



Urgent Action: Iran **Defender Beaten and Denied Health Care**

NAME AND PRONOUN: Alireza Farshi DizajYekan (he/him)

Azerbaijani Turkic human rights defender Alireza Farshi DizajYekan is arbitrarily detained in Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary for advocating for mother tongue rights, posting online about imprisoned activists and other peaceful activities. The Iranian authorities are denying him access to the health care he needs, including for his eye condition and high blood sugar. He is a prisoner of conscience who must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Alireza Farshi DizajYekan was arbitrarily arrested on July 21, 2020 to serve a two years' imprisonment sentence following his 2017 conviction related to his peaceful human rights activities, upheld upon appeal in 2020. Alireza Farshi DizajYekan stated that during the arrest, a ministry of intelligence agent threw him flat on the asphalt, pressed down on his neck with his boot impeding his ability to breathe, and then later repeatedly slapped and punched him in the face while he was bleeding and handcuffed. Ministry of intelligence agents also confiscated and wiped clean his external hard drives, where he stored his writing, and computer coding applications he developed. He says that when he arrived to prison, despite being bloodied and in great pain, he was denied medical care for his left eye, on which he previously had surgery for an eye-condition, and other injuries sustained during the beating. After his arrest, he was taken to Tehran's Evin prison where he repeatedly requested for the Legal Medicine Organization of Iran, a state forensic institute, to examine him and document his torture-related injuries, but his requests were dismissed. He also filed complaints with various officials to investigate his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, but he has not been provided with any information about the status of his complaints.

In February 2017, a Revolutionary Court in Baharestan, Tehran province, sentenced Alireza Farshi DizajYekan to 15 years' imprisonment after convicting him of "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and "founding groups with the purpose of disrupting national security" for his peaceful human rights activities in support of the rights of the Azerbaijani Turkic community, including his role in submitting a letter to the head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Tehran in February 2015 seeking assistance in obtaining official permission to hold a commemorative event on International Mother Language Day in Tehran.

Welcome one and all to the return of our annual picnic at the lovely Kristof farm.

After missing last year's event due to the pandemic, we're looking forward to seeing you live and in person on Saturday, August 28th.

The festivities begin at 2:00PM.

It's a potluck so bring a tasty dish to share. This will be our first in person gathering in over a year so it will be wonderful to see you there.!

In the verdict reviewed by Amnesty International, the court cited as “evidence” of Alireza Farshi DizajYekan’s involvement in “criminal” activity his participation in meetings in 2014 in which civil society activists discussed how to best campaign on issues related to their mother language. The court also sentenced him to two years of internal exile. In January 2020, on appeal, this sentence was reduced to two-years’ imprisonment and two-years’ internal exile.

While serving this unjust two-year prison sentence, Iranian authorities pursued new criminal charges against Alireza Farshi DizajYekan. Informed sources were told that the reduction of Alireza Farshi DizajYekan’s prison sentence on appeal contributed to intelligence agents pursuing a new case against him.

During the grossly unfair trial in March 2021, which he said lasted five minutes, the presiding judge denied Alireza Farshi DizajYekan’s request to defend himself and his requests for handcuffs and leg shackles to be removed in court were summarily ignored, undermining his right to the presumption of innocence.

Alireza Farshi DizajYekan reports that the day the verdict was issued, the judge cited as evidence of “national security offenses” acts that fall within the scope of the peaceful exercise of human rights including distributing books written in Turkish, supporting the right of minorities to use their mother tongue and posting on his Instagram account about others jailed in Iran, including Azerbaijani Turkic activist Abbas Lesani. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3130/2020/en/> for more information.

Ethnic minorities, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen face entrenched discrimination in Iran which curtails their access to education, employment, adequate housing, and political office. Despite ongoing calls for linguistic diversity, Persian is the sole language of instruction in primary and secondary education. Members of minority groups who speak out against human rights violations or demand a degree of regional self-government have been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture, and other ill-treatment.

In 2020, several Azerbaijani Turkic activists were sentenced to imprisonment and flogging in connection with the November 2019 protests and other peaceful

activism on behalf of the Azerbaijani Turkic minority. Two activists had their flogging sentences carried out. See *Trampling humanity: mass arrests, disappearances and torture since Iran’s November 2019 protests* for more information.

Sample Letter

Dear Mr. Mohseni Ejei,

Azerbaijani Turkic human rights defender Alireza Farshi DizajYekan, is unjustly jailed in Greater Tehran Central Penitentiary solely for his peaceful human rights activities, including advocating for mother tongue rights and posting on Instagram about imprisoned activists. He is being denied access to adequate health care, including

specialized eye treatment. While on brief prison leave in May 2021, his eye doctor examined him and advised an urgent cornea procedure to prevent complete loss of sight in his left eye. He had first reported to prison authorities not being able to see clearly out of his left eye in July 2020 after ministry of intelligence agents punched him repeatedly in the face during his arrest. However, he was only transferred to an outside eye hospital on July 4, 2021, where he was told that he would next be examined in five months as his condition did not merit an urgent intervention. He was transferred to an outside hospital on one prior occasion,

on June 29, 2021, after several months of frequent urination and numbness in his fingers, hands and feet. Doctors said he needed specific medication for diabetes and to follow a strict diet to manage his blood sugar not available in prison. According to an informed source, from his arbitrary arrest in July 2020 until these hospital visits, prison, security, and judicial bodies denied him access to specialized health care and his diabetes remained undiagnosed until the May 2021 examination by his own doctors while on prison leave.

