



**October 2022**

**Our Next Meeting:  
October 13th on Zoom**

**AISUA Regional Activism Conference  
October 21st – 23rd**

AIUSA's Regional Activism Conference will provide a space for people to come together to increase knowledge, build skills, and exchange ideas and strategies for progressing a human rights agenda! We will host our virtual conference via Whova while streaming from a test site with limited attendance from Atlanta, GA. If you are local we invite you to join us in person.

Continuing our AGM theme of Resilient Activism, the Regional Activism Conference is a hybrid conference and will bring to you the same energy that we have brought to you for the last 60 years.

This year's Regional Activism conference offers 20 sessions which cover an array of human rights issues such as Ending Racial Discrimination & Ensuring Equality and Equity, Reproductive rights, Refugee and Migrant Rights, Ending Gun Violence and more. Please check the agenda for a full list of sessions offered.

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/2022-regional-activism-conference/>

## **Hong Kong: Giggs Sentencing Highlights Authorities' Expanding Armory in Crackdown on Critics**

Responding to the prison sentence of two years and eight months handed to Hong Kong online radio DJ and political commentator Edmund Wan, better known as "Giggs", after his conviction for sedition and money laundering, Amnesty International's China Campaigner Gwen Lee said:

"With this reprehensible jailing of a DJ who dared to speak his mind and finance young protestors' education, the Hong Kong authorities appear to be expanding the range of tools they use to target people whose views and actions they object to.

"In addition to becoming the latest government critic imprisoned on a colonial-era 'sedition' charge, Edmund Wan has also been convicted of money laundering despite the prosecution providing scant evidence against him.

"Activists in Hong Kong no longer only fear the draconian National Security Law; increasingly, they are also being targeted with a range of other charges that can be abused to punish them.

"Deprived of a jury and facing a curtailed legal aid system – within a judicial system increasingly tilting against the accused in 'national security' cases – Edmund Wan's ability to defend himself has been severely compromised – just as it is for Hong Kong's many other activists.

"Wan was an outspoken critic of the government on his radio shows and helped set up an education fund for youths who had fled Hong Kong for Taiwan. Today he has been sentenced in connection with both these things.

"Given the Hong Kong government's zero-tolerance approach to dissent since 2019, it is difficult to believe that his imprisonment is anything other than politically motivated. The authorities must release Edmund Wan and drop all charges against him unless they demonstrate sufficient credible and admissible evidence that he has committed a criminal offence."

Edmund Wan, or "Giggs", was today sentenced to two years and eight months on charges of seditious intention and money laundering.

Prior to his arrest, Wan was the host of four shows on an independent online radio station in Hong Kong. He was often critical of the Hong Kong and Chinese central authorities.

In February 2020, he started a fundraiser for sponsoring the education of a group of Hong Kong youths who had fled for Taiwan as the Hong Kong government arrested tens of thousands of young people who took part in the city's 2019 mass protests.

On November 21st, 2020, Wan was arrested under the Hong Kong





National Security Law. On February 8th, 2021, He was instead officially charged with four counts of “acts with a seditious intention” under colonial era sedition laws. He was then charged on May 10th, 2021 with an additional five counts of money-laundering and one count of “conspiring to commit an act with a seditious intention”. The “seditious intention” charges concerned his criticism of the Hong Kong Chief Executive and the Chinese Communist Party on his online radio shows and posts. He has been detained for over 18 months.

In May 2022, the prosecution reached a plea deal with Wan, under which six of the 10 charges he was facing would not be prosecuted now, but kept on file if he pleaded guilty to the remaining charges and agreed to the prosecution’s application to confiscate the proceeds of his crowd-funding project.

Since 2020, the Hong Kong government has been using colonial-era sedition charges to stamp out dissent. People charged with sedition have faced some of the same draconian measures as those targeted under the National Security Law, which came into force on 30 June 2020.

In July this year, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the Hong Kong government’s use of colonial-era sedition charges to target people for exercising their right to freedom of expression. It called for the repeal of sedition offences and to end their use to suppress criticism or dissent.

---

## **AISUA Calls on Governors and Secretaries of State to Ban Guns Near Polling Places**

October 3, 2022--Amnesty International USA sent a letter on October 3, 2022, to governors and secretaries of state nationwide urging them to ban guns at and near polling places to ensure the safety of voters, poll workers and people in the vicinity.

