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IRAN

EXECUTION LOOMS FOR TORTURED ACADEMIC

Tortured Swedish-Iranian academic Ahmadreza Djalali, arbitrarily detained in Tehran's Evin prison, is at risk of imminent execution according to multiple Iranian state media reports that his death sentence for "corruption on earth" (efsad-e fel-arz) will be carried out by 21 May 2022 at the latest. He was sentenced to death in 2017 following a grossly unfair trial that relied on torture-tainted "confessions." The authorities must halt any plans to execute him and release him immediately.

Eighteen months ago, on 24 November 2020, Ahmadreza Djalali was told his execution would be carried out in a week which led to international calls to halt Ahmadreza Djalali's execution. On 2 December 2020 after global interventions, his execution was stopped. From late November 2020 to early April 2021, Ministry of Intelligence agents tortured and otherwise ill-treated Ahmadreza Djalali while he was in incommunicado detention in prolonged solitary confinement in section 209 of Evin prison, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, including by keeping a bright light on in his cell 24 hrs a day, which he said caused him great mental distress, and forcing him to sleep on the floor on a thin blanket for over five months.

Ahmadreza Djalali was sentenced to death for "corruption on earth" (efsad-e fel-arz) in October 2017 after a grossly unfair trial before Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The court relied primarily on "confessions" that Ahmadreza Djalali says were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment while he was held in prolonged solitary confinement without access to a lawyer. Amnesty International has consistently held that the offence of "corruption on earth" fails to meet requirements for clarity and precision needed in criminal law and breaches the principle of legality and legal certainty. On 9 December 2018, his lawyers learned that Branch 1 of the Supreme Court had upheld his death sentence without granting them an opportunity to file their defence submissions on his behalf. The Supreme Court has rejected at least three requests for a judicial review of Ahmadreza Djalali's case. Ahmadreza Djalali has several health conditions for which he has not receive adequate medical treatment and medication. He underwent surgery on 21 January 2022 for his chronic back pain, but was transferred back to prison just one day afterwards, where he has been forced to again sleep on the floor, leading to worsening back pain.

Write to the Head of the Judiciary urging him to:

- immediately stop any plans to execute Ahmadreza Djalali
- quash his conviction and death sentence, and immediately release him and accord him an enforceable right to compensation, as per the recommendation of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention
- pending his release, ensure that Ahmadreza Djalali is provided with adequate medical care, protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and order a prompt, independent, effective,

and impartial investigation into his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, bringing to justice anyone found responsible in fair trials and without recourse to the death penalty

- establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Write to:

Head of the Judiciary,
Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15
1050 Bruxelles
Belgium

Email: secretariat@iranembassy.be

Salutation: Dear Mr. Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei:

Additional information

On 4 May 2022, several major state media outlets in Iran simultaneously [published](#) identical articles which stated that according to “informed sources, Ahmadreza Djalali’s death sentence has been taken up for implementation and the sentence shall be carried out, at the very latest, by the end of Ordibehesht [21 May 2022].” These articles were published just days after the prosecution authorities in Sweden sought a sentence of life imprisonment for a former Iranian prison official, Hamid Nouri, for his alleged involvement in Iran’s [1988 prison massacres](#) in which thousands of political dissidents were forcibly disappeared and extrajudicially executed in secret. The media outlets [stated](#) that according to “some political analysts... in carrying out the sentence of Ahmadreza Djalali, the government of Iran will not only implement a binding judicial order but also bar the government of Sweden from undertaking further actions similar to the detention of Hamid Nouri.” State media reports in Iran concerning high profile political cases are widely known to be issued in close coordination with the country’s judiciary and its intelligence and security apparatus.

Ahmadreza Djalali is a medical doctor and academic who was living in Sweden and on a business trip to Iran when he was arbitrarily arrested on 26 April 2016. He was held in Evin prison for seven months in section 209, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence. He was held for three months in prolonged solitary confinement, without access to a lawyer. In a letter written from prison in August 2017, Ahmadreza Djalali said that during this period he was subjected to torture and other ill-treatment in order to force him to “confess” to being a spy. This included threats to execute him, kill or otherwise harm his children, who live in Sweden, and his mother, who lived in Iran and died in 2021. He has said that he was forced to read out “confessions” pre-written by his interrogators in front of a video camera. Ahmadreza Djalali denies the accusations against him and says they have been fabricated by the authorities. In the same letter written from inside prison in August 2017, Ahmadreza Djalali said he was held solely because of his refusal to use his academic ties in European institutions to spy for the Iranian authorities. On 17 December 2018 Iran’s state-run TV aired Ahmadreza Djalali’s “confessions” during a programme titled Axing the root, which used dramatic music, graphics and international news footage interspersed with Ahmadreza Djalali’s “confessions”, along with a voiceover presenting him as a “spy”. By extracting and airing these forced “confessions”, Iranian authorities violated Ahmadreza Djalali’s right to the presumption of innocence as well as the right not

to be forced into incriminating himself. Ahmadreza Djalali has since said the broadcast “confessions” were filmed while he was being held in solitary confinement, without access to a lawyer.

In November 2017, the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) called on Iran to release Ahmadreza Djalali immediately and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations, as he had been detained without an arrest warrant, was only formally charged 10 months after his arrest, and had been “effectively prevented from exercising his right to challenge the lawfulness of his detention”. They also found that his right to a fair trial had been violated so gravely “as to give Mr Djalali’s deprivation of liberty an arbitrary character”.

Amnesty International has [documented](#) a pattern of systematic fair trial rights violations in Iran, beginning from the time of arrest right up until when defendants stand trial. Detainees are often arrested without warrants and held in prolonged solitary confinement in undisclosed locations without access to their families. Individuals detained, investigated and prosecuted are subjected to grossly unfair judicial proceedings, including in cases involving politically motivated charges. Prosecution authorities and interrogators belonging to security and intelligence bodies, including the ministry of intelligence, systematically deny detainees their right to access a lawyer from the time of arrest and during the investigation phase. Torture and other ill-treatment are widespread and systematic, especially during interrogations. Iran’s police, intelligence and security forces, and prison officials have subjected detainees to prolonged solitary confinement, beatings, floggings, suspension, forced administration of chemical substances, electric shocks and sexual violence. Amnesty International has also [documented](#) how prison and prosecution authorities have deliberately denied prisoners access to adequate health care and committed violations of the right to life by deliberately denying ailing prisoners lifesaving healthcare and refusing to investigate and ensure accountability for unlawful deaths in custody.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.