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Dear Ali Khamenei

I wish to add my name to this appeal from the International Shia Cultural and Human Rights Organization (ISCHRO). ISCHRO is disturbed and concerned about the arrest of Grand Ayatollah Yasubedin Rastegari.

The pro-democracy cleric Grand Ayatollah Yasubedin Rastegari has been imprisoned for unknown charges since 27th April 2004. Grand Ayatollah Yasubedin Rastegari, who has remained a dissident cleric since the beginning of the Iranian 1979 Revolution, has been detained or arrested on numerous occasions for speaking against what he considers to be undemocratic legislations and activities of the government of Iran. He has on several occasions criticised the Iranian government's systematic oppression of its citizens and support of both internal and foreign militant groups. In every instance of his arrest, he has been a prisoner of conscience. During imprisonment, he has been subjected to torture, solitary confinement and has been refused access to family and friends.

Grand Ayatollah Rastegari's recent arrest comes after writing a book titled *The Reality of Unity in Religion* in which he has criticised the activities of the current government of Iran under the leadership of Ali Khamenei as well as the government under the previous supreme leader Ruhollah Khomeini. In the same book, Grand Ayatollah Rastegari has commented on the oppression that had taken place in Islamic history under the leadership of the first, second and third Caliph.

Since his arrest, Grand Ayatollah Rastegari has not been officially charged and there is no information about his whereabouts (although he is believed to be held in the Evin Prison in Tehran). He is being held incommunicado and his relatives and acquaintances have been refused access to him. There is no information available to indicate that he is going to be given or has been given a fair trial (or a trial of any kind) or that he has been provided with facilities to attain legal help. Needless to say Grand Ayatollah Rastegari is a prisoner of conscience who has been arrested for his non-violent academic activities and should not be imprisoned. The seventy eight year old academic is in poor health and in need of constant monitoring for his heart disease and diabetes. Since no independent verification of his health condition is available, it is not known whether he is receiving the required medical treatment necessary to insure his well-being.

The imprisonment of Grand Ayatollah Yasubedin Rastegari is against article 19 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, of which Iran is a member and a signatory. The International Shia Cultural and Human Rights Organization (ISCHRO) is disturbed by the government of Iran's systematic abuse of Shia clerics and academics and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Grand Ayatollah Rastegari. Furthermore, ISCHRO urges the Iranian government to compensate Grand Ayatollah Rastegari and his family for any kind of suffering or harm caused to them and to ensure that he can return to his academic work without hindrance.

Sincerely,

(Your name and address here without the brackets)