

# Hossein Behbudi

ARRESTED: 1976  
RELEASED: October 1979  
RE-ARRESTED: October 1983  
DETAINED IN: Evin and Gohardasht Prisons  
RELEASED: February 1989

1. My name is Hossein Behbudi.\* I was born in the city of Rasht in 1954. I was a political prisoner held at Gohardasht Prison during the 1988 massacre of political prisoners in Iran.
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.

## *Background Information*

### *Prison Conditions and Torture Under the Shah*

4. The first time I was arrested, it was under the Shah, when I was an industrial engi-

neering student and was in my fourth year at Tehran University of Technology. I was charged with actively supporting the Fadaiyan Khalq Organization (FKO). Though I was openly supporting the FKO, I was not armed. I was arrested in 1976 and was in prison until the Revolution. I was released in October 1978.

5. Under the Shah's regime [as political prisoners] we were under pressure during the interrogation. Physical and psychological pressure aimed at forcing us to give out information regarding the organization. We were tortured. The worse kind of torture, as far as I was concerned, was flogging on the soles of the feet with a cable. During the Shah's era it was called flogging; in the Islamic Republic it was called *ta'zir* (Islamic punishment). Many of your nerves go through the soles of your feet, and the foot is stronger and it can resist longer so they can beat you for a longer period of time. It does not leave a trace and disappears pretty fast. They would beat you until your feet were swollen and the skin would crack and they would continue beating it. Because the blood

\*The witness used the name Akbar Sadeqi in homage to his friend, who was executed in 1988, in the companion volume by Geoffrey Robertson.



- coagulates in those areas, the kidneys cannot refine the blood, and it can kill the prisoner. At this point the interrogators would take you to the infirmary and “dialyze” you, in order to clean the blood, so that they could carry on the flogging and the interrogation [without killing the detainee]. Under the Shah, I was not flogged so bad that I needed dialysis, but under the IRI, I had to be transferred to the infirmary and stayed there for several days.
6. Both under the Shah and under the IRI, members of groups engaged in armed struggle were treated more harshly and subjected to more torture than members of non-violent opposition groups. Ill-treatment aimed at breaking the detainees quickly and extracting information about their next organizational [clandestine] meeting. Under the Islamic Republic, the MKO sympathizers, in particular, were under more pressure than the others, followed respectively and decreasingly by the FKO (Minority), Peykar, Rah-e Kargar, and then only the FKO (Majority) members.
  7. I had a court hearing during this first detention under the Shah. It was an in-camera court proceeding, held in a room. During the Shah’s time, they [the authorities] would provide the defendant with a lawyer. I was given the choice between two lawyers designated by the authorities. After eight months in solitary confinement and having no idea that I was about to be tried, right before the trial I talked to my lawyer and realized that I was being taken to court. The lawyer did not really defend me, rather he encouraged me to ask for a pardon. My charge was being involved in activities for the FKO and acting against national security: organizing and participating in demonstrations and distributing [pro-FKO] leaflets in the university. I was sentenced to six years in prison.
  8. One year after I was sentenced to prison, the situation in prison improved. I was released on 1 October 1978 [a few months before the victory of the Revolution], and rejoined my organization. I was released with one thousand other political prisoners in Iran, and the newspapers reported that, as well.
  9. After the Revolution, precisely after June 1980, the FKO split into two main groups—the Majority and the Minority. The Minority thought they had to oppose the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), because they [the IRI] were against the people. The Majority thought the IRI “anti-imperialist,” they should have an alliance but be critical at the same time—to tell them [the IRI] their problems but support them. I was a member of the FKO (Majority).
  10. After my release in 1978, I took a job as a cartographer in a company. But this was not my main activity; I had become one of the full-time [professional] cadres of our organization. The FKO (Majority) was not a guerrilla group anymore and had expanded. I believe it was the biggest leftist political organization in the country. Both in terms of membership and influence, it had surpassed the Tudeh Party. I was in charge of the organization of the FKO (Majority) in one of Tehran’s districts and a member of the larger Tehran region’s committee, but this [my responsibilities



within the organization] was not uncovered during the interrogations. So, along with my work in the organization, I had also kept my normal job. And hence, if we had a financial problem, the organization would help us. My wife was also working for the FKO (Majority). Besides working at the organization, she was a high school teacher. I was active in the party until I was arrested in 1983.

