ansar-i Hezbollah* pursuant to their orders. [You should tell everyone] that your goal has always been the destruction [of the regime], and the gathering of information for foreigners."

33. I protested and said these allegations are completely unfounded. I didn't even know where the Canadian Embassy was. And I had only gone to the British embassy once to request a visa for medical purposes, because as you know I was wounded on the Iran-Iraq war front and required medical care outside of the country.
34. The arguments started up and resulted in an altercation when I refused to accept their demands yet again. They had just opened up the stitches on my head and chin the day before. Despite this, they ordered me to the basement again.
35. The torture this time was more violent than before. This time they beat me not with a wooden stick, but with a round metal rod. I sustained a broken rib and elbow as a result of the beatings. Believe me, I actually heard my elbow crack! I collapsed and passed out. When I awoke, I realized someone was pouring water on my face and head with a bucket. In less than five to ten minutes, my hand swelled. It had turned black and the swelling was dangerously increasing by the minute. They had removed my blindfold. Najafi came down and mercilessly poked at my swollen hand with his fingers. I was in pain. Half an hour passed. They called an ambulance and a plainclothes individual sat next to me in the car and blindfolded me. My pain got worse.
36. They moved me to the Gendarmerie Hospital. After taking x-rays of my arms the orthopedic doctors announced that my arm had broken in two different areas and that I needed to undergo surgery. I awoke after the surgery and noticed that the sign on top of my bed read "Private Ahmad Ghasemi." A soldier and a guard were present in my room. They had changed my clothes and I was wearing a hospital gown.
37. About two to three days after the operation a female nurse who had come to check in on me around midnight quietly asked me if I was Amir Farshad Ebrahimi. The guard was asleep. I was scared and didn't say anything. The nurse said that she had seen my picture in the newspaper and told me that my family was very worried about me. My guess is that this same woman informed my family that I was bedridden in this hospital. The next morning my guards abruptly forced me out of the hospital. I didn't know the reason for their actions until the day I was freed.
38. It was around the seventh month that they took me to the Intelligence Protection Organization office of the Law Enforcement Forces in Tupkhanih Square. My arm was still in a cast. From here they took me to Prison 66 in Eshratyab Square. Three to four days later they took me back to the Intelligence Protection Organization office again. I spent two to three weeks there. It's important to note that this detention facility belonged to the Inspection Office before the revolution and now belongs to the District Law Enforcement of Greater Tehran. I remember that during the time I was there was a detainee who screamed and yelled the

whole day. He wanted pain killers and kept requesting to be seen by a doctor. He said he was dying of stomach pain. There was absolutely no supervision in this detention facility.

39. Some time passed and they took me to a military infirmary. I don't know where it was. I was blindfolded, but my guess is that it was a military infirmary because the people there were wearing military boots. They took off the cast on my arm and took x-rays of it. They no longer transferred me back to Tupkhanih Square. Instead they took me to a detention facility located in the north of the city. This facility was run by the Revolutionary Guards, and was near Mini City in Aqdasiye-Artesh Boulevard. (Later after I was freed I spoke to Musavi-Khu'ini about this detention facility and he told me that it was set aside for the *Basij* of Tehran district and that they hadn't allow him access to the place). The facility housed both men and women. Once I heard the moans of a woman who was being tortured. It was apparent that this place was one of many secret detention facility they didn't let him visit the place. Both men and women were held there. Once, I heard the sound of a woman who was being tortured in the same station. I was in solitary confinement, but could hear the voices of other prisoners (which provided me with some comfort). I kept telling myself that I was not alone – there were others here with me. I spent approximately two months here. There were no interrogations or investigations. I stayed in my cell the whole time.
40. The interaction of the guards here (who were all soldiers) was better than at the previous facility. The food was also better. When I pressed the button to alert them that I needed to go to the restroom they allowed me to go.
41. After this place (at which I was still wearing my hospital clothes) they took me to Qasr Prison. They put a plaque around my neck, fingerprinted and created a file for me. Qasr Prison, which has since been demolished, was mostly used for drug-related, theft and white collar offenses. They placed me among thieves and robbers who were in Penitence Hall 6. Actually, all my cell mates were thieves and bandits. When I told them that I had been charged with a political crime they laughed at me. They didn't believe me, and instead mocked me. I soon learned not to insist that I was a political prisoner. The hall was extremely dingy and subpar. Our ward was probably the worst of the worst. It was here that I heard my name uttered over a loud speaker one day. It was March 18, 2000. They took me to guard (who was a ranking officer) and placed my fingerprint on a sheet of paper. They didn't let me read the document. The same high-ranking Law Enforcement Forces officer said "Get out." Your family has come to get you." I just realized that I had been freed. As soon as I exited the facility's gate I saw my mother and family.

