

QUARTERLY REPORT

APRIL-JUNE 2023

**IRAN: A HUMAN
RIGHTS REPORT
ON THE AZERBAIJANI
TURKS IN IRAN**



About the Foundation for Inclusive Society:

The Foundation for Inclusive Society (FIS), a nonprofit based in the United States, is dedicated to studying and empowering minority groups. Through conducting analyses and publishing reports on human rights and environmental issues, FIS strives to meet the needs of marginalized communities. Visit our official website, www.inclusivevision.org, to access our latest reports and publications. For inquiries, feel free to reach out to us at secretary@inclusivevision.org.

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Part One

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Introduction

1.1 Summary

This report offers an analysis of the human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran during the months of April, May, and June of 2023. Its purpose is to bridge the existing gap in the documentation of human rights abuses in the Azerbaijani region of Iran. The report is a collaborative effort between an initiative group of Azerbaijanis from Iran, currently based in the US and Canada as well as the network of Azerbaijani human rights activists within Iran.

The report commences with an introduction, providing pertinent background information about the initiative group and its objectives. A summary is presented with the principal findings of the report. Subsequently, the report delves into comprehensive sections with specific cases that classify and emphasise the gathered information on human rights violations encompassing arrests and releases, cases of exile, and instances of severe punishments, namely capital punishment. It provides detailed accounts for each case including the imposed sentences and the profound physical and psychological toll endured by the victims and their families.

During the second quarter of 2023, a total of 16 individuals were arrested by the authorities. Some of them have been released after posting bail pending the completion of the legal process. The report includes updates on three previously arrested cases, as well as information about one person who was summoned by the disciplinary committee of the university. Three individuals have been subjected to exile as a punitive measure. Unfortunately, one person tragically succumbed to the immense pressures endured in prison and attempted to commit suicide. At least three people were executed by hanging as a result of being sentenced to capital punishment. One individual who was sentenced to capital punishment passed away before the execution could be carried out. He was being transferred to solitary confinement prior to the execution when his heart stopped abruptly due to the immense stress and abuse he had endured.

Despite the issued order of “Amnesty and Reduction of Public Punishment” which called for ongoing cases to be halted and closed regardless of the proceeding stage, Alireza Farshi, Akbar Azad, Ali Rezai, and many others are required to serve their respective sentences. Tragically, Siamak Lotfi, Vahid Seyfi and Yousef Khoob Imchek (Mehrad) were subjected to execution by hanging, despite the anticipation of being granted amnesty.

The conclusion of the report encapsulates key insights derived from the collected information and the recommendations section offers actionable recommendations for addressing the documented human rights violations.

1.2 Methodology

This section aims to provide an overview of the methodology adopted in the preparation of this human rights report focusing on the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran from April to June 2023. The following methodology was employed for gathering and analyzing the information presented in this report:

Objectives

The primary objective of this report is to bring attention to specific cases of human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. It sheds light on a range of violations, including arrests and subsequent releases, instances of forced exile, and cases where punishments, such as executions, were disproportionately severe.

Furthermore, this report goes beyond documentation by offering recommendations for addressing the documented human rights violations. These recommendations are aimed at promoting accountability, justice, and the protection of basic human rights. The report emphasizes the urgent need for action to safeguard the rights and dignity of the Azerbaijani Turkish community in Iran.

By highlighting these violations and providing actionable recommendations, this report aims to contribute to a discourse that seeks to rectify the injustices faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, and to advocate for the protection and promotion of their fundamental human rights.

Sources of Information

The information presented in this report is the result of a collaborative effort between an initiative group of Azerbaijanis from Iran, currently residing in the US and Canada, and the network of Azerbaijani human rights activists, both in diaspora and within Iran. These sources provide invaluable firsthand accounts, testimonies, and documented evidence of human rights abuses experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the gathered data, a meticulous process is followed. Multiple reliable sources, including credible news reports, public records, and other reputable sources, are consulted and cross-referenced. This multi-faceted approach helps to corroborate the information and establish its authenticity.

Data Collection

The data collection process for this report involved a close collaboration between the initiative group and the network of Azerbaijani human rights activists inside Iran, consisting of 16 dedicated individuals. These activists played a vital role in gathering and disseminating information on human rights violations occurring in the Azerbaijani region of Iran.

Multiple sources were utilized to collect the data including eyewitness testimonies, accounts from the families of victims, published reports, and narratives shared by the protesters themselves. These sources provide firsthand information and personal experiences, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the human rights situation.

Data Analysis

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, the collected data undergoes a meticulous analysis and classification process. This ensures that the information is structured, allowing for a thorough overview of the violations.

