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February 1, 2010



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How Shirin Holy's Confessions Led to a Death Penalty: "Description of pressures put on me during my arrest"



Recently, Shirin Alam Holi, a Kurdish political activist was sentenced to death. In the indictment, her confession to having connections with the PJAK (Kurdish Independent Life Party), an illegal group in Iran, was the reason for her conviction. In a letter from prison, Ms. Alam Holi has described the condition in which she was forced to make such confessions. The *International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran* translated the text of this letter:

"I was arrested and transferred directly to the headquarters of Sepāh (IRGC) in Tehran in May 2009 by a number of military officials and plainclothes agents. Immediately after arrival, and before questions and answers, they started beating me. In total, I stayed 25 days in Sepāh. Twenty-two days of that time I stayed on hunger strike and suffered all types of physical and mental torture. The interrogators were male, and I was tied to a bed with handcuffs. They used their fists, feet, electric batons, and cables to beat my head, face, body, and soles of my feet. At that time I could not even understand and speak Persian. When their questions remained unanswered, they beat me again till I passed out. When the sound of noontime prayer was heard, they would leave to pray and would, according to themselves, give me time, until they returned, to let me gather my thoughts, and when they returned beatings, passing out, freezing water, and..."

“When they saw that I was adamant to continue my hunger strike, they used serums and tubes, which went from my nose into my stomach, to forcibly break my [hunger] strike. I would resist and would pull out the tubes, which resulted in bleeding and a lot of pain, and now after two years the scars still remain and it hurt me.”

“One day during interrogation, they kicked me so strongly that I immediately began to bleed. One day one of the interrogators came for me, the only interrogator that I saw, in other cases I had blindfolds. He asked me irrelevant questions. When he didn’t hear any answers, he slapped me in the face and took out a gun from his waist and put it on my head and said: ‘Answer the questions that I ask you. I know that you are a member of PJAK (Kurdish Independent Life Party), and a terrorist. Look girl, whether you talk or not it makes no difference, we are happy that a member of PJAK is in our captivity.’”

“On one of the occasions that a doctor came to treat my wounds and to check into my condition, I was in a world between sleep and awakening. The doctor asked the interrogator to transfer me to a hospital. The interrogator asked: ‘Why should she be treated in the hospital, isn’t she treatable here?’ The doctor said: ‘I’m not talking about treatment, I will do something for you in the hospital that the girl would start to talk like a nightingale.’ The next day they took me to the hospital with blindfolds and handcuffs. The doctor laid me on the bed and injected me with an ampoule (needle). It was as if I had no control over myself and would answer any question they asked, and would answer their question the way they wanted me to answer them, and they would film the process. When I came around I asked them where I was, and I became aware that I was still on the bed. I was then transferred back to my cell.”

“It appeared that this was not enough for the interrogators and they wanted me to suffer more. With my injuries they would make me stand up until my feet completely swelled up, at which point they would bring me ice. From night time until morning there were sounds of screams, groans, and crying, and I would become nervous to hear the sounds, until I found out that the sounds were a recording, and were intended to make me suffer more. Or, in the interrogation room, cold water would be poured on my head for hours, and they would return me to my cell at night.”

“One day I was sitting on my chair with closed eyes and was being interrogated. The interrogator put out his cigarette on my hand, or another day with his shoes he pushed so hard on my feet that my nails turned black and fell off, or he would make me stand up on my feet all day without any questions, while interrogators would sit in the room and would do a word puzzle. In short, they would do anything they could.”

“After I returned from the hospital they decided to transfer me to ward 209 [of Evin prison]. But, because of my physical condition and the fact that I could not even walk, ward 209 was not willing to accept me, and one whole day, with the same condition, they kept me at the door of the ward until they finally transferred me to the clinic.”

“During my detention I lost my grasp on the differences between night and day. I do not know how many days I stayed in the general clinic till my wounds healed and I was transferred to ward 209 to be interrogated. Interrogators at 209 had their own specific techniques and methods and, according to themselves, they had a policy of ‘hot and cold’. First came harsh interrogation, and one of them would put me under pressure, torture, and threaten me, and he would say that no law is important to him and he would do anything with me that he wanted to. Then the good investigator would come and ask him to stop that kind of treatment. They would offer me a cigarette and then they would repeat their questions and then this vain round would repeat again.”

“The time that I spent in ward 209, especially early on during interrogations, when I was not feeling well or when my nose was bleeding, right in my cell they would inject me with a sedative. I was sleeping all day. They would not take me out of the cell or transfer me to the clinic...”

Shirin Alam Holi, woman’s ward at Evin prison, 88/10/28