### **My Family's Attempts to Contact Me**

42. My family had gone to all the prisons, detention centers and courts but was sent away by all of them. All of them denied the fact that I was being detained in

prison. The only ones who pursued my case and attempted to address my family's concerns were the Article 90 Commission of the Islamic Republic, the Office of the President (Mr. Khatami), a group of representatives from the *Majlis* and several 2<sup>nd</sup> of Khordad activists. None of the officials informed them of my whereabouts. Despite this, one day my family received a call from an unknown individual, which I believe to be the nurse whom I spoke about earlier. The unknown individual informed my family that I was at the Law Enforcement Forces hospital in Vanak Square. My family was not able to find me in the hospital, however, because I had been registered under a different name. Regardless, once the guards found out that my family was looking for me inside the hospital they quickly snuck me out of there.

43. My family then contacted the President's brother, Mohammad Reza Khatami, and asked him to find me. My disappearance was a topic of discussion in *Majlis*. President Khatami appointed one of his assistants (Mr. Ali Rabi'i) to find me. Also joining in the search to find me was Mr. Abtahi, the legal assistant to the President's Office. A discussion also took place in the National Security Council, whose members include the Office of Presidency, National Security Ministry, Army and Revolutionary Guards. Ultimately the Minister of Intelligence made promise to the National Security Council that I will be found. The President issues a personal order to find me. I was finally released on March 18, 2000 due to pressure resulting from the President's investigation.
44. I was released around New Year. I had broken my head, chin, arm and a rib and I was terribly depressed. I waited until April 2, 2000, at which point I contacted the office of Shirin Ebadi and told her about my decision to go after my kidnappers. Ebadi asked me if I was aware of the consequences of doing something like this. I told her that I am willing to pay any price in order to file my complaint and prosecute my case with the legal authorities.

### **The Expository Video Tape**

45. My legal complaint against those who had kidnapped and tortured me (undeservedly) came to be known as the "tape makers' case file." We never made a tape. The Judiciary's use of this name in reference to my case indicated its position on the issue. From the very beginning they assumed that there must have been such a tape without having conducted any investigations on the matter! assumed did not make a tape and naming the case file as such by the Judiciary made their intentions clear. Without any follow-up and research, they assumed the tape was made up! I merely recorded my legal complaint and witness statements on a video tape which I left with Ms. Ebadi.
46. During the course of the taping, Ms. Elaheh Sharifpour (Hicks) who had also come to Iran to look into the arrest of the Jews of Shiraz, came to meet with Ms. Ebadi at the same time and unintentionally got involved in what we were doing. The movie was taped. Ms. Ebadi and Ms. Hicks who had planned to meet for