### *Arrest and Detention after the Islamic Revolution*

11. In October 1983, I was arrested in the street, by chance. Perhaps the Revolutionary Guards were following someone else, their behavior was very strange, so I do not know whether they were following me or whether they found me accidentally. It appeared to me that it was an accident, because, at the time, my political activism was underground.
  12. When, in 1983, the Tudeh Party was outlawed and the authorities started to arrest its members, we, the main cadres of the FKO (Majority) were ordered to go into hiding. When Kianuri [Tudeh's secretary general] was arrested, it became clear that all political activists close to Tudeh [such as members of the FKO (Majority)] were at risk. Therefore, and in particular after the televised confessions of Kianuri were broadcast, our cadres were hastily transferred to safe houses and were given pseudonyms and forged ID cards. But [at the time of my arrest] I still hadn't received my pseudonym and my fake ID. The Guards stopped me and asked for my ID, I showed them my real ID, the one I used for
- my work. Perhaps they became suspicious by just looking at my demeanor, although they had no reason to be suspicious; I had no beard (like the Hezbollahi) and no mustache and eye glasses (like the MKO affiliates), I just looked like an ordinary civil servant, so there was no need to arrest me. At the time, random arrests were made based on how people looked, for people's physical appearance was a sign of their political affiliation. I think they were looking for someone else, and, incidentally, I went where they were waiting for this person. They looked at my ID. They called Evin Prison and gave my name, and Evin Prison had the list of former political prisoners from the time of the Shah, and they looked it up and said, "Arrest him."
13. They first took me to Karaj Beltway. At that time, they had set up checkpoints in the highways around Tehran; repenters or guards were posted at the checkpoints and were searching the cars. They blindfolded me and took me somewhere near the Karaj Beltway. I had heard that a leftist militant had repented and was identifying [newly] arrested members of the organization. The repenter in question knew me from my time at university; he was a member of Rah-e Kargar. I recognized him when I saw his hand through my blindfold, and later, when I heard his voice, I had no doubt about his identity. I said, "Why am I here? I am an ordinary person?" I had an unpublished communiqué of the FKO (Majority) about the blows the organization had suffered in 1983 [when the government started to dismantle it and arrest its members]. I was one of the members who was supposed to publish and disseminate



this communiqué. I had hidden it very well in my car, but they found it. It was in a Kleenex box on top of the dashboard. I denied that it was mine. I said, "I bought this just like that. I am a taxi driver. People to whom I give rides may have left it in the box." They beat me right there and said, "Tell us where this comes from." I denied knowing anything about it: "It is not mine, and I am not part of any faction." The repentor retorted, "Akbar Sadeqi, FKO (Majority) member, former student of the San'ati University. . . and you pretend to be a nobody!!!" I replied: "I was [all this] in the past, but now I am not part of any group."

### *Interrogation*

14. I was transferred to Evin. Upon my arrival there they took me to the basement and started to beat me with a cable so that I would give out my appointments [time and locations] and the address of my residence. I gave my mother's home address. I wanted my family to find out that I was arrested and warn my wife in order for her to take the material related to the party out of our house, which in fact she did. Hence, she went into hiding and avoided arrest.
15. When flogged 50 or 60 lashes on the soles of the feet, many people faint or they get sick. Seventy lashes takes 15 minutes. Then they would take you for a walk for ten minutes, and then they would start flogging again. I don't remember how many lashes I received; I was focused on what to say so that I wouldn't give out any information. Between two lashes there is a second or two, which are the most beautiful moments, because the brain is working so fast

