



January 2023

**Our Next Meeting:
January 12th on Zoom**



*People gather in Melbourne, in solidarity with the Iranian protests in September 2022.
Photo by Matt Hrkac CC 2.0 Image cropped*

**AIUSA Annual General Meeting
March 3-5, 2023**

**San Diego Omni Hotel and
virtually via Whova**

Amnesty International USA is excited to be hosting our hybrid Annual General Meeting 2023 (AGM'23) in San Diego, California and virtually via WHOVA.

The AGM'23 is an opportunity for members and activists to come together and inspire one another, to learn about each other's efforts and campaigns, to share stories and experiences, and to listen and participate in our sessions and panels. For members looking to vote at this AGM please keep in mind there is a 50-day cut-off for AGM'23. Members must renew their membership to vote at AGM'23 by January 12, 2023. If you have any questions regarding your membership status, please email Member Services at aimember@aiusa.org

<https://www.amnestyusa.org/virtual-annual-general-meeting-2023/>

**Urgent Action: Iran
26 People Risk Execution in Relation to Protests**

NAME AND PRONOUN: Mohammad Ghobadlou, Saman Seydi (Yasin), Saeed Shirazi, Mohammad Boroughani, Abolfazl Mehri Hossein Hajilou, Mohsen Rezazadeh Gharagholou, Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh, Mahan Sedarat (Sadrat) Madani, Manouchehr Mehman-Navaz, Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Hossein Mohammadi, Akbar Ghafari, Toomaj Salehi, Ebrahim Rigi, Amir Nasr Azadani, Saleh Mirhashemi, Saeed Yaghoubi, Farzad (Farzin) Tahazadeh and Farhad Tahazadeh, Karwan Shahiparvaneh, Reza Eslamdoost, Hajar Hamidi and Shahram Marouf-Mola. (he; him)

At least 26 people are at great risk of execution in connection with nationwide protests after Iranian authorities arbitrarily executed two individuals following grossly unfair sham trials in a bid to instil fear among the public and end protests. Of the 26, at least 11 are sentenced to death and 15 are charged with capital offenses and awaiting or undergoing trials.

Thousands have been arrested and indicted in the context of nationwide protests, raising fears that many more people could face the death penalty in connection to protests. Consistent with a long-standing policy of concealing human rights violations and seeking to dehumanize victims, Iranian authorities have not disclosed the identifies of those sentenced to death. In the course of its ongoing investigations, Amnesty International obtained information confirming the names of 10 individuals sentenced to death. The identity of the 11th person, sentenced to death in a group trial of 16 individuals before a Revolutionary Court in Alborz province, remains unknown. Based on publicly available information clarifying the sentences against a number of defendants in the case, he could be one of the following people: Reza Arya, Mehdi Mohammadi, Shayan Charani, Mohammad Amin Akhlaghi, Reza

Images courtesy Amnesty International or in the public domain unless otherwise indicated.

Shaker Zavardahi, Javad Zargaran or Behrad Ali Kenari.

On December 8th, the authorities executed protester, Mohsen Shekari, after convicting him in a grossly unfair trial of “enmity against God” less than three months after his arrest. On December 12th, authorities publicly executed another young man, Majidreza Rahanvard, in Mashahd, Khorasan-e Razavi province, after convicting him of “enmity against God” in a grossly unfair trial. He was executed less than two weeks after one court session on November 29th, 2022.

The trials against individuals sentenced to death in connection with the nationwide protests have borne no resemblance to meaningful judicial proceedings. Authorities have fast-tracked the cases with some convicted only days after their trials started. Iranian authorities have also sentenced at least four individuals to death for offenses such as vandalism, assault, and arson, in a further serious violation of international law, under which capital crimes must be limited to “the most serious crimes” involving intentional killing. Amnesty International has also documented serious allegations of torture and other ill-treatment against at least 10 individuals at risk of the death penalty.

For instance, the authorities subjected Saman Seydi (Yasin) to severe beatings and forced exposure to extreme cold to extract forced “confessions” according to information gathered by Amnesty International. In the case of medical doctor Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, who was sentenced to death for “corruption on earth” on December 5th less than a week after undergoing an unfair trial; informed sources told Amnesty international that the authorities repeatedly tortured him to extract his forced “confessions”, leading to his hospitalization with broken ribs, difficulties breathing, and internal bleeding in his lung for which he required three surgeries. During trial, Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou showed the judge his injuries from torture, but no investigation into his allegations has been carried out. Judicial and prosecutorial authorities have relied on torture-tainted “confessions” and other evidence obtained in violation of international law and standards to issue indictments and verdicts. For instance,

Judicial and prosecutorial authorities have relied on torture-tainted “confessions” and other evidence obtained in violation of international law and standards to issue indictments and verdicts.

in the case of Akbar Ghafari, arrested after sheltering protesters at his sister’s home in Tehran, according to a prisoner detained alongside him, authorities tortured him to sign a forced statement, which he was unable to read and later discovered falsely incriminated him in a killing. Authorities also coerced Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou’s wife to make incriminating statements against him which were used in court to convict him.

