

Press Release

PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETERS CONCERNED BY TEHERAN TRIAL

GENEVA, 25 January 2001. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC), the only world-wide association of professional conference interpreters, with 2,500 members in 75 countries, defends the professional interests of conference interpreters throughout the world and is recognized as the representative of the profession by the European Union, the United Nations and many other organizations. AIIC holds no political or religious stance of any kind.

AIIC has learned with great concern that two Iranian-German translator/interpreters, Khalil Rostamkhani and Said Sadr, were recently sentenced to severe prison terms for their alleged ‘participation’ in a conference held in Berlin last year.

The conference, sponsored by the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, was convened to discuss the reform process in Iran.

The Government of Iran accused the conference organisers of harbouring “anti-Iranian” and “anti-Islamic” attitudes and arrested the Iranian participants on their return home.

AIIC believes it is unacceptable that a professional interpreter, translator, or any similar professional whose services have been retained for a conference should suffer persecution because of the views expressed by delegates or others.

This is tantamount to punishing the messenger. As an intermediary working to facilitate communication among persons who do not speak the same language, interpreters must strike a neutral stance in order to carry out their function. In addition, professional interpreters respect confidentiality and all those who become members of AIIC undertake to observe a strict ethic of professional secrecy. Punishing interpreters for what they have heard and helped others to communicate – and have sworn not to divulge – runs counter to greater understanding among peoples and to basic human rights.

The Bureau of AIIC

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