

URGENT ACTION

AHWAZI ARABS FACING UNFAIR TRIAL, RISK TORTURE

Six members of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority are due to go on trial in Iran on 20 May. The men were detained without charge for almost a year and all were arrested in connection with their activities on behalf of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority. It is feared they will not receive a fair trial and may be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

The six men, all from Khalafabad in Khuzestan province, south-west Iran, were arrested at their homes in February and March 2011 in advance of the sixth anniversary of widespread protests by Ahwazi Arabs in April 2005. Blogger **Mohammad Ali Amouri**, chemistry teacher **Rahman Asakereh** and teacher **Hashem Sha'bani Amouri** were arrested on 16 February. Teacher **Hadi Rashidi (or Rashedi)** was arrested on 28 February, and **Sayed Jaber Alboshoka** and his younger brother **Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka** were arrested in March.

The men are now held in Karoun prison in the city of Ahwaz, Khuzestan province. At least four of them were denied access to a lawyer for at least eight months after arrest. In or around February 2012, they were all charged in separate five-minute court sessions with the vaguely-worded offences of "enmity against God and corruption on earth" (*moharebeh va ifsad fil-arz*), "gathering and colluding against state security" and "spreading propaganda against the system". The charge of "enmity against God and corruption on earth" carries a possible death sentence. They are due to be tried before Branch 2 of the Dezful Revolutionary Court on 20 May 2012.

Mohammad Ali Amouri, who fled to Iraq in December 2007 and was forcibly returned in January 2011, was reportedly tortured and otherwise ill-treated during his first seven months in detention. Hadi Rashidi was hospitalized after his arrest, apparently as a result of torture or other ill-treatment, and is said to be in poor health. According to their family, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka lost 10 kg and Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka experienced depression and memory loss as a result of torture or other ill-treatment.

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

- Calling on the authorities to ensure that the men (naming them) are tried according to international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging them to make sure that the men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that they are allowed regular access to lawyers of their choosing;
- Calling on them to ensure that Hadi Rashidi and the other five men are given immediate access to adequate medical treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JUNE 2012 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
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Twitter: "#Iran Leader
@khamenei_ir must ensure six Ahwazi
Arab men are tried fairly"
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
[Care of] Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (Subject
Line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General High Council for
Human Rights
Mohammed Javad Larijani
c/o Office of the Head of the Judiciary
Pasteur St, Vali Asr Ave
South of Serah-e Jomhuri
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(Subject line: FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation
Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Ahwazi Arab minority is one of many minorities in Iran. Much of Iran's Arab community lives in the south-western province of Khuzestan. Most are Shi'a Muslims but some are reported to have converted to Sunni Islam, heightening government suspicion about Ahwazi Arabs. They often complain that they are marginalized and subject to discrimination in access to education, employment, adequate housing, political participation and cultural rights.

There were mass demonstrations in Khuzestan province in April 2005, after it was alleged that the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to force them to relinquish their Arab identity. Following bomb explosions in Ahvaz City in June and October 2005, which killed at least 14 people, and explosions at oil installations in September and October 2005, the cycle of violence intensified, with hundreds of people reportedly arrested. Further bombings on 24 January 2006, in which at least six people were killed, were followed by further mass arbitrary arrests. At least 15 men were later executed as a result of their alleged involvement in the bombings.

Mohammad Ali Amouri fled from Iran to Iraq in December 2007: he was said to have been sought by the authorities for organizing protests during the widespread anti-government demonstrations in April 2005. He was arrested in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, charged with entering Iraqi territory illegally and sentenced to serve one year's imprisonment in al-'Amara prison. He completed his prison sentence (see UA 3/09, MDE 14/001/2009, 7 January 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/001/2009/en>) and was forcibly returned to Iran in January 2011. He was arrested 20 days after his forcible return from Iraq.

Scores, if not hundreds, of members of the Ahwazi Arab minority were reportedly arrested before, during and after demonstrations on 15 April 2011. The demonstrations had been called a "Day of Rage" to mark the sixth anniversary of the 2005 mass demonstrations. At least three (according to the authorities) - and possibly many more - people were killed in the April 2011 demonstrations during clashes with the security forces, including some in the Malashiya neighbourhood in Ahvaz. Amnesty International received the names of 27 people said to have been killed. Ahwazi Arab sources have claimed the casualty figures were even higher. Amnesty International has been unable to confirm the reports as the Iranian authorities do not allow the organization to visit the country. The authorities maintain a tight control on the flow of information in and out of the province, preventing foreign journalists from visiting Khuzestan. At least four Ahwazi Arab men reportedly died in custody between 23 March and mid May 2011, possibly as a result of torture or other ill-treatment. Others - including Hadi Rashidi - were hospitalized around the same time, apparently as a result of injuries sustained from torture or other ill-treatment.

Between 10 January 2012 and the beginning of February, in the lead-up to parliamentary elections held on 2 March, between 50 and 65 people were reportedly arrested in at least three separate locations in the province; at least two deaths in custody were also reported. Some Ahwazi Arabs, mostly in Shoush, north-central Khuzestan, called for a boycott of the elections and arrests in Shoush, reportedly followed the appearance of anti-election slogans painted on walls. Others may have been pre-emptive arrests aimed at preventing any gathering of Ahwazi Arabs either on the anniversary of country-wide demonstrations held on 14 February 2011 in support of the people of Tunisia and Egypt which were violently repressed, or on the 15 April anniversary of the "Day of Rage". In the immediate lead-up to the 15 April anniversary, from late March until mid-April 2012, at least 25 Ahwazi Arabs were reportedly arrested following protests in cities across the province.

Name: Mohammad Ali Amouri, Rahman Asakereh, Hadi Rashedi, Hashem Sha'bani Amouri, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka and Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka
Gender m/f: all m

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