



**December 2020**

**Our Next Meeting:  
Thursday, December 10th,  
7:00pm via Zoom.**

**Contact Ron for  
information on attending  
the virtual meeting.**



## **URGENT ACTION: CHINA**

### **Lawyer Shares Allegations of Torture**

Name and Pronoun: Chang Weiping (He/Him)

Human rights lawyer Chang Weiping, known for defending the rights of people facing discrimination, was taken away by police officers in Baoji City, Shanxi Province, on October 22, 2020. He is being held incommunicado under “residential surveillance in a designated location” (RSDL) on suspicion of “inciting subversion of state power”. The arrest came six days after Chang posted a video on YouTube sharing details about his experience of torture during the 10 days he spent in RSDL detention in January 2020. The fact that Chang was subjected to torture before and is being denied access to his family and lawyer increases the risk that he might be subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.

Chang Weiping is a human rights lawyer in Baoji City, Shanxi, who is known for his work defending the rights of people facing discrimination based on their health status, sex/gender identity and sexual orientation. Due to his outspokenness and the sensitivity of his work, the Baoji City Judicial Bureau suspended his law licence in October 2018. As a result of continued pressure and interference from the authorities, Chang Weiping was unable to obtain employment at other law firms in 2019. Finally, in January 2020, the authorities officially revoked his lawyer’s licence.



Chang Weiping was taken away by the authorities on October 22, 2020. As he is now living alone, no one knew about the arrest until the authorities informed Chang’s wife through a phone call later that evening. The authorities have yet to provide any documentation about the details of Chang’s arrest.

On October 26, Chang’s father and lawyers Chang’s family had appointed to represent him went together to Gaoxin District Branch of the Baoji City Public Security Bureau to seek information regarding Chang’s arrest. All their requests – including for legal documentation, access to Chang and an application for bail – were rejected.

This is not the first time this year that Chang Weiping has been held under “residential surveillance in a designated location” (RSDL). He was detained for 10 days in January 2020 after attending an informal and private meeting in the city of Xiamen in December 2019 at which human rights activists discussed the situation of civil society and current affairs in China. Another person who attended the Xiamen meeting, human rights lawyer Ding Jiayi, remains in detention after being detained by police on December 26, 2019.

Chang Weiping was arrested six days after releasing a video clip on YouTube in which he shared that he had been subject to torture during his detention in January 2020. Chang Weiping said that police tied him to a restraining device known as a “tiger chair” for 24 hours a day and was interrogated 16 times. He also reported being subjected to heavy surveillance after his release.

“Residential surveillance in a designated location” is a measure that, under certain circumstances, enables criminal investigators to hold individuals for up to six months outside the formal detention system in what can amount to a form of secret incommunicado detention. When held without access to legal counsel of their choice, their families or others, suspects placed under this form of “residential surveillance” are at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. This form of detention has been used to curb the activities of human rights defenders, including lawyers, activists and religious practitioners. Activists and human rights defenders continue to be systematically subjected to monitoring, harassment, intimidation, arrest and detention.

### TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter by January 16, 2021 to one or both government officials listed calling on the authorities to:

- release Chang Weiping immediately and unconditionally, unless there is sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed an internationally recognized offense and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;
- pending his release, ensure that Chang Weiping has regular, unrestricted access to family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

2. Click [here](#) to report on the actions you took for Urgent Action 164.20. It’s important to report because AIUSA share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### **Director He Dong**

Baoji City Public Security Bureau  
57, Zhongshanxilu,  
Weibin Qu, Baoji Shi,  
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721001  
People’s Republic of China

#### **Ambassador Cui Tiankai**

Embassy of the People’s Republic of China  
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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

## **AIUSA Group 48**

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### **Postage Rates**

**Within the United States**  
\$0.55 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz  
\$0.35 - Domestic Postcard

**International Postage**  
\$1.20 - Up to 1 oz



Graphic by Megan Harrington

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81244529915>

December 10th is International Human Rights Day. Across the globe, supporters will come together on this day for Amnesty International's Write For Rights campaign, and will write letters for those whose basic rights are being attacked. Grab a drink, a snack, and a seat at your home table to join us.

Take a stand for human rights.

All are welcome! Your words have power.



## **WRITE FOR RIGHTS: A CHANCE FOR GOVERNMENTS TO STAND UP FOR HUMANITY**

(November 20th, 2020) Amnesty International today launches the world's biggest human rights campaign, Write for Rights, calling on governments to put right injustices against individuals who are detained or persecuted in countries across the globe, and to lead by example in building a fairer post- COVID-19 world.

