

Manucehr Esshaqi

ARRESTED: July 1981

DETAINED IN: Qolhak Committee, Moshtarak Committee, Evin and Gohardasht Prisons

RELEASED: August 1991



1. My name is Manucehr Esshaqi and I am 41 years old. I was a political prisoner in Iran for ten years, between 1981 and 1991. I was detained at the local revolutionary committee, Evin Prison, and Gohardasht Prison.
2. I make this statement in support of an investigation into the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988 in Iran.
3. This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. Except where I indicate to the contrary, I make this statement on the basis of facts and matters within my own knowledge. Where the facts and matters in this statement are within my own knowledge, they are true. Where the facts and matters are not within my own knowledge,

I have identified the source or sources of my information and I believe such facts to be true.

Activities Before His Arrest

4. I became active with the Mojahedin about eight months before my arrest. Before that I was just a supporter. In those days, kids started early in school. My uncle was a political activist and the environment in our house was political. We read newspapers of leftist groups and the Mojahedin, and we discussed and argued. The Revolution had created an atmosphere that affected everyone. We engaged in publicity-related activities. We put posters on the walls, distributed leaflets, and sold newspapers.
5. Maybe if the environment in school and society had not been so oppressive, I would never have been motivated enough to get involved in all of this. About eight or nine months before, in political meetings, I saw [people] being beaten with sticks and clubs or stabbed. For example, my younger uncle, who was not even a supporter or active, had come to see one of the meetings in front of the university—just to watch. The regime's club-wielders attacked the meeting participants. They did so with clubs, knives, and chains. At the time, we ran away. We did not



stay to get injured. They stabbed my uncle in the back and tore his lung. I was in the hospital [with him] for three days because he was in a coma.

6. I went to the 30 Khordad [20 June 1981] demonstration with friends who were all high school or university students. I was the youngest. The others were between 16 and 20 years old. It was a shock for me. For the first time, they [the regime's security forces] were openly shooting at us. In Ferdowsi Square, when they started, bullets were coming straight at us. They were kneeling down as they would in a firing squad and were shooting at us. We were not armed at the time. The demonstrations were meant as a protest but no one intended to use arms. We could not even imagine that, two years after the Revolution, they would shoot at people who had been part of the Revolution.
7. After that, the arrests became massive and I did not go home anymore. All of us who were activists, including my brother, were well known [in our neighborhood]. In those eight months [before my arrest], we were called the Militia [by our organization]. We had not received any military training, but the name suggested that we were ready to put our lives on the line. It was more a physical and psychological preparation for activism, but not really for military activities. In fact, there were no such confrontations at the time—even after the June demonstration.

Arrest and Detention

8. I was arrested on 17 July 1981 in the Qolhak area of Tehran. It was precisely twenty days

before I turned 14. They [security forces] arrested people randomly. My friend and I were arrested together; we always met in this neighborhood. They put hoods over our heads and pushed us below the car's back seats and sat with their feet on us. We were taken to Qolhak revolutionary committee.



Manuchehr Esshaqi is on the far right, in a snapshot taken in northern Iran before his arrest.

9. The interrogation started at the Qolhak revolutionary committee. They asked us our names, details about ourselves. They accused us of having set fire to a tent belonging to Hezbollahi. This lasted from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. We gave them false information about ourselves, and of course they suspected that they did not have the right information.
10. They then took us to the Moshtarak Committee, where the Revolutionary Guards



interrogated us until around 11 p.m. The Revolutionary Guards and the prosecutor's office were acting independently of each other. We were then transferred to ward 209 in Evin Prison. Ward 209 was under the control of the Revolutionary Guards.

11. 209 is really the most terrifying part of the prison. Not many people survived to tell what happened to them in there. And most of those who have survived their stay in this ward have an image of it that is not accurate. I was able to see it in 1989, when its second floor had been made into an infirmary. I went there without a blindfold and realized how it was and how it differed from what I had in mind. From the moment you are arrested until the very last moments of your interrogation, you are blindfolded, so there is very little that you actually see. To make the place seem scarier, [the guards] would tell you, "Bend, otherwise you are going to hit the ceiling," or they would hit you on the head and say, "Your head hit the ceiling. Bring your head down so that it doesn't hit the ceiling!"
12. Upon my arrival at Evin [ward 209] they took me to the basement where prisoners were tortured. They made me walk down the corridor. People were sitting on the ground by the wall waiting. Some were going into the room and some were coming out of it. They took me to one of the people sitting on the ground. The agent kicked him and told me, "See? This is what will happen to you if you don't talk." He then told the guy, "Tell him to say whatever he knows." The prisoner, who was half dead, said, "Tell them what they want to hear." He had been beaten so

much that all his body was infected and full of blood. He was in such a state they could not beat him anymore.

