



November 2020

Our Next Meeting:
Thursday, November 12th,
7:00pm via Zoom.
Contact Ron for an
invitation to attend the
virtual meeting.



Francisco de Goya

**Silence in the face of
injustice is complicity
with the oppressor.**

Ginetta Sagan



URGENT ACTION: CHINA

12 HONGKONGERS FORMALLY ARRESTED

NAME AND PRONOUN: Cheng Tsz-ho (he/him), Cheung Chun-fu (he/him), Liu Tsz-man (he/him), Quinn Moon (she/her), Tang Kai-yin (he/him), Li Tsz-yin (he/him), Li Yu-hin (he/him), Wong Wai-yin (he/him)

Twelve Hongkongers arrested on August 23, 2020 by the Chinese coast guard were formally arrested on September 30th – two for allegedly organizing people to cross the border between Hong Kong and China and the other 10 for allegedly crossing the border. Having been detained for more than 45 days without access to their families and family-appointed lawyers, the 12 individuals remain at imminent risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Cheng Tsz-ho, Cheung Chun-fu, Liu Tsz-man, Quinn Moon, Tang Kai-yin, Li Tsz-yin, Li Yu-hin, Wong Wai-yin and four other individuals were intercepted by coast guard officers from mainland China after leaving Hong Kong on a speedboat on August 23, 2020. On September 30, 2020, Yantian District People's Procuratorate announced that it has approved the arrest of the 12 Hongkongers. This means that the 12 individuals could remain in custodial detention for three months or more while the case is investigated further by the police. Quinn and Tang were arrested for allegedly "organizing other persons to secretly cross the border" and the ten others for "secretly crossing the border". The families have been urging the mainland Chinese authorities to ensure the rights of the 12 individuals, as well as calling on the Hong Kong government to provide more information.

On September 20, some family members of the 12 detained individuals demanded the Hong Kong Police Force to provide more information about the arrest of the 12 individuals as the families believed that the Hong Kong police took part in the arrest operation. According to the families, the Hong Kong police asked them questions about their campaigning efforts for the release of the 12 and how the families organized themselves. The police did not provide additional information and asked them to seek help at the Immigration Department. According to an article by Hong Kong Secretary for Security John Lee and a government response to a media inquiry about the alleged violation of the rights of the 12 individuals, the Hong Kong government has made clear it has no intention of interfering with "the law enforcement of other jurisdictions".

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases in which detained individuals in mainland China, many of them human rights defenders, have been routinely deprived of their right to see lawyers that they or their families have chosen to represent them. In some instances, the authorities have appointed lawyers for detainees without their consent or consent of the family. In other cases, the authorities threatened lawyers to drop cases, claimed that detainees dismissed family-hired lawyers without producing any proof or stopped families from hiring lawyers – all of which effectively amounts to depriving the detainees’ of their right to legal representation.

Individuals deprived of legal representation of their own choice are often denied access to information about their legal rights, making them more vulnerable to unfair legal procedures. Before being arrested and detained in mainland China for “secretly crossing the border”, 11 of the 12 individuals were arrested in Hong Kong for a range of alleged offenses, including conspiring to wound with intent, rioting, assaulting a police officer, conspiring to commit arson, possessing a substance with intent to destroy or damage property, making an explosive substance, committing arson with intent and conspiring to commit arson with intent.

One of the 12 detainees, Li Yu-hin, reportedly left Hong Kong to seek asylum after he was arrested for “possessing ammunition without license” and “colluding with foreign or external elements to endanger national security”. Li is among the 22 activists and protesters who have been arrested for violating the Hong Kong national security law so far since its enactment on 30 June 2020. The United Nations human rights office and expert bodies have repeatedly expressed concerns about the national security law, stating the broadly worded legislation can lead to “discriminatory or arbitrary interpretation and enforcement which could undermine human rights protection”. Some among the 28 arrested individuals are accused of endangering national security solely for acts of peaceful expression, such as possessing banners with political slogans or posting on social media platforms. According to international human rights law, “national security” cannot be invoked to deny people the right to express different political views and to exercise their other human rights as protected by international legal standards.

