***Head of Judiciary,***

*Mr. Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei*

*c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union*

*Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15*

*1050 Brussels, Belgium*

*Dear Mr. Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,*

*I am deeply concerned about unjustly jailed protester* ***Vahid Afkari*** *who is being tortured and otherwise ill-treated in Adelabad prison in Shiraz, including through the denial of adequate healthcare.*

*Held in a windowless cell in solitary confinement, Vahid Afkari is being denied contact with other prisoners, access to fresh air, telephone calls and face to face family visits since September 2020. Concerns about his ongoing torture and other ill-treatment were heightened after Vahid Afkari revealed to his family on 3 April 2022 that prison guards beat him and broke his arm for asking them not to transfer another prisoner to solitary confinement. Prison authorities then denied him access to adequate healthcare for the injury.*

*Vahid Afkari was sentenced, in three separate grossly unfair trials, to 33 years and nine months’ imprisonment, two years of “mandatory residence” in Ardabil province over 1300 km away from his family home in Shiraz, and 74 lashes. Vahid Afkari reported that agents from the investigation unit of Iran’s police (Agahi) and the Ministry of Intelligence tortured and otherwise ill-treated him and forced him to “confess” to crimes he repeatedly said he did not commit. Despite this, Vahid Afkari was convicted of vague and overly broad “national-security” related charges and accessory to murder. The “national-security” related charges are not internationally recognizable, and they are consistently used in Iran to criminalize the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. On the charge of “accessory to murder,” the prosecution authorities failed to meet the standard of proof required by international human right law beyond reasonable doubt, and also failed to present any credible evidence for "accessory to murder” while dismissing Vahid Afakri’s requests to exclude his torture-tainted “confessions” as evidence.*

*Vahid Afkari’s brothers Navid Afkari and Habib Afkari were also arbitrarily detained in relation to peacefully participating in protests and tortured to make “confessions” they repeatedly retracted. Navid Afkari was sentenced to death and executed in secret on 12 September 2020, and Habib Afkari to an unjust prison sentence. In March 2022, Habib Afkari was released.*

*People in Iran must be able to peacefully protest without fear of arbitrary detention, torture other ill-treatment or prosecution. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are human rights, protected under international law and standards.*

***Therefore, I call on you to:***

* ***Release Vahid Afkari as he is arbitrarily detained, quash his unjust convictions and sentences, and pending his release, provide him access to adequate healthcare and his family, and ensure he is held in conditions meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners, including ending his prolonged solitary confinement, and***
* ***Conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment with those suspected of criminal responsibility brought to justice in fair trials without recourse to death penalty.***

*Yours sincerely*