13. They took me to the place where they tortured people; it was like a bathroom. There were four different cables hanging from a hanger. They asked me to pick one [of the cables to be used for flogging me], and I picked the thickest one. I would always choose the thickest because it would not hurt quite as much. The pain from the thin ones would go all the way to my head. From behind my blindfold I could see the torturers. Their shirts were unbuttoned down their chests, and they wore their shoes and walked like thugs.
14. They sat me on a bench, like a wooden bench in a park. I was on my stomach, my hands were tied under the bench, and someone sat on my back and shoved a dirty, bloody piece of cloth in my mouth. There were two people on each side and each would hit me once with the cable. "Any time you have something to say, hold your head up," they said. Because I was still a kid, my head would automatically jump up each time they hit me, so they would stop to say, "What?" I would say, "What do you want me to say?" They would flog me for a while on the soles of my feet and then they would order me to put my feet in a bucket of cold water to stop the swelling.
15. I still did not identify myself so they did not know anything about me, just the name I had picked. While they were flogging me they would ask, "Where is your gun? Where were you supposed to meet other people?"



In our organization, the understanding was that if someone was arrested and if there was no news of that person, within 24 hours all the planned meetings were cancelled. So it was important to hold out for 24 hours [to protect our comrades from being arrested]. The prison authorities also knew about this rule. And that is why the torture and harsh treatment was so bad immediately after they arrested a person, and it lasted for one or two days. The interrogations and torture that followed aimed at obtaining militants' addresses, weapons caches, and safe houses.

16. I was beaten from 11 in the morning until 2 or 3 a.m [the following day]. Then they took me out of the room and made me sit in the hallway. Then they took me back in and beat me until dawn. When the call for morning prayer came, they locked me in the room and left. That is when I could see the torture room resembled a bathroom; the walls and the floor were tiled. You could see the sewer lines on top of it. I know that some people were hung from those pipes. I heard this from others. One of my cellmates was hung like this using the *qapani* method, so that as a result of this treatment one of his arms was completely paralyzed. He was hung like that for 24 hours.
17. They would tell me, "We beat you in a way that we could continue beating you. They tortured me two times. They gave me 70 to 80 lashes on the soles of my feet. I didn't count the lashes. They told me, "Why are you making such a fuss, we didn't give you more than 70 or 80 lashes?" Then they flogged me on my back. When you are at the

mercy of such people you don't humiliate yourself by begging them [to stop]. I would just tell them, "What do you want from me? I don't know anything?"

18. They did not hit more because that night they brought in someone who knew me and knew everything about me. And he told them all they wanted to know about me. So they knew that I had nothing more to tell them.
19. When I was in ward 209, I had heard one girl crying and asking the interrogator, "Mohsen has already raped me, what do you want from me?"

Trial

20. Three days after I was arrested my friend and I were taken to the religious judge. There were nine of us, to be tried together. They sat the nine of us down. Because we had been tortured we were barefoot. We sat on chairs. Then they put a table that was covered with a tablecloth in front of us to hide our swollen and bloody feet. There were cameras and they wanted to film the proceedings, so they made sure our wounds could not be filmed. During the proceedings some of [the relatives of] the Revolutionary Guards were present in the courtroom. It was a staged trial.
21. [Asadollah] Lajevardi was the prosecutor and [Mohammadi] Guilani was the religious judge. We did not face the judge. He read [out loud] to each of us the same [basic] indictment. There were some components common to all of the indictments, but each one also had additional elements. We



all were charged with “acting against the regime,” “waging war against God and the Imam,” and “corruption on earth.” For me, he said only that I had participated in the 30 Khordad demonstration [20 June 1981] and that I was a sympathizer of the MKO, but they had nothing else on me. It took one minute to read the indictment for each person. Lajevardi requested the most severe penalty [the death penalty] for all of us.

