

URGENT ACTION

SIX AHWAZI ARABS AT GRAVE RISK OF EXECUTION

Six men – Ali Mojadam, Moein Khanfari, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Salem Mousavi, Adnan Ghobeishavi and Habib Deris – from Iran’s persecuted Ahwazi Arab minority face imminent execution. A Revolutionary Court used their torture-tainted “confessions” to sentence them to death in February after a grossly unfair trial. Iran’s Supreme Court has upheld their convictions and sentences, meaning they could be executed at any time.

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

Head of the 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,

*Ahwazi Arab men **Adnan Ghobeishavi**, 25, **Moein Khanfari**, 28, **Mohammad Reza Moghadam**, 29, **Salem Mousavi**, 39, **Habib Deris**, 42, and **Ali Mojadam**, 43, and are at imminent risk of execution. On 14 February, a Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, sentenced them to death on the charge of “enmity against God” (moharebeh) in relation to armed operations carried out by a separatist group that led to deaths among security forces. The men have denied the charges and informed sources told Amnesty International that they were not members of the separatist group. On 6 March, the Supreme Court upheld their death sentences. On 6 May, authorities secretly executed Swedish-Iranian Ahwazi Arab dissident, Habib Chaab (Asyoud), whom the judiciary alleged was one of the European leaders of the separatist group, after a grossly unfair trial marred by torture allegations. On the same day, authorities moved the six men from Section 5 of Sheiban prison, Khuzestan province, to its quarantine section, raising fears of plans to carry out their executions. Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Adnan Ghobeishavi and Habib Deris were returned to the general ward on 9 May but the rest remain in quarantine with no news of their fate.*

Their group trial was grossly unfair. The men were denied lawyers of their own choosing and were never allowed access to their court-appointed lawyer, even at trial. The authorities have barred them and their lawyer from accessing their casefile and verdict. According to a statement from the judiciary, their “confessions”, which informed sources told Amnesty International were extracted under torture and other ill-treatment while they were forcibly disappeared, were used as evidence against them in court. Informed sources told Amnesty International that Revolutionary Guards agents subjected Habib Deris to sleep deprivation, waterboarding, electric shocks, beatings, and hung him upside down while submerging his head into water. Sources said they gave Moein Khanfari electric shocks and tied him in a stress position while beating and flogging him. Amnesty International also received information indicating that agents gave Ali Mojadam electric shocks to his ears and detained his wife and child to force him to give “confessions” in front of a video camera, which was broadcast in a propaganda video on state television prior to trial.

I urge you to immediately halt any plans to execute Ali Mojadam, Moein Khanfari, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Salem Mousavi, Adnan Ghobeishavi and Habib Deris, quash their convictions and death sentences, and release them, as the violations of their fair trial rights renders their detention arbitrary. Pending their release, I urge you to provide them access to their families, lawyers of their own choosing, and adequate medical care, and protect them from further torture and other ill-treatment and investigate their torture allegations, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials. I urge you to grant independent observers access to the men in Sheiban prison and immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view of abolishing the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Agents from the Intelligence Unit of the Revolutionary Guards arrested Ali Mojadam, Moein Khanfari, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Salem Mousavi, Adnan Ghobeishavi and Habib Deris from their homes in Khuzestan province in separate raids between October 2018 and around the beginning of 2019. Amnesty International received information from separate sources indicating that the six men were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment by interrogators while held in detention centres belonging to the Revolutionary Guards following their arrests. The sources, who include Karim Borvayeh, an Ahwazi Arab who was imprisoned alongside several of the men in Sheiban prison in 2019 and 2020, told Amnesty International that the men were held in solitary confinement for up to eight months in detention centres belonging to the Revolutionary Guards where they were subjected to gruesome torture methods. Interrogators subjected Ali Mojadam to six weeks of torture and other ill-treatment to force him to make “confessions”, which he refused until Revolutionary Guards agents arbitrarily detained his wife and son, who is under the age of 18, and threatened to keep them in detention until he “confessed” to everything they wanted. Sources said it was at this point Ali Mojadam told the agents “Bring me a blank piece of paper and I will write whatever you want”. The Revolutionary Guards subsequently released his wife and son but forced them to sign undertakings that they would not speak to the media. Ali Mojadam’s forced “confession” was subsequently broadcast prior to his trial, in violation of the presumption of innocence, in a propaganda video on state television. Ali Mojadam was held in solitary confinement for eight months. Interrogators blindfolded him and tied him to a bed that was next to an electrocution machine. They connected wires to both his ears and, while still blindfolded, moved his hand onto a dial on the machine and told him to move the dial with his fingers, which sent electric shocks with varying voltages to his body. In January 2021, he sewed his lips together and went on hunger strike in protest at being held in solitary confinement, being denied his fair trial rights, and constantly living under the threat of execution. While held in the Revolutionary Guards detention centre following his arrest, interrogators tied Habib Deris to a table with chains, put a wet towel over his face and subjected him to waterboarding by pouring water over the towel, causing him to suffocate. They hung him upside down and submerged his head into a large container filled with water and beat him so severely with cables and pipes that his body was completely covered with blood and bruises, and his skin was peeling off. Agents gave him electric shocks to his fingertips and nipples. Karim Borvayeh told Amnesty International that he witnessed marks such as bruising on Habib Deris’ forehead, back, shoulder blades and feet.

On 6 March 2023, the website of the judiciary, Mizan Online News Agency, published a statement announcing that six members of a “terrorist” group called “Harakat al-Nizal”, whom it said were responsible for some of the “armed operations” of the group in Khuzestan province between 2017 and 2019, had been sentenced to death by a Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz. The statement named the six individuals as Ali Mojadam, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Moein Khanfari, Habib Deris, Adnan Ghobeishavi and Salem Mousavi, and alleged that the men had carried out “terrorist operations” in Khuzestan province, during which two members of the paramilitary Basij force, a police officer and a conscripted soldier were killed. The statement added that the men had carried out the operations on the orders of the “leaders” of the group who live in Europe, one of whom they named as Habib Chaab (Asyoud), who was abducted from Turkey in October 2020 and removed to Iran where he was subsequently executed. Informed sources told Amnesty International that the grossly unfair sham trial of the six men began around December 2021. They said that, on multiple occasions, after the men were taken to court, the hearings were cancelled due to the judge’s absence and they were returned to prison. During the trial, the six men retracted their forced “confessions” and told the presiding judge they were forced to give them under torture. However, the judge dismissed their statements and refused to order an investigation into their torture allegations. The authorities have never provided the six men with copies of the verdicts issued by the Revolutionary Court sentencing them to death or by the Supreme Court upholding their convictions and death sentences.

In recent years, the Iranian authorities have executed several Ahwazi Arabs following grossly unfair trials marred by torture allegations, some in secret. 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.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 7 July 2023

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ali Mojadam, Moein Khanfari, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Salem Mousavi, Adnan Ghobeishavi, Habib Deris (he; him)