- dinner went out together. Ms. Ebadi assured me that she would seriously follow through with the case.
47. Not a week passed before I began receiving a series of suspicious and threatening phone calls. A few days after the Berlin Conference I was taking a walk past some booksellers in Tehran and noticed one store advertising a CD that made me stop dead in my tracks. The bookseller said he had a CD in stock in which an individual by the name of Amir Farshad Ebrahimi spoke about torture in prison. I was beside myself. I immediately went to the Ministry of Intelligence. After all, the Ministry had apparently been purged and was working under reformist government. I went to the investigations office of the Ministry of Intelligence because Mr. Mirdamadi, the head of the *Majlis*' national security commission, had previously instructed me to immediately notify the MOI if something happened to me. So I went there and told them about the tape's distribution. They took me to the Ministry of Interior. There, Mr. Ta'ali, who was head of Tehran's Security Council, told me that they were aware of the CD's existence and added that my life was in danger. We talked with Mr. Tajzadeh and Mr. Nayeri (the Chief Director of the Protection Office of the Interior Ministry) for several hours about what should be done. They asked if I knew how the CD entered the market. In response I said, "No, I don't know." They both insisted that my life was in danger, and that I should stay there in order to seek refuge.
48. They suggested taking me to a safe place designated by the Interior Ministry. I didn't accept because I didn't to be used by any particular faction. There was a serious possibility that I would be accused of being a *Second Khordadi*. I wanted my complaint to be used for legal purposes. Eventually I agreed to let them take me to a safe house that was under the supervision of the Ministry of Intelligence. This house was located in Tehran's Keshavarz Boulevard. Members of the Supreme National Security Council visited this safe house and asked me questions about the statement I had made. They played the tape and asked me to provide reasons for making certain statements and accusations. I would then provide them with explanations, point by point, regarding the statements I'd made on record. The Council wrote down my explanations.
49. I stayed in this safe house for 22 days. The Council informed me that during the course of their investigations, they were able to verify the validity of 70% of my claims. I was safe in that location, but the Judiciary had issued several warrants for my arrest and had sent the Law Enforcement Forces to our previous residence a few times. (It had been a while since we had moved from that location.) The Law Enforcement Forces went to my grandfather's house and arrested my grandfather, who was an old man. They told the old man to if he didn't point them to our new address, he would be their "guest."
50. Mom notified me of this disturbing situation and informed me that they had taken my grandfather and he had been in detention since that morning (it was now afternoon). I immediately contacted the office of President Khatami and after an

hour was able to get in touch with him. Khatami strongly urged: “[You have] a President and two ministers standing right behind you. We want to put an end to this business, and we pursue it until the end.” I felt relieved. Around evening my mom again reminded me of the Judiciary agents who were after me. They had apparently found our [new] address by this time. I was stunned – why was this happening? My mom said that they have threatened to take her and my dad away. When I asked them if they had informed anyone [about what was going on], she said that she had [contacted] Ms. Fatemeh Haghghatjoo (who was a *Majlis* representative and had occasionally investigated our complaints on behalf of the *Majlis*), but that she had responded with: “We don’t have the strength to resist them.”

### **Back to Prison**

51. My family was now under extra pressure. On one hand they are worried about me and on the other they were being pressured by persistent Judiciary agents. I realized that I was living in a glass house and that my security was very fragile. I informed the guards in the safe house that I wanted to go to the prosecutor’s office, and then I gave myself up to Tehran’s prosecutor’s office (under the supervision of Alizadeh). At 11 p.m., Abbas Alizadeh, the Prosecutor General, came and officially informed me of my arrest. This event happened on May 24, 2000.
52. When Mr. Alizadeh informed me of my arrest I offered many reasons as to why he shouldn’t do this, and reminded him that it may be to his benefit to refrain from sending me to jail again. They didn’t listen – I was caught on videotape. He told me to write down my defenses, and indicate whether I accepted my charges (which included publishing lies in an attempt to disturb the public mind, insulting high ranking regime officials and propaganda against the regime’s national security) or not. I wrote that I did not accept my charges. That night they transferred me to Prison 59 with a car. I stayed there for 2 nights. I was familiar with Prison 59 of the Revolutionary Guards in Eshratyab Square at the Vali Asr Military Base. I had been there before. The relation between this detention center and the Judiciary was that the [Revolutionary Guards] acted as the “court officers” for the Judiciary.
53. Two days later they sent me from Prison 59 to Branch 16 which was under the supervision of Judge Mahmoud Alipourian. From Branch 16 they took me home in a car. They violently rummaged through the house, but didn’t find anything. From my house they took me to Towhid Prison. I knew Towhid Prison. I was blindfolded, but I was familiar with the stairs at Towhid Prison and its layout. After the first two nights (during which I stayed in Prison 59 of the Revolutionary Guards) I stayed in Towhid Prison for two months without knowing what would happen to me. Towhid Prison was not crowded during this time. This detention facility had seemingly been shut down after inquiries conducted by the *Majlis*’ investigative committee under the supervision of Musavi-Khu’ini (which looked