22. The process did not go as well as they were hoping. They did not expect us to dare to defend ourselves after the torture we had been subjected to. But we did defend ourselves. The first person who got up to defend himself was from Lahijan, in the north of Iran. He stood up and said that his father was a peasant and that after the Revolution he thought that the era of feudalism had ended, but he saw that the Hezbollahis replaced local notables and nothing changed for the peasants. The judge did not allow anyone to speak for more than two or three minutes. The others [used this time] to defend themselves as well.
23. One of the [defendants] was my friend Parviz Ebrahimzadeh. He was 19 at the time and a chemistry student at Mashhad University. He explained the fact that there were no individual freedoms or any other freedom, and the space that had existed after the Revolution had been closed, that universities had been closed. The other defendants explained their motivation for joining the group they had joined or doing what they had done.
24. The person who was accused of having set fire to a tent belonging to Hezbollahis and allegedly causing the death of two people said, “When I set this place on fire I saw no one there. If such a thing has really happened, I am truly sorry. This was not my intention.” But they were lying about the death of two people there. There was no evidence [against him], and the names of the two people who were allegedly killed were not provided and there were no witnesses. I think this was meant to move the television viewers. Otherwise, the charges of participating in the demonstration and waging war against God were enough to sentence someone to death.
25. I was 13 at the time, and no one asked me how old I was. I was accused of participating in the demonstration and being a sympathizer of the MKO. They had nothing else against me. The trial of nine defendants lasted one hour.
26. Then they took us out of the trial room and sat us down. Fifteen minutes later they came with the sentences and said, “Let’s go.” We were blindfolded and had our hands on each other’s shoulder. Parviz was behind me and knew we were going to be executed. He told me, “Don’t worry. I will be with you until the end.”
27. Lajevardi came and kicked me in the leg. He just wanted me to talk to him. He asked me if I had erections during my sleep. [The age of maturity in Islam is when girls start having menstrual periods, and when boys begin having erections.] I did not know what that meant. [I thought this was an insult and] I returned the insult to him: “erection yourself.” At this point Lajevardi understood



- I had not yet reached the age of puberty.” So he took me by the shirt and told me to go and stand at the end of the line. He also said something to the guards and left.
28. They put us all in a minibus with dark windows. I could see from under my blindfold. They took us up into the Evin hills and lined prisoners up four by four, and they stood me on the side. They executed them four at a time. Our hands were tied behind our backs. I was behind, and I could see from under my blindfold. There was one person in front of each prisoner, [each one] holding a J3 gun. Each prisoner would be shot three times in the chest. When they fell, someone went up and shot them one more time. I felt terrible, so I fell on my knees and cried. I heard someone say, “Take him back to 209.” I realized that I had been put at the end of the row because I was going to go back to the cell.
 29. For the next six months I did not know whether I was sentenced or what was going to happen to me. My family did not know whether I was dead or alive.
 30. I was put back in the same small cell. It was a cell covered with soundproof materials. I could always hear sounds from the torture rooms because the sound would echo in the hallway. The soundproofing was not perfect. There was a light bulb, but it was protected by a metallic mesh, something so you could not break it. They turned it on and off when they wanted, so I never knew whether it was day or night. I was kept there for two or three weeks.
 31. Ward 209 was a three-story building. The rooms where they tortured people were located on the lower level. The cells of the people like me who were under interrogation or awaiting execution were above the torture rooms. The third floor was for the prisoners who would leave ward 209; they were kept there until they recovered [from torture].
 32. We were treated badly. There we were not considered as living human beings. Sometimes they would not feed us and if you asked, “What about food?” They would say, “What do you need food for? You are a corruptor on earth and are going to be executed.” They did not give us water; they would not let us use the bathroom. They told me every day, “Tonight you are going to be executed.”
 33. After three weeks they put me in an open-air cell, with barred roof, on the third level. They did not tell me why I was being moved. They did not say, and I could not ask. We would not ask any questions. They would always tell us, “You are not here to ask questions.” From there they took me to the public ward, or rather it was a public cell where prisoners were held together.
 34. About six months [after my arrest], they took me back to ward 209 again, and the interrogator talked to me. His behavior was very different [compared to] the first time. They put the sentence in front of me and asked me to sign it. It was a small piece of paper bearing the Islamic Revolutionary Court seal, saying I was sentenced to ten years for “sympathizing with the *monafegin*”



and “acting against the Islamic Republic of Iran’s regime.” They pulled the blindfold up a little so I could sign but I did not have time to read the details.

