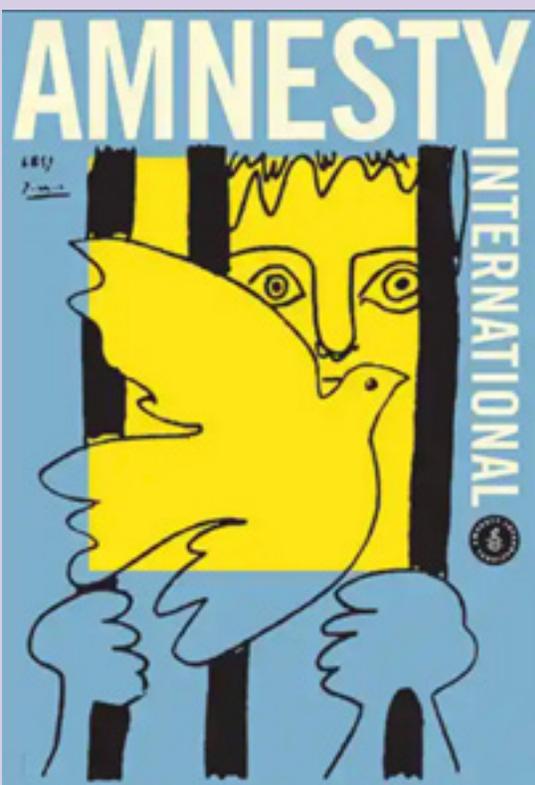




February 2022

Our Next Meeting:
Feb 10th on Zoom



***“There may be times
when we are powerless
to prevent injustice, but
there must never be
a time when we fail to
protest.” – Elie Wiesel***



Urgent Action: Iran

Youth Arrested at 17 at Risk of Execution

Name and pronoun: Arman Abdolali, Hossein Shahbazi (all he/him)

Iranian youth Hossein Shahbazi is at risk of imminent execution for a crime that took place when he was 17 years old. His trial was marred by serious violations, including the use of torture-tainted “confessions”. On November 24, 2021, the Iranian authorities executed Arman Abdolali for a crime that took place when he was 17 years old in violation of the absolute prohibition on the use of the death penalty against people under the age of 18 at the time of the offence.

On December 24, 2021, an official from Adelabad prison phoned Hossein Shahbazi’s family to come for a final visit before his scheduled execution on December 25, 2021. Following international interventions, his execution was postponed. Hossein Shahbazi was arrested on December 30, 2018 and denied access to a lawyer and his family for 11 days while undergoing interrogations at a detention facility run by the Agahi in Shiraz. He was then transferred to a child detention facility but still denied access to his family for several days, after which his mother was allowed to visit him. The sentencing of Hossein Shahbazi to death on the basis of an opinion from the Legal Medicine Organization of Iran (LMOI) confirming his “maturity” at the time of the crime again highlights the complicity of doctors affiliated with the LMOI in the ongoing assault on children’s right to life in Iran.

Arman Abdolali was sentenced to death in late December 2015 after Branch 4 of the Provincial Criminal Court of Tehran convicted him of murder in connection with the disappearance of his girlfriend in 2014. In its verdict, the court stated that the way the murder was committed indicated that Arman Abdolali had attained “maturity” and understood the nature and consequences of the crime. In July 2016, Iran’s Supreme Court upheld the conviction and sentence. Arman Abdolali was subsequently scheduled for execution on January 1, 2020, but following an international outcry his execution was halted. On February 8, 2020, Arman Abdolali’s request for a retrial was granted and his case was then referred for retrial to Branch 5 of Criminal Court One of Tehran Prov-

Iran's obligations under international law not to use the death penalty against people who were under 18 at the time of the crime and despite a pending request for retrial. It was postponed following international actions, but may be carried out at any time. His execution had previously been scheduled on three other occasions for March 1, 2021, June 28, 2021 and July 25, 2021 and postponed each time following international pressure. Branch 3 of Criminal Court One of Fars province convicted Hossein Shahbazi of murder and sentenced him to death on January 13, 2020 following a grossly unfair trial. He was convicted, in part, on "confessions" that he said were obtained through torture at a detention centre run by the Investigation Unit of Iran's police (Agahi). The court noted in its verdict that he was under 18 at the time of the crime, but stated that the Legal Medicine Organization of Iran, a state forensic institute, had found he had attained "mental growth and maturity" at the time of the crime, and therefore merited the death penalty under Article 91 of the Islamic Penal Code. In June 2020, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict. Hossein Shahbazi's request for retrial, filed June 20, 2021, remains pending before the Supreme Court.