Amid rising political violence, Amnesty International USA (AIUSA) called on governors and secretaries of state to enact measures to guarantee that polling places are free from intimidation of gun violence during the upcoming midterm elections. The letter references the political unrest that followed the January 6th attack on the Capitol, the increase in white supremacist violence across the country and other threats in asking governors and secretaries of state to do all they can to ensure voters’ safety.

“This year’s election with its supercharged rhetoric and issues including reproductive rights, gun rights, refugee and migrant rights, the war in Ukraine and economic issues has the potential again of seeing armed election monitors and armed voters at polls across the country. The presence of firearms at polling places will act as a force multiplier for violence and could result in abuses of the right to life,” the letter reads.

While most jurisdictions across the U.S. limit armed law enforcement officers from within 100 feet of the voting booths, the majority of states have no laws regarding armed private citizens in or around polling places. Governors and secretaries of state have the authority to institute temporary measures to guarantee safety at polling places.

AIUSA has been a long-time advocate for legal reforms on the acquisition, use and possession of firearms in the United States. Amnesty International USA supports a range of measures to curb gun violence, including comprehensive background checks, funding of gun violence prevention organizations, required training, a ban on high-capacity magazines/assault weapons, and mandatory safe-storage laws.

“By taking action, public officials can help address the rise of gun violence across our country that has a disproportionate impact on communities of color and other historically disenfranchised communities,” Coverson said. “We must not stand by as more lives are claimed due to inaction.”

## AIUSA Group 48

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

### Group Coordinators

**Marty Fromer  
and Terrie Rodello**

#### Treasurer

**Tena Hoke**

[tena.hoke@gmail.com](mailto:tena.hoke@gmail.com)

#### Newsletter

**Daniel Webb**

[pdx.videozine@gmail.com](mailto:pdx.videozine@gmail.com)

### OR Area Coordinator

**Marty Fromer**

[martyfromer@gmail.com](mailto:martyfromer@gmail.com)

#### Indonesia

**Max White**

[maxw33@comcast.net](mailto:maxw33@comcast.net)

### Prisoners' Cases

**Jane Kristof**

[kristofj@pdx.edu](mailto:kristofj@pdx.edu)

### Concert Tabling

**Will Ware**

[ww\\_ware@yahoo.com](mailto:ww_ware@yahoo.com)

### Central Africa/ OR State Death Penalty Abolition

**Terrie Rodello**

[tarodello@igc.org](mailto:tarodello@igc.org)

[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org)

#### Postage Rates

Within the United States

\$0.58 - Domestic Letter up to 1oz,  
standard envelope size

\$0.40 - Domestic Postcard

International Postage

\$1.30 - Up to 1 oz

## Urgent Action: Iran Iranian LGBTI Defender Sentenced to Death

NAME AND PRONOUN:

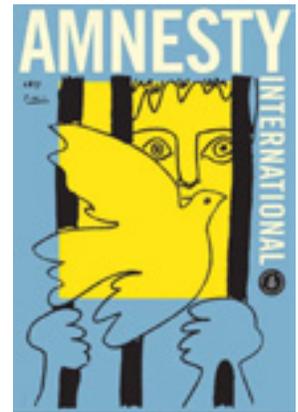
**Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani; Elham Choubdar (both she/her)**

Iranian LGBTI rights defender Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani and another woman, Elham Choubdar, were sentenced to death for “corruption on earth”. The women were targeted due to their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their social media activities in support of LGBTI communities.

The HENGAW Organization for Human Rights reported on September 4, 2022 that Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani and Elham Choubdar were sentenced to death. Following widespread media coverage, Iran’s judiciary confirmed the news on September 5, 2022, announcing that Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani and Elham Choubdar were sentenced to death in connection with “smuggling women and girls”.

Prior to this, on November 6, 2021, the Intelligence Organization of the Revolutionary Guards had claimed they caught “through a complex, multi-layered and extraterritorial intelligence operation, the leader of a network involved in smuggling Iranian girls and women to neighbouring countries for the purpose of corruption and directing and supporting homosexual groups that work under the protection of [foreign] intelligence agencies.” Amnesty International believes that the allegations of smuggling are spurious and baseless and stem from the women’s real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and in the case of Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani, association with other Iranian LGBTI asylum seekers fleeing systematic persecution in Iran.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards arbitrarily arrested Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani in late 2021 near Iran’s border while she was attempting to seek international protection in Türkiye. Elham Choubdar was arrested some time afterwards. The authorities charged both women with “inciting people to corruption and prostitution” and “spreading corruption on earth” (efsad-e fel arz). They further charged Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani with “illegally entering the country”. As per Iranian criminal law, the charges of “inciting people to corruption and prostitution” and “illegally entering the country” were referred to Branch 111 of Criminal Court 2 in Urumieh for trial, and the charge of “corruption on earth” to the Revolutionary Court in Urumieh. In July 2022, the criminal court convicted Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani of “illegally entering the country” and imposed a cash fine. In the same ruling, the court dismissed, with respect to both women, the charge of “inciting people to corruption and prostitution” on the grounds that the two women were already being prosecuted before the Revolutionary Court in Urumieh on the charge of “corruption on earth” for the same activities and therefore fell outside the jurisdiction of Criminal Court 2. The verdict of Branch 111 of Criminal Court 2 in Urumieh, which has been reviewed by Amnesty International, states that