into the existence of secret prisons), and was no longer supposed to be used to detain and interrogate the accused. Despite this the facility was still active. I spent an additional three months in a facility under the supervision of the Army. I know this because all the detainees and employees in that prison were military personnel with military uniforms and boots. (I could gather this information from time to time from underneath my blindfold.) I think this detention center was close to the Qasr crossing in Tehran. I was in the Army joint office until they moved me to Section 209 of Evin. From the very beginning I had two interrogators by the names of “Alireza” and “Mahdi.” I should add that when I described the physical features of these individuals to Ms. Ebadi, she referred to them by different names. We realized that the names used by them at Towhid Prison were not their real names.

### **More Physical and Psychological Torture**

54. The interrogations and beatings began from the fourth or fifth day of my imprisonment and lasted for a year and a half. I stayed in solitary confinement for about 18 months. During that time I neither had permission to have visitors nor to call my family. I only saw my family a couple of times on the stairs of the court house (which was located in the Ministry of Justice’s complex in Tehran). They went to court every day to receive news regarding my condition. My trial was closed to the public and took place behind closed doors without the presence of others, including journalists. Yet the news of this trial was indirectly reflected in the media (I have sent you the text of one of those). It was during that time that they took me to a distant location for interrogation and torture. We drove for about 45 minutes until we got to this second destination. They took me there at least 6 times. It looked like a garden. I was blindfolded but I could hear the wind whirl among the trees and the ground was unpaved. This location was far from the city and in a space that contained a warehouse and several other buildings (which function was not clear). Inside the cell there was only a U-shaped pipe. I don’t know if it was the heater, or if it was used for interrogation. This was neither a prison nor a detention center. It really looked like a garden with some cells. I was tortured five or six times. During the first torture session they beat the soles of my feet with cable wires. I didn’t stay there for long. I mean, I never stayed there overnight. They just took me there to be tortured. I was wearing a blindfold, handcuffs and ankle cuffs. When I told Mahmoud Alipourian, the judge who was working on my case that they had tortured me with cable wires, he responded to my comment with: “You are lying and providing false accusations.” I thought that the Judge didn’t know about the tortures, until during one of these torture sessions I heard the voice of Alipourian instructing the interrogator on how to interrogate and torture me. He told them to beat the soles of my feet with cable wires!
55. At this location the team responsible for torturing me consisted of 4 people, which included my two regular interrogators and Judge Mahmoud Alipourian. Two of them were directly involved in torturing me. The fourth person introduced himself

during the trial as the representative of the Intelligence Protection Center of the Judiciary. The two interrogators were responsible for the tortures (or as they put it, *Ta'zir*)<sup>2</sup>. Of course there were other people at [that] location, but I never saw them or came to know who they were because I was wearing blindfolds. In my interrogation team, however, there was a third individual (other than the usual two) who never really talked during the interrogations. He wrote his questions on a piece of paper and handed it to the interrogators. The interrogators would ask the written questions of me and the silent interrogator would write down my responses.

