

## **Evin Prison, Tehran - March.2010**

The blindfolded prisoner sits on the chair facing the wall. No sound can be heard and silence has dominated everywhere. The prisoner hears someone getting near him. A man stands by his side and asks with a mature voice: “What’s your name?”

The prisoner responds: “Hoomān Mousavi.”

Hoomān Mousavi says: the interrogator slapped me from behind. Then opened his briefcase and took some 50 sheets placing them in front of me and said: Sign them. Then suddenly slapped me in the face again from the other side. This session took 18 hours and all this time I was sitting on the chair facing the wall at the interrogation room blindfolded, I felt so much pressure that I was crying the whole time.”

Hoomān Mousavi insists: “All through this time the interrogators threatened me and persisted that I sign the sheets that first session. Documents that described whom I was in contact with, which demonstrations I had participated in and what I had done in each of them, also what reports and footages I had prepared and whom I had sent them to.”

After hours of exhausting interrogations, Hoomān Mousavi was taken back to his prison cell number 71 in section 209 of Evin Prison.

Seconds later two agents enter the cell and lock him up to the piping of the radiator that was there in the prison cell.

Hoomān Mousavi recalls: “The radiator was so high that I could not sit. My feet were on the floor and I could bend my knees but could not sit comfortably as my hands would be hanging above. I don’t know how long passed before I woke and looked up to see all my fingers on both of hands turned purple due to the pressure of handcuffs and the ensuing blood circulation blockage.”

He further adds: “In that situation when I was suffering from weakness, they would open the cell door and the guard would put the food on the floor closing the door. I could not shake a muscle let alone reaching for the food. I passed some time unconscious and panicked when looked at my hands as they had turned black and purple by then. That was a real strange condition. My shoulders had become numb and I could not move them. My back twinged and my neck was hanging from my body.”

The guards enter his prison cell after a day and unlock his hands. As soon as he is

unlocked he falls on the ground and blood flow runs again in his hands and he feels it under his skin and in his veins.”

He cannot move but the guards drag him to the interrogation room again. Hoomān Mousavi described his second interrogation: “The interrogator put 200-250 pages they had just printed before me and asked if I would sign it or not.” I said I swore to God I would sign whatever they wanted me to sign. My hands were so numb that I could not hold the pen in my hands. I had been hanging for one and a half days and my nails had turned purple from hematoma.”

I said I had no energy left to sign, he said leave a finger print. He would put my finger in stamp pad and then at the bottom of the sheet and then for the next sheet he would do the same. This was I left my finger print on all of those sheets one by one.

Then he said I had to sign them one by one. I tried to sign with my weak hand under each sheet slowly. I think it took some two or three hours before I signed these sheets.

Hoomān Mousavi was one of the young protestors to the Iranian Presidential Election results in 2009 and he was arrested on first of April 2010 in his home in Tehran with eight security agents storming his residence.

Hoomān Mousavi described his arrest: “It was around 6 AM that they rang the door bell and introduced themselves as gas office personnel who had come to fix something and needed to cut off the gas. I went downstairs, as soon as I opened the door eight people poured in and kicked me in the stomach knocking me on the floor they handcuffed me from behind. As soon as I wanted to say a word they slapped me in the face. My lip was torn and blood rushed out.

“They poured into the home and searched everywhere even under the carpets and inside the chickens and meats in the refrigerator. They took away my computer, camera and mobile phone with them. They turned my home upside down.”

They returned him to his solitary cell everyday after an excruciating interrogation. Thinking about this sentence of the interrogator would make his body shiver that: “We would execute you just like your father and mother.”

Hoomān Mousavi says: “I was thinking each moment they might come back and take me to the gallows. This was not far from my mind as it had already happened in my family and I was raised in such an atmosphere where innocent people were captured and

executed.”

In all his life time the heavy shadow of execution lingered above his head, the execution of his parents had shattered his five-person-family forever.

Hoomān Mousavi was born in prison himself, on Persian *Yalda* night of 1986. In Adelabad prison of Shiraz. His father had been arrested almost one month before his birth on the charge of financial cooperation with Mojahedin-e Khalgh. He was executed two-three weeks after in Adelabad prison.

Hoomān Mousavi says: “My father and uncle [paternal aunt’s husband] ran a small manufacturing workshop together. They bought fabrics, dyed them, cut them selling the final product as headscarves. During those years Mojahedin-Khalgh Organization signed a contract with them in Shiraz to purchase a quantity of headscarves for their female members. This relationship continued later on. Headscarves were the commodity being sold and their business came to a point when they would only produce scarves for Mojahedin. In 1986 they stormed our home, arrested my uncle and father and 15 days later informed the family that they were executed.”