the women were charged with “corruption on earth” based on their “activities in the online environment”, but does not provide more information.

In mid-January 2022, Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani was told by the lead investigator of Branch 6 of the Office of the Revolutionary and Public Prosecutor in Urumieh that she was accused of “spreading corruption on earth” including through “promoting homosexuality”, “communication with anti-Islamic Republic media channels” and “promoting Christianity”. The first two accusations stem from her public defence of LGBTI rights, including on her social media platforms such as Telegram and Instagram, and during an appearance in a BBC documentary aired in May 2021 about the abuses that LGBTI people suffer in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). According to information obtained by Amnesty International, the latter accusation is for wearing a cross necklace and attending a house church in Iran several years ago.

Prior to embarking on the hazardous segment of her journey across the Iran-Türkiye border, Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani recorded a video message and asked a trusted contact to release it if she does not make it to Türkiye safely. In the video circulated by the Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network (6Rang) on December 7, 2021, she says, “I want you to know how much pressure we LGBT people endure. We risk our lives for our emotions, but we will find our true selves... I hope the day will come when we can all live in freedom in our country... I am journeying toward freedom now. I hope I’ll arrive safely. If I make it, I will continue to look after LGBT people. I will be standing behind them and raising my voice. If I don’t make it, I will have given my life for this cause.”

Iran’s penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults, as well as between children, prescribing corporal punishments, such as flogging, which constitute torture, and the death penalty, which is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International’s research consistently shows that Revolutionary Courts lack independence and impose harsh sentences on human rights defenders and others under the influence of security and intelligence bodies and following grossly unfair, summary and predominantly secret processes which undermine the right to a fair trial. Human rights defenders and lawyers in Iran have repeatedly said Revolutionary Courts lack constitutional basis and should be abolished. Amnesty International has also previously documented the Iranian authorities’

criminalization of human rights defenders which takes place against the backdrop of ongoing smear campaigns against human rights defenders, particularly on the internet, in a bid to undermine their human rights work.

### **Sample Letter**

*Iranian LGBTI rights defender Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani and another woman, Elham Choubdar, were sentenced to death for “corruption on earth”. The women were targeted due to their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and their social media activities in support of LGBTI communities.*

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights defender Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani, 31, known as Sareh, and another woman, Elham Choubdar, 24, were sentenced to death after the Revolutionary Court in Urumieh, West Azerbaijan province, tried them in early August 2022 and subsequently convicted them of “corruption on earth.” Official statements, state media reports, and statements made by prosecution officials to Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani since her arrest in October 2021 indicate that she was targeted for discriminatory reasons tied to her real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as well as her peaceful LGBTI rights activism, including on social media, and her association with LGBTI asylum seekers in Iraq.*

*On July 18, 2022, state media affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards aired a homophobic video portraying Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani as a “criminal” for publishing online content which “promoted homosexuality” and “challenged the stigma around religiously forbidden [namashrou] sexual relations”. The propaganda video linked Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani’s peaceful online LGBTI rights activism to unfounded accusations of “gambling” and “smuggling women and girls from Iran to Erbil [Iraq]” in a bid to vilify her. Court documents and other information reviewed by Amnesty International indicate that Elham Choubdar was similarly targeted for discriminatory reasons related to her real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, LGBTI supportive activities on social media, and association with Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani.*

*The proceedings leading to the women’s convictions and sentences were grossly unfair. Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani was forcibly disappeared for 53 days following arrest. During this time, she was*

*subjected to abusive interrogations without access to a lawyer, prolonged solitary confinement, homophobic insults, death threats and threats to take away the custody of her children, which violate fair trial rights and the absolute prohibition on torture and other ill-treatment. Amnesty International understands that Elham Choubdar was pressured to make “confessions”. Moreover, the offence of “corruption on earth” fails to meet requirements for clarity and precision needed in criminal law and breaches the principle of legality and legal certainty. Officials told the two women of their sentences on September 1, 2022 in Urumieh prison, where both are held. Their cases have been appealed to the Supreme Court.*