On November 24, 2021, Arman Abdolali, aged 25, was executed in Raja'i Shahr prison, Alborz province, for a crime that took place when he was a child in a grave violation of international law. Prior to his execution, the Iranian authorities postponed his scheduled execution five times between October 13 and November 21, 2021. Each time, he was transferred to solitary confinement and then returned to the general ward. Given that these transfers, which are repeated acts of cruelty, inflicted intensive anxiety and fear amounting to severe mental suffering on Arman Abdolali, and that they were intentional and part of the process of his punishment, Amnesty International believes that in his final weeks Arman Abdolali was subjected to torture under international law. At the time of his execution, Arman Abdolali's request for retrial to the Supreme Court, filed October 17, 2021, remained pending.

I ask you to immediately halt the execution of Hossein Shahbazi. I call on you to quash both his conviction and sentence and grant him a fair retrial in full compliance with international law and the principles of child justice, excluding coerced "confessions", and without resorting to the death penalty. I also urge you to take immediate steps to completely abolish the use of the death penalty against child offenders, in line with Iran's obligations under international law, pending the

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 83.21. 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

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

H.E. Majid Takht Ravanchi

Permanent Mission of the
Islamic Republic of Iran
622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10017
Phone: 212 687-2020
Fax: 212 867 7086
Email: iran@un.int, Majidravanchi@mfa.gov.ir
Twitter: @Iran_UN , @TakhtRavanchi

Please take action as soon as possible until March 10, 2022 Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

full abolition of the death penalty and investigate the circumstances around Arman Abolali's torture prior to his execution with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

AIUSA Group 48

<https://aipdx.org>
[www.facebook.com/
amnestygroup48/](https://www.facebook.com/amnestygroup48/)

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China: World must use Winter Olympics to demand human rights improvements

January 14, 2022 The world must use the Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics as an opportunity to push for human rights improvements in China, Amnesty International said ahead of next month's Games.

China's capital will welcome athletes, officials and diplomats from around the world for the Games, which begin on 4 February. But the event will take place against a backdrop of myriad ongoing human rights violations in the country.

"The Beijing Olympic Games promise to be a memorable sporting spectacle, but the watching world cannot wilfully ignore what is happening elsewhere in China: the lawyers and activists imprisoned for their peaceful work; the sexual assault survivors punished for speaking up; the thousands estimated to be executed each year; the Muslim ethnic groups facing systematic mass internment, torture and persecution," said Alkan Akad, Amnesty International's China Researcher.

"The Games should not be used as a distraction from China's appalling human rights record. On the contrary, they should be an opportunity to press China to address these issues."

The Chinese government made a series of assurances related to human rights ahead of hosting the Winter Olympics, including on respecting media freedom, labour rights, "displacement" and ensuring genuine opportunities for peaceful demonstrations during the Games.

Amnesty International is calling on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to fully implement and publicly disclose its human rights due diligence policies and practices in the lead-up to, and during, the Games.

"The right to freedom of expression is systematically violated in China. That's why it's vital that the IOC and the various National Olympic Committees at the Games adequately respect athletes' and sports officials' wishes to speak out about human rights, including on issues deemed 'sensitive' by the authorities," Alkan Akad said.

"The IOC must also insist that the Chinese government keeps its promise to guarantee media freedom, including unrestricted internet access for Chinese and international journalists, and ensure that people who want to peacefully protest during the Games are able to do so."

Amnesty International urges government representatives, including those who plan to attend the Olympic Games, to place human rights at the top of the agenda in their discussions with Chinese authorities.

"The world must heed the lessons of Beijing 2008 Games, when Chinese government promises of human rights improvements never materialized," Alkan Akad said.

"The Beijing Winter Olympics must not be allowed to pass as a mere sportswashing opportunity for the Chinese authorities, and the international community must not become complicit in a propaganda exercise."

