

URGENT ACTION

TWO MEN AT RISK OF EXECUTION AFTER TORTURE

Behrouz Ehsani, 69, and Mehdi Hassani, 48, are at imminent risk of execution in Ghezel Hesar prison, Alborz province, after the Supreme Court rejected their request for a judicial review. They were sentenced to death in September 2024 after a grossly unfair trial, which lasted just five minutes and was marred by allegations of torture and other ill-treatment to extract forced “confessions”.

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 United Nations, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

On 23 February 2025, the lawyers of Behrouz Ehsani, 69, and Mehdi Hassani, 48, learned that Branch Nine of the Supreme Court has rejected their request for a judicial review of their case, placing them at imminent risk of execution. In the past two weeks, the authorities have denied them contact with their families, raising fears among relatives that they may be planning to carry out their executions in secret. Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani were tried jointly in a five-minute trial on 10 August 2024 in grossly unfair proceedings before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. They were denied access to their lawyers for nearly two years, from the time of arrest until weeks before trial. Their torture allegations were not investigated; they were not allowed to speak during their trial; and they were denied trial by an independent, competent and impartial tribunal. On 15 September 2024, they were sentenced to death on charges of “armed rebellion against the state” (baghi), “enmity against God” (moharebeh) and “corruption on earth” (efsad-e fel-arz) in relation to their alleged support of the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), a banned opposition group. On 7 January 2025, the authorities notified their lawyers that their convictions and death sentences had been upheld by the Supreme Court.

Ministry of Intelligence agents arrested Behrouz Ehsani on 28 November 2022 in Tehran and Mehdi Hassani on 9 September 2022 in Zanzan province. According to informed sources, agents denied them contact with their families, interrogated them without lawyers present and subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and prolonged solitary confinement, to extract self-incriminating statements. Agents held Behrouz Ehsani in solitary confinement for 50 days in section 240 of Tehran’s Evin prison and pressured him to make forced “confessions” under torture and other ill-treatment, including through threats to flog and execute him and arrest and otherwise harm his family. He refused to make forced “confessions”. He was then moved to Section 209 for 75 days before being moved to a general ward alongside other prisoners. According to an informed source, for six months following arrest, agents held Mehdi Hassani in solitary confinement and forced him to write self-incriminating statements under torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings and threats to harm his family. The informed source told Amnesty International that, in these written statements, Mehdi Hassani specified that he was being forced to write them under torture and other ill-treatment.

I urge you to immediately halt any plans to execute Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani, quash their convictions and sentences and release them as their detention is arbitrary due to severely grave violations of their fair trial rights. I further urge you to grant them immediate access to their families, independently chosen lawyers and to any adequate medical care they may need; and protect them from further torture and other ill-treatment and investigate their torture allegations, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials without resort to the death penalty. Finally, I urge you to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani were also convicted of multiple other charges including “spreading propaganda against the system”, “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and “membership of a group with the purpose of disrupting national security” for which they received prison sentences. According to informed sources, when they were held in Tehran’s Evin prison, prison officials told them that their death sentences would be quashed if they wrote a letter of repentance and express remorse, but they refused, maintaining their innocence. On 26 January 2025, without prior notice to them or their lawyers and families, they were transferred from Evin prison to Ghezel Hesar prison where prisoners are moved for execution.

Since February 2024, Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani have been on hunger strike every Tuesday as part of the “No to Execution Tuesdays” campaign by Iranians, including prisoners held for political reasons. In January 2024, prisoners on death row in Iran started going on hunger strike every Tuesday and publicly pled for interventions to halt executions in the country. This courageous act sparked solidarity hunger strikes by human rights defenders, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, who was released from prison temporarily in December 2024, and 60 other women imprisoned for political reasons in Tehran’s Evin prison, as well as labour rights activists and relatives of victims of Iran’s mass prisoner killings of the 1980s. On 18 September 2024, a letter written by Behrouz Ehsani that was smuggled out of prison and published online referred to the hunger strikes that he, Mehdi Hassani and scores of others on death row across the country have undertaken and underscored the need for international support to end the cruel and inhumane executions in Iran. Part of the letter wrote:

“...After 22 months of uncertainty, they [the authorities] have now issued a death sentence against me without any evidence. We expect nothing else from this execution-driven system...In addition to political prisoners, ordinary prisoners are executed every day...who are the defenceless victims of this system and its conditions. We have now completed the 34th week of the ‘No to Executions’ Tuesday hunger strikes, alongside [prisoners from] 21 other prisons across the country. We will continue these hunger strikes every Tuesday as long as executions continue to take place. I call on my dear compatriots, international organizations, and human rights institutions to take action against executions in Iran today because tomorrow will be too late. Join us in the ‘No to Executions’ Tuesday movement. People who seek freedom and democracy do not deserve execution. The silence of the international community emboldens this regime to carry out its executions.”

Amnesty International has previously documented how trials held in Revolutionary Courts are systematically unfair and result in arbitrary executions. The organization has documented hundreds of cases over decades where criminal proceedings held before Revolutionary Courts, leading to sentences of imprisonment and death, gravely violated the right to a fair trial. These included the rights: to access legal representation at the investigation phase of individuals’ cases and a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest and throughout trial and appeal proceedings; to protection from torture and other ill-treatment; not to be compelled to incriminate or confess guilt ; to the presumption of innocence; to meaningfully challenge the legality of their detention; to be tried by an independent, competent and impartial tribunal; and to a meaningful review of their cases by a higher court.

Over the past two years, in the aftermath of the Woman Life Freedom uprising, the Iranian authorities have intensified their use of the death penalty to instil fear among the population and tighten their grip on power. In 2023, Amnesty International recorded the executions of at least 853 people by the Iranian authorities, marking a 48% increase from 2022. The majority of people were executed arbitrarily after grossly unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts. In 2024, the authorities continued their execution spree, including against protesters, dissidents and ethnic minorities, again executing hundreds of people, many arbitrarily after grossly unfair trials held before Revolutionary Courts. The real number of executions is likely to be far higher as the Iranian authorities are not transparent and do not provide publicly accessible information on executions.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian and English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 27 May 2025.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani (both he/him).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/8975/2025/en/>.