

URGENT ACTION

AHWAZI ARAB TEACHERS NEARING EXECUTION?

Imprisoned teachers Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri, both members of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority, have been transferred to an unknown location, which suggests their executions may be imminent.

Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri were transferred on 7 December to an unknown location from Karoun Prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province. They may be at imminent risk of execution, given the recent news that four other Ahwazi Arab men were secretly executed in November or December 2013.

Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri were arrested in early September 2011, along with three other men, **Mohammad Ali Amouri, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka** and his brother **Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka**, apparently in connection with their cultural activities on behalf of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority. They were sentenced to death on 7 July 2012 by Branch Two of the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court, after being convicted of charges including "enmity against God", "corruption on earth", "gathering and colluding against state security" and "spreading propaganda against the system". All five men were denied access to a lawyer and their families for the first nine months of their detention and are believed to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated before and after the verdict. Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri were shown "confessing" on a state television channel before the trial, in violation of international standards on fair trial. In January 2013, the Supreme Court upheld their death sentences. In March 2013, the men began a hunger strike in protest at this decision, their alleged torture and other ill-treatment and the prison authorities' refusal to grant them medical treatment. They continued the hunger strike for 28 days.

All five men were transferred in August 2013 to an unknown location where they were held for between one and five weeks. Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri were reported to have been pressured to make videotaped "confessions" and are believed to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated when they refused.

Please write immediately in Persian, Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Hadi Rashedi and Hashem Sha'bani Amouri, not execute any of the five men (naming them) and order retrials for all of the men, in proceedings in line with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging them to effectively investigate the allegations that the men were tortured or otherwise ill-treated and disallow as evidence in court any "confessions" that may have been obtained under torture;
- Calling on them to ensure the men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, are granted all necessary medical treatment and are allowed immediate and regular contact with their lawyers and families.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 JANUARY 2014 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of Shahid
Keshvar Doust Street,
Tehran
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Twitter: @khamenei_ir
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: info@dadiran.ir
(Subject line: FAO
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
Email: media@rouhani.ir
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English)
and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

Iran does not presently have an embassy in the United States. Instead, please send copies to:

Iranian Interests Section
2209 Wisconsin Ave NW, Washington DC 20007
Phone: 202 965 4990 | Fax: 202 965 1073 | Email: requests@daftar.org

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The five men are members or co-founders of the cultural institute Al-Hiwar, registered during the administration of former President Khatami, which used to organize events in the Arabic language, including conferences, educational courses, art classes, and poetry recital gatherings, in the south-western city of Ramshir. The organization was banned in May 2005, and many of its members have since been arrested.

All five men were arrested at their homes in early 2011, ahead of the sixth anniversary of widespread protests by Ahwazi Arabs in April 2005. Mohammad Ali Amouri was arrested 20 days after he had been forcibly returned from Iraq, where he had fled in December 2007. He was not allowed family visits for the first nine months after he was detained, and is understood to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Hadi Rashidi was hospitalized after his arrest, apparently as a result of torture or other ill-treatment, and is believed to be in poor health. Family members have said that Sayed Jaber Alboshoka's jaw and teeth were broken during his detention and that Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka has experienced depression and memory loss as a result of torture or other ill-treatment. Hashem Sha'bani Amouri is said to have had boiling water poured on him.

Hashem Sha'bani Amouri and Hadi Rashidi were featured in a program aired by Iran's state-controlled English-language television station, Press TV, on 13 December 2011. Hashem Sha'bani was shown admitting that he was a member of the "Popular Resistance", a group which he said had ties to Saddam Hussein and Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi, the former leaders of Iraq and Libya. Hadi Rashidi was described as "the leader of the military wing of the Popular Resistance" and was seen saying that he had participated in an attack on a house containing four government officials.

A sixth man arrested around the same time and tried alongside the five – teacher Rahman Asakereh – was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment to be served in internal exile. His sentence was upheld in January 2013.

Four other Ahwazi Arab men, Ghazi Abbasi, Abdul-Reza Amir-Khanafereh, Abdul-Amir Mojaddami and Jasim Moghaddam Payam, were executed in November or December 2013 following their transfer from Karoun Prison to an unknown location on 3 November. Amnesty International understands that the families of the men were not told the exact date of the executions, either in advance or after they had taken place, and have not received the bodies of their relatives. A lawyer for one of the men has also said he had not been told beforehand of the executions despite legal requirements under Iranian law that lawyers must receive 48 hours' notification of any client's execution.

Under Article 38 of the Iranian Constitution and Article 9 of the Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Safeguarding Citizens' Rights, all forms of torture for the purpose of obtaining "confessions" are prohibited. Iran's Penal Code also provides for the punishment of officials who torture citizens in order to obtain "confessions". However, despite these legal and constitutional guarantees regarding the inadmissibility of testimony, oath, or confession taken under duress, forced "confessions" extracted under torture are sometimes broadcast on television even before the trial has begun and are frequently accepted as evidence in Iranian courts. Such broadcasts violate Iran's fair trial obligations under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a state party, including the principle of the presumption of innocence. They also violate Iranian law, including Article 37 of the Constitution, Article 2 of the 2004 Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Safeguarding Citizens' Rights and Note One to Article 188 of Iran's Criminal Code of Procedure, which criminalizes the publishing of the name and identity of a convict in the media before a final sentence has been passed.

Names: Mohammad Ali Amouri (m), Sayed Jaber Alboshoka (m), Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka (m), Hashem Sha'bani Amouri (m), Hadi Rashidi (m)

Issue(s): Death penalty, Imminent execution, Torture, Ill-treatment

Further information on UA: 137/12 (18 May 2012, 19 July 2012, and 22 January 2013)

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Country: Iran