The collected data is carefully examined and organized into distinct sections, each focusing on specific human rights violations. This classification enables a clear and comprehensive presentation of the violations experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

To ensure the authenticity and reliability of the collected information, the initiative group employed rigorous verification methods. This involved cross-referencing the data from different sources and channels to establish consistency and accuracy. By adopting this meticulous approach, the group aimed to present a reliable and accurate portrayal of the human rights violations faced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

By analyzing and categorizing the data, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation, shedding light on the various violations and their impact. Through this systematic approach, the report strives to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and injustices the Azerbaijani Turkish community faces in Iran.

The collaborative efforts of the initiative group and the Azerbaijani human rights activists, along with the careful verification process, contribute to the credibility and integrity of the data presented in this report.

1.3 Introduction

Our report covers various topics, including arrests and releases, exiled individuals, and cases involving severe consequences like executions. It begins with an introduction that provides contextual information about the initiative group responsible for compiling the report. A concise summary follows, outlining the main findings. The report then delves into detailed sections, carefully categorizing the collected information on human rights violations. These sections address diverse themes, such as the detention and release of individuals, forced exile cases, and instances where the gravest punishment of capital execution is imposed.

The conclusion and recommendations section concludes the report by highlighting key conclusions deduced from the collected information and providing recommendations to address the documented human rights violations. Additionally, contact information is provided for further inquiries or engagement related to the findings presented in the report.

The report aims to present an accurate and comprehensive account of the human rights breaches affecting Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. By shedding light on these violations, it is earnestly hoped that concrete efforts will be made to safeguard and uphold the rights and inherent human dignity of the Azerbaijani Turkish community in Iran.

1.4 Classification of the Collected Information on Human Rights Violations

The report systematically organizes the gathered information on human rights violations concerning Azerbaijani Turks in Iran into the following categories, with the aim of providing succinct and comprehensive insights:

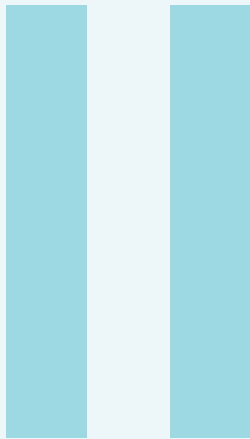
A. Arrested, Released and Summoned Individuals: This section highlights instances where Iranian authorities have summoned, detained individuals and released them. Detailed information is provided for each case, including the individuals' identities, the charges against them, and the physical and psychological harm they may have endured during their detention. Emphasis is placed on the unlawful treatment and inadequate medical care provided to those who were arrested.

B. Exiled Individuals: This section addresses cases of Azerbaijani Turks who have been forcibly displaced from their homes and communities. It presents testimonies of individuals who have been compelled to leave their residences due to persecution and discrimination, often stemming from their ethnic background or political activism. The purpose is to raise awareness about the violation of the right to reside and the displacement experienced by Azerbaijani Turks.

C. Executed Individual: This section focuses on specific cases of individuals who have been subjected to execution by the Iranian government. Comprehensive information is provided about these individuals, including their identities and the circumstances surrounding their execution. The section emphasizes the severe consequences faced by those subjected to capital punishment, underscoring the violation of the right to life.

D. Suicide Attempts and Murders: The report acknowledges, albeit briefly, cases of individuals from the Azerbaijani Turkish community who have been victims of murder or have attempted suicide. It indicates the presence of additional information and documentation concerning these incidents. While not extensively discussed in this section, the gravity of such violations and their impact on the community is acknowledged.

By categorizing the compiled information in this manner, the report aims to offer an in depth overview of the human rights violations experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. The detailed accounts and specific examples serve to illustrate the extent of these violations and their impact on the affected individuals and their families. Through this categorization, the report emphasizes the urgent need for action to address these violations and protect the rights and dignity of the Azerbaijani Turkic community in Iran.



Part Two

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Arrested and Released Individuals

2.1 Arrested and Released Individuals

In this section, we present noteworthy cases that highlight instances where Iranian authorities have carried out arbitrary arrests, incarcerations, and executions. In the second quarter of 2023, authorities made a total of 16 arrests. Some of these individuals have been released pending the completion of legal proceedings, while others have been incarcerated. Additionally, we have updates on three previously arrested cases, namely, Dr. Hamid Ghareh Hasanlou, Farzaneh Ghareh Hasanlou, and Hamed Ghareh Oghlani. Each case has undergone detailed examination to provide specifics about the individuals involved, the charges filed against them, and the extent of any significant physical or psychological suffering they endured during their time in custody based on the available data. The purpose of this section is to draw attention to the unjust treatment and inadequate medical attention given to those who were apprehended.



