

URGENT ACTION

FIVE AHWAZI ARAB IRANIANS TO BE EXECUTED

Five members of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority have been sentenced to death and may be at risk of imminent execution. They were reportedly tortured. A sixth Ahwazi Arab man was sentenced to 20 years in prison. All were arrested in connection with their activities on behalf of Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority and are believed to have been tried unfairly.

On 7 July 2012, **Mohammad Ali Amouri**, **Sayed Jaber Alboshoka** and his brother **Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka**, and teachers **Hashem Sha'bani Amouri**, **Hadi Rashidi (or Rashedi)** and **Rahman Asakereh** were sentenced by Branch 2 of the Ahwaz Revolutionary Court after conviction of charges including 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". Five received death sentences, except Rahman Asakereh who was sentenced to 20 years in prison, to be served in internal exile. Two of the men were shown on a government television channel before the trial "confessing" to the allegations. The men are currently held in Karoun prison in the city of Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, and are believed to have been denied access to their lawyers and families. All six were arrested at their homes in February and March 2011.

According to his family, Mohammad Ali Amouri was tortured or 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. Family members have said that Sayed Jaber Alboshoka appears to have lost 10 kg and that Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka has experienced depression and memory loss as a result of torture or other ill-treatment. Hashem Sha'bani Amouri is said to have had boiling water poured on him.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities not to execute the five men sentenced to death (please name them), to overturn or commute all death sentences or to grant re-trials in proceedings which comply with fair trial standards, and without recourse to the death penalty ;
- Expressing concern that the six men (please name them) did not receive a fair trial, and urging the authorities to investigate the allegations that they were tortured and to bring to justice anyone found responsible for abuses and to disregard as evidence in court "confessions" that may have been coerced.
- Calling on the authorities to make sure the men are protected from torture and other ill-treatment; are granted all necessary medical treatment; and are allowed immediate and regular contact with their lawyers and families.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 AUGUST 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: jinfo_leader@leader.ir

Twitter: "#Iran Leader
@khamenei_ir must ensure 5 Ahwazi
Arab men are not executed"

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

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: jinfo@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. This is the first update of UA 137/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/029/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All six were arrested in advance of the sixth anniversary of widespread protests by Ahwazi Arabs in April 2005. Mohammad Ali Amouri was arrested 20 days after his forcible return from Iraq. He had 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, 7 January 2009, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE14/001/2009/en>) and was forcibly returned to Iran in January 2011.

Hashem Sha'bani Amouri and Hadi Rashidi were featured in a programme aired by Iran's state-controlled English-language TV station, Press TV, on 13 December 2011, in which they appeared to "confess" to the allegations against them. International fair trial standards guarantee the right not to be forced to incriminate oneself or to confess guilt. Both men were reportedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention. Iranian courts frequently accept "confessions" extracted under duress as evidence.

Another Ahwazi Arab man, Taha Heidarian, was shown in the same programme making a "confession" in connection with the killing of a law enforcement official in April 2011 amidst widespread protests in Khuzestan. On or around 19 June 2012, he and three other Ahwazi Arab men were executed in Karoun Prison, according to activists close to the family, after apparently being convicted by a Revolutionary Court of "enmity against God and corruption on earth" in connection with the killing.

The Ahwazi Arab minority are 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 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 the government planned to disperse the country's Arab population or to take other measures to weaken their Arab identity. Following a series of bomb explosions in Ahvaz City in 2005, which killed at least 14 people, 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.

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 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. 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 Rashidi, Hashem Sha'bani Amouri, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka and Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka
Gender m/f: all m

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