

QUARTERLY REPORT

JULY-SEPTEMBER 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.

Summary

This report has been prepared by Azerbaijani human rights advocates, shedding light on the current state of human rights violations against Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. This collaborative initiative results from the combined endeavors of the Foundation for Inclusive Advancement, situated in the US, and a network of dedicated Azerbaijani human rights activists operating within Iran. By focusing on the severe infringement of minority rights in Iran, our primary objective is to present a balanced account of human rights abuses perpetrated by the Iranian government.

Iran is a diverse, multiethnic nation, with Persians constituting less than half of its population. The majority of non-Persian ethnic groups predominantly reside in the border provinces, creating a contrast with the Persian-dominated central regions. Notably, over 40 percent of Iran's populace lacks proficiency in the Persian language.

The Azerbaijanis, an ethnic Turkic group, represent Iran's most significant minority, primarily living in West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Ardabil, Zanjan, Qazvin, Hamadan, Alborz, and Tehran provinces, bordered by Turkey and the Republic of Azerbaijan. During an official visit to Turkey in January 2012, then-Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi underscored the shared cultural ties between Turkey and Iran, revealing that 40 percent of Iranians speak Turkish, indicating a significant ethnically Turkic demographic¹.

In Iran, despite its diverse makeup, minority rights have been subjected to brutal abuse by the government. The Islamic regime, akin to its predecessor, the Pahlavi monarchy, has consistently minimized and deliberately overlooked the distinctions between Persians and

¹<https://www.fdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/fdd-monograph-iran-is-more-than-persia.pdf>

Azerbaijanis. This attitude is starkly evident in the regime's unhesitant crackdown on the activities of Azerbaijani Turks.

In the context of human rights violations, the third quarter of 2023 bore witness to the apprehension of 33 individuals by the authorities. Notably, some have found temporary reprieve through granted release after posting bail, pending the conclusion of their legal proceedings. Beyond the newly detained, this report delves into updates on previously arrested cases, highlighting the exile of one individual to a remote area.

The summoning of 30 individuals by security forces, including six women, underscores the comprehensive nature of these actions. Regrettably, at least six individuals met the gravest fate, facing execution by hanging under capital punishment sentences. A female civil activist faced academic suspension, and the operations of at least one civil association were halted. Moreover, an individual serving an extended prison term has been stripped of telephone communication privileges, adding to the troubling circumstances. A woman was fined for participating in civil activities, indicative of punitive measures against peaceful engagement. Additionally, four individuals have been recorded facing threats from security forces, contributing to the overall distressing landscape.

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Part One

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This comprehensive report addresses a spectrum of subjects, encapsulating individuals' apprehension and subsequent release, sentencing outcomes, cases of forced exile, capital punishment instances, summoning procedures, activity suspensions, academic penalties, telephone communication restrictions, fines, and threats. The report commences with a concise summary, providing an overview of the primary findings. Following this introduction, the report delves into detailed sections, categorizing information on human rights violations. These sections carefully explore themes such as detainment and release, forced exile cases, and instances of capital punishment, thoroughly examining the multifaceted issues at hand.

The report seeks to present a precise and comprehensive depiction of human rights infringements affecting Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. By illuminating these violations, the report earnestly aspires to prompt concrete efforts in safeguarding and upholding the rights and inherent human dignity of the Azerbaijani Turkish community in Iran.

The conclusion and recommendations section succinctly summarizes the report by summarising pivotal insights derived from the gathered information and offering suggestions to rectify the documented human rights violations. Additionally, contact details are included for further inquiries or engagement pertaining to the report's findings. Special acknowledgment is extended to Turkan Bozkurt and Behzad Jeddi for their valuable contributions in preparing this report.

1.2 Methodology

This section aims to provide an overview of the methodology utilized in the compilation of this human rights report, focusing on the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran during the period from July to September 2023. The following methodology was employed for the collection and analysis of the information featured in this report.

1.2.1 Objectives

The primary aim of this report is to draw attention to specific instances of human rights violations experienced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran. It sheds light on a spectrum of violations, including arrests and subsequent releases, forced exile cases, and instances where punitive measures, such as executions, were disproportionately severe.

Additionally, the report extends beyond mere documentation by offering recommendations to address the documented human rights violations, targeting the promotion of accountability, justice, and the protection of fundamental human rights. By highlighting these violations and proposing actionable recommendations, the report aims to contribute to a discourse aimed at rectifying the injustices faced by the Azerbaijani Turks in Iran, advocating for the protection and promotion of their fundamental human rights, underscoring the urgent necessity for action to safeguard their rights and dignity.

1.2.2 Sources of Information and Data Collection

The information presented in this report is from a network of Azerbaijani human rights activists within and outside Iran. These sources provide invaluable firsthand accounts, testimonies, and documented evidence of human rights abuses experienced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

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

The data collection process for this report involved the effort of the network of Azerbaijani human rights activists inside Iran, comprising 16 dedicated individuals. These activists played a crucial role in collecting and disseminating information on human rights violations in the Azerbaijani region of Iran.

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

1.2.3 Data Analysis

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

The collected data was carefully examined and organized into distinct sections, each focusing on a specific human rights violation. This classification enabled 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 Foundation for Inclusive Society 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 Foundation for Inclusive Society aimed to present a reliable and accurate portrayal of the human rights violations faced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

Through the analysis and categorization of data, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation, shedding light on the various violations and their impact. This systematic approach strives to comprehensively understand the challenges and injustices the Azerbaijani Turkish community faces in Iran.