**Hamid Ghareh
Hasanlou**

Tehran - Tehran



**Farzaneh Ghareh
Hasanlou**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Hamed
Ghareh Oghlani**

West Azerbaijan -Urmia



**Ebrahim
Ahmadpour**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Davoud Shiri

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Ramin Alinia
Tazekand**

Tehran - Tehran



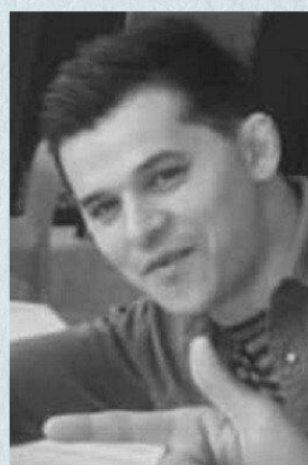
Hamzeh Valizadeh

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Ruhollah
Ahmadinejad**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



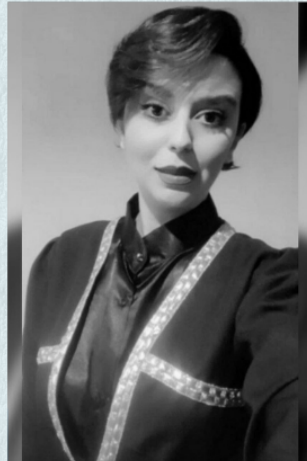
**Mohammad
Ilati**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Saleh Molla
Abbasi**

East Azerbaijan - Ahar



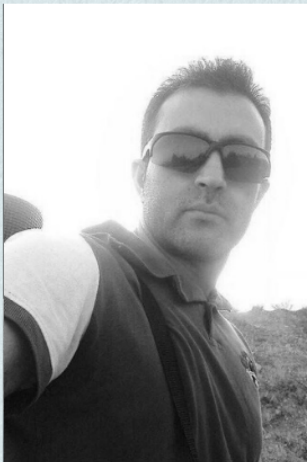
Armita Pavir

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Asadollah Asadi

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Ali Rezaei
Havastan**

Tehran - Tehran



**Hosein
Khodayi**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



Ali Shadi

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Mohammad
Reza Amani**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Hosein
Amani**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Mohammad
Eini**

Gilan- Rasht

Recently, Judge Asif Al-Hosseini issued new verdicts in the case involving **Dr. Hamid Ghareh Hasanlou** and **Farzaneh Ghareh Hasanlou**, which is linked to the death of Ruhollah Ajamian, a member of the Basij, during Hadis Najafi's funeral ceremony.

Dr. Hasanlou has been sentenced to 15 years in prison while his wife, Farzaneh Ghareh Hasanlou has received a 5-year sentence. Both of them have been sentenced to prison in exile with Dr. Hasanlou to the city of Yazd and Farzaneh to Mashhad. Both of these cities are far from their city of residence.

These verdicts were issued against the detained couple without providing any evidence or supporting documents, raising concerns about the unjust and cruel nature of the judgments.

Both Hamid and Farzaneh Ghareh Hasanlou are suffering from physical ailments resulting from severe physical torture. Hamid has sustained serious injuries to his hip and lungs and also suffered damage to the vitreous of his eye due to the continuous blows during torture. Unfortunately, they are being denied access to necessary medical treatment. Similarly, Farzaneh Ghareh Hasanlou is also experiencing physical health issues and unjustly being denied proper medical care.

During their arrest, the couple, who have two children, endured severe beatings in front of their young son and daughter. Additionally, denying Farzaneh the right to visit her family is an unlawful sentence. According to the laws of the Iranian government, prisoners should be held in a facility near their family's residence. The extended deprivation of social interaction and visitation rights, combined with the solitary confinement in their sentences, it appears to be a deliberate attempt to harass and torture not only the accused but also their family. Such treatment raises serious concerns about the impacts of human rights infringements on the activists and their loved ones.

Hamed Ghareh Oghlani who is currently held in the Urmia prison in West Azerbaijan is serving a 13-year sentence in the security ward. Hamed suffers from Grand Mal epilepsy and it is deeply worrisome that he is being denied access to the essential medical care he requires. According to reliable sources close to Hamed's family, there are concerns about

his well-being as he is being deprived of the medications necessary to effectively manage his condition.

Hamed Ghareh Oghlani was apprehended by the intelligence security forces on July 27, 2020 and was subsequently transferred to a detention center within the same security institution in Urmia city. Following the interrogation process, he was transferred to the Urmia prison on July 16, 2020. Since then, he has remained in the Urmia prison. Regrettably, he received a severe prison sentence of thirteen years under the application of Article 134 of the Islamic Penal Code. He was initially sentenced to capital punishment on the charge of "warfare through membership in the People's Mojahedin of Iran Organization". However, this was changed to a prison sentence of 14 years and one month by the Revolutionary Court of Urmia. This verdict was reached after the decision of two judges prevailed over another judge who had sentenced him to death. In an attempt to oppose the prison sentence, Hamed's lawyer asserted that his client, acknowledging his disorder of the brain, took responsibility for the alleged act. Nevertheless, the 41st branch of the Supreme Court upheld the verdict of 14 years and one month in prison on February 8, 2021 with a reduced sentence of 13 years to be enforced on the charges of "participating in military courses", "attacking Basij bases", "propaganda against the system", "insulting sacred things", and "insulting the leadership."