Hoomān Mousavi lived with his mother inside Adelabad prison of Shiraz until the age of two when his mother was executed during mass executions of 1988.

Hoomān Mousavi explains: “My mother was executed because of what my father had done. My mother was a very simple woman and as my aunts have told me she was arrested because of her husband’s beliefs. My mom had not given up under interrogation and had protested my innocent father’s execution and she had remained faithful to my father until the last moment. She was executed for this very reason. My mother did not even know what the ideals of these organisations were or who their leaders had been, be them communists or members of Tudeh party or Mojahedin-e Khalgh.”

Hoomān Mousavi does not remember anything from the first two years of his life living with his mother in the prison. Whatever he knows today is recounted for him by others.

He says: “My aunt used to tell me how I was always sick during those two years and cried the whole time. I used to have cold ulcers on my body and caught bad colds often. When I grew older symptoms remained with me due to the pressures of those days. My aunt said to me that my mother’s body had stopped producing milk and she could not feed me so other inmate women would gather their food ration for another lactating woman who could breastfeed children. To keep me alive in prison, I used to be fed by five or six women there.”

The security forces did not return the body of his father to his family and they do not know where he is buried to this very day. After the presidential election of 2009 and the reinstatement of the incumbent President Mahmood Ahmadinejad some Iranians contested the election results announced by the Islamic Republic. Hundreds of thousands of people and supporters of Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karoubi, candidates who also opposed the results, poured to the streets. They believed that the votes had been rigged.

The government resorted to violence. Tens of protesters were killed and thousands were arrested in their homes or in the streets during the few months that followed the announcement of election results.

Hoomān Mousavi was one of these anonymous youths who were arrested. He remembers: “I tried to be useful in anyway possible. I though nothing was better than making Iranian people’s voice heard by the world and telling the world what the people of my country said, so I started to gather videos and photos.”

He says he is still pained due to the execution of his mother and father but bears no grudge and even this very pain did not make him attend the streets protests regularly but other ideals attracted him towards those protests.

He insists that: “We did not want much. We just wanted someone to answer us and say where our votes had gone from ballot boxes?”

Hoomān Mousavi grew up with much anguish and hardship after the execution of his father and mother. His [paternal] aunt who had been imprisoned with his mother was released after a few months and took custody of him. His sister and other brother were raised at his [maternal] aunt and [paternal] uncle, not in a single city but each child in a separate city far from the other two.

About his sister and brother who were five and two years older than him, Hoomān Mousavi says: “My [maternal] aunt tool the responsibility of raising my sister and she lived in Mahshahr. My brother lived with my [paternal] uncle in Tehran. It was very difficult for us to live in separate cities but I still had their news from far away.”

Hoomān Mousavi remembers his childhood and adolescence as a hard period with discrimination and poverty, he never felt the hand of a father on his shoulder or the affection of a mother.

Hoomān Mousavi recounts his childhood wish as such: “I remember I wished for many years that they would throw a birthday party for me and one would buy me a gift but it never happened.”

His life throughout all his teenage years onward was filled with consecutive summonings to the security entities. At the age of 13 he was summoned to Shiraz branch of the ministry of intelligence. He had now reached an age when security officials had to remind him he was the child of an executed family where his father, mother and even his uncle were executed, so he had to watch his manners.

He says: “I was at the first grade of guidance school that they summoned me along with my aunt, I was 12-13 at the time, which is when I was interrogated first.” He emphasises: “They wanted to question me and tell me more about my family. When I entered high school these interrogations got more frequent and they would always say do not follow politics. Fool around with girls, drink, use drugs, do whatever you want but do not go after politics. If you have the slightest political inclination we will arrest you. They would search our home and had everything under control, me, my brother and my sister.”

After entering university another chapter is started in his life. In 2004 he enters Ghazvin Labour University studying Industrial Engineering, but only few days after the Presidential elections of 2009 he receives the verdict to his suspension from education.

Pointing to “the pressure from security and disciplinary committee during the four and a half years” that he was at Labour university, Hoomān Mousavi insists: “I used to study at the university and they would ask what is it that you believe in and ask do you say your prayers or why I did not participate in Rahiaan-e Nour camp or why were you absent during visits to Ghom and Jamkaran [religious sites]? Questions that had nothing to do with the university and hurt me.”