The collaborative efforts of the Foundation for Inclusive Society and Azerbaijani human rights activists and the careful verification process contribute to the data's credibility and integrity.



Part Two

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Arrested and Released Individuals

2.1 Arrested and Released Individuals

The government's inadequate response to the shrinking of Lake Urmia has sparked growing protests among Azerbaijani civil and environmental activists. Consequently, there has been a surge in arrests of these activists. The Iranian government employs various methods to suppress protests, leading to the arrest and sentencing of dozens of individuals. The arbitrary detention of people without clear reasons, coupled with unfair trials and privacy violations of Azerbaijani activists, raises serious concerns for human rights. The situation is further exacerbated when torture and physical abuse are employed during detention and questioning. The unjust treatment of civil activists, based on unfounded accusations, underscores the urgent need for attention to the human rights situation in the region.

Imposing severe sentences exacerbates these violations, underscoring a persistent disregard for fundamental human rights. The continued occurrence of such actions underscores the pressing need for the international community to thoroughly scrutinize and intervene in response to the significant and ongoing human rights abuses orchestrated by the Iranian government.



**Mostafa
Avazpour**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Rahim Sasani

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Mohammad
Mardi**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Jafar Nouri

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Saadullah
Sasani**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Mohammad
Alipour**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Reza Rastegari

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Saeed Minaii

Gilan - Rasht



**Abdullah
Ansari**

Ardabil - Ardabil



**Karim
Esmailzadeh**

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**Mehdi
Nasirzadeh**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Ebrahim Rezaii

Ardabil - Parsabad



**Mohammadreza
Amani Nadarli**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Omid
Mostafazadeh**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Esmail
Ahmadi**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Mohammadreza
Moharrami**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Peyman
Ebrahimi**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Mehrdad
Sheikhi**

Ardabil - Ardabil

On July 7th, 2023, Mostafa Avazpour, Rahim Sasani, Mohammad Mardi, Jafar Nouri, Saadullah Sasani, and Mohammad Alipour were initially arrested in Khoda Afarin city, East Azerbaijan. They were released on the same day after a brief detention. However, the following day, three activists - Saadullah Sasani, Jafar Nouri, and Rahim Sasani - were arrested again when they attempted to surrender their mobile phones and personal belongings as requested.

Following their detention, they were transferred to the first branch of the judiciary, specifically to the public and the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Khodafarin City. In this branch, they were charged with "propaganda against the Islamic Republic system". The six detainees were informed that a case with the same charge had been opened against them.

Upon the formal presentation of charges by the prosecutor, the activists were released on bail. Despite the release of Rahim Sasanian and Jafar Nouri, Saadollah Sasanian faced delays from judicial and security authorities, and due to the conclusion of official working hours, he was not released. Consequently, he was transferred to the central prison of Ahar city.

On the same day of July 7, six activists were arrested while visiting the Iran-Azerbaijan border near Khoda Afarin city. The arrest was accompanied by physical assault during the interrogation, resulting in slight injuries to Saadullah Sasani and Mohammad Alipour. The detention of these activists is attributed to their symbolic protest against the pollution of the Aras River by the Republic of Armenia. Notably, these human rights activists had previously been arrested due to their advocacy activities.

On July 29th, 2023, Azerbaijani environmental activist Reza Rastegari was arrested. Security forces detained him for several hours, confiscating his mobile phone in the process. Rastegari, known for his recent environmental activism, particularly his protests regarding the drying of Lake Urmia, became a target of the authorities.

On August 7th, 2023, Azerbaijani civil activist Saeed Minaii was arrested at his father's

home in the village of Akhund Qeshlaq, Bonab city, by security forces. After several hours of detention and interrogation in Bonab city, he was released. During the interrogation, this media activist faced threats and intimidation, and the security agents confiscated his mobile phone. The circumstances surrounding Mr. Minaii's arrest and the reasons and conditions for his release remain inadequately disclosed.

On August 16th, 2023, Azerbaijani civil activists Abdullah Ansari, Karim Esmaeilzadeh, Mehdi Nasirzadeh, and Ebrahim Rezaii were detained by security forces. During their arrest, these activists endured brutal beatings by the security forces.

On August 17th, they were transferred to Branch 10 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tabriz, where bail orders were issued. After posting bail, Abdullah Ansari, Mehdi Nasirzadeh, and Ebrahim Rezaii were released on August 19th, 2023. Karim Esmaeilzadeh was released only on September 28th by posting bail until the conclusion of the prosecution process from Tabriz Central Prison.

On August 19th, 2023, the court session of Mohammadreza Amani Nadarli, a civil activist, took place at the Revolutionary Court of Justice branch in Shabstar, East Azerbaijan. Amani was charged with "promoting the interests of groups or organizations opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran and insulting ordinary individuals". In the absence of the case judge, Asghar Mohammadi, Arash Amani's defense lawyer, submitted the defense statement to the mentioned branch office.