Ebrahim Ahmadpour, a civil rights activist and a graduate student of Political Science at Tabriz University recently received an electronic notification from the Judiciary's Sana system (the electronic system of the judicial system in Iran). According to the notification, he is required to appear at Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in East Azerbaijan, Tabriz on May 20, 2023 to defend himself against accusations. Previously, Ebrahim Ahmadpour was temporarily released from the Tabriz Central Prison on March 2, 2023 after posting bail in the amount of 400 million tomans. He is now scheduled to stand trial in the upcoming court session on the charge of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Following his release, Ebrahim Ahmadpour took to his Instagram page to share his experience when detained and shed light on the tortures himself and others endure during their detention. He explained that after receiving a phone call and summons from the East Azerbaijan Intelligence and Security Police, he was unable to be present in Tabriz city on the scheduled date. Following this, they issued a written summons to Tabriz University security to provide explanations in regards to his activities, dated February 27, 2023.

Upon his arrival on February 27, 2023 he was detained and subjected to repeated interrogations that included different forms of torture like threats, verbal and physical abuse. The beatings he endured resulted in injuries to his eye and he was taken to a medical facility.

Unfortunately, due to the absence of an ophthalmologist, they conducted a general examination and only painkillers were given. Moreover, he was asked to personally cover the expenses for these medications. However, his personal belongings were confiscated during his arrest and did not have access to his wallet. Due to this, he was unable to purchase the painkillers.

The following day, he was transferred to Branch 7 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tabriz under the supervision of Judge Hadi Ghaffarian where he was charged with "propaganda against the regime". Later, he was transferred to the quarantine ward of the Tabriz Central Prison and released on bail of 400 million tomans on March 2, 2023.

Ramin Alinia Tazehkand has been sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment, accompanied by a 2-year prohibition from engaging in various social and civil activities, including holding a social media account and participating in public social/political events by the 15th branch of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Salvati. He was arrested on November 8, 2022 by uniformed forces of the IRGC intelligence at his father's residence in Ardabil. He was released later on November 30th from the Evin prison after posting bail and pending the conclusion of the legal proceedings.

The charges against him include "gathering and collusion with the intention of acting against

the security of the country" and "propaganda activity against the Islamic Republic system". In addition to the imprisonment sentence, he has been prohibited from being a member of political parties, groups, and organizations as well as being active in the cyber, media, and press domains. He is also banned from leaving the country. Judge Salavati bases these accusations on Ramin Alinia's role as the administrator of an Instagram page called "Gundem". However, this civil rights activist believes that this conflicts with the charges against him. Despite the issuance of the Amnesty and Reduction of Public Punishment order last year, Ramin Alinia has been sentenced to 6 years of imprisonment and additional penalties.

On Thursday May 28, 2023, five Azerbaijani civil rights activists, **Davoud Shiri, Hamzeh Valizadeh, Ruhollah Ahmadinejad, Javad Ahmadzadeh, Hosein Amani, Mohammad Reza (Araz) Amani, and Alireza Sabri** were apprehended by security forces in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan. On June 8, 2023, Alireza Sabri, Javad Ahmadzadeh, and Hosein Amani were released from the Tabriz central prison by posting bail until the end of the proceedings. Davoud Shiri was transferred to the Tabriz central prison on May 23, 2023.

Unfortunately, there is limited information available regarding the specific reasons for their arrest and possible accusations. According to reports from their relatives, security agents conducted searches at the activists' residences following their arrests. During these searches, personal belongings such as mobile phones, computers, books, and manuscripts were confiscated. Further details regarding the circumstances surrounding their arrest remain undisclosed.

Mohammad Ilati is an Azerbaijani activist who received an electronic notification from the judicial system instructing him to appear at the Revolutionary Court of Ajabshir city on June 12, 2023. He was required to defend himself against the charge of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran".

On April 5, 2023, Mohammad Ilati was summoned to the Intelligence Department, as reported by his family. The next morning, intelligence forces arrested him on suspicion of distributing Turkish books and calendars within the city. He was apprehended in front of his house and taken to the Intelligence Department.

However, he was later released. Within the same month, the investigation session concerning Mr. Ilati's case took place at the first investigation branch of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Ajabshir city. After the indictment was issued, the overseeing investigator referred it to the court for a final verdict. A verdict is yet to be issued regarding his case.

