

URGENT ACTION

JAILED JOURNALIST BROTHERS SENTENCED

Brothers Khosro and Masoud Kordpour, both journalists from Iran's Kurdish minority, were sentenced on 10 November to prison terms of respectively six years and three-and-a-half years. On 10 December Masoud Kordpour wrote an open letter to the Iranian authorities demanding his and his brother's release.

On 10 November, the Mahabad Revolutionary Court in the north-western province of Kordestan convicted **Khosro** and **Masoud Kordpour** of the vaguely worded offences of "gathering and colluding against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system" and sentenced them to six and three-and-a-half years' imprisonment, respectively. The Court also stipulated that Khosro Kordpour should serve five of the six years of his prison sentence in Tabriz, north-west Iran, some 550km away from his home in Kordestan Province and, after serving his term, should be sent to Kerman, southern Iran, over 1,100km away from his home, to spend two years in internal exile. Trials in Revolutionary Courts fail to meet international fair trial standards.

Amnesty International understands that the evidence brought against both men is mainly based on reports by the Ministry of Intelligence and is related to their activities as journalists, including giving interviews to external media on the human rights situation in Kordestan Province. In an open letter to the Iranian authorities on 10 December, Masoud Kordpour raised the lack of response to concerns that he and his brother's rights had been violated and demanded that journalists be permitted to express their views as permitted under the Iranian Constitution.

Khosro Kordpour is the manager of the Mukrian News Agency, an online news agency reporting on human rights violations in Kordestan province, and his brother Masoud Kordpour is a freelance journalist. The brothers were arrested in March 2013 and did not have access to a lawyer during their first four months in detention. Denial of access to a lawyer following arrest is a common concern for defendants brought before Revolutionary Courts.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to quash the convictions of Khosro and Masoud Kordpour and release them immediately as they have been prosecuted for their peaceful journalistic activities,
- Pending their release, urging the authorities to allow the men regular visits from their family, including by ensuring that they are held in a prison close to their families, and have lawyers of their own choosing;
- Calling on them to ensure that the men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment and are granted any medical attention they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 JANUARY 2014 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
Twitter: @khamenei_ir
Email: info_leader@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Hassan Rouhani
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: media@rouhani.ir
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

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. This is the first update of UA 296/13. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/042/2013/en.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Masoud Korpour questioned the sentence imposed on him and his brother in an open letter to the government authorities, writing: "Your Excellency, President Rouhani, in my view, in order to resolve the problems and difficulties of the country, there should exist open paths between the government, civil agencies, and brave, critical and even opposition journalists. This way, problems are identified at their root and solved openly for the good of democracy and human rights in a world where information technology has advanced so much that without the participation of literate people of conscience, no progress can be achieved or sustained." He also wrote: "What is the crime of people who are not allowed to carry out their political activities even within the framework of the existing legal system? These prisoners, who are here because of political, social and economic circumstances, are here as a result of inefficient and management of the political and security aspects of running the country. They have not committed any crime except being born in Kordestan. Hence, I ask you, please, to order the review of our cases in order that our freedom is secured and we can return to our families."

Khosro Kordpour was arrested on 9 March 2013 in Mahabad, Kordestan. The security forces searched his home and removed some of his possessions. Two days later, they arrested his brother, Masoud Kordpour, when he visited the Mahabad office of the Ministry of Intelligence to seek information about the arrest and detention of Khosro Kordpour. Both brothers were taken to a Revolutionary Guards detention centre in the city of Orumiyeh, north-west Iran, on 16 March, where it is believed they were held in solitary confinement. Despite repeated inquiries, the families of both men were unable to obtain information about their whereabouts until 2 May, when they were permitted to visit them. The brothers told their relatives that they were given no reason for their arrest. Khosro Kordpour started a hunger strike on 19 April in protest at being denied access to his lawyer. He ended his hunger strike on 13 May at the request of his family and friends and after that was transferred from solitary confinement to a cell with other detainees. On 26 June, both men were transferred to Mahabad Central Prison.

Journalists expressing views contrary to those of the authorities have long been persecuted in Iran. In recent years, dozens have been harassed, detained and imprisoned after unfair trials. A number of journalists imprisoned because of their non-violent professional activities in the run-up to and aftermath of the June 2009 presidential election have not yet been released. In his October 2013 report, Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, expressed concern about the arrest of Khosro and Masoud Kordpour. According to his report, at least 40 journalists, as well as 29 bloggers and online activists, are currently serving prison terms in Iran. Journalist Ali Asghar Gharavi, writer of an article in *Bahar* newspaper, was recently arrested on 11 November. Subsequently, his friend Ali Ghafrani was arrested on 9 December for peacefully advocating for Ali Asghar Gharavi's release by gathering signatures in support of it.

Iran's Kurdish minority live mainly in the west and north-west of the country. They experience discrimination in the enjoyment of their religious, economic and cultural rights. Parents are banned from registering their babies with certain Kurdish names, and religious minorities that are mainly or partially Kurdish are targeted by measures designed to stigmatize and isolate them. Kurds are also discriminated against in their access to employment, adequate housing and political rights, and so suffer entrenched poverty, which has further marginalized them. Kurdish human rights defenders, community activists and journalists often face arbitrary arrest, prosecution, torture, grossly unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts and, in some cases, the death penalty. For more information on human rights violations against the Kurdish minority in Iran, see: *Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority* (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/088/2008/en>).

Name: Khosro Kordpour and Masoud Kordpour

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 296/13 Index: MDE 13/056/2013 Issue Date: 13 December 2013