

## The Plight of Ehsan Abdoh Tabrizi

someone 2010-08-12 17:18

### Durham University Student Imprisoned at Evin

copied from <http://www.iranian.com/main/2010/aug/plight-ehsan-abdoh-tabrizi>

A friend and colleague, Ehsan Abdoh Tabrizi has been held in the notorious Evin prison since mid January of this year. A fourth year PhD candidate at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA) at Durham University, Abdoh Tabrizi went back to Iran in during the Christmas holiday in December 2009 to visit his family, especially to see his mother who has been stricken with MS. Abdoh Tabrizi is particularly close to his mother and her illness has been a source of great concern to him.

Upon his arrival to Tehran at Iman Khomeini airport, Abdoh Tabrizi's passport was confiscated. It is unclear as to why and on what grounds Abdoh Tabrizi's passport was taken away. Two weeks later, on the 15th January 2010, Abdo Tabrizi was invited for an interview concerning his passport with the Bureau of Foreign Citizens. In an e-mail sent to friends before his interview, Abdoh Tabrizi states,

"Yesterday I received a phone call and was politely asked to go to a certain address in order to discuss the issue of my passport. The address is well known but rather curious (Nejatolahi St. taghto Taleghani, nabsh Koocheh Sheshom) as it is the "Bureau of Foreign Citizens". However, I take this a very positive sign because hopefully it means that I am of no importance to them. The meeting is today at 9am. I am a bit worried but calm. With a little chance I will have my passport after a session of questioning."

Instead, Abdoh Tabrizi was arrested without charge and has since languished for six months in sections 209 and 240 in Evin, one of the countless many who have been unjustly imprisoned without due process since the June 2009 Presidential election. Later, he was arrested for allegedly "acting against national security and creating unrest in the day of the Ashura events." Since his arrest, Abdoh-Tabrizi has spent 50 days in solitary confinement. It was reported that his health has seriously been affected and was close to death as a result of the first hunger strike he took part in to protest to his unjust detention.

The strong words of this allegation by the Islamic Republic do not match the person I know. I was introduced to Abdoh Tabrizi at the 2007 British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Graduate Conference at held at Wolfson College, Oxford University. At the time we met, he was at the initial stages of his doctoral studies. Once Abdoh Tabrizi moved from Durham to London, we met regularly in and around Bloomsbury, where the British Library and British Museum are located. Abdoh Tabrizi is an inquisitive person whose interest in Iranian politics was never more than academic in nature and is certainly not some rabble-rouser that the Iranian regime falsely portrays him to be. Moreover, Abdoh Tabrizi was very good-natured and sympathetic to the needs of others. After learning of my prolonged hospitalization for glandular fever, he brought from Iran a few things to put me in good spirits; pistachios from the famous dried nuts seller, Tavazo and a beautiful kalamkar, which now decoratively hangs on the wall next to my bed. Since learning of his arrest, I often look at that kalamkar, dumbstruck at the misery that has befallen on individuals such as Abdoh Tabrizi who are rotting in prison on the flimsiest of accusations.

Perhaps, Abdoh Tabrizi's arrest may have something to do his father, former secretary-general of the Tehran Stock Exchange and manager of the banned newspaper Samayeh, Hossein Abdoh Tabrizi. According Reporters and Human Rights Activists of Iran [1] (RAHANA), Hossein Abdoh Tabrizi has been critically of President Ahmadinejad's economic policies and riled Ahmadinejad's government supporters with his articles in Samayeh. Hossein Abdoh Tabrizi, was among 70 economists who criticized government's economic policies in an open letter published in 2008. Could his only child, Ehsan, be used by government means of punishing Hossein Abdoh Tabrizi for his critical stance against Ahmadinejad? It is not improbable to think this, especially given how oppositional leader Mir Hossein Mousavi's nephew endured death threats [2] and was eventually killed by government security forces patrolling the streets during the Ashura protest. It is an old tactic of the Iranian authorities to use family relations as bait to emotionally blackmail and break down those who are part of the Green movement.

---

[Indymedia does blah. Content is good, and free to use for non-commercial purposes under the Open Content license. if you have questions, email someone.]

What is both disturbing and utterly shocking regarding Abdoh Tabrizi's imprisonment is the lack of care that Durham University has shown concerning this grave injustice that the Islamic Republic has committed against one of their students. This stands in stark contrast to the swift response that Oxford University PhD candidate, Mohammadreza Jalaeipour, received by his colleague, Professor Margaret MacMillan, who wrote Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urging for his release when he was arrested again on the 14th of June 2010. As Guardian Middle East editor Ian Black has chronicled [3], Oxford University has taken a proactive stance concerning the prolonged detention of Jalaeipour, while Durham University has continued to keep silent and provide little information regarding the situation with Abdoh Tabrizi.