Saleh Molla Abbasi, an Azerbaijani civil rights activist residing in the city of Ahar, was apprehended by law enforcement officers on May 23, 2023, right outside his residence. The arrest occurred subsequent to his receipt of a summons in connection with defending against an accusation of "spreading false information". Law enforcement authorities subsequently transferred Saleh to the second branch of the Ahar Judiciary. He was released after posting bail until the end of the proceeding process.

On June 28, 2023, **Armita Pavir**, a biology student at Madani University, was apprehended by the security forces. However, there is currently no available information regarding the reasons for her arrest or her current whereabouts.

Previously, on October 31, 2022, Armita Pavir was arrested in front of the Madani University of Azerbaijan by intelligence forces. She was released on December 8th after posting bail, with the condition that she would be required to attend the proceedings until their conclusion. During her time in detention, starting on November 22nd, Armita Pavir initiated a hunger strike to protest the lack of transparency and due process in her case by the judicial authorities. She was regularly transferred from the Tabriz Central Prison to the Tabriz Intelligence Department for questioning. It is important to note that during her detention, this Azerbaijani student was denied the right to visit her family and make phone calls.

On June 25, 2023, **Babak Asadi**, the son of Dr. Asadollah Asadi, took to his personal Instagram page to announce that his father had been transferred to the Tabriz Central Prison on that day. Dr. Asadollah Asadi, a retired education minister, has faced multiple arrests and imprisonments in the past due to his civil activities. However, there is currently no

available information regarding the specific accusations against him.

On December 11, 2022, **Ali Rezaei** Havastan was arrested by security forces in his residence in Tehran. During the arrest, security forces seized several of his personal belongings, including three laptops, a mobile phone, and a hard drive. This Azerbaijani civil rights activist has been sentenced to a total of six years in prison stemming from his involvement in last year's protests. The 15th branch of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, led by Judge Salavati, determined his sentence on June 21, 2023. Ali received a five-year prison term for the charge of "conversation and collusion" and an additional one-year prison term for the charge of "propaganda against the regime".

Throughout his arrest and court proceedings, Ali was unjustly denied access to legal representation, and Judge Salavati consistently forbade his family from visiting his office, even resorting to issuing threats of arrest against them. Additionally, despite an administered Amnesty order that should have been applied to his case, Ali was unjustly denied a pardon.

On December 7, 2022, **Hosein Khodayi** was apprehended by security forces at his workplace. Subsequently, a search of his residence was conducted, and his personal belongings were seized. He was then transferred to the Intelligence Department of Tabriz. Following the completion of the interrogation process, Hosein Khodayi was released from Tabriz Central Prison on January 19, 2023, after posting bail, which remained in effect until the proceedings concluded. Ultimately, he was acquitted of all the charges brought against him by the 32nd branch of the Court of Appeal of East Azerbaijan province.

During the trial, Hosein was initially accused of propagating against the system of the Islamic Republic and being a member of opposition groups, particularly a separatist group. Subsequently, the first branch of the Revolutionary Court in Tabriz charged him with membership in the illegal group, aiming to undermine the country's security, which led to a six-month prison sentence.

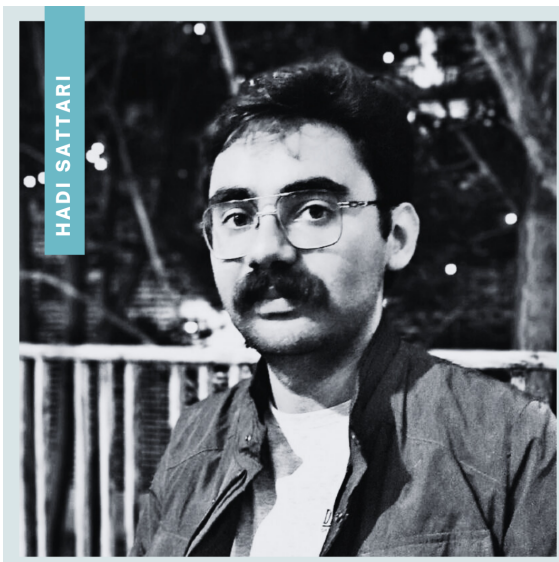
Ali Shadi, an Azerbaijani civil activist, has been sentenced to four months in prison by the Tabriz Revolutionary Court on the charge of “propaganda against the regime”. He was arrested on January 4, 2023, by security forces at his workplace in Tabriz. He was later released on bail until the conclusion of the proceedings.

On January 23, 2022, **Mohammad Eini** was arrested after visiting the Rasht Intelligence Department. Following the interrogation process, he was transferred to the Rasht Prison. On May 27, 2023, this Azerbaijani civil rights activist residing in Rasht city, received a notice through the electronic system of the judicial system (SANA). The notice instructed him to appear at the 16th investigation branch of the General and Revolutionary Prosecutor’s Office in Rasht City to defend against the alleged charge. The notification emphasized the need to provide a response within the specified deadline, warning that failure to comply may result in a decision being made in accordance with regulations. Additionally, it stated that according to Article 190 A.d, he has the right to legal representation during the proceedings.