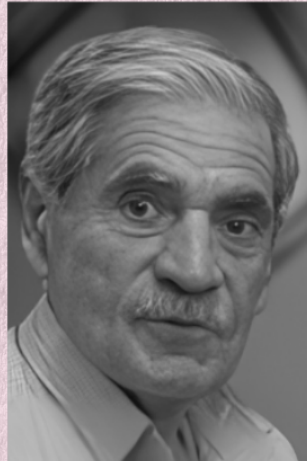
On August 21st, Esmail Ahmadi, an Azerbaijani labor rights activist, was detained by security forces in Varzaghan, East Azerbaijan Province. Ahmadi had previously been arrested for protesting the working conditions of miners in the Sungun copper mine in East Azerbaijan. He was released on August 24 from Ahar prison. The charges leveled against this civil activist during the hearing in the prosecutor's office included "disturbance in public order" and "insulting the officials of the copper company".

On August 22, Omid Mostafazadeh, an Azerbaijani athlete, was arrested at the entrance of Sahand Stadium in Tabriz by security forces and subsequently transferred to Tabriz Central Prison. Unfortunately, there is no additional information available regarding the



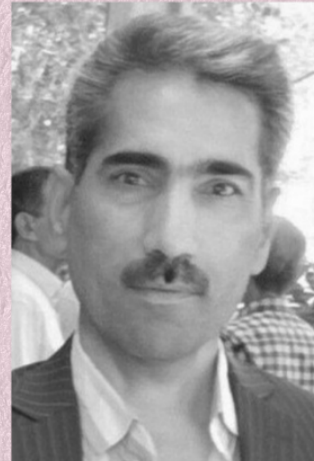
**Zulikha
Ghazizadeh**

Ardabil - Ardabil



**Mohammad
Sheikholeslami**

East Azerbaijan - Miyaneh



**Gholamreza
Asghari**

Ardabil - Ardabil



Afshin Naziri

Tehran - Tehran



**Mortaza
Nourmohammadi**

East Azerbaijan - Sofian



Ali Babaei

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Araz
Ebrahimnejad**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Javdar
Sudbar**

East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Amirhosein
Aghaei**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Mohammadreza
Movahed**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Davood Shiri

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



Babak Rahmati

East Azerbaijan - Bonab



Farhad Hosseini

Zanjan - Zanjan



Ashkan Saadatfar

West Azerbaijan - Urmia



**Hosein
Azadi**

East Azerbaijan - Tabriz

details of his detention.

On August 23rd, 2023, Mohammadreza Moharrami, an Azerbaijani civil rights activist, was apprehended and subsequently transferred to Tabriz Central Prison by intelligence officers. His arrest occurred as he entered Yadegar Emam Stadium in Tabriz with friends, with the grounds being that he wore a T-shirt featuring the slogan "Do not let the shrinking of Lake Urmia". Moharrami was released on August 27th. Initially, the charges against this civil activist were cited as "propaganda against the Islamic Republic" and "disturbing the public mind".

On August 26, 2023, Peyman Ebrahimi, a civil activist and Azerbaijani dance instructor, was arrested by security agents, and despite numerous requests from his family and relatives, the investigator refused to accept the order and issue a release order.

On August 28th, 2023. Mohammad Sheikholeslami, Zulikha Ghazizadeh, and Mehrdad Sheikhi, civil activists in Ardabil City, were released. They were arrested on August 27th, 2023, in Ardabil.

On August 29, Gholamreza Asghari, a trade union activist and member of the Teachers' Guild in Ardabil, was detained. On September 2nd, he was released after posting bail from Ardabil prison.

Bahram Namati, a teacher and member of the Teachers' Union in Ardabil, provided information about the detention of this Azerbaijani teacher: "Mr. Gholamreza Asghari is a retired teacher and an active member of the teachers union in Ardabil and the country. Previously, Gholamreza Asghari was arrested during the Women, Life, Freedom protests. He was detained on October 22nd, 2022, in Ardabil and was released on October 29th, 2022.

On August 29th, 2023, Afshin Naziri, an environmental activist, was detained by security forces and transferred to Evin Prison in Tehran. Judicial and security authorities have informed the family of this activist that Afshin is prohibited from visiting.

The environmental activist's sister, through an Instagram post, stated: "Unfortunately, we found out through one of the neighbors that at 6 am, five individuals in civilian clothes entered my brother's house and arrested him.

The judiciary took him to the prosecutor's office and transferred him back to Evin Prison. He is prohibited from visits and contact for the next ten days. The reason for the arrest of Afshin Naziri is sharing the right to preserve and protect the Lake Urmia that is shrinking."

On September 9th, 2023, Mortaza Nourmohammadi Nadarlu was arrested by security forces after initially being summoned to the registration office in Sofian City to address the process of obtaining an ID for his child. Upon arriving at the Registration Office in Sofian, he was detained by security forces.

Following the arrest of this Azerbaijani civil activist, security forces accompanied him to his residence. Subsequent to a search of his home, personal belongings, including books, were confiscated. He remained in intelligence detention until September 28 and was then transferred to Tabriz Central Prison.

Previously, Nourmohammadi Nadarlu had reported the opposition of the registration office in Sofian to issue an ID for his child, named "Hoonay," citing the objection due to choosing a Turkish name for his child.

On September 13, 2023, Ali Babaei, Javad Sudbar, Amirhosein Aghaei, Araz Ebrahimnejad, Seyyed Mohammadreza Movahed, and Davood Shiri, Azerbaijani activists were detained by security forces in the city of Tabriz.

Security forces reportedly subjected Ali Babaei to physical assault during his arrest at his workplace in Tabriz. Following the arrest, they proceeded to Babaei's residence in Mian-doab, West Azerbaijan, where they confiscated personal belongings, including a computer and books belonging to this national activist.