*I ask you to immediately quash the convictions and death sentences of Zahra Sedighi-Hamadani and Elham Choubdar, and immediately release both as they are targeted based on discriminatory reasons related to their real or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and peaceful activities in defence of the human rights of LGBTI people. Pending their release, ensure they are given regular access to lawyers of their choosing and family. I further urge the Iranian authorities to establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct, and adopt legislation to protect LGBTI people from discrimination, violence and other human rights violations.*

*Sincerely,*

#### **TAKE ACTION:**

1. Write a letter in your own words or using the sample letter 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 5.22. 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 November 10, 2022

## **Iran: At Least 82 Baluchi Protesters and Bystanders Killed in Bloody Crackdown**

October 6th--Iranian security forces unlawfully killed at least 66 people, including children, and injured hundreds of others after firing live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas at protesters, bystanders and worshippers during a violent crackdown after Friday prayers on September 30th in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province, Amnesty International said today. Since then, another 16 people were killed in separate incidents in Zahedan amid an ongoing clampdown on protests. Evidence gathered from activists, victims' families, eyewitness testimonies, and images and videos of the protests suggest the real death toll from Zahedan is likely to be higher.

Widely referred to by Iranians as “bloody Friday”, the onslaught on September 30th marked the deadliest day on record since protests started spreading across Iran nearly three weeks ago, after Mahsa Amini died

in custody following her arrest by Iran’s “morality” police.

“The Iranian authorities have repeatedly shown utter disregard for the sanctity of human life and will stop at nothing to preserve power. The callous violence being unleashed by Iran’s security forces is not occurring in a vacuum. It is the result of systematic impunity and a lacklustre response by the international community,” said Agnes Callamard, Amnesty International’s Secretary General.

“It is particularly abhorrent that nearly three years after the November 2019 protests, in which hundreds of people were unlawfully killed, the Iranian authorities have shamelessly continued their ruthless assault on human life. The only way to break the impunity that empowers such actions is for UN member states to urgently establish an independent investigative and

accountability mechanism for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Iran”.

Protests in Zahedan, Sistan and Baluchistan province, populated by the long-oppressed Baluchi ethnic minority, were scheduled to take place after Friday prayers on September 30th as a show of solidarity with nationwide protests and to demand accountability for the reported rape of a 15-year-old girl by a police commander in the province.

On September 30th, as a group of people finished praying in the Great Mosalla of Zahedan, a large prayer site near the city’s main mosque, and gathered outside the police station across the road to protest and chant, security forces fired live ammunition, metal pellets and tear gas at them from the police station rooftop.

Simultaneously, plain-clothed security forces fired at protesters and bystanders from the rooftops of several nearby houses, as corroborated by photographs shared by activists.

Security forces also unlawfully fired live ammunition, metal pellets and teargas directly into the vicinity of the Mosalla, where hundreds of people, including children and older people, were still performing Friday prayers.

Amnesty International has documented an alarming escalation in the use of force and firearms since September 21st, when the country’s top military body issued an order to commanders in all provinces instructing them to “severely confront troublemakers and anti-revolutionaries”.

Evidence gathered by Amnesty International shows that the majority of victims were shot in the head, heart, neck and torso, revealing a clear intent to kill or seriously harm.

On October 1st, Mawlana Abdolhamid Ismael-zahi, the outspoken Sunni leader of Friday prayers in Zahedan, recounted the crackdown in a video testimony. He stated that more than 40 people were killed after security forces standing on rooftops fired live ammunition towards a group of young protesters outside the police station as well as directly into the Mosalla towards men and women performing prayers.

Amnesty International has recorded the names of 66 people killed during the Mosalla incident on September 30th, but believes the real death toll is higher. The organization has also recorded the names of 16 people killed in relation to separate protests in other parts of Zahedan since September 30th and is continuing its investigations into these deaths. Those

killed include at least three children, two of whom were killed during the Mosalla incident on September 30th and another who was killed in a separate incident the same day. The organization is investigating reports of at least another four children killed in Zahedan since September 30th.

The number of deaths recorded by Amnesty International concerns only victims whose names the organization has identified through information from primary sources directly impacted by the deaths or through Baluchi human rights activists. The organization has spoken to the families of 21 victims killed in Zahedan.