35. I was relieved after knowing my sentence. My brother had the same sentence and he was able to bring his sentence sheet out. A few years later they came and handed us our sentences, but then, later, they came in and told us to leave the ward, searched everywhere and took them [the sentence sheets] back. They could not find my brother’s [sentence sheet]. He had sewed it to his underwear, and when he was released he brought it out.
36. Four or five years later I saw my interrogator, because he had become the head of Qezel Hesar Prison. He saw me first, but he was not sure I had recognized him. He came forward and asked, “How is it going?” After talking to me for a little while he asked me, “Did you recognize me?” I said, “Yes.” I had never seen his face, but I could recognize his voice and it made me feel very odd—it gave me shivers.

Events Surrounding 1988

37. In January–February 1988, I was in ward 4 of Gohardasht Prison. One day they came to our ward and they called all the prisoners whose sentences varied between 15 and 20 years imprisonment. My uncle (my mom’s brother), Jafar Hushmand, was among them. He had been arrested at age 17 (he was three years older than me), in 1981, and sentenced to 17 years. They transferred all of them to Evin. I think they took a great number of prisoners from several wards in Gohardasht Prison. We could hear them hitting and kicking the prisoners while they were transferring them. They took 37 prisoners from our ward. We felt that something was going on, something dangerous.
38. I think at that point they had already planned the killings of the prisoners. For there was no precedent for picking and transferring so many prisoners to another prison after six years and without any reason! All the prisoners who were transferred were MKO sympathizers. Generally, if there were transfers, it would be one or two prisoners. I don’t remember the exact date of this transfer, but it was in the winter, because at the time they also moved us from ward 4 to ward 1. They took all our belongings. They sent us to ward 1. I remember that for three days I was very, very cold because we did not have any blankets or warm clothes. On the third day we got our belongings back.
39. On the third day I fell sick. My kidneys were infected so I had a very high fever. There was a doctor in our group, and he made a huge pot of tea and forced me to drink all of it and said, “If you do not drink this, you will not survive.” Finally, because I still had a high fever, they took me to the infirmary and I had penicillin shot.
40. After this transfer, the situation changed in prison [in] that the [prison authorities] were more lenient with us and the prisoners had become more demanding. For example if the food was not enough we would refuse to take it in. Most of our demands concerned prison conditions. The prison guards were not reacting violently. They would say to us, “Eat or don’t eat. Do as you



wish.” Sometimes they would reduce our food ration. Sometimes we would refuse to eat because they had reduced our recreation time. Instead of allowing us to get six hours of fresh air they would give us only two hours or simply suspend our recreation and keep the door closed.

41. At that time, they kept giving us questionnaires. Any time a prisoner was moved from one place to another, they would ask us to give our name and information, charges, or our sentence. During the first years when the environment was really terrifying, we would write on the forms that the charge was *monafeqin*. Nobody dared say anything else. But now we were bolder and so prisoners would write “sympathizer,” and then they would kick the prisoners and say, “Sympathizer of whom?” The reply was, “You know better.” They wanted to break us and make us insult our own group.
42. The Revolutionary Guards and Naserian would use any opportunity to make us fill out these questionnaires. In the middle of the 1988 winter, they started to distribute the questionnaires. If we asked them, “What is it for?” they would say, “It is to organize the visitations,” or they would make another pretext. They wanted to know what our [ideological] position was. During the first years they often asked us if we believed in armed struggle. But now they asked us only what our charge was.
43. All this was done before the mass killings of prisoners started. They also brought a newly arrested MKO sympathizer to our ward. This had never happened before. [Before] they had never put the new prisoners and old ones together. Talking to the newly arrested prisoner lifted our spirits [because he would update us on the regime’s problems].
44. Shortly before the killings, after they announced that the war was over, they removed the television and newspapers from the rooms.
45. In our ward, ward 1, everyone was sentenced to ten years or less. A couple of nights before we were moved from ward 1 to the jihad ward, I and a few others saw from the window that far away Lashkari, the head of the prison, and some Revolutionary Guards were bundling something in white sheets that they were closing like a bag and tossing into the back of a truck. It looked bizarre, but we had no idea what it was. It was only later that we realized that these must have been bodies that had been removed from the Gohardasht Hosseinyeh (the multipurpose room).
46. Around the time they started the killing, they took us to the jihad ward, which was located in a separate one-story building. Usually ordinary prisoners were kept there, not political prisoners.
47. One or two days after we were moved, Naserian came there to check on us. Naserian was the head interrogator of ward 3 of Evin Prison. That was not his real name. When he entered the jihad ward, one prisoner, Shir-Mohammadi, asked him, “Why are we here? We do not want to work.” It was a very bad exchange and Naserian said, “Anyone who does not want to stay here—come out!” There were maybe 200 [of us] and maybe about 80 went out. Everything hap-



pened very fast. There was not enough time to confer or to react in an organized way. I did not leave but my brother [Mohsen] left. The doors were shut immediately. I had two brothers in prison with me. A few hours later they called my older brother, Mehdi. What I know about the killings is what my brother Mehdi told me.

