

URGENT ACTION

TORTURED STUDENTS JAILED UNJUSTLY

On 25 April 2022, a Revolutionary Court in Iran sentenced university students Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi to 16 years in prison on spurious national security charges after a grossly unfair trial. Their convictions were based on “confessions” which both men retracted in court and said were obtained under torture and other ill-treatment. They are prisoners of conscience targeted for exercising their right to peaceful assembly and their families’ real or perceived links to opposition groups.

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

*Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium*

Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

*University students **Ali Younesi** and **Amirhossein Moradi**, both 22, are serving unjust 16-year prison sentences in Tehran’s Evin prison after Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran convicted them on 25 April 2022 of “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security”, “spreading propaganda against the system” and “destruction of public property” for their participation in peaceful protests in January 2020 and their families’ real or perceived ties to the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an opposition group based outside Iran. Their trial was grossly unfair; their rights to adequate defence, not to incriminate themselves, and to the presumption of innocence were violated. Ministry of Intelligence agents denied them access to an independent lawyer of their choosing for the first 13 months of their detention. On 8 December 2021, journalists working with outlets affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards disseminated a video of their forced “confessions” on social media. According to an informed source, they “confessed” under the threat of death and sexual violence after being transferred out of Section 209 of Tehran’s Evin Prison to a location outside prison, where Ministry of Intelligence agents warned them that prison regulations did not apply. Prior to their transfer, they were held in solitary confinement for nearly 60 days in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.*

Amnesty International learned that in their last trial session on 17 April 2022, the judge noted that the prosecution had failed to present the video footage of their interrogation sessions he had requested during a previous hearing after the two students told him that they had “confessed” under torture and other ill-treatment. Even though the prosecution only gave the court the aforementioned propaganda video containing their videotaped forced “confessions”, the judge convicted them on that basis and failed to order an investigation into their claims. Branch 36 of the Appeals Court upheld their convictions and sentences on 6 June 2022. Amnesty International learned that since then, Ministry of Intelligence agents visited Amirhossein Moradi’s father and made vague promises about the possibility of his son’s release in exchange for agreeing to a “friendly” interview with state TV and publicly criticising dissidents; Amirhossein Moradi refused.

I call on you to release immediately and unconditionally Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi as they are detained solely based on their families’ real or perceived ties to opposition groups and their peaceful participation in protests, and quash their unjust convictions and sentences. An effective, prompt, independent and impartial investigation into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment must be conducted and all those suspected of criminal responsibility must be brought to justice in fair trials without recourse to death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ministry of Intelligence agents subjected Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi to torture and other ill-treatment, by inflicting severe pain and suffering on the two students for the purpose of extracting “confessions”. They were held in separate rooms in Section 209 of Evin prison for 808 days following their arrests on 10 April 2020. For the first 60 days, they were held in solitary confinement in small windowless rooms with bright lights on 24 hours a day, which left them without a sense of day and night and caused them severe distress and pain. Ali Younesi stated that he was only able to sleep by covering his eyes with his shirt. During their detention in Section 209, agents severely limited their access to fresh air and natural light to 20 minutes twice a week and denied them face to face visits with their families. Ali Younesi revealed to his family that he had been denied adequate healthcare for serious injuries sustained to his left eye during beatings upon his arrest by Ministry of Intelligence agents; he has not been examined by an eye doctor during his detention. Amirhossein Moradi also reported being harshly beaten during his arrest. On 26 June 2022, they were transferred to the public ward of Evin prison. On 15 July 2022, Iran’s High Council for Human Rights, which is supervised by the judiciary, responded to a communication by a group of UN Special Procedures dated 3 May 2022 raising concerns about Ali Younesi’s and Amirhossein Moradi’s treatment in detention and the violation of their fair trial rights, dismissing concerns and falsely claiming that “the defendants were kept in the solitary suite (not solitary cell) of Ward 209 of Evin Prison for a limited period of time before the verdict was issued. After that, they were transferred to General Ward 209”. (See [here](#) for more information).

The authorities violated their right to be presumed innocent by publicly accusing them of ties to “counterrevolutionary” groups apparently based on their families’ real or perceived association with the PMOI. During a weekly press conference on 6 May 2020, Iran’s then judiciary spokesperson Gholamhossein Esmaili stated that two university students had been arrested for being in contact with “counterrevolutionary” groups, in apparent reference to Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi. He used a pejorative term to refer to the PMOI, and failed to provide any evidence for the accusations. Authorities also made spurious accusations of having found “explosive devices” in their possession. Both students denied these accusations. Their interrogators also accused them of removing posters of Iranian officials and participating in peaceful protests in January 2020. In response to the spokesperson’s allegation that “explosive devices” were found in the homes of the university students, Aida Younesi, Ali Younesi’s sister, stated that security officials told them that they had found nothing suspicious after searching Ali Younesi’s home.

During a hearing before Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran held on 3 July 2021, Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi were accused of “corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel-arz*), which carries the death penalty, “gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security” and “spreading propaganda against the system”. According to media interviews given by their lawyer, the judge dismissed the “corruption on earth” charge and replaced it with “destruction of public property” which accounts for 10 years of their sentences.

The Iranian authorities have a history of targeting family members of those who have real or perceived ties with the PMOI. Following the post-June 2009 election unrest in Iran, the authorities arrested, amongst many others, individuals who had relatives with a past or current association with opposition groups, including the PMOI. See [From Protest to Prison](#), for more information. Those arrested in 2009 include prisoner of conscience Maryam Akbari Monfared, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence following the arbitrary interference with her privacy, family and correspondence in relation to having made phone calls to and visiting once family members who were members of the PMOI (Click [here](#) for more information).

From 11 January 2020, protests began across Iran after the authorities admitted that the Revolutionary Guards fired missiles at a Ukrainian passenger plane in Iranian air space, killing all 176 people on board, with protests quickly expanding to include anti-establishment slogans and demands for transformation of the country’s political system. Amnesty International documented that in response to these protests, security forces fired pointed pellets from airguns, usually used for hunting, at peaceful protesters causing bleeding and painful injuries, and that security forces also used rubber bullets, tear gas and pepper spray to disperse protesters as well as kicking and punching them, beating them with batons and carrying out arbitrary arrests. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/01/iran-scores-injured-as-security-forces-use-unlawful-force-to-crush-protests/> for more information.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 29 September 2022

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Ali Younesi (Him/his), Amirhossein Moradi (Him/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/5024/2021/en/>