Students Subject to Academic Consequences

3.1 Students Subject to Academic Consequences

Hadi Sattari, a student activist from Shahid Madani University of Azerbaijan has been summoned to appear before the disciplinary committee of the university.



According to the information shared by Hadi Sattari on his Instagram page alongside the summons, he is facing the following accusations: Insulting Islamic and national sanctities or engaging in acts against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Creating and participating in chaos, disturbance, and disruption of all university affairs and programs. The summons specifies that his case will be reviewed by the first committee on June 28, 2023.

Exiled Individuals

4.1 Exiled Individuals

This section focuses on the experiences of three Azerbaijani activists, **Alireza Farshi**, **Akbar Azad**, and **Behnam Sheikhi** who have endured exile and confronted legal obstacles and restrictions on their rights within Iran. Despite their physical health issues, the Iranian government compelled them to reside in remote cities, far away from their homes, effectively denying them their freedom of movement and subjecting them to further hardships.

Alireza Farshi, an Azerbaijani civil activist, recently provided an update on his exile sentence through his Instagram account. He disclosed that Mohammad Mehrdadi from the Execution of Criminal Sentences branch at the Evin Moghaddas Prosecutor's Office instructed him to report to Bagh melek in the Khuzestan province to serve his mandatory residence sentence. This directive came after he had completed three years and three months of his prison term at Evin prison, following a four-year prison sentence and two years of exile.

On May 22, 2023, Alireza Farshi voluntarily presented himself at the Bagh melek courthouse in the Khuzestan province, accompanied by a letter of representation from the criminal sentence enforcement branch of the Tehran Prosecutor's Office. During his conversation with the city prosecutor in Bagh melek, Alireza explained his circumstances, highlighting the financial challenges he faces in securing a place of residence and the isolation experi-



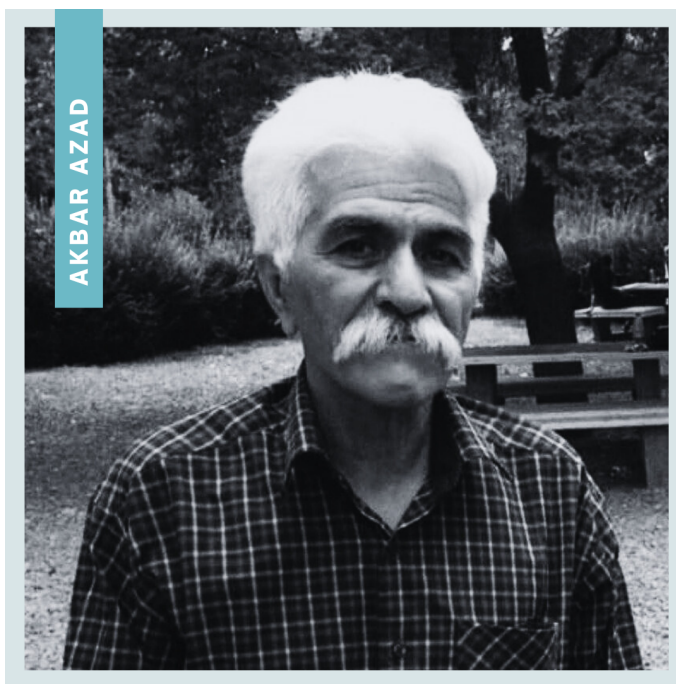
enced by his mother. Taking these factors into account, the city prosecutor granted him a 20-day leave to arrange suitable living conditions in Bagh melek. After conducting a survey among his Instagram followers, Alireza Farshi expressed his dissatisfaction with the imposed sentence and declared that he would not comply with the ruling. He stated that upon the completion of his 20-day leave, he would not return to Bagh melek city in the Khuzestan province.

It is noteworthy that Alireza Farshi had previously been arrested in March 2014 for participating in the celebration of International Mother Language Day in Nasim city, Tehran. He was released on bail pending the conclusion of his trial. Initially sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment and two years of exile in Bagh Melek by the first branch of the Revolutionary Court in Baharestan city. His sentence was later reduced to two years of imprisonment and two years of exile during the appeal process. While serving his previous sentence, new charges were brought against him by the intelligence forces. On July 31, 2019, he was arrested again to serve his two-year sentence. During his arrest, he sustained an eye

injury. Despite his ophthalmologist's recommendation for an urgent eye surgery, he was only granted a three-day medical leave from the prison on May 8, 2021. Unfortunately, the prison authorities refused to extend his leave.

Alireza Farshi holds a master's degree in computer engineering from Sharif University of Technology. He is originally from Marand city and currently resides in Tehran.

