

URGENT ACTION

DEATH ROW AHWAZI ARAB MEN ON HUNGER STRIKE

Five Iranian Ahwazi Arab men have launched a hunger strike in protest at the Supreme Court's decision to uphold their death sentences and their treatment in prison, including torture and other ill-treatment and the authorities' refusal to allow them medical care.

The five men from Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority – **Mohammad Ali Amouri, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka**, his brother **Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka**, and teachers **Hashem Sha'bani Amouri** and **Hadi Rashidi (or Rashedi)** – whose death sentences were upheld by the Supreme Court on 9 January 2013 began a "dry" hunger strike (refusing water as well as food) on 2 March 2013 in protest at the decision. Their hunger strike is also in protest against their torture and other ill-treatment in Karoun Prison and the prison authorities' refusal to grant them medical treatment for various ailments including some which may have resulted from earlier torture or other ill-treatment. They have not been examined by a doctor despite their repeated requests.

In an apparent act of retaliation against the hunger strike, prison authorities initially barred all five men from making or receiving phone calls for five days. During a visit to the prison on 13 March, the men's families persuaded them to end their dry hunger strike but all five now remain on a "wet" hunger strike (refusing food). On 20 March, when their families arrived at prison for their weekly visitation, they were turned away by the prison authorities.

The men were arrested in early 2011 and sentenced to death on 7 July 2012 after being convicted of vaguely worded national security "offences" including "enmity against God and corruption on earth", "gathering and colluding against state security", and "spreading propaganda against the system" following an unfair trial.

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to stop the executions of the five men (naming them), overturn their death sentences and grant them retrials in proceedings which comply with fair trial standards, without recourse to the death penalty;
- Urging them to ensure they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, including as reprisals for their hunger strike and urging them to investigate allegations that the five men were tortured. Anyone found responsible for abuses should be brought to justice in accordance with international fair trial standards;
- Calling on them to ensure that the men are granted any medical attention they may require, and for them to be granted a resumption in face-to-face family visits and ongoing access to their lawyers.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 MAY 2013 TO:

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: info@dadiran.ir (Subject line: FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of Prisons in Khuzestan Province,
Reza Poostchi
Third Floor
Head Office of Prisons for Khuzestan Province
Next to 'Sepid Sports and Cultural Compound, Sepidar Boulevard
Ahvaz, Khuzestan
Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Dear Sir

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 Jomhouri
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: larijani@ipm.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 137/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/049/2012/en> and <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/029/2012/en>.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The five men are members or co-founders of the cultural institute Al-Hiwar – registered during the administration of former President Khatami – which organized events in the Arabic language including conferences, educational and art classes, and poetry recital gatherings in the south-western city of Ramshir. The organization was banned in May 2005, and many members of Al-Hiwar have since been arrested.

All five men were arrested at their homes in early 2011 in advance of the sixth anniversary of widespread protests by Ahwazi Arabs in April 2005 and were denied access to family members and lawyers for months afterwards. Mohammad Ali Amouri was arrested 20 days after he had been forcibly returned from Iraq, where he had fled in December 2007. He was not allowed family visits for the first nine months of detention and has reportedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated. 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's jaw and teeth were broken during his detention 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.

Hashem Sha'bani Amouri and Hadi Rashidi were featured in a programme aired by Iran's state-controlled English-language television station, Press TV, on 13 December 2011. Hashem Sha'bani said he was a member of the "Popular Resistance", a group which he said had ties to Saddam Hussein and Mu'ammar al-Gaddafi, the former leaders of Iraq and Libya. Hadi Rashidi was described as "the leader of the military wing of the Popular Resistance" and said he had participated in an attack on a house containing four government officials. Iranian courts frequently accept "confessions" extracted under duress as evidence.

A sixth man arrested around the same time and tried alongside the five – teacher Rahman Asakereh – was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment to be served in internal exile. His sentence was upheld in January 2013.

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 amid 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.

Under Article 38 of the Iranian Constitution and Article 9 of the Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Safeguarding Citizens' Rights, all forms of torture for the purpose of obtaining "confessions" are prohibited. Iran's Penal Code also provides for the punishment of officials who torture citizens in order to obtain "confessions". However, despite these legal and constitutional guarantees regarding the inadmissibility of testimony, oath, or confession taken under duress, forced "confessions" are sometimes broadcast on television even before the trial has concluded and are generally accepted as evidence in Iranian courts. Such broadcasts violate Iran's fair trial obligations under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a state party. They also violate Iranian law, including Article 37 of the Constitution, Article 2 of the 2004 Law on Respect for Legitimate Freedoms and Safeguarding Citizens' Rights and Note One to Article 188 of Iran's Criminal Code of Procedure, which criminalizes the publishing of the name and identity of a convict in the media before a final sentence has been passed.

Name: Mohammad Ali Amouri, Sayed Jaber Alboshoka, Sayed Mokhtar Alboshoka, Hashem Sha'bani Amouri, Hadi Rashidi
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 137/12 Index: MDE 13/014/2013 Issue Date: 26 March 2013