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IRAN FOUR KURDISH MEN AT GRAVE RISK OF EXECUTION

Anwar Khezri, Farhad Salimi, Kamran Sheikheh, and Khosrow Basharat, members of Iran's Kurdish Sunni minority, face a serious threat of execution in Ghezel Hesar prison, Alborz province. This comes amid a concerning increase in executions across the country. Notably, three other Iranian Kurdish men were arbitrarily executed between November 2023 and January 2024 in the same case. All seven men were convicted of "corruption on earth" (efsad-e fel-arz) and received a death sentence following an extremely unfair trial, marked by allegations of torture and mistreatment.

Write to the Head of Judiciary urging him to:

- Immediately halt any plans to execute Anwar Khezri, Farhad Salimi, Kamran Sheikheh and Khosrow Basharat, quash their convictions and death sentences.
- Grant them fair retrials in proceedings in line with international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty and excluding coerced "confessions".
- Ensure that they are protected from further torture and other ill-treatment and their torture allegations investigated, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials.
- Immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Write to:

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

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In February 2020, Anwar Khezri wrote an open letter to Ebrahim Raisi, the then Head of the Judiciary, outlining serious human rights violations he experienced at the hands of Ministry of Intelligence agents, judges, and prison authorities. Khezri attempted suicide after enduring 56 days of torture, including beatings to his chest, head, and soles of his feet in a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility referred to as a "*torture chamber*." Despite receiving blood transfusions for blood loss related to the suicide attempt, he was returned to prison the next day against medical advice. Khezri was forced to sign "confessions" as torture resumed, including a mock execution in August 2017.

Khosrow Basharat, following his arrest, faced repeated beatings with electric cables, suspension from the ceiling by cuffed hands, and forced exposure to the sounds of others being tortured, causing sleep deprivation and severe distress. After three weeks, he was coerced into signing a pre-written

"confession." In February 2020, Farhad Salimi revealed pressure to make forced "confessions" and dismiss his chosen lawyer, but no investigations into torture claims were conducted.

After their arrests, the seven men were initially held separately in a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Urumieh before being transferred to prisons in West Azerbaijan province. After more than six years in pre-trial detention, they were sentenced to death in May 2016 for "*corruption on earth*" and national security offenses. The initial trial in March 2016 lasted just five minutes. On appeal, their sentences were overturned in March 2017, leading to a retrial in mid-2018, resulting in death sentences upheld by the Supreme Court on February 3, 2020.

In September 2017, Khezri, Sheikheh, and Basharat were transferred for a separate murder trial in Urumieh. In July 2018, Sheikheh was convicted of murder and sentenced to death and 10 years' imprisonment, while Khezri and Basharat received 10 years for complicity to murder.

Ghasem Abesteh, Ayoub Karimi, and Davoud Abdollahi's arbitrary executions contribute to an alarming trend of increased executions by Iranian authorities. In November 2013 alone, at least 115 people were executed, nearly double the number in November 2022. This rise is part of the intensified use of the death penalty in 2023, particularly against oppressed minorities, protesters, and dissidents.

Ethnic minorities, including Kurds, Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, and Turkmen, face discrimination in education, employment, and political office. They also experience disproportionate death sentences for vague charges like "*corruption on earth*" and secret executions. Religious minorities, such as Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Christians, Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, and Yaresan, also suffer discrimination in law and practice, including arbitrary detention, unjust prosecutions, torture, and other ill-treatment.

On June 30, 2022, Tehran's Prosecutor, Ali Salehi, visited Raja'i Shahr prison, where the seven men were held. He stated that "*Sunni people don't deserve the right to life in Iran,*" prompting 22 Sunni prisoners to go on hunger strike in protest.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, considering it a violation of the right to life and the ultimate cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment. Amnesty International consistently urges all states, including Iran, to establish an official moratorium on executions with the aim of abolishing the death penalty entirely.

Please take action at your earliest convenience!