On September 16, 2023, Babak Rahmati was arrested by security forces in Bonab city, East Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, there is no available information regarding

his current whereabouts or any potential accusations against him.

On September 19th, 2023, Farhad Hosseini, an Azerbaijani activist, was arrested by security forces in Zanjan city. He was released on September 26th. This master's student in management at Zanjan Azad University has prior experience as a reporter in Zanjan provincial press, contributing to "Bayram" magazine, and has authored articles in cultural and social domains. Farhad Hosseini has additionally been involved in cultural centres in Zanjan city, where he has taught Azerbaijani Turkish language and literature at the Imam Zanjan Cultural Center for several periods.

On September 20th, 2023, Ashkan Saadatfar was arrested by Urmia city security forces. He was transferred to Urmia central prison on September 26th. Despite the family's efforts to inquire, judicial and security authorities have refrained from providing information about Saadatfar's condition. Furthermore, there have been threats stating that any publication of information regarding this Azerbaijani activist will prompt action by security institutions against his family.

During nationwide protests, Saadatfar was also previously arrested on September 24th, 2022, and was temporarily released on September 26th. On September 23, 2023, Hosein Azadi, an Azerbaijani civil activist originally from Miandoab city in West Azerbaijan, was arrested by security forces in Tabriz city, East Azerbaijan.

Sentenced Individuals

3.1 Sentenced Individuals

Several activists received prison sentences during the third quarter of the year. Additionally, there are updates on the cases of individuals previously arrested and sentenced to prison in the preceding months.

On July 5th, 2023, Sahand Nourmohammadzadeh's sentence of 6 years of imprisonment and 10 years of exile was confirmed by the Supreme Court of the country. Sahand, an Azerbaijani prisoner held in Rajai Shahr prison, was subsequently transferred to Kerman's Kahanouj Prison on August 10, 2023, to serve his 10-year prison sentence in exile.

Nourmohammadzadeh, detained during the Women, Life, and Freedom protests, received his sentence from Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, led by Judge Iman Afshari. His arrest took place on October 4, 2022, during nationwide protests on the Ashrafi Esfahani highway in Tehran. Judge Ali Mazloun from the 29th branch of the Revolutionary Court initially issued a "death sentence" for Nourmohammadzadeh on the charge of "attempting to close the street and preventing the movement of vehicles".



**Sahand
Nourmohammadzadeh**
Tehran - Tehran



Hossein Amani
East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Ramin Alinia
Tazehkand**
Ardabil - Ardabil



**Mahmoud
Ojaghlou**
East Azerbaijan - Tabriz



**Saleh
Mollaabbasi**
East Azerbaijan - Ahar



**Reza
Shahabi**
Tehran - Tehran



**Ali Rezazadeh
Nadarlu**
East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



**Jafar
Ebrahimi**
East Azerbaijan- Tabriz



Asghar Faraji
East Azerbaijan - Tabriz

Sahand's father raised concerns about the interference of the security apparatus in his son's sentencing and requested an investigation from the head of the judiciary. According to Sahand's father, security agents had announced the exile order for his son before the judge's ruling. Expressing his protest, Sahand's father highlighted the unjust nature of the sentence, which included 6 years of imprisonment, 10 years of exile, and flogging for his son.

During a visit to the Moghaddas Court's Judgment Execution Branch, Sahand's father was informed by the judgment execution judge that the court's judgment was unclear. He initiated a request to resume the proceedings of the case under Article 474, citing a pre-order call from someone claiming to be a security officer, stating that the person admitting Moharebeh not only faces execution but also exile. The father has urged the head of the judiciary to investigate this call.

On July 8th, 2023, the interrogation sessions of Hossein Amani, Javad Ahmadzadeh, Mohammadali Rezai, and Alireza Sabri took place at Branch 15 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Tabriz. The initial accusation of "Propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran" was changed by Mousavi, the investigator of Branch 15, to "(starting) assembly and collusion". These arrested Azerbaijani activists have consistently denied engaging in any illegal activities and refute the mentioned charges. Previously, Hossein Amani, Javad Ahmadzadeh, and Alireza Sabri were detained on May 18th, and Mohammad Reza (Araz) Amani on May 21st by security forces. They were later released from Tabriz Central Prison after posting bail, awaiting the conclusion of legal proceedings.

On July 4th, 2023, Ramin Alinia Tazehkand, an Azerbaijani civil rights activist, received a cumulative sentence of 6 years in prison, accompanied by additional penalties. The verdict, including a 2-year prohibition from joining political parties, groups, and organizations, engaging in online activities, media, press, and leaving the country, was confirmed by the 36th Branch of the Tehran Provincial Appeals Court.

On November 8th, 2022, Ramin Alinia Tazehkand was arrested by the Intelligence forces of the Revolutionary Guards at his father's house in the village of Ardabil city in Ardabil

province. Subsequently, on November 30th, 2022, he was released from Evin Prison after posting bail until the end of the trial process.

The charges against him included "collusion and conspiracy to act against national security" and "propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic system". Judge Salavati attributed the accusations in Mr. Alinia's case to his administration of the "Gondam" Instagram page. Despite finding the reasons cited inconsistent with the charges labeled against him, specifically "collusion and conspiracy" and "activities against national security," the judge upheld the verdict.

On July 13th, 2023, Mahmoud Ojaghrou, an Azerbaijani civil and political activist imprisoned in Ward 4 of Evin prison, informed his family about his sentence of 16 years of imprisonment and additional punishments.