Akbar Azad is an Azerbaijani political activist, writer, researcher, translator, and member of the Iranian Writers Association. He is also associated with the French cultural and literary association Pen Club. Throughout his dedicated involvement in peaceful activities, he has unfortunately encountered previous arrests and convictions. On Sunday, June 11, 2023, Akbar Azad, this prominent civil rights activist traveled to Dareh Shahr city in the Ilam province to begin serving a two-year compulsory residence sentence.



The aforementioned sentence was imposed following his arrest during the commemoration of International Mother Language Day in March 2013. In 2016, the first branch of the Revolutionary Court in Baharestan city sentenced him to imprisonment and exile, with a sentence of two years of imprisonment and exile. This sentence was upheld by the appeal court. It is important to note that Akbar Azad is 67 years old and also suffers from diabetes.

While he was in Dareh Shahr city, government agencies have failed to provide him with any support or assistance. As a result, he was solely responsible for covering all expenses related to transportation, accommodation, and meals. Additionally, he was encountering difficulties with telephone communication. Akbar temporarily left Ilam and returned to

Tehran due to his son's deteriorating condition, and he has been unable to return to Ilam since then.



On Wednesday, May 31, 2023, **Behnam Sheikhi**, an Azerbaijani activist, was mandated to commence his two-year exile sentence in Masjed Soleyman city, located in the Khuzestan province, in south west of Iran. According to a trustworthy source with close ties to his family, Behnam received a summons to appear at the execution branch of the prosecutor's office. Following this, he was directed to report to Masjid Sulayman city, where he would be

required to reside for a mandatory two-year period as part of his sentence.

In March 2014, Behnam, alongside several other activists, was apprehended for participating in the observance of International Mother Language Day in Nasim Shahr city, Tehran. Later he was granted temporary bail until the completion of his trial, which allowed him to be released from custody.

In 2015, this activist was given a verdict of 10 years of incarceration and two years of exile to Masjid Suleyman in the Khuzestan province. The charge against him was "participating in the formation of a crowd with the intent to disrupt the security of the country," as issued by the first branch of the Revolutionary Court in Baharestan city. However, during the appeal stage, the sentence was reduced to two years of imprisonment and an additional two years of exile.

Security forces apprehended Behnam at his workplace in Tehran on July 21, 2020, and he was immediately transferred to the Evin prison to serve his sentence. He was informed of a conditional release in August 2022 while he was on temporary leave.

Capital Punishment Cases

5.1 Capital Punishment Cases

In this section, we delve into specific cases of individuals who have tragically faced execution by the Iranian government. We provide comprehensive information about these individuals, including their identities and the circumstances surrounding their executions. The aim of this section is to bring attention to the severe consequences endured by those subjected to capital punishment, highlighting the profound violation of their fundamental right to life.

Yousef Khoob Imcheh, also known as Yousef Mehrad, was arrested on May 24, 2020, in Ardabil and transferred to the Arak Prison. Upon his arrest, he was subjected to two months of solitary confinement during which he was denied access to legal representation and prevented from contacting his family for a staggering 8 months. These actions flagrantly violated his rights as a prisoner of conscience. The Islamic Republic's judicial system has accused Yousef Mehrad, a resident of Ardabil for "insulting holy ideas" and "burning" the Quran on social media platforms.

Yousef was a father of three children and his family was unaware of the impending execution of his sentence. He remained in the public ward until the evening before his execution. On May 7, 2023, the judicial authorities assured the family that the implementation of the death sentence had been completely halted and that Yousef would be granted amnesty by the leadership. A day prior to his execution, a screenshot of Yousef Mehrad's sister circulated in media channels appealing to the people of Iran for assistance, as her brother had been transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for the execution. The judiciary has alleged that Yousef Mehrad was the primary administrator and director of at least 15 anti-religious groups and channels, actively engaged in promoting atheism and insulting holy elements.

On June 20, 2023, Siyamak Lotfi and Vahid Seyfi were executed in the Tabriz Central Prison after being arrested four years ago on charges of intentional murder. They had received a death sentence from the judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Siyamak was married and had one child. They had been held in the Tabriz Central Prison for approximately four years following accusations of committing murder during a dispute. Although more than one month has passed, the execution of this prisoner has not been announced by the Iranian media or official sources. We were unable to collect reliable data about Vahid Seyfi to include in this report. It is important to highlight that in Iranian law, there is a lack of a precise definition of homicide. As a result, any action leading to the death of an individual is generally classified as murder, irrespective of potential justifications such as self-defense or other mitigating factors. This is always punishable by death.

5.2 Loss of Life and Suicide Attempts

This section briefly acknowledges cases within the Azerbaijani Turkic community where individuals have tragically lost their lives or attempted suicide. Although not extensively discussed, it recognizes the gravity of these incidents and acknowledges the existence of additional information and documentation surrounding them. It highlights the profound impact human rights violations can have on individuals and the effects of such tragedies on the general community.