She retracted her “confessions” in court. Authorities have denied the right of individuals they have prosecuted for capital offences to access lawyers of their choosing during the investigation phase and at trial, and have barred independently appointed lawyers from representing clients in court and accessing casefiles and verdicts.

The rights to presumption of innocence has also been repeatedly violated by the authorities with state media airing forced “confessions” of several individuals at risk of execution prior to trial. In the case of Amir Nasr Azadani, a footballer charged with the capital offence of “armed rebellion against the state”, on December 11th, 2022 in an interview with state media, the justice department head of Esfahan pronounced him guilty prior to trial by saying “the accused has unequivocally confessed to his criminal actions” and “there exists sufficient evidence establishing his participation in the armed group” while his trial was ongoing.

For detailed information about the cases of all individuals named on page one of this Urgent Action, see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/6308/2022/en/>.

Sample Letter

I am gravely concerned that at least 26 people are at grave risk of execution by the Iranian authorities following sham grossly unfair proceedings involving charges of “enmity against God” (moharebeh), “corruption on earth” (efsad-e fel arz) and “armed rebellion against the state” (baghi) in connection to the nationwide protests.

At least 11 were sentenced to death, including Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh, Mahan Sadrat (Sedarat) Madani, and Manouchehr Mehman Navaz,

AIUSA Group 48

<https://aipdx.org>
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A September 2022 protest at London's Piccadilly Circus against mandatory hijab in Iran. Photo by Garry Knight CC 1.0

who were tried separately before Revolutionary Courts in Tehran; as well as Mohammad Boroughani, Mohammad Ghobadlou and Kurdish rapper Saman Seydi (Yasin), who were tried in a group trial by a Tehran Revolutionary Court. Authorities have also sentenced to death Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Hossein Mohammadi and an unnamed individual in a group trial of sixteen people for "corruption on earth" before a Revolutionary Court in Karaj, Alborz province.

At least 15 others are also at risk of execution. They include Abolfazl Mehri Hossein Hajilou, Mohsen Rezazadeh Gharagholou, and Saeed Shiraazi who have been tried on capital offences but there is no publicly available information on the outcome and status of their cases. The remainder are awaiting or undergoing trials for offences that carry the death penalty, namely Akbar Ghafari and Toomaj Salehi in Tehran; Amir Nasr Azadani, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi in Esfahan province; Ebrahim Rigi (Riki), a from Iran's Baluchi minority; and brothers Farzad (Farzin) Tahazadeh and Farhad Tahazadeh, Karwan Shahiparvaneh, Reza Eslamdoost, Hajar Hamidi and Shahram Marouf-Mola, from Iran's Kurdish minority in West Azerbaijan province.

The 26 individuals have all been denied fair trials, including the rights to adequate defence and access to lawyers of their choosing; to be presumed innocent; to remain silent; and to receive a fair, public hearing. According to information available to Amnesty International, at least 10 of them, including Hamid Ghare-Hasanlou, Toomaj Salehi and Mohammad Ghobadlou were tortured and authorities used their torture-tainted "confessions" or those of others as evidence. State media also broadcast forced "confessions" of several defendants prior to their trials.

I urge you to immediately quash all convictions and death sentences, refrain from seeking further death sentences, and ensure that anyone charged with a recognizable criminal offence is tried in proceedings meeting international fair trial standards without recourse to the death

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 <https://www.amnestyusa.org/report-urgent-actions/> to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 103.22. 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
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Phone: 212 687-2020

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Email: iran@un.int,

Majidravanchi@mfa.gov.ir

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Please take action as soon as possible until
February 9th, 2022.

penalty. I urge you to release all those detained for peacefully exercising their human rights. I urge you to provide detainees access to their families and lawyers of their own choosing, protect them from torture and other ill-treatment and investigate torture allegations, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials; and grant independent observers from embassies access to capital trials connected to protests. Finally, I urge you to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view of abolishing the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,



Group 48 Congratulates Kate Brown, Governor of Oregon, for Commuting Death Sentences

The following letter was sent to Governor Kate Brown following her commutation of the death sentences of all 17 people on Oregon's death row to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

"We, the undersigned members of Amnesty International USA Local Chapter 48 Portland, congratulate you on your courageous act to commute all death sentences to life without parole. This decision could not have been easy as many believe justice is furthered by the state executing those who committed terrible crimes that placed them in prison. Your action is a step toward ending a failed public policy and a move toward a more effective system of justice.