Sample Letter

Dear Director Fang,

I am writing to express my grave concern for 12 Hongkongers who have been formally arrested for “secretly crossing the border” and “organizing other persons to secretly cross the border” on September 30, 2020. Two of them were under 18 years old when arrested. Held incommunicado for more than 45 days, I am concerned that they are at imminent risk of unfair trials and even torture and other ill-treatment. It is distressing to learn that the Yantian District Detention Centre has not allowed any of the family-hired lawyers to meet with the 12 individuals. Hong Kong Secretary for Security John Lee announced on September 19th, that the 12, including a 17-year-old boy, had “chosen their own lawyers” and were “in good health”. In a public statement issued on 1 September 19th, the

AIUSA Group 48

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families refused to acknowledge these lawyers claimed to be chosen by the 12 detainees. Furthermore, at least four of the family-hired lawyers have withdrawn from this case after being threatened and intimidated by the authorities to quit.

Meeting lawyers of one's own choosing is an integral part of right to a fair trial and a fundamental safeguard for the prevention of torture and other ill-treatment. Denying these 12 individuals access to legal representation and to family members is in contravention of international human rights, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Basic Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, as well as China's Criminal Procedure Law. It is extremely worrying that there is no way for family members or family-hired lawyers to confirm whether the 12 are in good health. I am concerned about three individuals who have existing health conditions and require regular prescribed medication. Additionally, juvenile justice protections set forth in international law and the China Criminal Procedural Law should be provided to the youngest detainees.

I call on you to immediately ensure that the 12 individuals have regular and effective access to family and family-appointed lawyers without delay; ensure that the 12 individuals are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment; and allow the 12 individuals prompt, regular and unrestricted access to medical care on request or as necessary.

Yours sincerely,

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 by December 13, 2020.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 14.20. 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.

Director Fang Hongsheng

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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

TODAY'S REPORT ON FAMILY SEPARATION HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

October 29, 2020 -- Responding to the House Judiciary Committee releasing the findings of its 21-month investigation into the development and execution of the Trump Administration's family separation policy, which resulted in more than 2,500 migrant children becoming separated from their parents, Denise Bell, the researcher for refugee and migrant rights at Amnesty International USA said:

"Today's report only confirms what this administration's immigration policies have shown: cruelty was always the point. This administration's deliberate policy to separate families inflicted severe mental suffering — all in order to deter people from seeking safety or to coerce them into giving up. This is

called torture, and there must be accountability for these heinous acts."

"While the harms wrought by family separation can never fully heal, a criminal investigation is a critical and necessary step to ensure that such wrongs are never repeated. Any government officials who participated in, ordered, authorized, condoned, or acquiesced in torture or other crimes should be investigated. There must be an effective criminal investigation of all government officials, personnel, and contractors who are responsible for this shameful period of our history — no matter their current or former level of office."



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URGENT ACTION: IRAN

ACTIVIST'S SENTENCE INCREASED TO 15 YEARS

NAME AND PRONOUN: Abbas Lesani (he/him)

Azerbaijani Turkic activist, Abbas Lesani, arbitrarily imprisoned in Ardabil prison, Ardabil province, was sentenced to 15 years in prison by an appeal court after a grossly unfair trial. The appeal proceedings were presided over by a judge who had filed the charges against him in his previous capacity as prosecutor. In July 2020, the Supreme Court rejected his request for a judicial review.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abbas Lesani has spent decades advocating for the rights of the Azerbaijani Turkic ethnic minority and has been arrested numerous times as a result. His previous arrests have stemmed from peaceful activities such as publishing a calendar in the Azerbaijani Turkic language, and taking part in Azerbaijani Turkic cultural gatherings on International Mother Language Day and ceremonies commemorating several Azerbaijani Turks who were killed during protests in May 2006 when security forces used excessive force, including teargas and live ammunition, to disperse protests. He has faced several unfair trials and subsequent convictions on national security related charges in relation to his activism.

Abbas Lesani's was arrested on January 15th, 2019 by plain clothes ministry of intelligence agents while he was in Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province, after being summoned there in connection to charges related to his activism.