56. Another unusual thing that I realized in this prison was the extreme feeling of drowsiness that I felt every time during the interrogations. I don't know why it was like that. I did not feel the drowsiness during the days that I did not go to court. Now that I think about those days and the extreme fatigue that I felt during my trial, I reach the conclusion that they would put something in my food or my morning tea.
57. The torture that I suffered in these prisons was horrifying. For example, they would lay me on a narrow wooden bed and beat my feet and back with cable wires. This bed looked like the English letter 'L' laid down on its side.
58. The first time they beat the soles of my feet with a rubber whip. They had tied my feet with a rope. No one would hold me down, unless I was curling up on the chair from pain or I would fall from the bed. Then I think two people would pick me up and lay me down and beat me again. I don't know how long the torture lasted, but I vividly recall that I did not have the energy to move or even stand on my feet. The soles of my feet were swollen and in horrible pain. They picked me up in a wheel barrow, took me away and left me in my room. The swelling in my feet did not go down for a week. Whenever I needed something I would ring a bell and the guard would come over and bring it to me. The soles of my feet bled and became infected; pus came out of it. They provided me with tissue paper to wipe the blood off my feet.
59. But the second time they whipped my back, buttocks and legs with cable wires. This time they laid me down on the L-shaped wooden bed again and beat with a cable wire. I think the cable had electricity because during the course of hitting my body I felt electric shocks. The second time they hit me so many times that I fainted. During the beatings the interrogators (who were also involved in the torture) demanded that I confess to having sexual relationship with my attorney, Ms. Ebadi. But how could I confess to such a grave accusation? Ms. Ebadi was like my mother; she was my attorney and was defending me. They wanted to slander us. He said that Ms. Ebadi herself had confessed to this relationship – why shouldn't I confess? They said, "Write that you had such a relationship, otherwise we will beat until you confess."

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<sup>2</sup> *Ta'zir* is a form of discretionary punishment administered pursuant to *Shari'a* law.

60. The physical torture didn't affect me as much as the psychological torture, indecent curses and obscenities, which [truly] broke me. They insulted my family's honor. They used obscene words in reference to them, created disgusting sounds and made unjust accusations regarding my mother and sister's integrity. They threatened that if I didn't give into what they requested they would rape my family in front of me. I couldn't figure out why I had fallen prey to such horrible individuals.

### **Forced Confessions and Eventual Release**

61. Over time they used physical and psychological torture simultaneously. On the one hand they would strike me with a whip, and on the other they would employ psychological torture. I could not resist. I was broken. I cried. I had no energy. What could I do? My torturers were proud of themselves for breaking me. I could not imagine the extent to which my torturers were removed from humanity. If I remained silent they would beat more. They said I should talk. If I talked they would still beat and say, "Say what we want [you to say]." If I cried they would insult and humiliate me more. Eventually, I couldn't take it any more. I said, "Tell me what you want me to do and I will do exactly that."

62. They told me to write down what they wanted. When I did he said, "You've written lies. Write this." When I would write that they would again claim that [I've written] lies and tell me to write something different. In the end they tortured me so much that I completely broke down. When I broke they asked me to go in front of a camera and confess that I was a foreign spy, and that I had had a sexual relationship with Ms. Ebadi.

63. I accepted. I requested that they give me time to go in front of the camera. From there they took me to Towhid Prison again so I could prepare for the television interview. When they took me for the interview they transferred me to the Revolutionary Court building in Pol-i-Rumi (that was formerly used for combating narcotics; I don't know what it is used for now). The first time they videotaped me it was in the presence of Alipourian in court. I thought to myself: I cannot accept such an accusation. I asked them to allow me to use the restroom before the interview. There, I banged my head against the wall very hard. Blood streamed down my face. They took me to the hospital. After that they [again] took me to that torture place in the garden. They kicked me around like a soccer ball. This time they accused me of other things as well, like being an infidel and an apostate. These beatings accompanied more indecent threats. They said if I didn't confess they would sexually assault me and distribute the video. I was really horrified; I believed they would really do it.

64. They took me to Towhid Prison again. Towhid Prison was not crowded. I screamed. I needed water and painkillers but they didn't give them to me. Later they gave me a glass of water but they didn't give me any painkillers.