Alireza Farshi DizajYekan was convicted and sentenced in two separate cases, both stemming solely from his human rights work. Following a grossly unfair trial, a Revolutionary Court convicted Alireza Farshi DizajYekan on March 31, 2021 of “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the system” and sentenced him to four years and two months in jail, a two-year ban on “membership in collectives, [political]



parties and groups” and two months forced labour for four hours a day in a Tehran waste management facility, which is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Alireza Farshi DizajYekan was denied access to a lawyer during trial and barred from defending himself. The verdict was upheld on appeal in May 2021. These proceedings took place while Alireza Farshi DizajYekan was serving another unjust two-year prison sentence.

I ask you to release Alireza Farshi DizajYekan immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience detained solely for his human rights work. Pending his release, ensure that he is provided with immediate and continued access to the health care he needs outside prison as well as his medication. A prompt, independent, effective, and impartial investigation must be conducted into his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, bringing to justice anyone found responsible in fair trials.

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. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.

2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 84.21. 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, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei
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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible until September 14, 2021

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Urgent Action: China • Barrister Charged for Social Media Posts

NAME AND PRONOUN: **Chow Hang-tung (she/her)**

Chow Hang-tung, a human rights lawyer and an organizer of the annual Hong Kong vigil commemorating the Tiananmen crackdown, was charged for “advertising or publicizing unauthorized assembly”. The arrest came after Chow posted messages on social media asking people to individually commemorate China’s Tiananmen crackdown in June 1989, as the public vigil was banned. This is yet another example of the chilling effect on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in Hong Kong as authorities increasingly use the Public Order Ordinance to target activists and human rights defenders.

Chow Hang-tung was first arrested on June 4, 2021 on the charge of “advertising or publicizing unauthorized assembly” under Section 17A(1D) of the Public Order Ordinance. Released shortly after on bail, she was arrested again on June 30, 2021 and has since been remanded into custody. Police revoked her bail for allegedly inciting others to join a banned rally on July 1, 2021.

Chow is a long-term human rights defender. Prior to becoming a human rights lawyer, she was very vocal in advocating labor rights in China and supporting human rights defenders. As a barrister in Hong Kong, she has defended political activists targeted by the National Security Law. She is also the vice chairperson of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (the Hong Kong Alliance), the organizer of the world’s largest annual commemoration of the Tiananmen crackdown.

Hong Kong’s annual Tiananmen vigil on June 4, 2021 has been banned on Covid-19 grounds since 2020. It has been increasingly evident that the Hong Kong authorities have been using Covid-19 as a pretext to muzzle the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies and experts have long been expressing concern about the Hong Kong government imposing excessive restrictions on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. According to Articles 14–15 of Hong Kong’s Public Order Ordinance (POO), those wishing to organize a protest are required to obtain “a notice of no objection” from the police before an assembly

may proceed. Twenty-four activists who participated in last year’s peaceful Tiananmen vigil have since been arrested, and some have been jailed. Vague and ambiguous charges such as “inciting others to participate in unauthorized assembly” appeared to be politically motivated and intended as a pretext to deter peaceful exercise of the rights to peaceful assembly and expression.

The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (NSL) was unanimously passed by China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) and enacted in Hong Kong on June 30, 2020 without any formal, meaningful public or other local consultation.

The impact of the NSL has been immediate and sweeping. The law’s expansive definition of “national security”, which follows that of the Chinese central authorities, lacks clarity and legal predictability and has been used arbitrarily as a pretext

to restrict the human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association, among others, and to repress dissent and political opposition. By accusing political parties, academics and other organizations and individuals actually or perceived to be critical of the present government and political system in Hong Kong of threatening national security, the authorities have sought to justify censorship, harassment, arrests and prosecutions that violate human rights.

Following the arrests under the POO and ongoing accusations of violating the NSL from pro-Beijing scholars and media, the Hong Kong Alliance dismissed all staff members and significantly reduced the number of committee members in July 2021 to mitigate the risk of prosecution.

Sample Letter

Dear Secretary Cheng,

I am writing to express my grave concern for Chow Hang-tung, a barrister who has been arrested and charged for “advertising or publicizing unauthorized assembly”. It is alarming to learn that she was targeted





simply for writing social media posts asking people to commemorate the Tiananmen crackdown in a private manner. This act is a mere peaceful expression of opinion, which is permissible under international human rights law and standards, and must not be criminalized.

