

# URGENT ACTION

## PROTESTER SENTENCED TO DEATH IN UNFAIR TRIAL

Protester Abbas Deris is at risk of execution in relation to the November 2019 nationwide protests in Iran. On 4 July 2023, his lawyer publicly stated that the Supreme Court had upheld Abbas Deris' conviction and death sentence for "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*). In late October 2022, a Revolutionary Court in Mahshahr sentenced Abbas Deris to death following a grossly unfair trial marred by "confessions" aired on state television weeks after arrest. Abbas Deris' request for judicial review remains pending before the Supreme Court.

**TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER**

*Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei*

*c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union, Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium*

*Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,*

*Protester Abbas Deris, 50, is at risk of execution in relation to the November 2019 nationwide protests and is held in Sepidar prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province. On 4 July 2023, his lawyer publicly said that Branch 39 of the Supreme Court had upheld his conviction and death sentence for "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*). According to public statements by his lawyers, the authorities accused Abbas Deris of involvement in the killing of a police official during protests in Mahshahr, Khuzestan province, on 18 November 2019, which Abbas Deris and his family have repeatedly denied. On 15 July 2023, a request for judicial review to the Supreme Court was submitted, which remains pending.*

*Since intelligence and security agents arrested Abbas Deris in Khuzestan province on 8 December 2019, authorities have grossly violated his due process rights. His trial before Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of Mahshahr, which consisted of two sessions on 10 May 2022 and 13 September 2022, was grossly unfair. His forced "confessions" of firing a gun towards security forces were aired on Iranian state television in late December 2019 weeks after his arrest and prior to his trial. By airing these forced "confessions", the authorities violated Abbas Deris' right to the presumption of innocence, to not self-incriminate and to remain silent. Amnesty International has repeatedly documented the Iranian authorities' pattern of extracting forced "confessions" following torture and other ill-treatment and the reliance by Revolutionary Courts' judges on such "confessions" to issue convictions and death sentences. On 22 October 2022, Abbas Deris' lawyers learned that the Revolutionary Court had issued its verdict. Abbas Deris also has a pending case for "murder" before Criminal Court One in Khuzestan province on the same allegations as the Revolutionary Court case.*

*Abbas Deris is a widower and parent of three children. In early July 2023, his mother and three children publicly called for global help in preventing Abbas Deris' execution.*

***I urge you to immediately quash the conviction and death sentence against Abbas Deris. If charged with a recognizable criminal offence, proceedings must meet international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty and exclude coerced "confessions". I urge you to immediately grant Abbas Deris access to his family, an independently chosen lawyer, and adequate medical care. I urge you to protect him from torture and other ill-treatment and investigate any torture allegations, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials. Finally, I urge you to grant independent observers access to capital trials connected to protests and immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.***

*Yours sincerely,*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mohsen Deris, Abbas Deris' brother, was also arrested the same day – 8 December 2019 - as Abbas Deris and accused of being an accomplice to the killing of a police official in Mahshahr on 18 November 2019. Iranian state media aired Mohsen Deri's forced "confessions" of firing a gun towards security forces during protesters just weeks after his detention in late December 2019. Mohsen Deris' lawyer announced that he was acquitted of the charges in his trial by the Revolutionary Court. Mohsen Deris also has a pending case before Criminal Court One in Khuzestan province on the same allegations.

In a video circulated online in mid-July 2023, Abbas Deris' three children urge for the world to help in calling for their father's conviction and death sentence to be overturned amid a plea that "we have no one left but our father" in reference to their mother's death shortly after Abbas Deris' death sentence was issued.

On 15 November 2019, following a sudden announcement by the government about a significant overnight increase in the price of fuel, tens of thousands of people across Iran took to the streets in protest. The focus of the protests quickly expanded to include broader grievances against the political establishment and generating demands for transformation of the country's political system, including constitutional reforms and an end to the Islamic Republic system. Iran's security forces used unlawful force, including live ammunition, metal pellets, tear gas and water cannons against protesters and bystanders. Amnesty International has documented the details of hundreds of unlawful killings of protesters and bystanders, including at least 23 children, killed by security forces during the crackdown on the mass protests between 15 and 19 November 2019, including in Mahshahr, Khuzestan province. The authorities continue to cover up the real number of those unlawfully killed by security forces during November 2019 nationwide protests, and they deny and distort the truth about the circumstances surrounding the killings. During the protests, the authorities implemented a near-total [internet shutdown](#), which stopped people inside Iran from being able to share images and videos of the lethal crackdown with the rest of the world.

Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge must be treated in full compliance with Iran's human rights obligations including rights to a fair trial. These include the rights to choose one's own lawyer; to access effective legal assistance from the time of arrest and throughout the pre-trial and trial proceedings; to be brought promptly before an ordinary civilian judge; to challenge the lawfulness of detention before an independent, impartial tribunal; to be presumed innocent; to remain silent and not to be compelled to incriminate oneself or to confess guilt; to obtain full access to relevant evidence; to not be detained on vague charges; to examine and cross-examine witnesses; to receive a fair, public hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal; and to be provided with a public, reasoned judgement. Amnesty International has documented a pattern of systematic violations of the rights to a fair trial in Iran from the time of arrest and throughout the investigation, trial and appeal proceedings. Courts routinely ignore allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, without ordering an investigation, and rely on torture-tainted "confessions" to issue convictions and sentences, including in death penalty cases. In view of the irreversible nature of the death penalty, the proceedings in capital cases must scrupulously observe all relevant international standards protecting the right to a fair trial. Under international law, the imposition of the death penalty following an unfair trial constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of the right to life.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International has consistently called on all states that retain the death penalty, including Iran, to establish an official moratorium on executions, with a view to completely abolishing the death penalty.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 7 November 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Abbas Deris (his/him)