

URGENT ACTION

AHWAZI ARAB MEN AT RISK OF EXECUTION

Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah, from Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority, are facing the death penalty following a grossly unfair trial. "Confessions" they have said were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment, including electric shocks and mock executions, were used to convict them. Their cases are before the Supreme Court.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Head of the Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi
C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland*

Dear Mr Raisi,

Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah, Sunni Muslims from Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority, are on death row following a grossly unfair trial which relied on "confessions" they say were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment. They have been convicted of "enmity against God" (moharebeh) in connection with an armed attack on a Shi'a religious ceremony in Safiabad, Khuzestan province, on 16 October 2015, which left two people dead. They have denied any involvement in the attack. Their lawyers have said there is no evidence linking them to the attack and have identified inconsistencies between the "confessions" that led to their convictions and the accounts of eyewitnesses present at the scene of the crime. On 19 October 2015, both men were arrested by the ministry of intelligence and held in solitary confinement in an unknown location for six months. They have since been moved to several different detention centres. They have been given extremely limited access to their families through irregular telephone calls and only one visit. On 9 April 2019, they were transferred to a ministry of intelligence detention centre in Hamedan, Hamedan province, where they have been denied access to their families.

Both men have said they were subjected to months of torture in detention including by being beaten and given electric shocks. Abdullah Karmollah Chab has said his interrogators hung him upside down for 11 days and subjected him to mock executions, saying they would execute and bury him in an unmarked grave. For three mornings in a row, according to him, they woke him, put a sack over his head and a noose around his neck, and told him that if he "confessed" he would not be executed. He refused, saying he was innocent. On the third day, he said he heard one of the interrogators say: "Just let him go. If he had anything to confess he would have done so by now." Both men were denied access to a lawyer until the day of their trial, when they were represented by a state-appointed lawyer. During their trial before the Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz on 22 June 2016, they reportedly removed some of their clothes to show torture marks on their bodies to the court. However, no investigation was ordered. Iran's Supreme Court later quashed the conviction and sentence due to lack of evidence and flawed investigations and ordered a retrial. On 6 July 2017, they were sentenced to death again. The case is now again before the Supreme Court for appeal.

I urge you to quash Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah's convictions and death sentences; and release them unless there is sufficient evidence, not obtained through torture or other ill-treatment, to charge them with a recognizable criminal offence. In addition, I urge you to grant them a fair trial, without recourse to the death penalty. I urge you to provide them with ongoing access to their families and lawyers. I also urge you to ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and to order an independent and impartial investigation into their torture allegations, bringing to justice anyone responsible.

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah were among 15 Ahwazi Arabs who were arrested following the armed attack on a religious ceremony in Safiabad on 16 October 2015. Within weeks of the attack and before their trial had taken place, the authorities made a series of announcements that undermined their presumption of innocence. On 1 November 2015, the public prosecutor of Dezful, Khuzestan province, announced: "After arresting all of the perpetrators on this incident, and [obtaining] their confessions, it is clear that this was a terrorist incident." He went on to accuse the detainees of belonging to a group that called itself Jandolfareq, which he said had 15 members and aimed to commit sabotage operations and other acts in the province. He said: "Thankfully, they were identified and arrested after their first operation and had their weapons and other devices discovered and seized. According to the law, their crime is certainly that of *moharebeh* and they have been charged as such." On 17 November 2015, the Islamic Republic News Agency also reported that the head of the justice department in Dezful told its reporters: "I anticipate that these 'terrorists' will be convicted of *moharebeh* and handed down a punishment that will make them pay for their deplorable actions and serve as a lesson to others."

In court, Abdullah Karmollah Chab and Ghassem Abdullah were tried alongside six other Ahwazi Arabs. The prosecution authorities accused them of involvement in an armed group called Jandolfareq, which they described as following a "Salafi Takfiri" ideology, but failed to provide any evidence to show how the defendants were connected to the group. Amnesty International has received information from a reliable source that also show evidence of the flawed investigations that took place. These include inconsistencies between "confessions" the men say they made under torture and the evidence presented to the court. The men are said to have "confessed" that the car they used during the attack was a white Peugeot Persia while eyewitnesses have stated that a silver Peugeot 405, which is an older model, was used by the assailants. In addition, Ghassem Abdullah, who is a farmer, told his interrogators that he owns a rifle and indicated where they could find it. However, according to statements made by the arms specialist assigned to this case and a report by the security authorities, three shells found at the scene of the crime do not match the bullets found in the cartridge of the rifle that was retrieved from Ghassem Abdullah's home. Despite these and other inconsistencies, the judge presiding over their trial refused to order an investigation into their torture allegations and accepted their "confessions" as evidence to sentence them to death. The six other defendants on trial with them were also convicted of "enmity against God" but were spared the death penalty and were instead sentenced to between three and 25 years in prison.

Abdullah Karmollah Chab is a 38-year-old with three children, and Ghassem Abdullah is a 32-year-old farmer with two children. Both men, from Shush county in Khuzestan province, are Sunni Muslims who have converted from Shi'a Islam.

Under international human rights standards, individuals charged with crimes punishable by death are entitled to the strictest observance of all fair trial guarantees. The arbitrary deprivation of life, as well as torture and other ill-treatment are absolutely prohibited at all times and in all circumstances.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 19 June 2019

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: **Abdullah Karmollah Chab** (he; his); **Ghassem Abdullah** (he; his)