Following his arrest, his family repeatedly visited prosecution offices, Revolutionary Courts, police stations, prisons and other known detention centres in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province, and Ardabil, Ardabil province, travelling hundreds of kilometres to enquire about him, but the authorities refused to provide them with information. Six weeks after his arrest, his family learned from the office of the prosecutor in Ardabil that he was being held in a detention centre in Ardabil but the family was denied contact with him for a further two weeks when he was allowed a visit with his wife in the presence of security officials. The authorities subjected his wife to interrogations during this visit.

Abbas Lesani's trial, which was held before Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Ardabil between June 10th and June 27th, 2019 was grossly unfair. He was denied access to a lawyer until after the investigative stage of his case was complete, meaning that he was repeatedly interrogated without legal representation. In a verdict reviewed by Amnesty International, the court cited as "evidence" peaceful activities that are protected under the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly in international human rights law. They included: holding meetings in his home and attending cultural gatherings; speaking about the history of the Azerbaijani Turkic ethnic minority community in Iran, including on the protests that took place in 2006; and speaking to media organizations outside Iran. The court verdict also accused him of communicating with GAMAC

(Turkish acronym for South Azerbaijan National Liberation Front), which is a group based outside Iran that posts global and regional news stories online, and of establishing a group inside Iran, which Abbas Lesani has consistently denied. The court verdict refers to Abbas Lesani's human rights work as "so-called civil activism" and cites speeches, interviews and discussions as evidence of national security offences, including his alleged association with GAMAC. On September 26th, 2019, Branch 1 of the Court of Appeal in Ardabil province increased his sentence from eight years to 15 years.

Under international law, fair trial rights must be respected during appeals, as they are part of the criminal proceedings. Fair trial rights include the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare the appeal,

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the right to counsel, and the right to a hearing before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal. The higher court which hears the review must be a competent, independent and impartial court. The impartiality of the appeals tribunal is undermined if it involves a judge who participated in the case as a prosecutor before the lower court, as in the case of Abbas Lesani.

In recent weeks, other Azerbaijani Turkic activists have been arrested after taking part in protests and some remain in detention facing trumped up national security related charges, including "insulting the Supreme Leader" and "disrupting public order". Among those arrested were Ali Khairjoo, Asgar Akbarzadeh, Meysam Jolani, Mohammad Jolani, Morteza Parvin, Mostafa Parvin and Sajjad Jolani, who is severely visually impaired. Amnesty International learned that security forces beat Sajjad Jolani and several other activists during arrest. The activists were

among dozens of people arrested from the Azerbaijani Turkic ethnic minority when they took part in protests in the provinces of Ardabil, East Azerbaijan and West Azerbaijan between the end of September and beginning of October 2020. The protests were in support of Azerbaijan in the fighting that erupted in late September between Azerbaijan and Armenia and against the Iranian authorities' alleged support of Armenia in the conflict.

Sample Letter

Dear Mr. Raisi,

I am writing to express concern about the arbitrary detention of Azerbaijani Turkic activist Abbas Lesani who was imprisoned following grossly unfair judicial proceedings in both the court of first instance and appeal court. In July 2020, the Supreme Court rejected his request for a judicial review of his case.

Abbas Lesani was arrested on January 15th, 2019 by Ministry of Intelligence agents in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan province. The authorities held him incommunicado and subjected him to enforced disappearance for six weeks by concealing his fate and whereabouts from his family. He was detained at a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Ardabil and held in prolonged solitary confinement in violation of the absolute prohibition on torture. His interrogators tried to force him to make false "confessions" incriminating himself, which he refused to do.

On July 4th, 2019, Branch 2 of the Revolutionary Court in Tabriz convicted him of "forming a group composed of more than two people with the purpose of disrupting national security" and sentenced him to eight years in prison, followed by two years of "internal exile" in Yazd province, hundreds of kilometers from his family. On September 26th, 2019, an appeal court increased his sentence to 10 years. It also convicted him of "inciting people to go to war with each other with the purpose of disrupting national security", a charge he was acquitted of by the lower court and sentenced him to an additional five years in prison. The judicial proceedings to which he was subjected were grossly unfair. He was denied access to a lawyer during the investigation phase and to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. The judge reviewing his case in the appeal court was the prosecutor who issued the indictment and filed the charges against him. His lawyer's objection to this on grounds of judicial bias was never addressed. Under Iran's sentencing laws, he will serve 10 years of his

sentence. Amnesty International believes that the case against Abbas Lesani is politically motivated, given his long history of activism for the rights of the Azerbaijani Turkic ethnic minority.