to help you avoid giving away any information. It is very beautiful. Under the Shah, they used to put you on your back and flog you. The Islamic Republic interrogators put you on your stomach, because it is easier to beat the sole of the foot. They would tie up your hands and feet and fasten your mouth and start flogging. If you wanted to talk, you should raise your finger. As soon as you did so, the flogging would stop and the interrogator would say, "Talk!" But if you played with them and talked nonsense, the flogging would start immediately. It is so much easier to be told that you will be punished and you are going to get 100 lashes, than to be told you are going to be flogged until you give up the locations of your appointments. When you know how many lashes you are going to take, you count or you scream and so on, but when you don't know how many lashes there will be, it becomes really hard. Some people have become repentors only because of the unbearable pain of such torture. When you give out what you know, the lashes stop for a while. Even many prisoners give information about imaginary appointments to stop the flogging for a while. I called the seconds between the two lashes "happiness." I read somewhere: "According to the interrogators, as well as the prisoners, the worst method of torture is flogging with a cable wire." It is interesting to know that people who are being flogged to give out information make noises such as no wild animal can make. But those who are being flogged for punishment make no noise. They remain stoically silent, because they know how many lashes they have to endure, 20 or 30, and then it will be over.





Three letters and two receipts from Shahram Shahbakhshi, who was arrested in 1981 and executed in the summer of 1988. The two documents in the foreground are receipts his mother received when she sent money to him in prison. Behind the receipts are three letters from him. The middle one, dated June 20, 1988, is the last letter he wrote from prison.

16. I was in ward 209 of Evin Prison for two and a half months. During the first month and a half, sometimes they would take me to the basement to be flogged and then bring me back up into the hallway and handcuff me to the radiator. After a month and a half in the hallway, I was taken to a cell that I shared with two others. I had no visitations. I was intensely interrogated every day, but I didn't divulge any secret information. I even managed not to reveal my wife's real name. My wife's last name had a suffix, and I gave her name without a suffix so that she couldn't be identified; she had also been a political prisoner under

the Shah. Had I divulged her complete surname they would have identified and arrested her.

17. From Evin I was transferred to Gohardasht Prison. But I was still under interrogation. They put me in a solitary cell for eight months. I thought they would continue to interrogate me, but apparently I was put in the cell just in case new arrests would reveal new information about me, based on which they could start interrogating me again. I thought I had done well up until then, and for now they were leaving me alone. When you divulge very little information so that they could not figure you



- out, or when you give out all your information, they leave you alone. But when you are in the middle and you divulge slowly and bit by bit what you know and they learn progressively about you from other detainees, you remain for a long time and constantly under interrogation.
18. In Gohardasht Prison, we were more harassed and humiliated. It was easier to bear prison hardship and humiliation under the Shah, because I was single and had no wife and child. The interrogators under the Shah were very vulgar and would insult your mother and your sister, but we had learned not to show any sensitivity about that, or else they would discover our weak spot. The interrogators in the Shah's prisons were trained in the U.S. or Israel. They were all older than we were. Therefore, when they tortured or insulted us we were less offended. But in the IRI prisons, we were blindfolded, but we still could tell from the voices if the interrogators were our age or younger. We were revolutionaries ourselves, while most of them had not even participated in the Revolution. They mostly had little education. So, when they insulted us, we used to get really offended. For instance, once one of the interrogators talked about my wife in a disrespectful way. I responded, "Watch your tongue! Or else I will reciprocate." So he began to beat me up.
19. I had my first visitation ten months after my arrest. I was spending my last month in Gohardasht Prison when I was allowed a visitation, and my mother came to see me. My mother had told me that if I were arrested again she would kill herself. And I feared she might have killed herself [upon my arrest]. She came with my sister. The visitation was through a glass partition and over the phone.
20. After eight months in Gohardasht, they transferred me to Evin Prison, to a room with 30 inmates in ward 3 of the Amuzeshgah section. Upon my arrival, they asked me if I was praying, and I said I was not. So they put me in a room where people were not praying. It felt good psychologically, though we were 30 people in the room. There were 14 rooms in each ward. We were in a very small space, 15 square meters [161 square feet]. Each person had 30 centimeters [less than 12 inches] for sleeping, so we had to sleep on our sides, like books. Three times a day we could use the restrooms; 30 inmates had 20 minutes to use the restrooms. The time for the first round would change every day. For instance if today the first round was at 8 a.m. [for our room], the following day it would be noon and this would create a situation for some of our cellmates who were forced to use plastic bowls or plastic milk bottles and urinate in the presence of their cellmates. And sometimes I would say, jokingly, I aspire neither to socialism, nor to freedom, but only to have a restroom.