According to the notification from Branch 15 of the Tehran Islamic Revolution Court, led by Abolghasem Salavati, Mahmoud Ojaghrou received five years in prison for the charges of "assembly and collusion to commit a crime" and "being a member of one of the opposition groups to disrupt the security of the country". Additionally, he was sentenced to another five years in prison for the charge of "inciting people to war and killing each other to disrupt the security of the country" and one year for "propaganda against the regime".

Arrested on December 11, 2022, Mahmoud Ojaghrou was also verbally informed of additional penalties, including a two-year prohibition on "membership in political parties, groups, and organizations" and "activity in cyberspace, media, and press". Moreover, he faces a two-year travel ban.

Asghar Faraji, an activist of the Azerbaijani National Movement serving a 5-year sentence in Ward 8 of Evin Prison, has been denied medical furlough despite being nearly 16 months into his imprisonment. Faraji, experiencing severe lower back pain, continues to be deprived of medical furlough despite numerous requests from his family and their pleas for his transfer to medical facilities for treatment.

Even after nearly 16 months of imprisonment, judicial authorities and prison officials persist in refusing to grant him furlough. While many imprisoned individuals were released due to the issuance of the "Amnesty and Reduction of Public Punishment" circular, this Azerbaijani civil activist was not included in the releases.

Asghar Faraji faced trial in Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran on charges including "collusion and conspiracy to act against national security", "membership in an illegal and anti-system group called Gamaaj", "propaganda activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran system through distributing the book 'What Should Be Done?', and "spreading falsehoods in cyberspace to disturb public minds". Initially sentenced to 17 years and 4 months of imprisonment with 2 years of mandatory residence in the "Dehsalm" region in the No-habad area of South Khorasan province, his sentence was reduced to a definitive 5-year term of imprisonment in the appellate court after he protested the initial verdict.

On July 19th, 2023, Saleh Mollaabbasi has sentenced to 91 days imprisonment on the charge of "Publishing false information to disturb public peace". This verdict was issued by Ahar 101 Criminal Branch, led by Amir Khadavi.

On October 9, 2022, Saleh Mollaabbasi was arrested at his sister's house in Ahar city in West Azerbaijan province. He was released from Tabriz Central Prison on November 9, 2022, after posting bail until the end of the legal proceedings. During the raid on Mollaabbasi's residence, security forces confiscated computers, laptops, tablets, mobile phones of family members, and several books.

Prior to this incident, Saleh Mollaabbasi had a history of threats, summons, arrests, and imprisonment due to his civil activities. In 2015, he, along with other activists named Esrafil Fathollahzadeh, Ebrahim Nouri, Morteza Shokri, Hamed Allahvirdipoor, and Soleyman Kazemi, was sentenced to 10 months in prison for protesting against an offensive television program called "Fitileh".

Reza Shahabi, an Azerbaijani workers' rights activist and a member of the board of directors of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran Bus Company, remains deprived of proper medical attention and has not been granted medical leave despite the specialist doctor

emphasizing the need for surgery.

Arrested on May 2nd, 2022, by security forces and subsequently transferred to Evin prison in Tehran, Reza Shahabi was sentenced by the Revolutionary Court to a total of 6 years in prison for charges including "propaganda against the system and society, and collusion with the intent to commit a crime against national security". Additionally, he faced supplementary penalties, including a ban on leaving the country, membership in political parties, engagement in social networks, and prohibition from residing in Tehran and neighboring provinces for 2 years. The Tehran Province Appeals Court confirmed this sentence.

On July 24, Ali Rezazadeh Nadarlu, an Azerbaijani human rights activist, was sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran, headed by Judge Salavati, on charges of "membership in an illegal group to undermine national security". In addition to the prison term, he received supplementary penalties, including a 2-year ban on membership in a group and leaving the country. The trial of this activist took place on July 15, 2023, in Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran.

Jafar Ebrahimi, an Azerbaijani teacher and a member of the Tehran Teachers' Union, continues to face deteriorating physical conditions and worsening blurred vision while being deprived of essential medical care and being denied transfer to a specialized hospital for treatment.

Despite urgent medical needs, Ebrahimi, who was transferred on September 3, along with 12 other Evin prisoners, has been placed in a security cell named "Secure Cell" in Ghezel Hesar Prison, housing prisoners of serious crimes. Despite the pressing need for hospitalization and specialized medical attention, he is being kept in poor conditions within the prison.

Ebrahimi's health worsened to the point that he was transferred to the prison's health center. Following this, he requested a short call with his wife in the central guard officer's room, where he faced severe beatings and insults from the deputy officer and several prison

staff members. The visible effects of the beating included injuries to his neck, shoulder, body, wrist, and forehead. Even though the Ghezel Hesar Health Center wrote a letter emphasizing the deterioration of Ebrahimi's physical condition and recommended urgent transfer to a specialist doctor to address the risk of blindness due to complications of the disease, prison officials still refused to facilitate this necessary medical intervention.

Security agents arrested Jafar Ebrahimi on April 30th, 2022, and initially held in the Ministry of Intelligence's detention center in Evin prison (Wing 209). Despite relatives depositing bail for his release, security forces obstructed his temporary release. In early November 2022, he was sentenced to five years in prison, with an additional two-year ban on activities and membership in groups, as well as a travel ban, for charges including "assembly and collusion" and "propaganda against the regime".