65. I don't know how many times I was tortured in total. I think I was tortured at least six times. Sometimes I was tortured once a month, sometimes twice a month, and at other times once a week.
66. My case was in court but the interrogation and torture continued in the secret detention facilities. The first court had issued a verdict. My file was under petition at the appeals court but my interrogation and torture continued. A year had passed since my arrest. I was in the general ward of Evin Prison when they moved me from the public section again to Prison 59. This time in Prison 59 (of the Revolutionary Guards) they also beat me. I was there for maybe 30 or 40 days. One of the most common methods of torture in this prison was poking a pen into a prisoner's body. In this prison they regularly slapped my head and face and hit my head against the wall.
67. The food in Prison 59 was really bad and the sanitary conditions were a disaster. There were ants in the room but they didn't let the prisoners clean their rooms. If you needed to use the restroom the guards would curse at you and say, "What the hell is your problem?" Or they would escort you but use obscene curses, like "motherfucker, what do you want?" I was amazed – it seemed like nothing but obscenities ever came out of these people's mouths. Inevitably, we refrained from asking for anything. We would simply remain silent. We would just suffer the miserable conditions. If we wanted anything they would laugh out loud and mock us. They enjoyed insulting us. After 40 days they transferred me to Prison 66 of the Revolutionary Guards that was located at the end of Takhti Highway in eastern Tehran. I was kept in the general ward – the other prisoners were all Revolutionary Guard personnel who had committed crimes. (This prison belonged to the Revolutionary Guards.) After about 50 days they transferred me to the general ward of Evin Prison again. In Prison 59 and 66 of the Revolutionary Guards the interrogators demanded that I write a personal letter to the Supreme Leader begging for forgiveness and mercy. The Judiciary had ordered my release, but I was still in prison and my interrogators demanded that I ask the Supreme Leader for mercy and forgiveness!
68. During the same time that they interrogated and tortured me so I would write a letter requesting amnesty the order regarding my release had been issued. I will send you an exact copy of [this order]. Now [I want to share some information regarding] how news of this verdict reached family. When my attorney Mr. Saleh Nikbakht went to read my case file, an employee in charge of executing the orders in Evin Prison had given him my verdict by mistake. [Nikbakht] had copied it and published it in the newspapers the next day, indicating that even though my release had been ordered [by the judge] I was still being kept in prison. Despite this I was held for six months *after* the day the verdict for my freedom had been issued.

69. In prison, the interrogators threatened that if I didn't write a letter to the Supreme Leader begging for forgiveness they would add new charges to my case file and would keep me in prison in connection with these new charges. My attorney had told the Evin Prison authorities that I should be freed, but no one seemed to care about the rule of law.
70. I remember a story that I would like to share with you. I am a heavy tea drinker. The tea cup they provided me with in prison was dirty. One day I saw a glass tea cup in Haddad's office.<sup>3</sup> Anyway, I requested that he give me his tea cup. He gave me permission. When I was being transferred from court to prison one of the interrogators saw the glass tea cup and asked where I had obtained it from. I said from Judge Haddad. The interrogator started cursing and insulting Judge Haddad. He used obscenities. The next time I went to court I told Judge Haddad that the cup that he had given me was taken by the interrogators and that they also insulted him. Judge Haddad said, "We can't do anything about them, they are all from the [Ministry of Intelligence]. It's best if you do not get involved with them."
71. Eventually after a total of four and a half years in prison I was freed. This happened after two investigations conducted by the *Majlis* regarding the Judiciary, which resulted in several disputes between the two. The head of the prosecutor's office in Tehran openly declared that he would not submit to anyone's demands and that *Majlis* has no authority. The President and the speaker of the *Majlis* had announced over and over that they were investigating my case, and the Minister of Interior taken responsibility for following my case. Eventually after all of these involvements I was freed. My second imprisonment and case file (which became famously known as the story of the expository tape) were linked to my attempt to regain respect, and my demand that those who had put me in prison the first time and tortured me be tried. But my efforts landed me in prison yet again. Despite these events I tried to stay in Iran. I remained there until I was the target of an assassination attempt and was forced to leave my beloved country against my will.

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<sup>3</sup> My judge never changed. I was in prison for three charges. My first charge was creating a tape that was prosecuted in Branch 16 of Public Court. Judge Mohammad Alipourian was on my case until the end. The next charge was attempts against the national security and was tried in Branch 6 of Revolutionary Court. Judge Haddad was on that case. And my other charge was expulsion from the Revolutionary Guards, which tried in the judicial office of Tehran's Military.