48. Mehdi said that on 5 August 1988, he was taken to a hallway where he had to sit. In a room in this hallway the committee was officiating. When he went to the hallway, he saw [from below his blindfold] that there were broken watches and rings; private objects [personal belongings] were lying on the ground. A number of blindfolded prisoners who had been just sentenced to death were sitting on one side of the hallway and a number of prisoners on the other side. The death row prisoners were those who would start breaking their watches, their rings and other personal belongings so that no one could take them once they were executed.
49. While Mehdi was waiting his turn, one of the prisoners who was sitting opposite him in the hallway had told him that they were taking people to be executed. Mehdi knew that the situation was very serious. He never trusted these people [authorities]. Naserian took Mehdi into the room and said, “This is the eldest brother. I haven’t brought in the younger.” One of the members of the committee asked him, “Would you ask for a pardon from the Imam and the people?” Mehdi signed the paper [asking for a pardon].
50. When they brought Mehdi out of the room, instead of taking him back to where people

were waiting to be taken to their cells, they threw him somewhere with some of the people who had not yet been tried. It was chaos. There were about 30 people in there, including my other brother Mohsen. Mehdi was able to tell him, “Accept whatever you are told to accept. They are executing people.” At first his cellmates didn’t believe him. But Mehdi had insisted and told them he had seen it himself. Most of these prisoners [followed Mehdi’s advice] and came back [were not executed].

51. They took them [Mehdi and the prisoners who had not been tried] to the committee. Mehdi told the guards that he had already been to the committee, but he was ignored by them. Naserian saw him behind the door of the courtroom and sent him back to the cell. Mohsen went to the court and agreed to sign the paper asking for a pardon and came back. Maybe out of the 80 people who left [the jihad ward]—when the tension with Naserian broke out—only about 30 returned. These are only approximate numbers.
52. Some of the people very close to me were killed. Mohammad Zamiri was arrested in 1981; he was coming back from work on the day of the big demonstration [20 June 1981]. They arrested him by mistake and kept him as a suspect. He was not even a serious sympathizer, but in prison he became a sympathizer. He always said, “I do this for the kids.” [“Kids” is a familiar way of referring to a group of people that the speaker feels close to. Here, it may mean “I do this for our friends.”] Even when they were taking him



to that room, he would say, “I give my life for the kids [my prisoner friends].”

53. We never thought that Mehdi Fereiduni would be executed. We used to call him Mehdi the brain, because he was always teasing everyone. Mehdi and his friends all belonged to a soccer team. They had been arrested along with their coach. Mehdi had been first sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment. His sentence had been later reduced to 8 years. He had nearly finished serving his sentence. [In the summer of 1988] when he realized that many of his fellow soccer players, who were his best friends, were being executed, he got mad and refused to sign a letter demanding to be forgiven by the murderers of his friends. No one thought Mehdi would refuse to sign the letter; he was not confrontational and never argued. He just liked to play soccer. But in a few [fateful] moments he decided not to sign.
54. Another friend of mine, Ali Akbar Bak’ali, had three days left to complete his seven-year sentence. When he came out of the [Death Committee] room, he said [to a cellmate]: “I won’t be able to cope yet again with the unbearable prison conditions and pressure we were submitted to during the 1980s. We were in such a humiliating position.” He never returned. My friend Shir-Mohammadi was my grandmother’s neighbor; he also was executed. He was born in 1964; he was the same age as my uncle, three years older than me.
55. My uncle Ja’far (my mother’s brother) was executed at Evin Prison. Ja’far was 17 when he was arrested. He had gone through terrible torture. The first time I saw him after my arrest, I saw him from the window. He had washed his clothes and he wanted to hang them in the courtyard to dry; so he had only his pants on without a top. His whole back was completely black from bruises. The backs of his feet were also all black and blue. His pants were rolled up so I could see his calf up to his knee, and when he turned around to go back into the ward I saw his face and realized that it was my uncle. It was only then that I realized that my uncle had been arrested. He was only as active as I was: participating in demonstrations, selling newspapers, putting posters up, distributing leaflets.
56. My uncle and I spent six years together in prison. He was also arrested accidentally in a trap they set for people. Whenever something happened somewhere, they [state agents] would arrest anyone who could have potentially been involved. They knew, for example, that people like us wore sneakers and jeans and looked like casual, sporty people. The Hezbollahis never wore jeans or sneakers. Everyone in our ward really liked Ja’far. He was always smiling and everyone could confide in him and he would boost their spirits, and everyone called him “uncle” because my brothers and I called him “uncle.” He was very patient. The pressure on people who were older and had kids and family outside was much greater. My uncle would sit and listen to their complaints for hours and hours.
57. My brother Mehdi told me about Majid Moshref whose father was a clergyman from