Exiled Individuals

4.1 Exiled Individuals

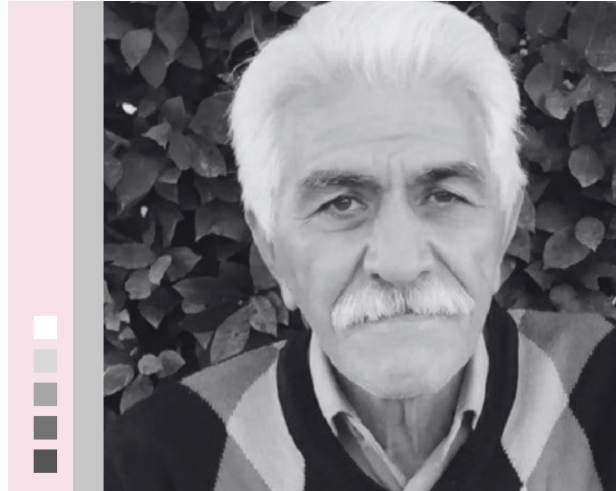
The Iranian government employs a strategy of exiling prominent human rights defenders and activists to remote areas within the country, effectively limiting their ability to engage in and manage social activities. This practice aims to curtail their influence and involvement in civil society initiatives by relocating them to distant and less accessible regions.

On July 29th, 2023, Akbar Azad, a notable Azerbaijani writer and activist, was subjected to exile in Darreh Shahr city, Ilam province, serving a mandatory two-year residence term. On August 29, 2023, he visited the Intelligence Office in Darreh Shahr for identification, experiencing a prolonged delay at the entrance before being transferred to a detention center after approximately 4 hours.

During approximately one hour of detention, facing intense heat without proper ventilation and cooling and deteriorating health, Azad was eventually moved to an interrogation room. Despite facing illegitimate actions by security forces, he refrained from answering both written and verbal questions. Protesting the unauthorized interrogation, Akbar Azad de-

clared the illegality, stating, "Your interrogation is illegal and there is no freedom of speech for me to state my opinions without punishment. Due to this, I will not answer your questions verbally or in a written manner".

In an audio file, Azad shared insights into his conditions in exile, revealing harassment and mistreatment by intelligence officials in Darreh Shahr. On July 30th, around 19:30, expressing his objection, Azad left the Intelligence Office. According to judicial authorities, Azad is obligated to present himself monthly at the In-



telligence Office in Darreh Shahr for signature and attendance, a provision exploited by security officials for unlawful harassment and attempted interrogation. This 67 year old, activist with diabetes was initially exiled to Darreh Shahr on June 11th, 2023. However, due to the severe health condition of his son, who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis (MS), requires constant care, and uses a wheelchair, he returned to Tehran.

This Azerbaijani political activist, writer, researcher, translator, member of the Iranian Writers' Association, and member of the PEN Club in France had a history of detention and conviction due to his peaceful activities.

On International Mother Language Day in February 2014, Akbar Azad, along with several other Azerbaijani activists, was arrested in Baharestan-Eslamshahr. Among these activists, Behnam Sheikhi, Hamid Manafi Nadarloo, Alireza Farshi, Akbar Azad, and Ali Babalu were each sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment and 2 years of exile in various cities. Following their prison terms, each of these four civil activists had been summoned to the courthouse to endure the exile residence sentence.

Capital Punishment

5.1 Capital Punishment Cases

While government news agencies claim that many of these individuals were executed for charges like drug smuggling and murder, Amnesty International has strongly denounced the death penalty, considering it an inhumane sentence. The organization advocates for the abolition of all execution verdicts in Iran.

On July 12th, 2023, Habib Mashghati, an Azerbaijani prisoner, was executed in Tabriz prison. He was accused of murder and was imprisoned in the 15th ward of Tabriz prison for four years before the execution. On July 17th, 2023, Aydin Emami was executed in Zanzan's Safarabad Prison. He was accused of murder. On July 17th, 2023, Sangar Khodari, who had previously been sentenced to death on charges related to narcotics, was executed in Naghadeh Prison. On July 17th, 2023, Abbas Rahmani, Mohsen Yaghouti, and Farrokhi (full name unknown), who were previously sentenced to death for drug-related charges, were executed in Hamadan prison.

5.2 Summoned Individuals

Iranian Intelligence agents engage in illegal summoning practices of activists. Despite Iranian law stating that summonses must be official and in writing, intelligence agencies often resort to telephone or verbal messages to inform individuals about their activities. This illegal summoning tactic aims to intimidate political and social activists, hindering their engagement in various activities.

On August 7th, 2023, Mohammad Ilati, an Azerbaijani civil activist appeared before the Revolutionary Court of Ajabshir County in East Azerbaijan to defend against charges of alleged "propaganda against the Islamic Republic system". The summons for this court appearance was delivered through the electronic system of the judiciary, and the session was presided over by Judge Jabari.

Earlier, on April 5th, 2023, Eilati had been summoned to the Intelligence Office's department, where, due to his absence the next morning, security forces detained him in front of his home and transported him to the Intelligence Office department. During the questioning, he was interrogated about various activities, including distributing books and Turkic calendars in the city, spreading alleged falsehoods, and engaging in provocative games that were perceived to encourage and disturb the youth of Ajabshir. Following the questioning, he was released.

In May 2023, an interrogation session with Eilati occurred in Branch 1 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office of Ajabshir County, East Azerbaijan. The investigator issued an indictment, forwarding the case to court for a final verdict.

