

**TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**  
**FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

# APPEAL FOR ACTION

## RE: FREE IRANIAN HIV DOCTORS IMMEDIATELY

Ahead of World AIDS Day on 1 December, Amnesty International is renewing its call for the immediate and unconditional release of Iranian brothers and HIV professionals, Drs Arash and Kamiar Alaei, who have been in prison since June 2008 on political charges widely believed to be linked to their professional work with international specialists on HIV and AIDS, particularly US institutions.



Dr Arash Alaei (pictured left) and Dr Kamiar Alaei (pictured below) are well known internationally for their work on HIV and AIDS, most notably in harm reduction approaches to the care of injecting drug users. At the time of his arrest, Dr Kamiar Alaei was a doctoral candidate at the State University of New York (SUNY) Albany School of Public Health. He holds a Masters degree in International Health from Harvard University and was due to resume his studies in Albany later in 2008. Prior to this he had worked with his brother in AIDS research in Iran, and along with other clinicians and advocates, the two had helped make the country a leader in prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. Dr Arash Alaei is the former Director of the International Education and Research Cooperation of the Iranian National Research Institute of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. Amnesty International believes their arrest is politically motivated and resulted from their

ties to US academic and research institutions and their professional travel abroad.

While in prison, the brothers were initially kept in solitary confinement but were later allowed to share a cell. They have been granted occasional temporary leave from prison to stay at their mother's house. Most recently they had a two-week release during Ramadan in August/September 2010. Currently, the brothers are not allowed to do volunteer work in the prison clinic, nor to work in the prison kitchen and bakery, as they had been previously. The brothers are reportedly having a very difficult time with their current situation but their health is believed to be holding up.

Dr Arash Alaei is serving a sentence of six years' imprisonment and is expected to remain in prison until 2014. Dr Kamiar Alaei was sentenced to three years in prison and is expected to be released in 2011. They are currently held together in a cell in Evin Prison, Tehran. Since their arrest, they have exhausted all appeals. The only remaining mechanism that could lead to their release is for the Supreme Leader to grant a pardon on the basis of a recommendation by the Amnesty and Clemency Commission, which, can be considered once they have served one-third of their sentence. Although Arash has already served two thirds of his sentence and promises of the doctors' imminent release have been made on the eve of religious holidays, there are no signs that they will be freed before their sentence is over.

Amnesty International believes the brothers are prisoners of conscience who have been sentenced solely on the basis of their professional work for the prevention of HIV and care of people affected by the disease – including work with with US institutions on HIV and AIDS – and the organization is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. The Iranian government should also ensure that health professionals are able to implement HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment without fear of reprisals.



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**PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:**

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Drs Arash and Kamiar Alaei, as their imprisonment appears to be politically motivated and related to their international contacts in the context of their work on HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment;
- Urging the Iranian authorities that pending their release, Drs Arash and Kamiar Alaei are protected from any form of ill-treatment, and are granted permission to resume their volunteer work in the prison clinic;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that health professionals are able to continue work on HIV and AIDS without fear of reprisals from any branch of government or the security forces.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 01/01/2011 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:** info\_leader@leader.ir  
 via website:  
<http://www.leader.ir/langs/en/index.php?p=letter> (English)  
 Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary  
 Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani  
 Howzeh Riyasat-e Qoveh Qazaiyeh  
 (Office of the Head of the Judiciary)  
 Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave., south of  
 Serah-e Jomhour, Tehran 1316814737  
 Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email:** Via website: <http://www.bia-judiciary.ir/tabid/62/Default.aspx> ;  
 2nd box (starred)=first name,3rd  
 box(starred)=family name,5th box  
 (starred)=email address, last  
 box=substance of message  
 Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:  
Mininister of Health and Medical  
 Education  
 Her Excellency Marzieh Vahid-  
 Dastjerdi. Ministry of Health,  
 Jomhour, Eslami Avenue  
 Hafez Crossing  
 Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran  
**Email:** ad@mohme.gov.ir or  
 pr@behdasht.gov.ir (in subject line:  
 FAO Marzieh Vahid\_Dastjerdi,  
 Minister)  
**Fax** +98 21 8836 4100 (unreliable;  
 please try three times and if it fails  
 please send email)  
 Salutation Your Excellency

ALSO SEND COPIES TO DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES ACCREDITED TO YOUR COUNTRY. PLEASE TRY AND SEND HARD COPIES OF LETTERS AS WELL AS EMAILS. IF YOU RECEIVE NO REPLY WITHIN SIX WEEKS OF SENDING YOUR LETTER, PLEASE SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER SEEKING A RESPONSE. PLEASE SEND COPIES OF ANY LETTERS YOU RECEIVE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH TEAM, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 0DW OR E-MAIL: [health@amnesty.org](mailto:health@amnesty.org)

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Arash Alaei was arrested on 22 June 2008, and his brother Kamiar on the following day. They were accused of plotting to overthrow the Iranian government and of "cooperating with an enemy government". They were tried in a closed court session held on 31 December 2008 and their sentence was announced on 19 January 2009. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern that the proceedings did not meet international standards for fair trial, as they were not told of all the evidence against them, nor did they have the right to call or examine witnesses. Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and medical professional bodies, have appealed for the brothers' release. The brothers' appeal against their conviction and sentence was rejected in April 2009, and a further appeal was rejected in May 2009. However, Amnesty International has learned that all opportunities for appeals have been exhausted.

Two others convicted with Drs Kamiar and Arash Alaei have since been released. Silva Harotonian, a maternal health worker for an international organization, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment and was pardoned on 10 March 2010; Mohammad Ehsani, a filmmaker, also sentenced to three years' imprisonment was released on 11 August 2009 also after receiving a pardon.

In May 2009, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in Opinion 6/2009. concluded that the detention of Drs Arash and Kamiar Alaei is "arbitrary, being in contravention of articles 9, 10, 25 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 9, 14, 18, 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political

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Rights, to which the Islamic Republic of Iran is a State party.” The Group also concluded that “the detention of the above-mentioned physicians is also contrary to articles 12 and 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to Principles 11-1, 17-2 and 18-1 of the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment” and called on the Iranian authorities to immediately take the necessary steps to redress the situation.<sup>1</sup>

Iran’s response to HIV and AIDS has been accorded international respect, particularly the preventative measures promoted by Drs Arash and Kamiar Alaei. According to the *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic* published by UNAIDS on 29 July 2008 “the... support for needle exchange projects in countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran... serve as clear examples of courageous, visionary leadership in the response to HIV”. However, the government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, which took office in August 2005, has started to remove its support for such centres. More information is available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/iranian-aids-doctors-tried-closed-hearing-20090108>.

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/13/30/Add.1 pp 285-286

