UN regulations mandate proper medical care for prisoners of conscience

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Karim Lahidji, vice-president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and president of the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI), said today: "Article 22 (2) of Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted by UN Economic and Social Council on 13 May 1977 provides that sick prisoners who require specialist treatment must be transferred to specialised institutions or to civil hospitals. Nevertheless, the Islamic Republic authorities have consistently refused to observe the right of prisoners of conscience to have access to proper and regular medical treatment. This is in line with their systematic denial of all other rights of political prisoners and subjecting them to all kinds of torture, inhuman punishments and ill treatment."

Specific cases
The following are some of the prisoners of conscience who are currently in pressing need of treatment, but the authorities are denying them the right to seek proper medical care outside the prison.

Hossein Ronaghi-Maleki is a blogger and computer expert. On 16 November 2011, having reportedly suffered from kidney bleeding a few days before, he was taken to a hospital for examinations but was returned to Evin Prison after a few hours. He has undergone four kidney operations since May 2011. The authorities have taken him back immediately to prison every time without giving him the three-month necessary healing time. The last operation was undertaken in late October, but he was taken back to prison on 31 October 2011. In contrast to expert medical opinion, the authorities have reportedly demanded self-incriminating televised confessions as a condition to let him seek proper treatment. He was detained on 13 December 2009 and subjected to various physical and psychological tortures and spent 13 months in solitary confinement at the detention centre of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps. As a result, both his kidneys were infected; one of them lost 80% and the other 20% functionality. Ronaghi-Maleki was later sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of membership of Iran-Proxy Internet Group, propaganda against the system, insulting the Iranian Supreme Leader as well as the president.

Abolfazl Ghadiani, a political activist, who recently underwent a heart surgery, is in bad conditions and at risk of heart attack in Evin Prison. He is serving a one-year prison sentence and is due to be released in late November 2011 but the authorities have issued new charges against him including insults against the Supreme Leader and the president that could lead to a new prison sentence.

Massoum Fardis, a political activist, is suffering from damages to his spinal cord and is in need of surgery. He is reportedly unable to walk in Evin Prison, where he is detained. Mr. Fardis was sentenced to six years in prison. Although the appeal court has reportedly repealed his sentence, he is still kept in prison.

Mehdi Mahmoudian, a journalist, was allowed in mid-November 2011 to have a surgery on his lungs in a hospital. His lungs, damaged as a result of torture during pre-trial detention, have partially lost their functionality owing to the
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7-month delay of the authorities to allow his treatment. Mr. Mahmoudian, who exposed the atrocities in the Kahrizak Detention Centre, where several protestors died in summer 2009, was detained on 16 September 2009, and sentenced to 5 years in prison, which he is serving in the remote Rajaishahr Prison. In May 2011, he wrote an open letter to the leader, in which he disclosed the widespread prevalence of rape and drugs among common criminals and the widespread use of torture against and inhuman treatment of political prisoners, after which he was sent to solitary confinement for 10 days.

Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand suffered a heart attack in December 2008, one stroke in May 2008 and two strokes in July and November 2010. He is also suffering from prostate and kidney problems and reported periods of dizziness and unconsciousness. In June 2011, an independent doctor recommended heart and prostate operations on him. The authorities have however denied him proper medical care. Mr. Kabudvand has been serving a 10 and a half years prison sentence since 1 July 2007 on charges of acting against the national security through establishment of Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan. He is a journalist, founder and president of HROK and recipient of 2009 Hellman-Hammet prize of Human Rights Watch.

Issa Saharkhiz, a journalist, was detained on 7 July 2009 and is serving a three-year prison sentence in the remote Rajaishahr Prison for insulting the Supreme Leader and propaganda against the system. His ribs were broken during his arrest. In early December 2010, he had a surgery for internal bleeding in the prison clinic by a medical team brought from outside.

Kayvan Samimi-Beihabani, a veteran journalist and human rights defender detained on 13 June 2009, is suffering from a risky liver ailment. He is serving a six-year sentence in the remote Rajaishahr Prison and has been banned from professional activities for 15 years for propaganda against the system, assembly and collusion to disrupt the national security, participation in demonstrations and issuing statements denying the correctness of the elections.

Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Kazemeyni Borujerdi, a religious leader advocating separation of religion from politics, who is serving an 11-year prison sentence in Evin Prison since August 2007, has been reported to suffer from Parkinson's disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney and heart problems and loss of vision in one of his eyes.

Some of the other prisoners, who have previously been reported to be in need of proper medical care include:

- **Sa’eed Matinpour**: Iranian Azeri cultural activist and journalist; serving 8 years in prison since 2007; lung infection since January 2011
- **Zahra Jabbari** (female); street protestor; serving four years in prison since September 2009; rheumatic heart disease
- **Ahmad Zeidabadi** (aka Zeydabadi); journalist; serving six years in prison since June 2009; unexplained extreme loss of weight
- **Heshmatollah Tabarzadi**; political activist; serving eight years in prison since December 2009; heart problems and high blood pressure
- **Majid Dari**; student activist; serving six years in prison in internal exile in the southern city of Behbahan since July 2009; migraine resulting in unconsciousness several times
- **Kurosh Kuhkan** (aka Kohkan); political activist; serving three and a half years since January 2010; his knee was operated on for meniscus tear that occurred during interrogations but was infected later and he is at risk of amputation of his leg
- **Abdollah Momeni**: political activist; serving four years and 11 months since June 2009; kidney problem and skin disease

In the past few years, at least 19 prisoners of conscience have lost their lives in dubious conditions in custody