Amnesty International previously recorded the names of 52 people killed across the country by Iran’s security forces between September 19th and September 25th.

Consistent with their previous pattern of denial and cover-up, the authorities have under-reported the number of fatalities, announcing that 19 people, including bystanders and several members of the security forces, were killed during the protests in Zahedan on September 30th.

In an attempt to absolve themselves of responsibility for the deaths, the authorities have shared false narratives blaming the deaths on “terrorists”, “rioters” and “separatists” whom they claim were acting for foreign governments.

Propaganda videos broadcast on state media after September 30th have shown detainees, whom authorities allege were involved in armed attacks against security forces in Zahedan, with sacks over their heads. One video shows a detainee being asked leading questions by a TV presenter and being forced to make self-incriminating statements without a lawyer present over his alleged involvement in shootings on September 30th. Given the Iranian authorities’ well-documented patterns of producing and broadcasting coerced statements from detainees to cover-up human rights violations, Amnesty International is concerned that such statements have been extracted under duress.

The authorities have claimed that protesters committed acts of looting and arson on public property. However, beyond a minority of protesters throwing stones towards the police station, Amnesty International has found no evidence that, more generally, protesters and bystanders engaged in acts of violence during the Mosalla incident on 30 September that would pose a threat to life or serious injury to security

forces or others and would justify the use of lethal force used against them.

Evidence also reveals that many victims killed during the incident at the Mosalla were shot in the back of their heads or torso, indicating that they were facing away from the security forces and posed no imminent threat to life or serious injury.

Under international human rights law and standards, the use of firearms is only considered lawful in response to an imminent threat of death or serious injury, and only when less dangerous means have

proven to be insufficient. Even if some protesters engage in acts of violence, law enforcement officials must ensure that peaceful protests are allowed to continue without facing undue interference or intimidation by security forces. The use of any force is only permitted as a last resort in response to violent protests, must be legal, necessary and proportionate, with law enforcement officials clearly distinguishing between those engaged in acts of violence and those who are not.

## **Human rights defenders from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine win the Nobel Peace Prize**

October 7, 2022 --Responding to the news that human rights organisations from Ukraine and Russia, as well as rights advocate Ales Bialiatski of Belarus, have been awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize, Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, said:

“The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to human rights defenders and organizations from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine highlights the vital role they play in defending human rights in their countries and the wider region.”

“Amnesty International stands in solidarity with Ales Bialiatski, Memorial and the Center for Civil Liberties. All three are an inspiration and an example of courage and dedication for all those who carry out human rights work in Eastern Europe.”

“The Nobel Committee is sending an important message to the world – that it must support human rights defenders that have shown an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human rights abuses and the abuse of power in their countries. This message is sent at a critical moment when ongoing Russian aggression has led to a human rights crisis of incredible proportions in Ukraine, and of the crackdown on any form of dissent in Russia and Belarus.

“This is also a message of solidarity. Since July 2021 Ales Bialiatski, a pioneer of human rights in Belarus since the mid-1980's, has been behind bars for his peaceful work documenting, among other things, the crackdown on dissent following the disputed 2020 presidential elections. Memorial, one of the oldest Russian human rights organisations, was shut down by the Russian authorities at the end of 2021, and the Center for Civil Liberties has been documenting Russian war crimes in Ukraine since 2014 and continues

its work in Ukraine despite the ongoing Russian war of aggression.

Ales Bialiatski, the chairman and founder of the Human Rights Centre Viasna in 1996, is held in a pre-trial detention centre since July 2021. Along with his fellow colleagues, Viasna vice-chair Valyantsin Stefanovich and the organization's lawyer Uladzimir Labkovich, he's falsely charged with “smuggling of large sums of money and financing group activities that grossly violated public order” as retaliation for his lawful human rights work.

Between 2011 and 2014, Ales Bialiatski served a sentence on trumped up charges of tax evasion. Then, as now, Amnesty International recognises him as a prisoner of conscience.

Memorial is one of the oldest and most respected human rights groups in Russia that started operating in 1988. The Soviet dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov was the first chair of Memorial until his death in 1989. Memorial was liquidated by a court order in December 2021 on grounds of violation of the now infamous “foreign agents” law. The Russian authorities labelled Memorial a ‘foreign agent’ in 2013. Currently, Memorial continues operating without official registration.

The Center for Civil Liberties, founded in Ukraine in 2007, is currently playing a critical role in efforts to identify and document war crimes committed in Ukrainian territory under effective Russian control since 2014 and occupied during the 2022 invasion.