### *Trial*

21. I believe it was early 1985 when they took me to the court. The whole trial lasted between 10 and 15 minutes—I was given no notice and no lawyer. In court, they mentioned something that had not come up in my interrogations, but I knew it had been divulged by another prisoner. They told me that I had been in charge of collecting the weapons [taken from military



barracks, by our members, during the insurrectional days of February 1979) and handing them over to the Islamic Republic's authorities. I denied the fact and said I had no such responsibility. Had I answered yes to this question they would have wanted to know how many arms had I collected from where and from whom? The charges brought against me were being responsible for the FKO (Majority) in a small district of Tehran, as well as being in charge of a commission that spearheaded democratic activities, similar to present-day NGOs (women, unemployed, teachers, etc). As I tried to deny the charge [of collecting and returning arms], the judge said, "You know what happens if we discover that you were, in fact, in charge of collecting arms? Beating to death [he used the Arabic expression]. He threatened me and I was really scared.

22. There was a religious judge and two non-religious individuals. I was taken to court blindfolded, but once in the courtroom, they took off my blindfold. A cleric was sitting in front of me and two individuals were behind me, and I couldn't see them. [The judge] asked me if I was Marxist or a Muslim. I said, "I am a political person. I am supporting the FKO (Majority)." He said, "Respond to my question." I replied, "I am political and not interested in ideology [meaning that I supported FKO for political reasons and not for ideological reasons]."
23. Two or three weeks later, I received my sentence. They came to my room and they called my name. The Revolutionary Guard showed me the sentence and said, "Sign it." It said seven years. I signed it. At the

time they did not count the interrogation period. So I had to stay in prison for seven more years in addition to the two years that I had already served. After my trial I was transferred back to the ward 7 or 8 of Gohardasht Prison. But the names of the wards were changed later on.

### *Prison Conditions*

24. At that time, every two weeks we had visitations. And every two weeks we were allowed to write a letter. [We did not have any] paper or pens; only when we wanted to write our letters did they give us pen and paper, and you had to write the letter immediately and then give the pen back. You could write only four lines. Officially I wrote the letters to my sister, but real addressee was my wife. But we didn't have a regular schedule for writing letters. Sometimes the gap was more than two weeks, and we had such an opportunity every three weeks or only every month.
25. In early 1986 or so, Montazeri's delegations came to the prison, and things improved. This was in Gohardasht Prison. As a result, the insults and humiliation decreased. There were fewer clashes between us and the guards. Novels and educational books were provided. This period lasted less than a year.
26. At some point, in early 1987, they [the prison officials] put us along with the MKO sympathizers and members of other groups in the same ward. This was a strange move. The MKO sympathizers were always together [avoiding contact with people from other groups]. But we were constantly in contact with other groups.