I find it distressing that the authorities increasingly use the Public Order Ordinance to target activists and human rights defenders who exercise their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Over the past two years the authorities have arrested, charged and sentenced at least nine members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China for taking part in unauthorized assemblies.

As you will be aware, under international human rights law and standards, participating in and organizing peaceful assemblies does not require prior permission by the state. Failure to notify the authorities of an assembly should not render participation in the assembly unlawful and should not in itself be used as a basis for either arresting the participants or organizers or imposing undue sanctions, such as charging them with criminal offences.

I therefore call on you to:

- Drop all charges against and release Chow Hang-tung immediately and unconditionally, as she was charged solely for peacefully exercising her rights;*
- End the practice of bringing criminal charges against those who have simply exercised their right to freedom of expression or other human rights;*
- Review and amend all laws and regulations, and end all related measures, that violate the exercise of human rights, in particular to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.*

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. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 86.21. 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.

Secretary for Justice Teresa Cheng Yeuk-wah

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Salutation: Dear Ambassador

Please take action as soon as possible
until September 22, 2021

Human Rights in Tunisia Must Be Upheld Following Suspension of Parliament

July 26, 2021 Tunisian President Kais Saied should publicly commit to respecting and protecting human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, after he suspended parliament and assumed some judicial powers, said Amnesty International.

Concerns that human rights are at risk have heightened following a raid by security forces on Al Jazeera's office in Tunis today and the president's threats during his speech of resorting to heavy-handed force against "those threatening state security".

“The hard-won freedoms and human rights gains of Tunisia’s 2011 uprising are at risk, particularly in the absence of a Constitutional Court to protect the rights of everyone in the country. President Kais Saied must ensure that any acts he orders are strictly in line with Tunisia’s obligations under international human rights law and most importantly must refrain from political purges,” said Heba Morayef, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“The raid on Al Jazeera’s offices is an outrageous assault on the right to freedom of expression and deeply worrying precedent signaling that human rights are in danger during this period.”

In a televised speech late on July 25 after a day of protests, President Kais Saied, who presides over the armed forces, announced plans to temporarily suspend the parliament for 30 days, to lift immunity for its members, and stated that he will personally preside over the public prosecution of parliamentarians. After his announcement, the army moved to block access to the Parliament.

During his speech, the Tunisian President also warned that anyone who “would use a bullet” against the security forces will be met with “a hail of bullets”. Under international law and standards, lethal force can only be used lawfully by security forces when strictly necessary to protect life and must be used proportionately. Tunisian security forces have a dire track record of resorting to unnecessary or excessive force for which they are hardly ever held to account.

President Kais Saied also dismissed Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi, whose government was responsible for a sharp deterioration of human rights in Tunisia. During demonstrations in January 2021, thousands of young people were arrested and protests were violently dispersed by security forces, who also tortured protesters in custody. His government also targeted human rights defenders and activists who voiced critical opinions or participated in peaceful demonstrations. Discontent with the government’s Covid-19 response and vaccine rollout, with the second highest daily deaths per million people rate in the world, led to high participation in the July 25 protests.

On July 26, Al Jazeera reported that 20 heavily armed plainclothes police officers raided its office in Tunis, expelling all staff, confiscating their telephones and other equipment. Closing television stations or imposing similar arbitrary restrictions on media

purely on the basis of their perceived political or other affiliations is a flagrant violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Kais Saied invoked Article 80 of the 2014 Constitution, which according to some interpretations, gives him the right to take exceptional measures in the case of an “imminent threat against the country’s security and independence”. The article requires the president to ensure that the measures will “guarantee, as soon as possible, a return to the normal functioning of state institutions and services,” and assumes the existence of a Constitutional Court to protect human rights.

However, successive parliaments have failed to elect the required members to form the Constitutional Court, which is now seven years overdue.

Amnesty International is particularly concerned by the President’s announcement that he will preside over the prosecution office in judicial affairs related to parliamentarians, after lifting their immunity.

“Judicial independence is one of the cornerstones of a rights-respecting society and should not be trampled on. The concentration of powers in the hands of the executive branch is alarming. Tunisia’s president must uphold all fair trial guarantees for everyone and must not use his judicial powers to settle political scores or to conduct purges of critical voices,” said Heba Morayef.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Tunisia is a party, prohibits states from suspending certain human rights, even during a state of emergency, including fundamental requirements of fair trials.

Tunisia has been undergoing a shaky democratic transition since it toppled its longtime ruler Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. The country held its second parliamentary and presidential elections since the 2011 Revolution in October and November 2019, which brought President Kais Saied to power and yielded a fragmented parliament, with no party capturing more than 25% of the seats. The Islamist Ennahda party came in first, with 52 out of 217 seats, closely followed by Qalb Tounes party. Since the elections, three heads of government were appointed. For several months, the country has been embroiled in a political crisis and disagreements over power sharing between the President and the head of government, who both exercise executive powers under the 2014 Constitution.