“Devastating though it has been, the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought out the best in people. We have witnessed countless acts of compassion and solidarity as people come together in their communities to help those most in need. Sadly, many governments have pursued the opposite course, detaining and persecuting people who stand up for human rights,” said Julie Verhaar, Acting Secretary General of Amnesty International.

“We are at a crossroads – we can all choose to build a future which puts kindness, solidarity, tolerance and human rights at its core. Governments must use this moment to show that they can put right injustices by releasing prisoners of conscience, ending the persecution of human rights defenders, and upholding every person's right to freedom of expression.”

## URGENT ACTION: EGYPT

### DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S HEALTH AT RISK

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ibrahim Ezz El-Din (he/him)

On October 31st, 2020, the pre-trial detention of human rights researcher Ibrahim Ezz el-Din was renewed for 45 days. His health has been deteriorating since his arrest on June 11th, 2019 and his 167 days of enforced disappearance. Ibrahim's poor health puts him at increased risk of the effects of COVID-19 that has reportedly been spreading in Egypt's notoriously overcrowded and unhygienic prisons.

Ibrahim is a researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), where he focuses on the right to housing. Plain clothes police arrested Ibrahim on the night of June 11th, 2019 from the street near his home in Cairo. The authorities concealed his fate and whereabouts for 167 days and denied having him in custody to his relatives and lawyers.

On November 26th, 2019, Ibrahim was brought before the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP).

According to his lawyer, he appeared physically weak and lost a considerable amount of weight. He told the prosecutor that he was tortured during his incommunicado detention to extract information about his relationship to the ECRF and about the organization's work. He also complained about being held in inhumane and degrading conditions of detention, at several security agencies locations.

On October 31st, 2020, the pre-trial detention of human rights researcher Ibrahim Ezz El-Din was renewed for 45 days. Ibrahim's lawyers told Amnesty International that he appeared frail and thin during the hearing. Following a prison visit on October 27th, 2020, his mother also reported that he seemed withdrawn. He is the fifth person affiliated with the ECRF to have been arrested since 2016. His arrest follows the detention of labour rights lawyer Haytham Mohamdeen, who also works at ECRF, on May 31st, 2019 on trumped-up charges of "aiding a terrorist group". In May 2018, Egyptian security forces arrested

Amal Fathy, a human rights defender and wife of the Executive Director of ECRF and former Amnesty International Researcher Mohamed Lotfy, over a video critical of the authorities' failure to address rampant sexual harassment. She was conditionally released in December 2018 and put under house arrest until March 14th, 2020 when SSSP lifted all precautionary measures imposed on her. In 2016, authorities had also

arrested Minorities Programme Director Mina Thabet and head of the board Ahmed Abdallah, before releasing them without charge. Ibrahim has been unable to defend his master's thesis as scheduled in December 2019 given his arrest. While Ibrahim's lawyer obtained permission for him to receive books in prison, he was prevented from writing his thesis by prison authorities. Ibrahim is allowed one visit per month for a duration of 10 minutes. He also receives packages that include food and medicines once a week.

Ibrahim's arrest came amid a human rights crisis, characterized by a crackdown on independent civil society and arrests of hundreds of individuals over their human rights

work or their exercise of their rights to freedom of expression or peaceful assembly. The crackdown has affected journalists, football fans, critics, politicians and staff of civil society organizations. Many of those arrested have been abducted and subjected to enforced disappearances, before being charged with unfounded "terrorism" charges and held in pre-trial detention for months or even years, without trial. (see more)

Amnesty International has documented Egyptian security forces' use of enforced disappearance as a tool against political activists and protesters, including students and children in Egypt (see more). Hundreds of people forcibly disappeared were arbitrarily arrested and held incommunicado in secret detention with no access to their lawyers or families and no external judicial oversight. ECRF is one of the main Egyptian NGOs working extensively on the issue of enforced disappearances. Amnesty International has documented how the Egyptian authorities mishandled the outbreak of COVID-19 in prisons and other



detention facilities, including by failing to provide prisoners with sanitary products or systematically test and isolate those suspected of infection. The authorities released thousands of prisoners in annual pardons, but this was insufficient to reduce overcrowding. Pre-trial detainees and those held in political cases were excluded from the pardons. Authorities also arbitrarily arrested and harassed relatives and supporters of prisoners for expressing concerns over their health. The authorities banned prison visits between March and August citing COVID-19 fears but failed to provide regular alternative means of communication between prisoners and their families and lawyers. Prison officials denied any family visits throughout 2020 to several detainees held in relation to political cases. (see more)