27. In early 1987, prisoners in Gohardasht Prison, in particular the MKO sympathizers, became more outspoken and started to protest against the prison's bad conditions. Before, leftist prisoners were more vocal than the MKO affiliates. But usually we [the leftists] would be just two or three to protest and express our demands, whereas the MKO prisoners would protest collectively [all of them together]. They would demand the right to "exercise collectively" and would start exercising together. The Guards would deny them the right to exercise collectively and would beat them, but somehow the beating was not as bad as before. Or, for instance, when there was not enough food or if he had found worms in the food, we would raise our concern with the head of the prison, telling him, "We will go on a hunger strike if the food's quality is not improved." At that time our spirit was stronger, we were less fearful of them. There was less pressure [from them]. This was also the time MKOs prisoners were receiving uplifting news from outside, telling them that the MKO situation was good and that victory was within reach. The stronger spirit of the leftists was due to the fact that they sensed an increase of popular discontent vis-a-vis Khomeini's regime and the regime's difficult position in the war with Iraq. During the Shah's regime, prisoners' protests were strongly repressed. My understanding was that [sooner or later] the ongoing protests would be also suppressed. Prisoners had grown bolder and their movement was changing from defensive to offensive.
28. In March 1988, we were still all together with the MKO. Later, in the spring of 1987, for no apparent reason, the MKOs were separated from us. One morning, they took them somewhere where there were no prisoners from other groups. After this, the tension within the prison increased. Every month, prison wardens would come to check the ward. If they found a piece of writing [by a prisoner] or handicrafts [made by prisoners] they would tear it down, or break it or confiscate it. This had become a major issue with the prison wardens. To which was added the fact that they deprived us of newspapers or would give very few newspapers. Recreation had become another cause of problems, for the wardens started first to reduce and then to suspend our time of recreation. Shortage of food was another issue. All these problems would make prisoners go on strike. They would first protest verbally and then show their discontent through their acts. For example they would put the food outside the ward and not eat it.
29. To know how much bolder the prisoners had grown, suffice it to remember that during the time Lajevardi was producing repenters in great numbers, the MKO affiliates, no matter how steadfast they were, never dared to say the name "Mojahedin" when they were talking about their group. If asked about their charges, they would say they were sympathizers of *monafeqin* [i.e., hypocrites]. If they used "Mojahedin," they would be beaten so much that they would end up saying *monafeqin*. But at this time—in 1987—when asked about their affiliation, the MKOs would say "the organization," instead of using "hypocrites." It was a subtle but important



change, and it showed that their spirits were higher. They were beaten but they were not beaten so badly, so they would not give in. Rarely would they use [the term] “hypocrites” when alluding to their affiliation. Among the leftists, we would not fight for the name. But we had grievances [and would express them]. But the [prison authorities’] pressure started to increase progressively. So, for example, the guards would first take the prisoner to *zir hasbt* and give him a warning. [In case the prisoner resisted] they would give him a few slaps. A few days in solitary confinement were the next punishment. But all this didn’t deter the prisoners who grew more resilient instead.

30. Eight or nine months prior to the killings in Gohrdasht [fall 1987 or winter 1988], during the parliamentary elections, they blindfolded all the prisoners and took them out. They told us, “People who want to vote, come and stand on this side.” I think ninety percent did not go. They threatened us all—“You don’t want to vote; so what is your name?”—just to scare us and make us vote. There was one fellow organization member who had militated under my supervision years earlier. He asked me, “What should we do?” I said, “It is your own choice, but I won’t vote.”
31. They also had questionnaires. It used to be called “the exam.” It very politely asked us the usual questions: “What organization were you active in? Do you still believe in your organization? If not, why? What do you think about the war? What do you suggest for improving the conditions in the prison?” This was in 1987. We each had a

questionnaire; we were allowed to sit next to each other while filling it out but were not allowed to talk. For each question there was one space to write the answer. Some of the *sar-e moze’i* prisoners would respond earnestly: “The war is a bad idea for such and such reasons” or “the prison is a bad place; we should not even be here.” They would even give their opinions about the regime. But I thought that we should not give accurate responses to these questions, because this was not a real discussion or a fair public debate. From my point of view, the whole process resembled more of an interrogation, because they wanted to know what we thought. These questions were given to us by the Ministry of Intelligence to collect information. So, some prisoners had somehow been informed about their organizations’ official positions, publicized in a congress outside the country. And when given the form, they had inadvertently given, as their opinions, the official positions of their organizations. When one of the prisoners told us that he had done so, we asked him, “Why did you do that? Didn’t your interrogator ask you how you know these things [the official positions of your organization]?” This prisoner was called in again and told, “Well! your opinions match your party’s positions defined in their recent congress.” I had heard before that, in Qezel Hesar, seven or eight sympathizers of the MKO had been executed in 1983 and 1984 for having given as their own opinions the MKO’s official positions. [This was considered by the authorities to be the proof of the existence of an organized MKO network within the prison that was connected to the MKO outside the prison.]