Ahead of the Games, Amnesty International has launched its 'Free the Five' campaign highlighting the plight of five Chinese activists among the

many detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression. They are: citizen journalist Zhang Zhan, Uyghur professor Ilham Tohti, labour rights activist Li Qiaochu, human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng and Tibetan blogger Rinchen Tsultrim.

“The unjust imprisonment of these five peaceful activists is emblematic of the Chinese government’s intolerance of all opposing views, and its eagerness to punish dissent in the harshest possible terms,” Alkan Akad said.

“If the Chinese government wants to use the Olympics as a showcase for the country, it should start by releasing all those who have been prosecuted or detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights.”

Athletes must be allowed to speak freely

The IOC has pledged – through its Safe Sport initiative – to support the rights of athletes and protect them from harassment and abuse “on and off the field”. However, the strict Covid-19 “bubble” imposed at Beijing 2022 will severely limit athletes’ freedom of movement in a way that could make it even more difficult for them to freely exercise their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Late last year, tennis player and three-time Olympian, Peng Shuai, made sexual assault allegations against a former Chinese Vice Premier in a social media post that was quickly censored in China. When reference to her was scrubbed from the internet and she disappeared from public view, fellow players and the Women’s Tennis Association expressed fears about Peng’s fate. Nearly three weeks after her post was censored, the IOC responded by arranging a video call with Peng in an attempt to ease concerns about her well-being and whereabouts.

“The IOC accepted assurances about Peng Shuai’s well-being without corroborating whether she experienced any limitations to her freedom of expression, freedom of movement and right to privacy, therefore running the risk of whitewashing possible violations of Peng Shuai’s human rights,” Alkan Akad said.

After heavy criticism, in December the IOC acknowledged “we can’t give assurances and don’t know the full facts”. They insisted that “all aspects of the case are being discussed with the Chinese side” and this would continue beyond the Games.

“Amid the severe restrictions in place at Beijing 2022, the IOC must do better at keeping its promise to protect athletes’ right to voice their opinions – and

above all to ensure it is not complicit in any violations of athletes’ rights,” Alkan Akad said.

Congress Must Use Power to Advance Human Rights for All in Israel and in the Occupied Palesitnian Territories

February 2, 2022 In response to the members of Congress who expressed concern with our recent report on Israeli authorities’ ongoing human rights abuses against Palestinians, including the finding that the Israeli government is committing apartheid, Amnesty International USA said:

Amnesty International is committed to researching and documenting human rights abuses wherever they occur. We have issued reports on crimes against humanity committed by authorities in countries around the world, from China to Sudan to Saudi Arabia. In 2017, Amnesty International released conclusive evidence that authorities in Myanmar are committing apartheid against the Rohingya. Our sole mandate is to document and expose human rights violations wherever we find them and to issue recommendations that will remedy and end them.

The U.S. Government is uniquely placed to meaningfully pressure Israeli authorities to repeal discriminatory laws and policies, issue reparations where appropriate, and uphold its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

We encourage all members of Congress to use the full power of their office to advance human rights for all by calling for a thorough review of U.S. security aid to Israeli forces to determine whether such aid has been used in the commission of violations; and by conditioning security aid appropriated to Israel on an end to violations of international humanitarian law and improvements in respect for human rights.

Amnesty’s research, campaigns, advocacy, and statements pertaining to Israel are focused on the actions of the Israeli government – they are not, and never will be, a condemnation of Judaism or the Jewish people. Furthermore, we condemn anyone who would cynically cite our research as justification for committing antisemitic acts of hatred and violence. Amnesty International condemns antisemitism in the strongest possible terms.

Urgent Action: United States Stop U.S. Abuses Against Haitian People

Thousands of Haitians have traveled to the US-Mexico border to seek safety in the USA. The US government has responded with human rights violations, including the forcible removal of thousands to Haiti and Mexico. These expulsions and deportations put Haitians at risk of gang violence, being unhoused, and even death as Haiti is in the midst of political, economic, and environmental crises. In past months, the situation has gotten worse. Call on US authorities to end deportations and respect the human right to seek asylum.