### Sample Letter

*I am writing to you to raise concern about the ongoing arbitrary detention of human rights researcher Ibrahim Ezz el-Din at the Tora Investigation Prison. Prior to his transfer to prison on November 26th, 2019, he was forcibly disappeared for 167 days at undisclosed locations, where he said he was tortured. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful human rights work.*

*On October 31st, 2020, the Cairo Criminal Court renewed Ibrahim's detention for 45 days pending investigations into case No. 488/2019 over baseless charges of "contributing to the achievement of the objectives of a terrorist group" and the "publication of false information undermining national security".*

*According to informed sources, Ibrahim suffers from an inflammation in his lumbar vertebra, chronic allergies, and a fungal infection of the tongue due to poor conditions of detention. In April 2020, Ibrahim was taken to the prison's hospital, but the prison authorities did not share his medical record with his family, hindering their ability to consult a private doctor and prescribe him the appropriate dosage of medication. The prison hospital does not have X-ray equipment needed to diagnose Ibrahim's back pain. Ibrahim's poor health puts him at increased risk of the effects of a virus like COVID-19, according to the World Health Organization's list of vulnerable groups, particularly as he suffers from chronic allergies that cause respiratory difficulties. According to medical professionals familiar with Ibrahim's case, the torture he endured while forcibly disappeared, in addition to the denial of adequate medical care by the Tora Investigation Prison authorities, might have triggered his depression. Ibrahim attempted suicide twice in 2020.*

### TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 104.19. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### **Public Prosecutor Hamada al-Sawi**

Office of the Public Prosecutor

Madinat al-Rehab

Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt

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Twitter: @EgyptJustice

Dear Counselor,

#### **Ambassador Yasser Reda**

Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt

3521 International Ct NW

Washington, DC 20008

Email: [embassy@egyptembassy.net](mailto:embassy@egyptembassy.net)

Twitter: @EgyptEmbassyUSA

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: January 15th, 2021.**

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

*I urge you to release Ibrahim Ezz El-Din immediately and unconditionally given that his detention stems solely from his peaceful human rights work. I call on you to ensure that, pending his release, he has access to adequate health care, including psychiatric services if needed. I also urge you to open an investigation into his enforced disappearance and the torture to which he has been subjected and bring all those responsible to justice in fair trials.*

*Yours sincerely,*

# URGENT ACTION: IRAN

## Austrian-Iranian Prisoner at Risk

NAME AND PRONOUN: Massud Mossaheb (he/him)

Massud Mossaheb, a 73-year-old Austrian-Iranian dual national, is serving a 10-year prison term imposed after a grossly unfair trial for vague national security offenses. He is being held in Tehran's Evin prison and has serious medical conditions, including heart failure and diabetes. He is at heightened risk of severe illness or death if he contracts COVID-19.

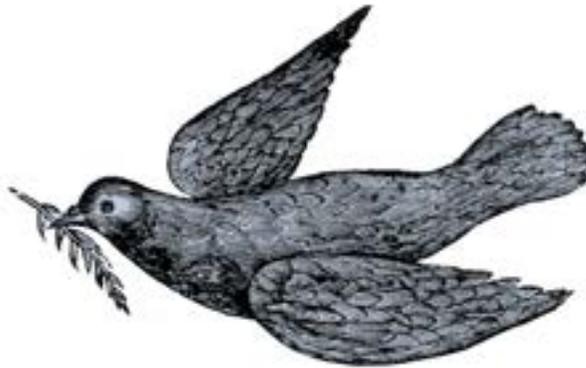
Massud Mossaheb was in poor health prior to his imprisonment and regularly received medical treatment from specialists. According to information available to the organization from informed sources as well as a letter that Massud Mossaheb wrote to the authorities from inside prison on August 5th, 2020 requesting medical treatment, he suffers from several serious medical conditions and has had numerous operations in the past. He suffers from heart disease; diabetes; kidney failure; fatty liver; and musculoskeletal problems of the knee, feet and back. He also suffers from recurrent episodes of the inflammatory bowel disease diverticulitis, for which he was due to have surgery to remove parts of his bowel when he was arrested in January 2019. He previously had a transient ischaemic attack, also called a "mini stroke", which is a serious condition where the blood supply to the brain is temporarily disrupted. In 2011, he suffered complications following the surgical removal of the prostate. Several years ago, his thyroid gland was surgically removed, and he is required to take thyroid medication. He has been denied access to adequate medical care and to specialist medical professionals outside prison. For a time, he was also denied access to his daily medication. Massud Mossaheb is a mechanical engineer and has worked in the aerospace industry for decades. In recent years, he worked as a consultant with different companies, and was arrested in Tehran while he was accompanying a delegation representing Med Austron, a radiation therapy technology company which provides cancer treatment and research. In a joint venture with Iran,

the company worked with the Austrian authorities and Iran's ministry of health, ministry of foreign affairs and the Atomic Agency Organization of Iran to build a hospital providing ion therapy treatment. Massud Mossaheb was also one of the co-founders of the Iran-Austrian Friendship Society, which is a non-governmental group established in Austria to build closer ties with Iran.