### *Events Surrounding 1988*

32. There was one point of view that held that prisoners' demands and actions in prison left the regime with no other option than to violently repress them. The other view held that the decision made to eliminate the MKOs and the leftists came from above and had nothing to do with the prisoners' attitude in the prisons. I am not sure which point of view was the correct one. But surely a mass killing of such magnitude couldn't have been an ordinary prison disciplinary measure.
33. The televisions in the wards were controlled remotely. They would turn them on and off whenever they wanted to. On 29 July 1988, newspapers and televisions were taken away. The visitations were cancelled as well. When they took the televisions, and prisoners asked why, the guards refused to respond. They would also not let us out for recreation. It was not unusual for them to be late for the recreation. We started knocking and said, "Sir, it appears you forgot! It is 8 o'clock. You should have opened the doors at 7." The guards said, "Ok, later." We kept knocking for one hour, but then they said that the recreation has been suspended. We said, "What do you mean it is suspended? Why has it been suspended?" but they ignored us. So there were different views about what to do about this—some suggested that we should keep knocking and refuse lunch and dinner until they explain why they have suspended our recreation time. Others said, "No, we first have to find out what is going on, and we should wait and get in touch with other wards [to see if they know something]." There was a ward on the other side of the courtyard in front of our ward. The distance between the two wards was about 20 or 30 meters [66 or 99 feet]. Morse is usually useful when you are wall-to-wall neighbors. We would do Morse code with lights. We called this one "light Morse." The other ward responded that "their situation was the same, no television and no recreation." This ward was in a two-story building. It had two large corridors and its wards were separated from each other on the both sides. The public ward was on the upper floor, and on the lower floor was the solitary ward. Every one of these wards could hold up to 120 people. Our ward and their ward took turns to go get fresh air. We realized that everyone was in the same situation, and they wanted to go on strike.
34. From 29 July to 27 August 1988, we had neither family visits nor any news [from the outside world]. They would not even take anyone to the infirmary. One of the inmates was really sick. I think they took him to the infirmary, but they never returned him to the ward to update us. Basically, no one left the ward for that period of time. They made sure we were not informed of anything, and we were kept in complete ignorance of what was going on. Two or three months before these events, they had separated the prisoners according to their sentence and took the prisoners who had sentences of more than ten years to another ward. The prisoners had reacted by going on strike; they wanted to know why their situation



had changed. The ward in front of our ward was for the *mellikesh*. They also suggested going on strike. One of those whose story always saddens me was Mr. Sirus Adibi, who worked at the Water Organization. He was a low-ranking member of our organization. He was arrested in 1982. There was nothing incriminatory in his dossier. He refused to give a televised confession, so he remained in prison, as a *mellikesh*, until 1988 and was executed in the summer. There were a lot of these examples.

35. In one of the secondary wards there were approximately 30 sympathizers of the MKO. On 9 or 11 August, the MKO prisoners informed us via Morse codes that a cleric along with two others had come to their ward the previous night and had taken out the prisoners one by one and had asked them, “What is your charge?” meaning what was your political affiliation. They had taken with them whoever had responded, “affiliation with the Mojahedin” and left the ones who had said “affiliation with the *monafeqin*” in the ward. They also added that 27 of their cellmates, who had been taken away, were either transferred somewhere else or executed. But, because the MKO were notorious for exaggerating the news, we did not take their execution stories seriously. We figured that the absentees must have been transferred but we didn’t know why the transfer had taken place at night.
36. During this same month something strange happened. They brought in a big truck. Our ward looked over the courtyard, and we had managed to make a hole in the blind so that we could see outside.

At about 1 or 2 a.m. one of these nights—I used to read at night, I slept late—I heard [the sound of] a truck engine. So I went to the room where the blind was pierced—the doors of the cells within the ward were open. I saw a big truck negotiating its way into the yard with difficulty. I wondered what this was; we had become very sensitive about everything. I had never seen a vehicle like this coming into the prison at 2 a.m. My friend and I woke up a prisoner who was a sympathizer of the Ranjbaran Party and a truck driver by profession. We asked him about the truck and he told us, “You came and woke me up for this? This is a truck for frozen meat!” We asked him what such a truck was doing here. He laughed and said, “What do I know what they are doing with it? They [the prison authorities] are crazy; maybe they are bringing us frozen meat.” At the time it didn’t occur to us what it was used for. But later we realized that it was there to move out dead bodies.

