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Pajhwok

Detainee links Iran to attack on Mamoon

By Khwaja Basir Ahmad

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KABUL - A man accused of throwing acid on journalist Razaq Mamoon last week has confessed to the attack, saying that Iran forced him to do so.

"If I hadn't attacked Mamoon, the lives of my wife and children would have been in danger," Khwaja Abdul Rafi told Pajhwok Afghan News on Monday.

He was arrested two days after attacking Mamoon, director of the Bust-i-Bastan news agency, near his house in the 3rd Micro Ryan neighbourhood of Kabul on Tuesday.

One week before the assault, three people in a pick-up vehicle asked him to spray Mamoon with acid, Rafi said. The men, two of them having an Iranian accent, asked him several times over the following few days.

On January 16, the trio asked him where his spouse, Zuhra Musavi, and children were. He was informed that his wife was at the house of Najibullah Kabuli, a former MP and his children at their neighbour's residence.

On his return home, Rafi said, he found the information correct. Later on, Rafi said the same people threatened him: "You see, whatever we say is right and if you don't throw acid at Mamoon, we will behead your children and kill your wife.

"I had to do that under duress, because they were going to kill my wife and children," the detainee, who also burnt his own face with acid to escape suspicion of involvement in the incident.

Asked why he did not seek help from police, the man replied: "They warned me that I was under surveillance and should not discuss the issue with anyone."

Still fearful that the three men may harm his family, Rafi claimed that Iran was behind the assault, and that the neighbouring country did not want her wife to be in an affair with the writer. "That's why it conspired against Mamoon."

Musavi visited Mamoon, who has also accused Iran of being behind the episode, in hospital and cried when she looked at burns on his face and hands. At one time, the two worked together for an Afghan TV channel and Radio Liberty.

But the Kabul crime branch chief, Col. Mohammad Zahir, said: "During the investigation, we have found no evidence linking a foreign country to the incident."