Recent conversations with concerned friends and colleagues of Abdoh Tabrizi shows evidence of systematic negligence by Durham University to respond and inquire in a reasonable manner about his detention in Evin. After Abdoh Tabrizi was unjust arrested with no charge in January 2010, friends in touch with the Abdoh Tabrizi family informed Durham University and in appalling fashion, no action was taken by the university to investigate further about this matter. Perhaps the lack of action by Durham University concerning Abdoh Tabrizi is because of funding they have received from the Islamic Republic. On the 28th January 2010, SGIA at Durham University organized a conference financed by the Islamic Republic to the amount of £5,000 that included many pro-regime speakers [4] providing very little impartiality in academic discourse. Although funding by the Islamic Republic of Iran has ended, other channels are being used by Durham University to bring in questionable funding. Recently, SGIA at Durham University hosted a conference which most of the Iranian panelist invited were students of Mesbah Yazdi, an extremist religious authority. These students of Mesbah Yazdi issued a number of press releases in Farsi [5], and through their association with Durham University from the conference they received much publicity and legitimacy for their views. Ayatollah Makarame Shirazi has called involvement with Durham University a "greater jihad [6]". It is quite fascinating how Durham University has turned to a platform for extremists from the Islamic Republic, while their own student, Abdoh Tabrizi, subjected to the worse brutality from this regime, is strangely ignored.

Funding of some area studies programs in UK finest universities by the world's most authoritarian regimes is not uncommon as a report entitled, "A Degree of Influence: The Funding of Strategically Important Subjects in UK Universities [7]" published by the Centre for Social Cohesion found. Although critics of the report [8] cite an anti-Muslim bias, they agree that money received by area study programs from unpalatable regimes needs closer scrutiny. Those close to Abdoh Tabrizi strongly believe that funding that the Centre for Iranian Studies at Durham University received from the Iranian regime has greatly compromised the academic and professional standards of the university to speak against gross abuses being committed against Abdoh Tabrizi held in Evin prison.

After Durham University's shocking lack of care regarding the case of Abdoh Tabrizi, concerned friends and colleagues contacted ITV News, notifying them of his detention in Evin prison. Upon learning that ITV News was in the process of doing a story about Abdoh Tabrizi, Durham University threatened the ITV News. In an e-mail leaked on the 15 April 2010 between Durham University and ITV News the message stated that if ITV News covered the issue regarding Abdoh Tabrizi's imprisonment in Evin, this would "endanger his life". Again, this stands in sharp contrast to the wishes of the Abdoh Tabrizi family who have asked those in the UK to publicize what is happening to their son.

The only academic to publicly come in support of Abdoh Tabrizi has been Dr. Rainer Schulze, head of the Department of History at Essex University where Abdoh Tabrizi completed his Masters. In a letter written to the Iranian Embassy in London, Dr. Schulze requested the immediate release of Abdo Tabrizi so that he can continue his studies. Of course, Dr. Schulze has the freedom to stand in firm support for Abdoh Tabrizi because he is not in debt to Iranian regime for funding. This is unlike the case with Abdoh Tabrizi's PhD supervisor at Durham University, Dr. Colin Turner, who use to be co-director for the Centre of Iranian Studies, which received funding from the Islamic Republic while he was in charge. In mid June 2010, I made a phone call to Dr. Turner inquiring about his student, Abdoh Tabrizi. However, instead of taking my call and showing concern, Dr. Turner instead angrily hung-up. Why would Dr. Turner need to hang-up when Abdoh Tabrizi's name was mentioned, unless he has something to hide? The lack of financial transparency at Durham University that has allowed Islamic Republic funding should be thoroughly investigated by academic and funding bodies in the UK. Durham University continues to stonewall and remain silent regarding the plight of Abdoh Tabrizi. The lack of care by Durham University has proven to be a very unsettling experience for some Iranian students at Durham who are afraid of returning to Iran for fears of

having no institutional support if detained.

Recent news about Abdoh Tabrizi indicate that he is participating in his second hunger strike [9] has since been moved to section 350 of Evin prison. This new hunger strike is in protest to his continued detention despite being granted a month ago freedom within 48 hours in exchange for bail in the amount of \$80,000. In a strange twist, officials revoked this cash-for-freedom offer. Currently, Abdoh Tabrizi is in critical condition as a result of his rapid weight loss due to his first hunger strike. His parents fear that this new hunger strike will cause the death of their only child. By all accounts, Abdoh Tabrizi is an innocent person who is being played as a pawn by the Islamic Republic, drunk on paranoia and high on illusions. Imprisoning, abusing, and killing a generation born after the 1979 revolution of bright and capable Iranians will be this regime's downfall.

Please help Ehsan Abdoh Tabrizi by signing this petition [10] in support for his release.

Links: [1] <http://www.rhairan.biz/en/?p=3284> [2] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle-east/8433991.stm> [3] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jun/25/oxford-urges-iran-release-student> [4] <http://ukgreenwave.wordpress.com/2010/02/03/2-2/> [5] <http://www.rasael.ir/?task=show?nid=199> [6] <http://www.hawzah.net/Hawzah/News/NewsView.aspx?LanguageID=1&NewsID=68660> [7] <http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/publications> [8] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/apr/01/islam-social-cohesion-university-funding?showallcomments=true> [9] <http://hra-news.org/1389-01-27-05-27-21/3120-1.html> [10] <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/ehsan/signatures?page=5>

**<http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/08/456957.shtml>**