During his education at the university he was summoned to the disciplinary committee multiple times due to his active participation in student protests within the university. Even when he found a job after university, he was soon fired when his employers learnt his parents were executed.

Since the time of his arrest a few months had passed and he was still in the 1.5x2 meter solitary cells of Evin prison’s section 209. The difficult situation and the isolation of his cell brought him to such a mental status that he would not fear his interrogator’s threats to execution. He explains: “I was under so much pressure that I would cry for hours in

my cell and asked God that they just take and execute me to put an end to all this situation.”

Hoomān Mousavi was transferred to section 350 of Evin prison after seven months of tolerating a solitary cell and another four months in multi-person-cells.

He describes the conditions of their cell in section 350 of Evin prison as such: “It was good since I had come out of section 209 and I saw other people who were like myself. They were dissidents of the regime or members of the Green Movement or prisoners of conscience and there was so much sympathy. They gave me a jacket and a tuque and my morale had improved. I was really feeling I did not regret having gone to the street and filming the demonstrators making their voice heard by the world. It was a good feeling.”

In section 350 there were also some of the most famous political prisoners arrested after 2009 elections and passing their sentence period. Along these famous prisoners there are many prisoners of conscience who were detained after the Presidential elections. The unknown prisoners of this prison section are overshadowed by the famous ones and their legal situation is usually ignored. Hoomān Mousavi adds: “at some points visit times in person had decreased a lot and they would be only given to those very special prisoners. To us, the unknowns, they would not pay attention at all and there were many who had not been given visit times for long.”

One year passes since his arrest and despite the fact that his interrogation has been over, a court has not been a court hearing held for his case and each month his arrest warrant is renewed by his interrogator until March 2011 that his court session was finally held without his lawyer behind closed doors.

The 28th branch of the revolutionary court named Mohamad Moghiseh browses through his file pages and asks him: “Are you the one whose parents were executed? After their execution don’t you wanna become human?”

Hoomān Mousavi answers the judge: “I had nothing to do with my parents and lived my own life. They were responsible for whatever they did and I am a different humanbeing.” The judge says: “Will deal with you shortly.” He calls for the prosecutor.

“A few workers were fixing the air conditioners behind the judge and he was preoccupied with them the whole time, when the prosecutor’s representative was asking me questions he was telling the workers how to install the new wood-wool pads arguing with them and this was off to me.”

He recalls another part of his court session: “I had received some emails that I had forwarded for friends. For example there was a caricature or an important news or Mr. Karoubi’s letter. The first question of Mr. Moghiseh was why I had sent these to my friends. I said I had not sent anything and I was surprised. He asked “So what are these letters you have signed under them?” I answered these are not letters, these are emails and I was not the one writing them, they were forwarded to me and I simply forwarded them. The judge asked: letter or email, I don’t care. Whatever these were did you or did you not send them? I said I was not the one writing the emails but he stopped me and said: “Don’t say a word.” As soon as I wanted to defend myself he would say: “Don’t say a word, I don’t want extra explanation.”

He says his court session did not take more than 20 minutes and he was not allowed to defend himself against the accusations.

He verdict is issued. The judge mentions in his verdict that the father and mother of the defendant were anti-revolutionaries executed in 1988 and sentences Hoomān Mousavi to three years of prison and ejection from education at all state universities in Iran on the charges of acting against national security by means of participating in illegal gatherings and contact with opposition satellite channels. In addition to these, an additional 74 lashes and monetary fines for insulting Mahmood Ahmadinejad were both upheld by the appeal court.

Hoomān Mousavi spends the rest of his prison term after receiving his sentence at section 350 of Evin prison just like the past. A section that had been news-making many times due to the group protests of the inmates in this section to their open letters opposing the death of Hoda Saber, well-known prisoner of conscience of section 350 who passed away due to cardiac arrest following his hunger strike inside prison.

Hoomān Mousavi remembers his own observation of Hoda Saber’s sitaion during his hunger strike: “Once Mr. Ezatollah Sahabi and Mr. Haleh Sahabi were martyred, Mr. Hoda Saber went on hunger strike. In the prison various groups requested him to end his strike but he said he would stand to the last day until these people answer for what they did.”

He says: “Mr. Saber was losing wight every day and his situation deteriorated. During last days he was left in his bed and his eyes did not see. He did not recognise fellow-prisoners and was in a critical condition. No one attended to him and when he used to passed out we would take him to the prison clinic. They wouldn’t take him and return him after five minutes. The last day that he went to the clinic we did not hear from him

until tomorrow that we heard he had become a martyr at the hospital.”