Our thoughts are also with the families who lost a loved one to murder by someone whose sentence was commuted. The pain, anger, and grief of such an act are unimaginable. Although many Oregonians may agree with your decision, we respect the families and others who may not agree.

We are grateful for your action to end one era of the death penalty in Oregon. But we recognize your decision did not end the death penalty in Oregon. The death penalty is still in the Oregon constitution. Voters will have the final say on whether executions can still occur in Oregon.

We must continue our move to change Oregon's constitution and move toward a more humane and effective system of justice.

Sincerely,

(Members of Group 48)

Twitter's Decision to Disband Safety Council Threatens Wellbeing of Users

(December 13, 2022) Responding to Twitter's decision to abruptly dissolve its Trust and Safety Council, an advisory group comprising almost 100 civil, human rights and other organizations that sought to address child exploitation, suicide, self-harm and hate speech on the platform, Joe Westby, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for Amnesty Tech, said:

"Flippantly dissolving an independent advisory body that was set up to help Twitter users feel safe when expressing themselves online is only going to exacerbate the rampant issues of abuse and harassment on the social media platform. Twitter's decision to dissolve the safety council harms efforts to protect the right to freedom of expression for women and marginalized groups, and to safeguard children from harm.

"Since Elon Musk's takeover, Twitter has also lifted bans on numerous accounts that have previously posted abusive content, a move that is likely to lead to a massive increase in incidences of abuse online. Twitter must urgently reverse course, and do all in its power to protect its users against online abuse.

"Amnesty has repeatedly highlighted how abuse and hate on Twitter disproportionately affects women, and especially those from marginalized communities. Instead of shutting down groups that seek to make the platform safer, the company must take steps to urgently and transparently investigate reports of violence and abuse."

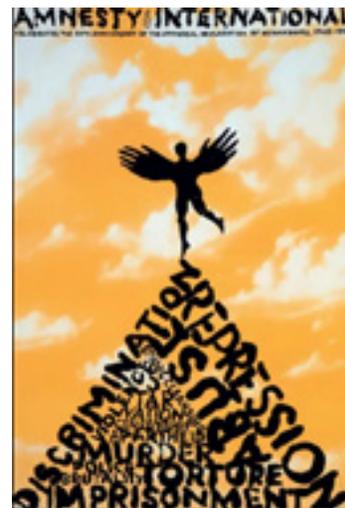
Twitter suddenly dissolved its Trust and Safety Council on Monday evening, emailing the group moments before it was supposed to meet with company representatives.

On November 4th, a week after taking over the company, Elon Musk also fired Twitter's entire human rights team, while thousands of independent contractors who worked on content moderation for the social media platform have also lost their jobs. Amnesty International has repeatedly documented how Twitter has failed to respect women's rights online. Violence and abuse against women have flourished on the social media platform, often with little or no accountability.

Amnesty International USA Condemns Biden Administration's Attack on Asylum

(January 5, 2023) Amnesty International USA Advocacy Director for the Americas, Amy Fischer, released the following statement in response to the Biden administration's announcement to limit pathways to asylum seekers:

"Amnesty International USA condemns the Biden Administration's attack on the human right to seek asylum. Today, the Biden Administration fully reversed course on its stated commitment to human



rights and racial justice by once again expanding the use of Title 42, announcing rulemaking on an asylum transit ban, expanding the use of expedited removal, and implementing a new system to require appointments through a mobile app for those desperately seeking safety.

While we welcome the expanded humanitarian parole program

to provide a pathway for Cubans, Haitians and Nicaraguans to apply for protection without having to make the dangerous journey to the border, that must not come at the expense of the human right to seek asylum.

These new policies will undoubtedly have a disparate impact on Black, Brown, and Indigenous people seeking safety. In fact, Amnesty International previously found that the cruel treatment of Haitians under Title 42 subjected Haitian asylum seekers to arbitrary detention and discriminatory and humiliating ill-treatment that amounts to race-based torture. The United States has both a legal and moral obligation to uphold the right to seek asylum, and over the holidays, we once again saw communities mobilize to welcome asylum seekers with dignity. The Biden Administration must reverse course and stop these policies of exclusion, and instead uphold the right to seek asylum and invest in the communities that are stepping up to welcome."

