

Mr. Kofi Annan, help save the Life of a journalist Dying for Freedom of Expression

To: Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the UN

27 July 2005

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Mr. Akbar Ganji, a *prisoner of conscience in Iran since 2000*, began a second hunger strike on June 11, 2005, protesting his continued detention for peaceful investigative journalism and public expression of views. In addition to Mr. Ganji's unwarranted imprisonment and his periodic mistreatment in prison, he suffers severe respiratory problems. On July 17, Mr. Ganji was transferred to a hospital, where he has been placed under quarantine and prevented from regular access to his family and legal representatives, the latter restriction in violation of Iranian law. In protest, Mr. Ganji has continued his hunger strike, notwithstanding public statements from Iranian authorities to the contrary. To deflect responsibility for his potential imminent death under arrest, and also to intimidate his lawyers, Iranian authorities have even launched a disinformation campaign, accusing one of Mr. Ganji's lawyers, the 2003 Nobel Laureate for Peace Ms. Shirin Ebadi, of orchestrating his hunger strike and disseminating false information about the state of his health.

Mr. Secretary-General, as we write these words, **Mr. Ganji is fast nearing death**. Ganji's plight has attracted widespread sympathy from diverse quarters and across a broad spectrum of public opinion around the world. Yet, various international appeals on his behalf, such as the one appearing below, as well as by international human rights organizations, the European Union, Reporters Without Borders, International PEN, the likes of Václav Havel, and several Nobel Peace Laureates, have so far failed to sway Iranian authorities. *Ganji's slim chance of survival now depends on the initiative of other internationally respected personalities, such as you.*

Mr. Secretary-General, we urge you to do everything in your ability to secure Mr. Ganji's immediate and unconditional release.

With due regards,

International Committee in Support of Akbar Ganji

Free Akbar Ganji

TO: Ayatollah Sayyid 'Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran; **Hojjatoleslam Sayyid Mohammad Khatami**, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran; **Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi**, Head of the Iranian Judiciary; **Mr. Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far**, Secretary of Islamic Human Rights Commission.

We, the undersigned independent, non-partisan, international organizations and community of concerned journalists, academics, artists, writers, intellectuals, and defenders of human rights, express our grave anguish over the critically deteriorating health of the jailed Iranian journalist Mr. Akbar Ganji and call on Iranian authorities for his immediate release.

Ganji, a renowned Iranian investigative journalist, has been under arrest since April 2000, following his return from a conference at the Heinrich Böll Institute in Berlin. He was sentenced in January 2001 and, after an appeal court overturned his initial sentence, he was once again tried and condemned in July 2001. He was ultimately sentenced to six years imprisonment on grounds of his journalistic exposé (in 2000) of the serial murders of 5 opposition intellectuals by members of the Iranian security forces in 1998 as well as for the views he had expressed at the Berlin conference. Ganji remains a *prisoner of conscience*, serving a sentence for no more than his *peaceful* expression of views and journalistic activities. His case has been documented extensively by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Without Borders, International PEN, and International Freedom of Expression Exchange, among numerous other independent international organizations.

Ganji suffers serious medical conditions (acute asthma and other respiratory ailments) and his health has fast deteriorated in recent weeks due to his treatment in prison, lack of adequate access to medical care, and his hunger strike in protest of his continued confinement and mistreatment. *He is now into his second month on hunger strike*. According to one of his lawyers, Shirin Ebadi (the 2003 Nobel Laureate for Peace), Ganji's condition is extremely dire.

"Akbar Ganji is an Honorary Member of the Canadian, English, and Lichtenstein PEN Centers. He is a recipient of the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression 2000 International Press Freedom Award."

Signed:

The International Society for Iranian Studies-Committee for Academic & Intellectual Freedom (ISIS-CAIF)

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English PEN
Sydney PEN, Australia
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Jody Williams (1997 Nobel Peace Laureate, US)
Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1984 Nobel Peace Laureate, South Africa)
Mairiad Corrigan Maguire (1976 Nobel Peace Laureate, Ireland)
Betty Williams (1976 Nobel Peace Laureate, Ireland)
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