“When this news reached us, of the 200 inmates at the section, there was no single person who was not crying and it was one of the worst days of our lives.”

Political prisoners of section 350 do not sit idle after the passing of Hoda Saber. They stage their own protest; a protest that was reported beyond the high-rising walls of Evin prison but this protest is followed by security forces attacking the prison section.

Hoomān Mousavi says: “We held a memorial service for Mr. Hoda Saber and Ms. Sahabi but unfortunately they cut off the electricity of the whole section and after a few minutes a big number of special forces in camouflage fatigues poured to the section with their subordinate soldiers all equipped with wood batons or make-shift batons made from plastic pipes. They poured into the section and threatened they would beat us. Many returned to their rooms but almost 25 people remained in the hall that they started beating us with their batons and pushing us toward our rooms. Only five people remained there and did not go to the rooms. They took these five prisoners to solitary confinements that night and threatened the rest.”

Almost two and a half years pass since Hoomān Mousavi was arrested until July 2012 that he was summoned along another 13 other political prisoners for the execution of their lash sentences.

He wears a few layers of clothes to better tolerate the pain of lashed on his body. His lash sentence is a punishment for having insulted Mahmood Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran.

Hoomān Mousavi says about his lash sentence: “When the soldier raised the lash to hit on my back, the judge asked him to wait. He told me how many clothes you are wearing, take them off. I had to take my clothes off and was standing there wearing only a t-shirt.”

I was the first person to be lashed and felt that that soldier did not know how to do his job. The lash consisted of three strands of leather weaved into each other with a knot at the end making its tip very heavy and painful. When the soldier was lashing me, it hit me in the chest and all turned all my chest purple and covered in hematoma. My whole frontal torso was swollen. I was doing my best not to moan or beg for mercy but said why are you lashing my chest you must hit me on the back.”

The prisoners receive their lashes accordingly. The last person from this lot is Kamran Ayazi, a dentist whose satirical writings about religious matters make him receive a nine year prison sentence plus 160 lashes. The stroke of lashes on his body are so strong that his skin is peeled off and blood gushes out.

He tells about Kamran Ayazi: “He opened Kamran’s file and asked: have you said this stuff about the holy ones? Kamran said: I have not, I was just the website admin and others wrote them. When they took him for the lashing he was shouting and screaming in pain too much.

Kamran was quite resilient but when we took him out it was like carrying a corpse from that room. He was in a critical situation. None of the others bled from the lashes and did not have skin cuts, only lash bruise marks. But Kamran’s body was bleeding in several parts and his skin was slashed because of the lashes. We were all crying for him. It was really a bizarre sight.”

The 14 lashed prisoners return to the prison section with wounded and bleeding bodies. Their fellow inmates have tears in their eyes seeing them. The prison officials do not provide them with any medical and caring aid.

Hoomān Mousavi remembers the moment when they returned to section 350 of Evin: “When we got to the section all others gathered around us. They were sad and many were crying and we tried to calm them that we are well. We were resisting and standing erect. This was not us who were lashed. It was as if all prisoners from the section being lashed and everyone was sad because of this situation. Everyone felt crushed.”

They never took us to the prison clinic or gave us an ointment. We asked them a few times and requested that Kamran Ayazi, who was feeling bad, be taken to clinic but they didn’t accept. The rest of the prisoners came taking big bowls of water to the cells washing the lashed friends with water and cotton cleansing them and then compressing them with pieces of cloth.”

In August 2012 Hoomān Mousavi and another group of political prisoners are pardoned; although he says not he nor any other fellow prisoner never made a plea with any of the Islamic Republic officials.

Hoomān Mousavi is released from prison after two and a half years.

It has been weeks since he was released from prison but he does not feel free since many

of his friends he grew up with in the prison are still there and their families are still kept worried behind Evin prison walls each week.

He visits the families of political prisoners and goes to the graves of Neda Agha-Soltan, Sohrab Arabi and other ones who lost their lives after the presidential election.

These activities bring back pressures from security forces once again. His interrogator summons him again reminding him of the slaps in his face and the conditions of his solitary confinement; he warns him very seriously that in case he continues his activities this time his punishment would be the gallows and the noose.

He is left with no other option than leaving all his memories behind Iranian borderlines and flee from the country with only a small pack.

He escapes to a future that is creating yet another unsure destiny for him.