



June 5, 2007

Ayatollah Sayyid 'Ali Khamenei
Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran
c/o H.E. Mohammad Javad Zarif
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
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Your Excellency:

We are writing on behalf of the more than 14,000 members of the American Sociological Association (ASA), a scientific society of academic and professional sociologists, to request that Dr. Kian Tajbakhsh, a highly respected academic sociologist with dual citizenship in Iran and the United States and who was arrested on May 11 by the Iranian government, be freed. While he is in your custody, we urge you to use your good offices to guarantee his safety and freedom from mistreatment, and allow him to confer with legal counsel. We urge you to determine the circumstances of his detention and to secure his immediate release.

As a party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Iran is required to provide among other rights to its citizens, the: (1) Right to hold opinions without interference (Article 19.1); (2) The right to freedom of expression; this right includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds (Article 19.2); and (3) Citizens are entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law (Article 14). Under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 23), individuals also have the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and speech. As a scientific organization, with an international membership, ASA is committed to ensuring academic freedom, free exchange of ideas, and free expression, to all scholars including those conducting research on sociological and related comparative studies of culture and social institutions. Without governmental assurance of such intellectual freedoms, a nation quickly becomes universally recognized as failing

to ensure superior scholarship and unwilling to protect its intellectual status in international cultural and scientific arenas. This is particularly unfortunate for Iran, given Dr. Tajbakhsh's work on urban issues in the developing world and his humanitarian purposes, which are valued by scholars globally including by scholars in Iran.

We are profoundly dismayed by the arbitrary and secretive nature of Dr. Tajbakhsh's arrest and the vague "espionage" charges against him. We are hopeful that under your leadership Iran will respond to avoid the grave harm this damage to intellectual and scientific pursuits in your country will do to Iran. We appreciate your consideration of our concern about of this apparent breach of Iran's commitments under International Conventions, and we urge you to ensure that all false or politically based charges against Dr. Tajbakhsh will be dropped. The leaders and members of the American Sociological Association consider this to be a matter of great urgency.

Sincerely,



Frances Fox Piven, PhD
President, American Sociological Association



Sally T. Hillsman, PhD
Executive Officer, American Sociological Association

cc: Head of the Judiciary
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