

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN KURDS FORCED TO MAKE TV “CONFESSION”

Iranian Kurds Houshmand Alipour and Mohammad Ostadghader were arrested by security forces on 3 August and held incommunicado for weeks. They were shown on state television on 7 August making a forced “confession” incriminating themselves. They have had little access to their families and no access to lawyers of their choosing.

On 3 August, **Houshmand Alipour** and **Mohammad Ostadghader**, from Iran’s Kurdish minority, were arrested by security forces near Saqqez, Kurdistan province, on suspicion of taking part in an armed attack against a security base in that city. Mohammad Ostadghader was shot and injured during the arrest but has been denied medical care. The pair were held in an unknown location without access to their families or lawyers. On 7 August, Iran’s state news agency, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), broadcast a programme showing the men “confessing” to the attack, undermining their rights not to be compelled to incriminate themselves, to presumption of innocence and to freedom from degrading treatment. Houshmand Alipour was able to make a call to his family on 1 September, during which he said the pair were initially held in a detention centre in Baneh and there tortured into making “confessions”. He said the only reason he made the “confession” was to stop the torture. He was allowed to see a state-appointed lawyer on 31 August, after both men were transferred to a detention centre in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province. His family has retained two lawyers, but they have been unable to gain access to him. Amnesty International has been unable to obtain further information about Mohammad Ostadghader.

Following their arrest, the Ministry of Intelligence claimed it had arrested members of “separatist and Takfiri” groups that had attacked a security base in Saqqez. On 9 August, the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), a Kurdish opposition group based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq that has engaged in armed activities against Iran, issued a statement taking responsibility for the attack. It stated that Houshmand Alipour and Mohammad Ostadghader were arrested after they went in to rescue injured PAK members who had taken part in the attack. Houshmand Alipour’s family has said both men are PAK members but are not involved in armed activities and had entered Iran to engage in political activities such as raising awareness about PAK amongst Iranian Kurds. Amnesty International has no information about the charges they may be facing but is concerned that the nature of the accusations against them and their forced televised “confessions” may be a precursor to charges that incur the death penalty.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Ensure that Houshmand Alipour and Mohammad Ostadghader are tried in proceedings that are in line with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty, and that they are given regular access to their families and lawyers of their own choosing, as well as to any medical care they may require;
- Ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and order a prompt, independent, effective, and impartial investigation into their allegations of torture, bringing to justice anyone found responsible in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty;
- End the practice of producing and broadcasting “confession” videos, as they violate the defendants’ rights not to be compelled to incriminate themselves, to presumption of innocence and to freedom from degrading treatment.

Contact these two officials by 22 October, 2018:

Public Prosecutor of Kurdish Province
Shahid Beheshti Judicial Complex
Basij Square, Sanandaj
Kurdistan Province, Iran
Salutation: Dear Sir

H.E. Gholamali Khoshroo
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: 212 687-2020 | Fax: 212 867 7086
Email: iran@un.int
Salutation: Dear Permanent Representative

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For years, the Iranian authorities have broadcast “confession” videos on state television in an attempt to justify their actions and gain support from the public. “Confession” videos are made when detainees are at their most vulnerable – often just after they have been arrested, when they are held incommunicado and subjected to prolonged interrogations under torture and other ill-treatment. Such videos illustrate the extent to which Iran’s intelligence and security forces go to violate the rights of detainees to remain silent during questioning and at trial, to benefit from the presumption of innocence, not to be forced to incriminate themselves and to be free from degrading treatment. Amnesty International’s research has shown that IRIB and other state-controlled media work closely with intelligence and security officials and have been involved in the production and distribution of “confession” videos, thereby sharing responsibility for the human rights violations committed against individuals featured in their productions.

Forced “confessions” that have been broadcast on Iranian state television have contributed to death sentences being passed and executions being carried out following grossly unfair trials. The most recent example of this is from 8 September 2018 when cousins Zaniar Moradi and Loghman Moradi, from Iran’s Kurdish minority, were executed in Raja’i Shahr prison in Karaj, north-west of Tehran. Zaniar Moradi and Loghman Moradi had been arrested by Ministry of Intelligence officials on 1 August 2009 and 17 October 2009 respectively in the city of Marivan, Kurdistan province, and accused of the murder of the son of a senior cleric which had taken place on 4 July 2009. They were held incommunicado without access to their families or lawyers by the Ministry of Intelligence for the first nine months of their detention. During this time, they said they were forced to “confess” to the murder in front of a video camera after being tortured. Their forced “confessions” were then broadcast on a programme that was aired on the state television channel Press TV in early November 2010. In December 2010, after a trial that lasted just 20 minutes, Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran convicted them of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and murder. Their lawyer has maintained that the only evidence against them was their forced “confessions”. Both men had repeatedly denied the accusations against them and pleaded their innocence. The pair claimed that the Ministry of Intelligence targeted them in retaliation for the activities of Zaniar Moradi’s father, Eghbal Moradi, a well-known political dissident who was assassinated in July 2018. Eghbal Moradi was a former member of the Komala Party of Kurdistan, a banned Iranian Kurdish opposition group based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and a member of the Kurdistan Human Rights Association.

Broadcasting forced “confessions” extracted through torture is a denial of human dignity for the prisoners and a serious violation of their rights. Under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Iran is legally obliged to respect and protect the rights of all defendants to the presumption of innocence and not to be compelled to incriminate themselves. Under Article 7 of the ICCPR, as well as rules of customary international law, Iran is obliged to respect and protect the right of accused persons to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to kill the prisoner. The organization considers the death penalty a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Name: Houshmand Alipour, Mohammad Ostadghader
Gender m/f: both m

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