On August 1st and 2nd, 2023, the Intelligence Office of Ardabil Province summoned numerous Azerbaijani civil activists. Firouz Moini, Asghar Akbarzadeh, Tohid Amir-Amini, Meysam Joulani, Youssef Kari, Morteza Parvin, Saeed Sadeghifar, Farshid Pichkanlou, Mohammad Joulani, and Yashar Akbarzadeh were all individually summoned to the Intelligence Office.



Mohammad Ilati

West Azerbaijan -
Ajabshir



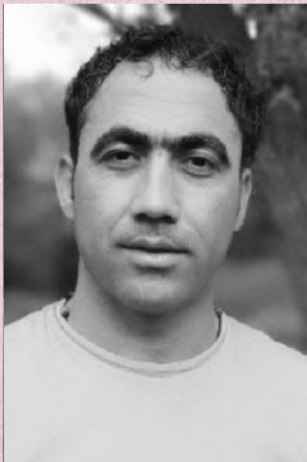
Firouz Moini

Ardabil - Ardabil



**Asghar
Akbarzadeh**

Ardabil - Ardabil



Tohid Amiramini

Ardabil -Ardabil



Meysam Joulani

Ardabil - Ardabil



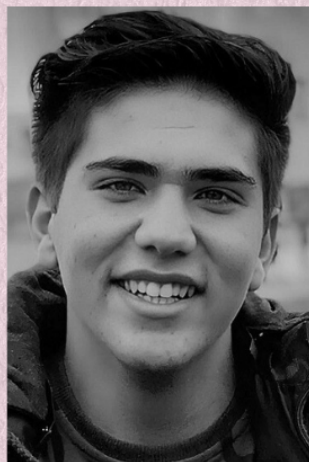
Youssef Kari

Ardabil - Ardabil



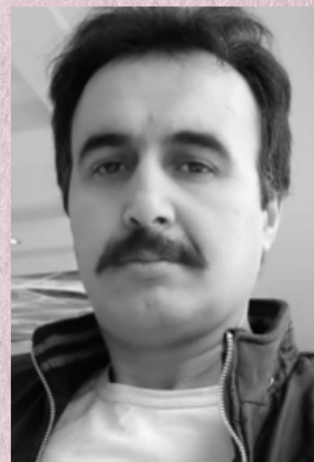
**Mohammad
Joulani**

Ardabil - Ardabil



**Yashar
Akbarzadeh**

Ardabil - Ardabil



Afshin Sobhi

Ardabil - Ardabil



**Farshid
Pichkanlou**
Ardabil - Ardabil



Roghayeh Kabiri
West Azerbaijan -
Khoy



Negar Khiyavi
East Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



Sara Turi
East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



Vahid Abhari
East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



**Yousef
Salhashoor**
East Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



Ibrahim Asemani
East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



**Hossein
Rokhsani Kia**
East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



Sina Yousefi
Germany - Berlin



Shahin Barzgar

East Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



**Mohsen
Ebrahimidinvar**

East Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



Jafar Akbari

West Azerbaijan -
Khoy



**Yashar
Hasanpour**

East Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



Sima Alipour

West Azerbaijan -
Tabriz



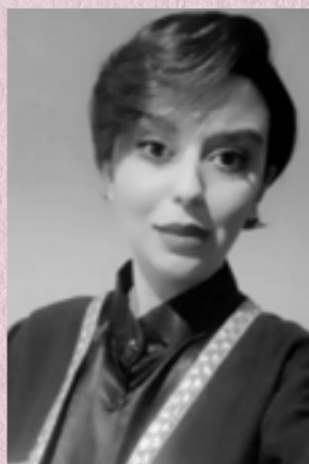
Vadud Asadi

Rasht - Rasht



Daniz Zonouzi

East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



Armita Pavir

East Azerbaijan-
Tabriz



Alireza Farshi

East Azerbaijan-
Marand

In response to the opposition of Azerbaijani civil activists to attend the Intelligence Office, security forces resorted to threatening tactics. After making telephone contact with the families of activists such as Tohid Amir-Amini, Yusef Kari, Farshid Pichganloo, and Mehrdad Shikhi, security forces issued warnings. These threats included intimations that if the activists persist in their activities, they will face severe repercussions from security forces, and the Intelligence Office will disclaim any responsibility for their well-being.

The activists, in defiance of the security officials' calls, firmly stated, "This action by the Intelligence Office is entirely illegal. Any summons lacking a judicial order is devoid of legal validity, and we will only comply with official summonses delivered through proper legal channels".

On August 15th, 2023, security forces in Tabriz contacted the renowned Azerbaijani poet and writer, Roghayeh Kabiri, requesting her presence at the Intelligence Office of Tabriz County. Kabiri, through a post on her personal Instagram page, attributed the potential summons to the Intelligence Office to her participation in a gathering of women supporting environmental conservation at Lake Urmia, in front of the Tabriz Governorate.

The Azerbaijani writer stated that "during the gathering, one of the present individuals (presumably a security force member) informed participants that everyone present had been photographed. Today, the consequence of this photograph became clear as I was summoned to the Intelligence Office."

It's noteworthy that Kabiri had previously announced on her Instagram page, "As a writer with 20 works including stories, novels, poetry, and travelogues in my mother tongue (Azerbaijani Turkish), in protest against news censorship, the forceful suppression of the civil demands of the country's youth, and the University of Tabriz, I declare that I will not submit any book for inspection by the Ministry of Guidance".

