

URGENT ACTION

IRANIAN WRITER SENTENCED TO DEATH

Iranian prisoner of conscience Arzhang Davoodi, already in prison for nearly 11 years, has now been sentenced to death on a new charge of “enmity against God”, in relation to his peaceful political activism and writings.

Iranian writer and poet **Arzhang Davoodi** learned from his lawyer on 20 July 2014 that he had been sentenced to death for his alleged membership and support of banned group People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI). The sentence was imposed despite an apparent lack of evidence and after grossly unfair proceedings. He had been given less than an hour on 3 June to present his defence before a Revolutionary Court in the southern city of Bandar Abbas, which relayed it to a Revolutionary Court in Karaj, responsible for issuing the death sentence. Neither Arzhang Davoodi nor his lawyer were allowed to appear before the court which issued the verdict.

Arzhang Davoodi was arrested in 2003 and held in solitary confinement for prolonged periods during which he has said he was tortured and otherwise ill-treated and denied access to a lawyer and his family. He was sentenced, in March 2005, to 25 years' imprisonment, reduced to 10 years on appeal, on charges of “spreading propaganda against the system” and “establishing and directing an organization opposed to the government” for his peaceful activities, including directing a cultural education centre. In May 2014, he was sentenced to an additional two years' imprisonment, on the charge of “insulting the Supreme Leader” which is under consideration in an appeal court.

Arzhang Davoodi is a prisoner of conscience, jailed, and now sentenced to death, for his political opinions and peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression. He has no links with the PMOI or any armed groups. He is believed to have been accused of having ties with the PMOI merely because in prison he insisted on calling PMOI by its official name, *Mojahedin*, rather than by the term used by the Iranian authorities, *Monafeghin* (hypocrites).

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

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to overturn Arzhang Davoodi's death sentence;
- Calling on them to release Arzhang Davoodi immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Reminding them that under international law, the death penalty can be imposed only for “the most serious crimes”, interpreted as “intentional killing” and after proceedings that comply with the most rigorous internationally recognized standards for fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 SEPTEMBER 2014 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street- End of Shahid
KeshvarDoust Street,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Twitter: @khamenei_ir
Email: info_leader@leader.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
c/o Public Relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street intersection
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
(Subject line: FAO
Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani)
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

President of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Hassan Rouhani
The Presidency
Pasteur Street, Pasteur Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Email: media@rouhani.ir
Twitter: @HassanRouhani (English) and
@Rouhani_ir (Persian)

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arzhang Davoodi was arrested by Ministry of Intelligence officials on 9 November 2003 and taken to an undisclosed location for 10 days, during which he was allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated. He was later transferred to solitary confinement in Evin Prison for 109 days, held without access to a lawyer and his family – and subjected to further torture and other ill-treatment. He was eventually sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment by a Revolutionary Court in March 2005 on spurious charges for his peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association including directing *Parto-e Hekmat* Cultural Education Centre in Tehran, taking part in the making of the documentary *Forbidden Iran*, in which he spoke out about human rights violations in Iran, and writing about establishing a secular system of governance in Iran. His prison sentence was later reduced to 10 years which he finished serving in September 2013. He was previously the subject of UA 249/12 (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/059/2012/en>).

During his 11 years of imprisonment, Arzhang Davoodi has frequently been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, which has apparently left him with broken teeth, injuries to his eye, eardrum, shoulder and knee. He has been repeatedly shuffled between numerous prisons in Tehran and the Central Prison of Bandar Abbas, which is far from his family, and subjected to prolonged periods of solitary confinement. He is now held in the Central Prison of Bandar Abbas, among a group of over 200 convicted offenders in extremely poor conditions, with food that is insufficient and of poor quality, inadequate sanitary facilities and bedding and lack of access to items for personal hygiene.

Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran ruled in November 2012, after a fresh charge of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) was brought against Arzhang Davoodi, that the case fell outside the court's jurisdiction, apparently due to lack of credible evidence. However, it is understood that the Ministry of Intelligence later arranged for the case to be sent to Branch one of the Revolutionary Court in Karaj, which in turn delegated the conduct of Arzhang Davoodi's trial to Branch three of the Revolutionary Court in Bandar Abbas. Following a court session held on 3 June 2014, the Revolutionary Court in Bandar Abbas relayed Arzhang Davoodi's defence statement to Branch one of the Revolutionary Court in Karaj. Arzhang Davoodi was not allowed to tell his lawyer to attend this session in Bandar Abbas until a few days before its scheduled date, and met his lawyer in person for the first time only at the courtroom. The Revolutionary Court in Karaj eventually sentenced him to death without him or his lawyer present. Arzhang Davoodi was also sentenced, on 14 May, to a further two years' imprisonment, on a charge of “insulting the Supreme Leader”, by a Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The charge was imposed, apparently in relation to a phrase he wrote on the walls of the prison's bathroom, implying that rampant injustice and inequality prevails in Iran under the rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He has appealed against the sentence.

Under Article 287 of Iran's new Islamic Penal Code, which came into effect in May 2013, individuals may be sentenced to death for “enmity against God” only if they have personally resorted to the use of arms. Mere membership or support of an organization that has taken up arms against the state can no longer constitute a valid ground for a death sentence on charges of “enmity against God”. Under Article 15(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty, a person charged or convicted of a capital offence must benefit when a change of law following charge or conviction imposes a lighter penalty for that crime.

Name: Arzhang Davoodi
Gender m/f: m

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