I call on you to release Abbas Lesani, as he has been targeted because of his activism. His continued imprisonment is arbitrary on the grounds that both his initial trial and appeal proceedings were grossly unfair and failed to meet international fair trial standards. His sentence and conviction stemming from the peaceful exercise of his rights should be quashed. I also urge you to ensure an end to state harassment and intimidation of his family.

Yours sincerely,

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 9th, 2020.

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

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 156.20. 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 the Judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi

c/o H.E. Majid Takht Ravanchi

Permanent Mission of the

Islamic Republic of Iran

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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

URGENT ACTION: NIGERIA

INVESTIGATE KILLINGS OF PROTESTERS

Since October 8th, Nigerians have been taking to the streets, peacefully demanding an end to police brutality, extrajudicial executions and extortion by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian police tasked with fighting violent crimes. They have been met with excessive use of force by the army and police forces. On October 20th, at least 12 peaceful protesters were reportedly shot dead when the army opened fire on thousands of protesters calling for an end to police brutality as part of the #EndSARS movement. The authorities must immediately end the killing and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters across the country.

Amnesty International has been monitoring developments across Nigeria since the #EndSARS protests began on October 8th, 2020. At least 56 people have reportedly died across the country since the protests began, with about 38 allegedly killed on 20

October alone. In many cases the security forces had used excessive force in an attempt to stop the protests.

In response to the nationwide protests, the Inspector General of Police on October 11th, 2020, dissolved the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and called for the immediate redeployment of all SARS officers to other units. Despite the pronouncement and increasingly brutal repression of the demonstrations, thousands of Nigerians continue to protest. They are demanding the release of all arrested protesters, justice for victims of police brutality and adequate compensation for the victims and their families, as well as prosecution of those suspected to be responsible.

Over the past five years, the Federal Government has promised to reform SARS several times. Despite these pledges of reform and accountability for violations, Amnesty International's report shows that SARS officers continue to commit violations with impunity.



Sample Letter

Dear President Buhari,

I am writing to express grave concern over reported killings of peaceful protesters in several parts of Nigeria. Between 6:45pm and 9:00pm of October 20th, the Nigerian army and police reportedly killed at least 12 peaceful protesters and left several injured in Lekki and Alasusa – two locations in Lagos – when they opened fire on thousands of people who were peacefully calling for good governance and an end to police brutality as part of the #EndSARS movement.

Since October 8th, protesters have been occupying the streets of major towns and cities across 21 states of the country, demanding an end to police brutality, extrajudicial executions and extortion by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian police tasked with fighting violent crimes. The protests, which began as a response to a viral video of SARS operatives shooting a young man on October 3rd, has transformed into nationwide protests for police reform. The protesters have consistently been met with excessive use of force: including the firing of live ammunition, water cannons, the throwing of tear gas into crowds, beatings and arrests, all of which have led to death and injuries. This excessive force on peaceful protesters is contrary to both the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 [as amended] and international standards that protect the rights to life, dignity, and peaceful assembly.

I call on you to publicly order an end to the killing and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters across

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 157.20. 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.

President Muhammadu Buhari

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Ambassador Sylvanus Adiewere Nsofor

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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: December 21st, 2020

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

the country by security agents and the military; ensure a prompt, thorough, impartial, effective and transparent investigation into all cases of human rights violations by the police, including the unlawful killings of the #EndSARS protesters; ensure access to justice and effective remedies for victims and their families; and publicly commit to implement the demands of the protesters including an end to police brutality, accountability for extrajudicial killings, rape, torture and extortion by SARS officers and policing reforms in general.

Yours sincerely,