37. That day or a couple of days later, I cannot remember clearly, there was a huge commotion downstairs. Naserian and Lashkari were there. Lashkari was the head of prison security. Naserian was the former interrogator of the MKO. We saw Lashkari with a military gas mask. We knew Lashkari. We used to see him every day, and we could recognize him from his demeanor and his height. He was giving directions at the same place where we had seen the truck. They were spraying the space where the truck had been. It was like the process they used every year to get rid of scorpions, grasshoppers, and other bugs. Gohardasht was in the middle of a wilderness. So it was



not necessarily unusual. But that yearly sanitizing had become a cause of laughter, because it was this old guard who was supposedly spraying and, since he was confused, he did more spraying of us than of anything else. The fact that Lashkari was doing this himself was unusual, and it was doubly strange that it was being done in the garden. All the indications pointed to something strange: this unusual spraying, the frozen meat truck in the prison's yard, and the transfer of the 27 MKO affiliates who had not used the appellation *monafeq*. But we still couldn't imagine that something like this [mass killing] was happening.

38. On 27 August, the ward's doors opened. They said those whose names were called should put their blindfolds on and come out. It was precisely lunchtime. My name was among the ones called. There were 25 of us. We put on our blindfolds and went out, and though we were anxious, we were also excited, because we were finally going to go out to see what was happening. We thought they would ask us the same specific questions: "Do you say your prayers? Do you still believe in your organization? Are you ready to give a televised confession?" Before, all of us, *sar-e moze'i*, would say that we did not pray, we were still believing in our organization, and we would not give a televised interview [public confession]. But it had been three or four months since we came to the conclusion that these answers increased the number of *mellikesh*. The prisoner should say: "I do not have an opinion. I do not know. I am not out, [so I do not] know if I still believe

or not. But I will not give a televised interview." We should not answer very strongly. My closest friend had the same opinion, and he knew that, from the bottom of my heart, I did not like to answer this way. He warned me before I went out, "Don't lose it, boy!"

39. We were on the third floor. We were taken to the first floor, and what we saw there were many people sitting and waiting there. It was the same hallway but on the floor below. Lashkari arrived with a piece of paper in his hand. He just asked, "What is your charge?" and then he asked, "Do you still believe in your organization?" I said, "Well, I am in prison, what do I know?" "Are you going to give us an interview?" "No." He did not ask us about prayers, because he knew we did not say our prayers. The 25 of us gave similar answers.
40. We were all blindfolded, and we could not talk to each other. The guards were walking past, all the time, making sure we wouldn't talk to each other. I [discreetly] asked the fellow sitting next to me, "What was their question for you?" He said, "If I still believed in my organization." I said, "What do you think they mean by asking this question?" He said, "Nothing, it is the usual exam question." I replied, "I think it is much more serious than that." My understanding was that, since they had accepted [UN]Resolution 598 and Khomeini had drunk the cup of poison, meaning that they had been forced to accept peace, now they would have to reconstruct the country and free the prisoners. But since they don't want to release the prisoners before break-



ing them, they want to put pressure on us so that we agree to make televised confessions and attend the Friday Prayer. And only then would they release a great number of prisoners. They then led us toward a room, at the door of which a number of people were waiting.

41. I went in the room. They told me, “Take off your blindfold.” So I thought that this was a good sign. I thought it meant that there would be a real questioning and that some high-ranking officials were present. But it also could be scary, because they let the people who were going to be executed remove their blindfolds, because they no longer cared if they saw their faces. But that also was just a thought—it was not what I focused on at the time. I saw three people sitting. There was a big table and everything looked very official. There was Lashkari at a table without a clerical robe, Nayyeri, and Eshraqi. There was another one—I am still not sure about his name—but he was the prosecutor of Karaj at the time, and currently [2009] he is the Minister of Interior, but at the time he was young and dressed normally, not like a member of the clergy. Nayyeri had a piece of paper. Before interrogating me, he said, “We are a delegation to review the situation of prisoners, so respond to our questions.”
42. He asked my name and profession, and then my charge. I said, “FKO Majority sympathizer.” He said, “Are you still a sympathizer?” I said, “Now I am in prison.” He asked, “Do you pray?” I said, “No, Haj Aqa” [i.e. one who has gone on a Hajj pilgrimage]. He said, “We will beat you so much that you will start praying.” He

