

In The Name of God

A Statement Made by Sharif University of Technology About the Arrest of Prof. Mojtaba Atarodi

As the faculty of Sharif University of Technology, we have heard with extreme distress that our distinguished colleague, Professor Mojtaba Atarodi, has been arrested in the United States.

We would like to hereby bring the following as our conscious testimony to your kind attention and hope you will take it into consideration before any judgment on his case.

- A. Professor Atarodi has more than 15 years of academic experience and is a well established professor dedicated to his profession and has pursued his area of research with exemplary academic focus.
- B. A number of M.S. and Ph.D. students have received their degrees under his guidance. These students are all successful professionals in excellent academic and professional positions throughout the world, including the US.
- C. The areas of his research are all related to mass public usage of Integrated Circuits (IC's) and systems such as smart cards, central office line cards, and Digital TV set-top box.
- D. Professor Atarodi has never pursued business, trade, or financial gain of any type. He has been dedicated to the advancement of his expertise in the country and throughout the world as can be easily ascertained from his numerous international publications. We urge you to ask Electrical Engineering professors who are experts in Analog IC design to evaluate his splendid academic record and his contribution to the knowledge in the field, in quality and quantity. The number of his international publications by themselves should be a strong indication of his unparalleled dedication to the advancement of human knowledge in the field.
- E. He has never been involved in any kind of military related type of research. His publications and the thesis of the numerous students supervised under him is a clear indication of that fact.
- F. He suffered a massive heart attack in the Fall of 2010 and spent several days in the CCU. We were fortunate and thankful to have him back at the university. We regret to hear that he has suffered a stroke upon entering custody.
- G. The items mentioned in the indictment, if truly purchased by him are all simple, basic, and elementary components and equipment that are easily sourced and can be found in every electrical engineering department. It is so disappointing to note that most of the items in question are not even the so called "dual use" equipment.

Dr. Atarodi's main contribution has been to bring MicroElectronics and IC design to the undergraduate level from being advanced topics for M.S. students. His recent lectures on Analog IC design and Digital IC design should be used in every EE department throughout the world. He developed these lectures to give an early insight into chip design to undergrads and get more undergrads to choose MicroElectronics as their field of specialty.

Professor Atarodi has focused on his academic career that many times we were concerned about his messianic approach to promote MicroElectronics and not care too much about his own person and family. Long working hours and his many graduate students were our common concern for him.

We strongly urge you to dismiss the case as he has no criminal record, is a respected academic colleague, and the equipment in question are truly basic equipment and in some cases very simple basic components that every professor may want to use in educational labs. We believe holding a distinguished 55 year old professor in custody is a historical mistake and not commensurate with the image that America strives to extend throughout the world as a bastion of free scientific exchange among schools and academic institutions.

International companies go out of their way to provide equipment with educational discounts or for free to the universities throughout the world. If a university professor picks up a development board (which as the name says is for development of a DVB-T or digital TV circuits) for his research simply out of convenience and he has to fill out end user certificates and pass it through customs then all professors, and academics from around the world should be incarcerated and taken to court in the United States.

We believe in this case there is no criminal intent, no intent for financial gain, no intention to bypass rules of any kind and only for the sake of time and convenience he may have purchased such items. That is what we all do normally when we need simple items to do our academic research.

We urge you to verify through the U.S. Interest Section at Swiss Embassy in Tehran that the kinds of items allegedly procured by Dr. Atarodi are readily available in the Iranian market. We are surprised that such items have been classified as sensitive and requiring certificate. Professor Atarodi, if he has indeed purchased such items, he may have done it only to save time. He did not even have a second thought that anybody in the world would one day even think of prosecuting a distinguished academic like him for picking up the needs of his own university lab. It is not strange for our professors to buy books, test equipment, and even a couple of IC's for their labs while in conferences abroad.

The list of equipments that are alleged to have been transferred are such basic equipment that we are surprised they can be put on a list of sensitive equipment. And if a foreign professor picks up an oscilloscope or 8 Maxim chips in a trip to USA and he or she should be prosecuted for failing to fill end-user certificates we think there is something really wrong. Why should a professor who has been developing chips for the next generation set-top box (Digital TV for consumer use at home) in his research be persecuted for bringing a development board with him?

Some individuals belong to humanity as a whole. Engineering professors throughout the world who publish international papers are for the most part contributing to the general human knowledge and Professor Atarodi is a prime example of that. How can the US prosecute a professor for using the tools of his profession and be insensitive to his contribution to international knowledge. How can a professor whose students are among the best faculty members in the best of US universities be prosecuted for the advancement of academia?

We are very much concerned about the health of Professor Atarodi. He has a well documented history of heart and diabetes problems. Prison conditions, he is currently in, not only exacerbate these problems, but may have a devastating effect on such a sensitive person. Last fall when wanting to leave the school late night in the height of Tehran inversion pollution he suffered a mild heart attack in the school parking lot which later in the night changed to a massive heart attack. Here are excerpts from his email several days later:

“Please be advised that on the date of 9/9/89 (equivalent to Nov 30, 2010) between 2:30 to 3:30AM I have had a super-massive heart attack. According to my doctor, I can resume my normal activity after one month. Semi-normal activity is allowed after 2 weeks. I can manage 2 Midterm exams of my courses this week from home since they have been prepared already. I can start my advising and research activity after one month and I appreciate one of my PhD students and 2 of my M.S students for their patience since their graduation will have a one month delay. I feel that I still have 10-15 years remaining to an academic life that I love passionately.”

He is a very sensitive and well focused person. We are sure this type of detention will devastate him psychologically and his heart and diabetes problems now compounded with a light stroke will be even worse. We would like to ask EE professors world-wide to check into his numerous papers and track his students' careers. In what way has he been hurting the international community to spend a day in prison? And in what way has he hurt the interests of America? (Assuming America can tolerate other countries to have universities and professors?)

With all respects and regards,

Council Members of Sharif University of Technology

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