Qom. When Majid came out of the committee room and sat on the side reserved for death row inmates, he told my brother, facing him on the other side, “I agreed and signed the demand for pardon. But Naserian took it and tore it up, telling me to sign it again.” At this point Majid refused to sign again. “I chose death over obeying Naserian,” he told my brother and he added, “Naserian wanted to break me, but I broke him.” Had he signed again, Naserian would have asked him for more, to attend the Friday Prayer. Naserian was particularly harsh to prisoners who were popular among their fellow inmates. He would suspend their visitation rights and throw them in a solitary cell on any meaningless pretext.

58. For several days after we realized what had happened we were all very upset. No one talked in our ward; there was complete silence. They had liquidated all the wards’ prisoners; no one was left alive from the wards on the upper floors. All the prisoners of wards 1–8 had been executed. Our ward, the jihad ward, was separate from those wards. They had picked the most popular and the most resilient prisoners and had executed them. There were a few prisoners with long-term prison sentences left alive, but this was because they were not that active and headstrong.
59. A few days after all these executions happened, they came to us. It was our turn, but they did not take us to the committee; [instead] they brought the forms to us—[the forms that were given] to the people in that committee room. It was the same form, ask-

ing for pardon from the Imam, the Leader, and the people and this kind of nonsense that we were required to sign. If anyone showed any reluctance, he would be taken to the committee.

60. The international pressure about the killings helped stop the committee’s work; otherwise we would have been executed as well.
61. In late September we finally had our first visitation. The three-member committee had left the prison. My mother came and she was wearing black. That was when I found out for sure that my uncle had been executed. After that, I became unsettled and was being more forward with the guards, so they put me in solitary confinement.
62. One of our concerns was how to explain the reason for the executions to family and friends of the executed prisoners. What could we tell them? Why were they executed? What could we say to their relatives? Also, we did not know if we were going to stay alive and leave the prison or not. We were in a state of uncertainty as to whether it was really over. Until the day we were released, we were not sure if we would ever be released. Naserian would say, “You think you would go out of here? Who knows if you would ever get out of here.”
63. A few months after the killings, in early March 1989, we could have group visitations with our families in the same amphitheatre [the Hosseinyeh] where our friends had been executed. From below their blindfolds some of the prisoners had seen people being hanged. There were people, in the chaos,



- who were taken to that amphitheatre [where the executions took place], but later the mistake was realized and they were brought back. So these prisoners saw the room and told us what had happened with details and showed us where people had been hanged.
64. There was a stage in the Hosseinyeh where they [the authorities] would stand to give speeches. Above the stage there were iron bars across the ceiling. The bars were old and rusty so you could still see where the rope was tied. The rope left marks in the rust. There were marks from four ropes. They would put a bench there, put the rope around the neck, and then push the bench.
65. Before the visitation began, Naserian made a speech. He said, "We were wrong to give you such long prison sentences; we in fact nurtured our own enemies. Your families are going to come and visit you here, so don't be too arrogant, don't talk too much, and just visit with your family whom you haven't seen."
66. When I was released I did not feel free. I could not go anywhere alone. It was very strange for me to be free. Whatever I did [after I was released from prison], I could hear only what the other prisoners were saying to me, "When we get out, let's go and have ice cream here," or if I was in a suburb or place in Iran that someone had described [I thought only of my fellow prisoners].
67. Inside prison we were not alive nor were we dead. When we came out, it was the same thing, as if we were still in prison. I had difficulty walking in the street, I had no balance; I had to walk along [the side of] the street, walking by the wall, touching the wall. My mother's sister was in prison for five years, and she knew how I felt. She had been through it so she accompanied me wherever I went because she understood. I am still not really living. There is nothing that makes me really happy. Sometimes my child makes me feel happy. Whenever I go out to have fun, I am always trying to have fun, but I find it very difficult.

Paris, June 2009