After his arrest in January 2019 and during his detention in a hotel room, ministry of intelligence interrogators told him they had monitored and observed him for the past two decades and considered every trip and vacation he had taken to Iran during that time as a sign of espionage. Three days after his arrest, he was transferred to Section 209 of Evin prison, which is under the control of the ministry of intelligence, where his interrogators subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment including through the denial of his spectacles without which he is unable to see properly. He

was not allowed any family visits until April 16th, 2019. Around 50 days into his detention, he was moved from solitary confinement to an overcrowded cell in the quarantine section of the prison and is currently being held in Section 7 of the prison.

During Massud Mossaheb's trial, which took place between February 1st and April 26th, 2020, forced "confessions" were used as admissible evidence against him. In the court verdict, the prosecution claimed that he had worked with the intelligence services of Israel and Germany for the past two decades, that he had used his position with the Iran-Austrian Friendship Society as a guise under which to carry out his activities and pass intelligence about Iran to Israel and Germany. They also alleged that he had received money as "financial compensation for his espionage services". On July 13th, 2020, his lawyer was told by the authorities that the verdict had been upheld and was final. On August 11th, 2020, the spokesperson of the judiciary, Gholamhossein Esmaili, announced Massud Mossaheb's conviction and sentence during his weekly press conference. This was followed by a propaganda



video published on August 13th, 2020 by the state-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting which showed Massud Mossaheb forced “confessions”.

Amnesty International has previously expressed concern about the situation of prisoners in Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Iranian authorities have failed to sufficiently protect the country’s prison population. Leaked official letters have revealed that the Ministry of Health ignored repeated requests from the Prisons Organization for adequate resources to tackle the spread of the virus in prisons. According to the World Health Organization, prison populations are particularly exposed to infectious diseases like COVID-19 and conditions of detention can exacerbate the risks.

### Sample Letter

*Dear Mr. Raisi,*

*The health of Massud Mossaheb, a 73-year-old Austrian-Iranian dual national arbitrarily detained in Tehran’s Evin prison, is declining and his life may be at risk. He has serious medical conditions, including heart and kidney failure, diabetes and high blood pressure, for which he needs ongoing specialist medical care and daily access to medication. According to informed sources, the authorities have refused to transfer him to a heart specialist outside prison despite recommendations by a prison doctor. The spread of COVID-19 in Iran’s prisons puts him at heightened risk of severe illness or death.*

*Massud Mossaheb was arrested in Tehran on January 29th, 2019 by plain clothes ministry of intelligence agents. According to informed sources, they held him in a hotel room for three days, where they subjected him to torture through sleep deprivation, interrogated him without a lawyer present, and coerced him into signing two documents by falsely promising to release him and allow him to return to Austria. They then transferred him to Section 209 of Evin prison where, according to informed sources, he was tortured. On three separate occasions between July 31st and August 7th, 2019, he was removed from prison, taken to the same hotel in which he was held after arrest and forced to read pre-written incriminating “confessions” on camera. He was denied access to a lawyer during the investigation phase and his chosen lawyer was rejected by the presiding judge in Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran who, instead, appointed one from a state- approved list. The first time he had access to his state-appointed lawyer was on October 2nd, 2019. On April 27th, 2020, he was convicted of “espionage for Germany”, “collaborating*

*with a hostile government”, in reference to Israel, and “receiving illicit funds” from both governments. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison. He has denied all charges. His trial was grossly unfair, with the court relying on torture-tainted “confessions”, which he retracted in court and told the judge he had made under torture. His sentence was upheld without an appeal hearing. Under Iran’s sentencing guidelines, he will be required to serve 10 years. On August 13th, 2020, state media broadcast his forced “confessions” in a propaganda video.*

*I ask you to quash Massud Mossaheb’s conviction and sentence and release him unless he is charged with an internationally recognizable offense and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards. I further call on you to urgently release him on medical grounds because, as an older person with pre-existing medical conditions, he is at heightened risk of severe illness or death if he contracts COVID-19 in prison.*

*Yours sincerely,*

### TAKE ACTION:

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to the government official listed below. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 162.20. It’s important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

#### **Head of Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi**

c/o H.E. Majid Takht Ravanchi  
Permanent Mission of the Islamic  
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PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 31st, 2020.  
Please check with the Amnesty office in your  
country if you wish to send appeals after the  
deadline.