Masoumeh Sanobari, an Azerbaijani prisoner held in the Fardis prison, endured severe pressure and torture at the hands of prison authorities. Following a court order, she was sentenced to solitary confinement and prohibited from contacting her family. On May 14, 2023 in a distressing response to ongoing mistreatment and increasing pressure from officers and prison management, Sanobari attempted to end her life by cutting the veins in her hands. Unfortunately, the current status of her condition after the suicide attempt and whether she is still alive is unknown.

Masoumeh is a political prisoner and was amongst the detainees involved in the general protests at the Fardis Karaj prison. She was arrested on December 13, 2022, and subsequently transferred to the Intelligence Department in the city. On Sunday, January 4, 2023, after approximately 40 days of interrogation, she was moved to Ward 4 of Fardis Karaj Prison. On March 5, 2023, she stood trial at Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Karaj, facing charges of "participating in actions against the country by aligning with the Mojahedin Khalgh organization, engaging in propaganda activities against the regime through involvement in illicit gatherings, and disseminating materials such as slogans and images featuring Mojahedin Khalgh leaders". Consequently, she was sentenced to serve a term of 7 and a half years behind bars.

In accordance with the court's ruling, Masoumeh Sanobari was prohibited from communicating with fellow prisoners and was required to remain within the confines of the correctional facility. As a political prisoner, she was stripped of the customary rights afforded to individuals in her position.

Moreover, she was subjected to solitary confinement without sufficient ventilation, with strict prohibition on interaction with other inmates. Visitation privileges were denied to her.

On May 22, 2023, Milad Bahmanzadeh tragically passed away due to anxiety-induced complications arising from the impending execution of his death sentence. Milad was held at the Central Prison of East Azerbaijan Tabriz. On May 21, Milad was transferred to the special ward of Tabriz prison in preparation for the execution of his sentence. However, only a few hours after the transfer, he experienced a heart attack, marking the beginning of the unfortunate events that led to his untimely death.

Conclusion

This comprehensive human rights report focuses on shedding light on the grave human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran during the second quarter of 2023. It is the outcome of a collaborative effort between a group of Azerbaijani individuals residing in the US and Canada, as well as a network of Azerbaijani human rights activists within Iran. The primary objective of this report is to address the significant gap in documenting and raising awareness about the human rights abuses taking place in the Azerbaijani region of Iran. The report carefully organizes the gathered information into distinct categories, including arrests and releases, cases of exile, and instances of severe consequences such as executions. Each case is presented in a meticulous manner, highlighting the physical and psychological hardships endured by the victims and their families.

Recommendations

Immediate action is imperative to address the human rights violations faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, as revealed by the findings of this report. In accordance with international human rights principles, the following recommendations are proposed: Termination of Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions: The Iranian government must cease the arbitrary arrests and detentions of Azerbaijani Turks based on their ethnicity and/or political activism. Upholding the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly is crucial.

Ensure Fair and Transparent Trials: Individuals who are arrested should be granted fair and transparent trials, adhering to international standards. They should have access to legal representation, be informed of the charges against them, and be given a genuine and reasonable opportunity to present their defense.

Protect the Rights of Exiled Individuals: Measures should be taken to safeguard the safety and well-being of Azerbaijani Turks who have been forced into exile. Discrimination and persecution based on ethnicity and/or political beliefs must be addressed, and steps should be taken to facilitate voluntary return if desired. When in exile, basic living expenses such as shelter and food should be covered.

Abolish Capital Punishment: The Iranian government should immediately cease the use of capital punishment and work towards its complete abolition. The right to life is a fundamental human right that must be protected and upheld.

Provide Adequate Medical Care: Prison authorities must ensure that all prisoners, including Azerbaijani Turks, have access to necessary medical care. Denying medical treatment, especially to those with pre-existing conditions or disabilities, is a violation of their rights and must be rectified.

International Attention and Monitoring: The international community, including human rights organizations and relevant stakeholders, should closely monitor the human rights situation of Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. Increased attention and engagement can help exert international pressure to address violations and reduce human rights infringements.

Dialogue and Engagement: Constructive dialogue and engagement between the Iranian government, Azerbaijani human rights activists, and representatives of the Azerbaijani Turkic community can contribute to resolving human rights issues. Meaningful dialogue should be pursued to address grievances and work towards lasting solutions.

The prompt implementation of these recommendations is vital to safeguard the basic rights and human dignity of the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. The international community should offer support and advocate for the protection of human rights, holding the Iranian government accountable for its actions. Through concerted efforts, meaningful change can be achieved, leading to an improved human rights situation for the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran and other minorities.

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