URGENT ACTION: CHINA JOURNALIST'S HEALTH FURTHER DETERIORATED

NAME AND PRONOUN: Huang Qi (He/Him)

Huang Qi, founder and director of Sichuan-based human rights website “64 Tianwang” was able to speak with his mother on videoconference on November 24th, 2022. His health has further deteriorated following his diagnosis of hyperthyroidism in July. With limited access to healthcare and additional supplies, his poor health is at risk of significant deterioration. His mother, 89, continues to be subject to heavy surveillance. The authorities must ensure that Huang has access to immediate and proper medical care and allow him to speak with his family and lawyers of his choice.

Huang Qi founded “64 Tianwang” together with his then-wife Zeng Li in 1998, and the website continues to publish reports of the human right violations investigated by citizen journalists in China. Huang Qi was charged with “intentionally leaking state secrets” and “providing state secrets to a foreign entity” by the Mianyang City Intermediate People’s Court on July 29th, 2019.

Huang Qi was first taken away in 2016 and has reported incidents of ill-treatment throughout his detention. On October 23rd, 2018 he told his lawyer that doctors and detention centre officers provided false reports of his blood pressure and understated the extent of his critical medical conditions. Prior to that, on July 28th, 2017, Huang Qi told his lawyer that he was made to stand for hours at a time and was repeatedly questioned and insulted by officers since his detention in late 2016. On November 3rd, 2017 he also shared that he had been beaten up by other detainees at the Mianyang City Detention Center, Sichuan Province, on October 24th-26th, with the knowledge of at least one of the detention centre’s officers.

Over the years, Huang Qi and other “64 Tianwang” contributors have been frequently detained or harassed by the Chinese authorities. Huang Qi has been put on trial and sentenced to terms of imprisonment twice. He was detained in June 2000 – the 11th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown – before being convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to five years in prison in May 2003. He was again imprisoned for three years after exposing the substandard building scandal following the 2008



Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan.

In addition, lawyers who have worked on Huang Qi’s case have also faced harassment and intimidation by the authorities. In February 2018, the Guangdong Provincial Department of Justice notified Guangzhou-based lawyer Sui Muqing that he was being disbarred. The lawyer, who had previously represented Huang Qi, believes his disbarment was related to his legal representation of human rights defenders. Another of Huang Qi’s lawyers, Liu Zhengqing, was also disbarred in January 2019.

There is an alarming pattern of deaths of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. In July 2017, human rights activist and Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo died in custody after the authorities refused his and his family’s requests to receive treatment abroad for his cancer. The same year, Chinese writer and government critic Yang Tongyan (pen name Yang Tianshui) died three months after being released on medical parole and undergoing an operation to remove a brain tumour. Beijing activist and prominent campaigner Cao Shunli died from organ failure after months in custody in March 2014. She was denied appropriate medical treatment while in jail.

Sample Letter

Dear Director Su,

I am writing to express my grave concern for the health and wellbeing of Huang Qi, a human rights defender who is currently serving a 12-year sentence in Sichuan Bazhong Prison for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. It is distressing to learn that Huang Qi’s health has further deteriorated and is at risk of worsening further. The prison authorities must ensure that he has access to immediate and



proper medical care.

For your information, Huang was known to suffer from chronic kidney disease and hydrocephalus, as well as other conditions affecting his heart and lungs, before being detained. It has been reported that Huang has not able to access to proper medical care in prison. Huang's mother spoke with Huang via videoconference on November 24th. According to Huang's mother, Huang has become very frail after he was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism in July 2022. It is also worrying that Huang reportedly has only limited access to the account where his friends and family members have deposited money for him to purchase additional supplies in the prison. Huang reportedly has not been able to get necessary treatments in prison for months.

I also find it appalling that the authorities continue to put Huang's elderly mother under heavy surveillance. Pu, 89 years old, has repeatedly requested the authorities allow her to visit Huang, but none of these requests have been granted. The authorities promised her that they would remove restrictions and surveillance after the 20th National Party Congress in October but failed to keep their promise.

Huang Qi should not have spent even a day in prison simply for exercising his rights to freedom of expression. He should be released immediately. Furthermore, there is an alarming pattern of deaths of imprisoned Chinese activists, either in detention or after being belatedly released on medical parole. Therefore, pending his release and to ensure that no one else dies while in your detention facilities, I urge you to ensure that Huang Qi receives urgent, regular, and adequate medical care, and see that he has regular and unrestricted access to his family and to lawyers of his choice, and that he is not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

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. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
2. Click [here](#) to let us know the actions you took on Urgent Action 284.16. 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 Su Yuanliang

Sichuan Bazhong Prison
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Please take action as soon as possible until
January 30th, 2023

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