The Biden administration has shamefully continued dangerous policies of the preceding Trump administration – including Title 42 expulsions, the deceptively named “Migrant Protection Protocols” (MPP or the “Remain in Mexico” policy), and the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention.

The US government has been misusing Title 42 of the US code to forcibly expel people at the US-Mexico border back to Mexico or to their countries of origin, without access to asylum or protection screenings. First implemented by the Trump administration under bogus public health grounds and the pretext of COVID-19, the Biden administration has continued Title 42 despite objections by CDC officials, public health experts, and administration officials. Over 1,400,000 people were expelled under Title 42 between March 2020 and November 2021 and subject to serious violence and dangerous conditions.

After the Trump administration implemented MPP in 2019, nearly 70,000 asylum-seekers at the US-Mexico border were forced to return to and stay in Mexico during the adjudication of their asylum claims, which can take months or years. They lived in dangerous conditions in northern Mexico, under the threat of violence, homelessness, and kidnapping. The Biden administration terminated MPP but a federal court in August 2021 ordered it to reinstate MPP for reasons of administrative legal procedure. Despite describing MPP as having “endemic flaws, imposed unjustifiable human costs,” DHS reinstated and expanded the program in December 2021 to include nationals from Haiti and other Caribbean countries.

Meanwhile, the average number of people held in US immigration detention has ballooned more than 50 percent to over 22,000 people under the Biden



administration – despite the President’s previous commitments to end for-profit detention and as outbreaks of Covid-19 rage through detention facilities with the Delta and Omicron variants. As of January 19, 2022, more than 10 percent of people in detention had contracted Covid-19 in US custody – an increase of 680 percent in cases since January 3, 2022.

All of this has been entirely unnecessary and violates US obligations to uphold the right to seek asylum, detain people only as a last resort, and not forcibly return individuals to places where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations. Restoring the rule of law and access to asylum requires upholding due process. Asylum-seekers should be allowed to live freely in the country, not expelled or detained, where they can pursue their asylum claims in communities supported by community-based organizations.

News media in 2021 broadcast footage of US border agents charging into Haitian migrants on horseback – violently dispersing, taunting, and forcing them away from safety. This escalation of violence went hand-in-hand with a rise in removal flights to Haiti, despite the country still reeling from widespread violence, political instability and humanitarian disaster – from the catastrophic 2013 and 2021 earthquakes and the assassination of its president in 2021. Since September 19, 2021, the US has deported over 15,000 Haitians, largely without providing access to the asylum system or protection screenings. Amnesty co-authored “Not safe anywhere” and “Stop US deportations and abuse against Haitians on the move” with Haitian Bridge Alliance and other partners to document the harm facing Haitians in their search for safety in the US and across the Americas.

Sample Letter

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

I'm writing with deep disappointment about the enduring mistreatment of Haitians seeking asylum at the US-Mexico border at the hands of US immigration authorities. The administration's aggressive expulsions under Title 42 and the appalling decision to reinstate and expand the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) are especially concerning as these policies violate the human right to seek asylum and send hundreds of thousands of Haitians and other asylum-seekers to face danger and even death in their countries of origin and/or transit. These reckless actions not only abandon the administration's obligations under US and international law, but also its promises to halt these cruel, abusive, and unlawful programs.

If the US truly aims to convince the world that its commitment to human rights and racial justice are sincere, then it cannot deny access to asylum protections and deport thousands of people who fear for their safety back to countries experiencing extreme instability and massive human rights violations.

I call on the Biden administration to immediately halt deportations to Haiti, immediately end MPP and Title 42 expulsions and end the use of arbitrary, mass immigration detention

Images of desperation from the airport tarmacs in Port-au-Prince and ill-treatment in refugee camps in Del Rio and elsewhere along the southern border have

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Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 99.21. 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.

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas

Secretary Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528, USA
Email: dhssecretary@hq.dhs.gov
Twitter: @SecMayorkas

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: March 24, 2022.

been a damning indictment of the US government's approach to humanitarian action and human rights for all, without discrimination. This is your time to reverse course and show truly principled leadership. People around the world are watching you

AI Research Report: Crime of Apartheid

The Government of Israel's System of Oppression Against Palestinians

Amnesty International's new research report, Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity shows that Israeli authorities impose a system of domination and oppression against the Palestinian people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), and against Palestinian refugees. Laws, policies, and institutional practices all work to expel, fragment, and dispossess Palestinians of their land and property, and deprive Palestinians of their human rights. We conclude this treatment amounts to an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination defined as

apartheid under international law.

