

## **IRANIAN LAWYERS**

Seven lawyers in Tabriz and Mashhad who had been representing young Iranians detained in post-presidential election protests have been killed by the Iranian authorities in recent days, according to sources in Iran.

Their deaths have deterred other lawyers from taking detainees' cases, they added.

In Tabriz, Iran's fourth-largest city, the bodies of five lawyers were returned to their families earlier this week, the sources said. The five had been representing some of the hundreds of Iranians detained in the northwestern city during the post-election protests. They were then themselves accused of disrupting security and encouraging unethical actions against the regime, and were sentenced to three years each in jail.

Three of them then died from injuries suffered during their detention. They were so badly beaten that their families could barely recognize their faces, this reporter was told.

The other two - prominent figures in the local community - were executed, having been sentenced to death on trumped-up charges of drug possession, the sources said.

"These men did everything they could to help those people who had been wrongfully detained," one source said. "The two more prominent figures were made an example of by the regime - hence the drug charges. They were both good Muslims, and they were framed by the regime's local authorities."

The regime's aim, this source said, was to discourage other lawyers and activists from taking their places.

On Wednesday, the sources said, protesters came out into the streets to rally in their memory. They carried flowers and pictures of the men, and chanted from the Koran as they marched. Prayers recited by the demonstrators commemorated the lives and good deeds of the deceased.

In similar cases in Mashhad, in eastern Iran, two more lawyers were hanged on fabricated charges of drug trafficking, the sources said. Both were known to have been representing young students detained by the Iranian authorities.

"Why would lawyers traffic in opium? It does not make any sense," said one source. "The government is targeting lawyers - and as a result, many have stopped representing protesters."

In another case detailed to this reporter, a Teheran-based lawyer managed to extricate his brother-in-law - a fellow attorney based in Mashhad - from detention.

"I was able to get him out," the Teheran lawyer said, "but I am not proud of how I did so. I am sorry to say that I had to turn over all of my files and cases. In addition, I had to sign an agreement not to take on any further cases [of arrested protesters] in the future."

The lawyer said that his own well-being was a consequence of his uncle's demonstrative loyalty to the regime.

"After the revolution in 1979, he gave away most of his money to organizations supported and endorsed by [current Supreme Leader] Ali Khamenei."

Still, he went on, if he were to violate his agreement not to take on further cases, "even I would be out of my uncle's reach. I need to be very careful. Just last week, a lawyer friend of mine disappeared. His family does not know his whereabouts. I don't think it is a coincidence that he also represented some of those who were detained during the rallies."