then asked, “Will you give an interview?” I said, “No.” “Are you Muslim?” “I am like my parents, yes I am a Muslim.” “Are you a Marxist?” We knew that the mere fact of saying we were a Marxist was enough to get us executed. So when asked this question, we used to equivocate and avoid saying, “Yes, I am a Marxist,” and rather say, “I am a political activist.” But [that day] I responded, “I am Muslim.” The one that did not have on a clerical robe said, in a very hooligan kind of way, “This does not work. You are Majority, you won’t give us an interview, and you are Muslim, but you don’t say your prayers. . . it doesn’t work like that. . . .” I said, “Haj Aqa, if it is possible that I have been in prison for five years, then anything can happen.” Up until now, Eshraqi had not said anything. Nayyeri said to the guy questioning me, “Let it be. . . . He is an apostate.” Eshraqi said, “But, Haj Aqa, he said he is a Muslim.” At that moment, two ideas crossed my mind: first, the issue here goes beyond flogging and interview, and second, that Islam is important here. Eshraqi said, “Mister, you have a wife and kids, just sign this,” and he showed me a paper. I looked at the paper and saw that the foundations of Islam were summarized in three principles. “1. Believe in the transcendent God; 2. Believe in Mohammad the Seal of the prophets; 3. Believe in the resurrection and the Judgment Day.” There was another line that was not to my liking: “don’t believe in socialism and Marxism and Leninism.” Before each line there was printed “I,” and a space for one’s name.

43. Now I only wanted to get out of there so I could think about what was going on and



how I could avoid giving them all they wanted from me. I said, “Haj Aqa, these are all too complicated for me. You are a clergyman yourself. I told you something very clear, ‘I am a Muslim, and the rest is up to you.’” Naserian was behind me, he hit me on the head with a pen and said, “Get up, get up, Haj Aqa didn’t I tell you he is *khabith* [evil]?” But he did not put me on the right or the left [in the hallway]; rather he put me near the door because there was no clear decision made about me. So, also there was one of my friends, Dr. Soleimani, from the Tudeh Party, whom I had not seen for five or six months, because he had been taken to another ward—a person who was very strong, very tough, and I could see that he was signing the paper. So, I was surprised, because he was a symbol of resistance—why was he signing it? And since I had not seen him in six or seven months, I did not know if there was something these guys knew that I did not. Quietly, I said, “I haven’t signed this; why are you signing it?” I do not know if he did not hear me or if he was scared to say anything, but he did not reply. I said to another prisoner, “Why are you signing this?” and I got no response.

44. Then Naserian came, and he told those who had signed to stand up and follow him—I was still at the door in the middle. I had my blindfold on, of course. But I said almost automatically to Naserian, “Haj Aqa, I said I am a Muslim too,” and

he said, “Well, come along”—as simple as that. I went with these guys; they took us in a line to a ward. The door was opened and there were three or four Revolutionary Guards there. They asked our names and wrote them down. And then they said, “Are you the guys who don’t pray?” But before we could say yes or no, they began beating us up. It was unusually violent. They beat us with stuff that we had not seen in prison before—like clubs, iron rods, lumber, and even chains. I had never seen beating with a chain, because it can blind or maim the prisoner. After the beating, they threw us in a room—about 20 people. When we removed our blindfolds we hugged each other emotionally as if we had not seen each other for months.

45. One of my friends, whom I had not seen for a couple of months, was very upset. He was crying. I said, “Don’t be upset, it is nothing; they just want to pressure us!” He said, “This is not about fear. I am worried for Alireza.” Alireza Daliri was his brother and a member of the Tudeh Party. He said, “That was a trial we were at. In our ward we had received information about what was going on. I am very worried about my brother. He is very stubborn, and I am worried that they are going to execute him. During the whole month of August they were executing MKO sympathizers. And now it is the leftists’ turn.” We found out later that Alireza had been in fact executed on one of those days.

*Cologne, June 2009*

