

PUBLIC

**AI Index: MDE 13/171/2008
25 November 2008**

Further Information on 269/08 (MDE 13/141/2008, 22 September 2008) and follow-up (MDE 13/158/2008) - Fear of torture and other ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

IRAN

Alireza (Elirza) Sarrafi (m), civil engineer, journalist and cultural activist
Hassan (Hesen) Rashidi (m), engineer, writer and lecturer
Sa'id (Seid) Mohammadi (Mehemmedi) Mughanli (m), poet and journalist
Mehdi Na'imi (Neimi) (m), poet and university lecturer

Iranian Azerbaijani activists Alireza Sarrafi, Hasan Rashidi, Sa'id Mohammadi Mughanli and Mehdi Naimi were released on 8 November on US\$250,000 bail each pending trial. Before being released on bail, they were charged with "acting against national security." No date for their trial has been set.

Alireza Sarrafi, Hasan Rashidi, Sa'id Mohammadi Mughanli and Mehdi Naimi, had been held in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison since their arrest on 10 September. However, towards the end of their detention they were allowed outside for up to 30 minutes daily. During their time in detention they had no access to a lawyer. They were not allowed family visits until 13 October, after which they were permitted visits on an almost weekly basis. The Vancouver-based Association for the Defence of Azerbaijani Political Prisoners (ADAPP) reported that the four had been subject to ill-treatment that included beatings and psychological abuse. Whilst in detention Alireza Sarrafi went on a hunger strike to protest against the way he had been treated, and because officials had also threatened to arrest his wife.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iranian Azerbaijanis, who are mainly Shi'a Muslims, are recognized as the largest minority in Iran and are generally believed to constitute between 25-30 per cent of the population. They are located mainly in the north and north-west of Iran. Although generally well integrated into society, in recent years they have increasingly called for greater cultural and linguistic rights, such as the right to education through the medium of the Azerbaijani Turkic language, which they believe is provided for under the Constitution, and the right to celebrate Azerbaijani culture and history at cultural events.

Many thanks to all who sent appeals. No further action is required at present. Amnesty International will continue to monitor their case and will take further action if necessary.