Amnesty's research, campaigns, advocacy, and statements pertaining to Israel are focused on the actions of the Israeli government — they are not, and never will be, a condemnation of Judaism or the Jewish people. Antisemitism is antithetical to everything Amnesty represents as a human rights organization. <https://www.amnestyusa.org/endapartheid/Full-Report.pdf>

One Year After Jailing, Aleksei Navalny and his Associates in a “Living Hell.”

January 16, 2022 Over the course of the last 12 months, the Russian authorities have unleashed an unprecedented campaign of repression and reprisals against wrongfully imprisoned opposition leader Aleksei Navalny and his supporters, destroying all remnants of the rights to freedom of expression and association, Amnesty International said today on the first anniversary of the politician’s arrest.

“In the year since Aleksei Navalny’s detention at a Moscow airport, the politician, his supporters and Russian civil society organizations have suffered a relentless onslaught of repression. Dozens of Navalny’s associates and supporters are facing prosecutions on bogus charges, while a growing number of them are already in prison. Meanwhile, the authorities have labelled his organizations as ‘extremist’ and blocked their websites,” said Marie Struthers, Amnesty International’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia Director.

“Some of Aleksei Navalny’s associates were able to flee the country, yet they now fear their relatives in Russia will suffer a similar fate of unfounded prosecution and imprisonment. On the anniversary of his detention, Navalny and the political activists associated with him are in a living hell.”

On February 2, 2021, a court in Moscow replaced Navalny’s non-custodial sentence with a jail term of two years and eight months, later shortened by two months. Soon thereafter, the Russian authorities began dismantling the Anti-Corruption Foundation and the Citizens’ Rights Protection Foundation, which Navalny founded, and closed his offices. On June 9, 2021, the two organizations were officially labelled as “extremist” and arbitrarily banned.

The activities of the two organizations have since been criminalized. On September 28, 2021, the authorities opened a criminal case against Navalny and his associates under the trumped-up charge of creating an “extremist association.” On November 9, Lilia Chanyшева, the former coordinator of Navalny’s offices in Ufa, was placed in pre-trial detention.

Dozens of Navalny’s team and regional coordinators from his wider political movement have now left

Russia fearing political persecution. Yuri Zhdanov, the father of Ivan Zhdanov, the director of the Anti-Corruption Foundation, was arrested on spurious charges of “forgery” and “large-scale fraud” in March 2021.

Aleksei Navalny faces further bogus charges and up to 15 additional years in prison on top of his current sentence. He stands accused of “contempt of court,” “fraud on an especially large scale” and “money laundering” in relation to alleged misappropriation of donations to his NGOs. He has also been charged with creating an organization that “infringes on the personality and rights of citizens.”

“The callous actions of the Kremlin, who remain hellbent on silencing and vilifying Aleksei Navalny and his supporters, must end now. More than 360,000 people around the world have signed a petition set up by Amnesty International that calls for the Russian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Aleksei Navalny,” said Marie Struthers.

“We call on world leaders, international organizations and people across the world to add their voices not only to the call for Aleksei Navalny’s immediate release, but also for the end of brutal reprisals against his supporters”

Aleksei Navalny, an outspoken Kremlin critic, author of groundbreaking investigations into high-level corruption in Russia and founder of several civil society organizations, was arbitrarily detained on January 17, 2021 in Moscow’s Sheremetyevo airport upon his arrival from Berlin, where he had been recovering after being poisoned in Siberia in August 2020.

He was placed in pretrial detention for allegedly failing to report regularly to his probation officer in person while recovering from his near-fatal poisoning.

The European Court of Human Rights found Aleksei Navalny’s conviction in 2014 and subsequent prison sentence to be “arbitrary and manifestly unreasonable.”

On January 14, Leonid Volkov and Ivan Zhdanov, two associates of Navalny, were added to a list of “extremists” by the Russian finance regulator. Their assets in Russia are now blocked.



Image CC 2.0 Mitya Aleshkovskiy