

URGENT ACTION

FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED MEN RISK SECRET EXECUTION

Iranian Kurdish dissidents **Pejman Fatehi, Vafa Azarbar, Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloum**, are at grave risk of execution in secret, without prior notice to their families and lawyers, as the authorities have been subjecting them to enforced disappearance, a crime under international law, since July 2022. Amid a horrific spike in executions across Iran, the men's death sentences, imposed after a grossly unfair secret trial, were upheld by the Supreme Court on 2 January 2024 and sent for implementation.

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,

*Iranian Kurdish dissidents **Pejman Fatehi, Vafa Azarbar, Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloum**, who have been subjected to enforced disappearance since their arrests in July 2022, are at grave risk of execution in secret without prior notice to their families or lawyers. The men's families and independent lawyer learned that their death sentences were upheld by the Supreme Court on 2 January 2024 and sent to the Office for Implementation of Sentences in Tehran. On 16 January 2024, the men's independent lawyer stated on X (formerly Twitter) that his request for judicial review was rejected as copies of because he was unable to attach copies of the verdict to the request for review, as required by Iranian law. The authorities have refused to reveal the men's whereabouts, disclose the exact charges of which they were convicted, grant their independent lawyer access to their casefiles and provide copies of the verdicts issued in secret by Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court and the Supreme Court. On 14 January 2024, their families gathered outside Evin Prison in Tehran, where they suspect their loved ones are held, to protest their death sentences and demand visitation. In reprisal, the Ministry of Intelligence summoned the family members of the four men and threatened them with death, torture and imprisonment if they continued to protest and enquire about their loved ones. The Iranian authorities' campaign of harassment and intimidation against the families coupled with their consistent denial of information about their loved ones' fate and whereabouts, increasing their anguish and suffering, violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.*

The convictions and death sentences against the four men follow serious violations of fair trial rights, including to a lawyer of their choosing from the time of arrest, adequate defence, a fair and public trial, presumption of innocence, not self-incriminate, remain silent, and a meaningful review by a higher tribunal. On 6 January 2024, their independent lawyer stated on X that he was merely their lawyer "on paper", having never been allowed any access to his clients. Following their arrests on 20 July 2022 by the Ministry of Intelligence in West Azerbaijan province, Iran's state TV aired a propaganda video on 12 October and 5 December 2022, showing the four men "confessing" to planning to bomb an industrial estate near Esfahan, at the instructions of the Israeli intelligence. Amnesty International has long documented the pattern of the Iranian authorities extracting forced false "confessions" under torture or other ill-treatment.

I urge you to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of Pejman Fatehi, Vafa Azarbar, Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloum, halt any plans to execute them and quash their convictions and death sentences. If charged with a recognizable criminal offence, grant them fair retrials without recourse to the death penalty and excluding coerced "confessions". I also urge you to protect them from torture and other ill-treatment, and grant them immediate and regular access to their families and lawyers of their choosing. Finally, immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Over the past 18 months, the families and independent lawyer of Pejman Fatehi, Vafa Azarbar, Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloun have enquired about the four men's fate and whereabouts in detention centres, courts and Ministry of Intelligence offices in Urumieh, Mahabad, Sanandaj, Esfahan and Tehran. The authorities have refused to provide any information and, instead, have subjected the anguished families to arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment including beatings, verbal abuse, and threats to kidnap, kill, torture or otherwise harm the relatives if they continue to speak out. On 25 July 2023, around the anniversary of their arrest, Ministry of Intelligence agents arrested Mohsen Mazloun's brother, Omid Mazloun, near Mahabad, West Azarbaijan Province, and arbitrarily detained him for 40 days. During interrogations, the agents subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment, including beatings, and threatened to harm him and other family members if they continued to enquire after the four men. Around the same time, Ministry of Intelligence agents summoned Vafa Azarbar's brother and father for questioning to their offices in Urumieh and Boukan, respectively, and warned them against speaking out. In Spring 2023, Ministry of Intelligence agents told Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi's sister that she should no longer enquire about him as "his execution is imminent. We will tell you when you need to collect his body". Following video-recorded appeals by the mothers of Pejman Fatehi, Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloun, which began circulating online in January 2023, pleading for the authorities to grant them access to their sons, Ministry of Intelligence agents summoned family members for interrogations and threatened them with imprisonment for making any further enquiries about the fate and whereabouts of the four men. Following the publication of the video, Ministry of Intelligence agents in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, arbitrarily detained Pejman Fatehi's mother for several hours, beat her for "raising such a son" and threatened her and other relatives with imprisonment.

On multiple occasions, officials have denied any knowledge of the four men, even after the videos of their forced "confessions" were broadcast by the state TV. The first time the men's families had any information about them since their arrests in July 2022 was on 12 October 2022, when their forced "confessions" were broadcast. In an open letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Javaid Rehman, the men's families describe the faces of the four men in their forced televised "confessions" as "weak, tired and tortured". An earlier statement by the Ministry of Intelligence, published by state media on 23 July 2022, announced the apprehension of four unnamed individuals in connection to "terrorist activities", which the four men's families suspected referred to their loved one based on the timing and nature of the allegations. In response, Komala, a Kurdish opposition group, issued a statement on 27 July 2022, "vehemently denying the false and baseless accusations" against its members and noting that the four men were arrested for involvement in organizational and political activities.

Some Kurdish opposition parties, including Komala, have separate armed wings based outside Iran, which engage in armed confrontation against state authorities inside the country. The Iranian authorities routinely target individuals from Iran's Kurdish minority for arbitrary arrest and detention simply based on their real or perceived support for or association with Kurdish parties, and rarely provide sufficient evidence pointing to their direct or indirect involvement in internationally recognizable offences. The right to freedom of expression includes the right to be critical of the political social system espoused by the authorities and the right to peacefully advocate for any political ideas or visions so long as the ideas do not advocate hatred constituting incitement to discrimination or violence.

The Iranian authorities have recently embarked on another alarming execution spree, executing at least 115 people in November 2023 alone or almost double the number of executions carried out in November 2022. This spike comes as the Iranian authorities intensify their use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression, including against protesters, dissidents and members of oppressed ethnic minorities, particularly Kurds and Baluchis, who are disproportionately targeted by death sentences. The authorities are using this ultimate cruel and inhuman punishment to torment and terrorize people in Iran and impose silence and subservience through brute force. Iranian authorities have a long-standing history of secretly executing members of ethnic minorities, and concealing their fate and the whereabouts of their remains for years. The anguish inflicted on families due to this prolonged uncertainty violates the absolute prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment. 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, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 14 March 2024

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Mohammad (Hazhir) Faramarzi, Mohsen Mazloun, Pejman Fatehi and Vafa Azarbar (he; him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6466/2023/en/>