On August 15, 2023, Negar Kheyavi, the acclaimed Azerbaijani poet and writer, was called to the Intelligence Office of Tabriz County via a phone call. Security forces visited Kheyavi's

residence on August 14, carried out a search, and seized personal items, including books and her mobile phone. Khiyavi after a few hours of being detained by intelligence forces, was released.

On August 19th, 2023, Vahid Abhari and Sara Turi were summoned to the Intelligence Office in Tabriz. These Azerbaijani civil activists declined to appear at the intelligence departments.

On August 20th and 21st, Azerbaijani civil activists, Yousef Salhashoor, Hossein Rokhsani Kia, and Ibrahim Asemani, were summoned to the Intelligence Office in Tabriz.

On August 21, 2023, Sina Yousefi was summoned to Branch 20 of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Isfahan (Complex 2) through an electronic notification on the Judiciary's online system.

Sina Yousefi posted an electronic notification on his Twitter account, stating: "Due to my reports on the illegality of the judge's actions, I have been summoned by Isfahan General and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office (also known as Isfahan House) on charges of propaganda against the system and disturbing the public mind".

During the nationwide Woman, Life, and Freedom protests in Iran on October 14th, Sina Yousefi took a significant step by announcing the establishment of a defense committee within the Human Rights Committee of the Bar Association in Iran. The purpose of this committee was to offer legal support to citizens detained during the 2022 protests. However, his activism led to his arrest by security forces on October 15th. Subsequently, he was released on bail, which he remained on until the end of the judicial process on October 27th.

In a verdict issued by Branch 112 of the Criminal Court of Tabriz, Sina Yousefi faced harsh sentencing. He was sentenced to 6 months in prison, subjected to a 2-year travel ban, and had his electronic devices confiscated, all on charges of "spreading lies in cyberspace". Additionally, Branch 112 imposed another sentence of 91 days in prison and a fine of 150 million rials for the same charge. The mounting pressure forced him to leave Iran and

seek refuge in Germany.

On August 27th, 2023, Shahin Barzegar and Mohsen Ebrahimidinvar, Azerbaijani civil activists, were summoned by the Tabriz Intelligence Office. They refused to obey and appear at the intelligence office.

On August 27th, 2023, Afshin Sobhi was summoned to the intelligence department, which resulted in the opposition of this civil activist, and then the security agents tried to arrest him, but they could not arrest Afshin because of lack of presence at home.

On August 27th, 2023, Jafar Akbari was summoned by the intelligence force in Khoy. Security forces contacted this Azerbaijani activist and stated that he would be arrested if he did not appear in the intelligence department.

On August 27th, 2023, Yashar Hasanpour was summoned by intelligence forces. He refused to appear at the intelligence department.

On August 27th, 2023, Sima Alipour was summoned by the intelligence forces to Tabriz's intelligence department.

On August 27th, 2023, Vadud Asadi, an Azerbaijani civil activist, received an electronic notification from the judiciary specifying that on September 10th, at 9:00 AM, the individual is required to be present at the third branch of the Revolutionary Court in the Rasht city to defend against charges related to "propaganda against the Islamic Republic system and insulting the leadership".

On August 28th, 2023, Deniz Zonouzi, an Azerbaijani civil rights activist, received a summons to appear at the Tabriz County Intelligence Office through a phone call. After enduring several hours of interrogation, the security forces explicitly conveyed to Zonouzi that she is not allowed to partake in activism and advocacy related to Lake Urmia in the online sphere. They warned her of potential detention if she continued such activities. On September 2, 2023, Armita Pavir, a student in the Molecular Biology program at Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University, received a summons through the electronic system of the judiciary to appear before the first branch of the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Of-

face in Tabriz. The charges against her included "propaganda against the Islamic Republic system," and she was expected to defend herself within the next five days.

Additionally, this student activist faced another charge related to "disruption of public order and tranquillity and disturbing public minds," for which she was summoned to the Public and Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Azarshahr (Tufargan) city.

During nationwide protests in Iran, Pavir had been previously arrested on October 30th, 2022. Security forces detained her at the university's entrance gate, and on December 8th, 2021, she was released from Tabriz Central Prison after posting bail. It is important to note that this student also received a punishment of a one-year suspension from school in 2020. She was one of the students protesting and holding the Iranian government responsible who shooting down the Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 with two surface-to-air missiles.

On September 4th, 2023, Alireza Farshi Dizaj Yekanli, an Azerbaijani human rights activist, received a phone call summoning him to the Cyber Police in Marand, East Azerbaijan. The officers from the Cyber Police in Marand requested his appearance at the Marand Police Intelligence, under the command of Sergeant Rasti. Farshi declared that, due to the perceived illegality of the summons, he would not comply with the specified location.

It's worth noting that Alireza Farshi Dizaj Yekanli had been previously released from Evin Prison after serving three years and three months of his four-year sentence due to the "Amnesty and Reduction of Public Punishment" order. His initial sentence included two years of imprisonment and two years in exile, handed down by the 54th branch of the Tehran Court of Appeal. This sentence was related to his participation in the "World Mother Language Day" ceremony in Baharestan City, Tehran. Additionally, he was sentenced to three years and six months of imprisonment in another case by Branch 36 of the Court of Appeal of Tehran Province on charges of "gathering and collusion against national security" and "propaganda against the regime". He was arrested on July 21, 2019, and taken to Evin Prison.

Suspension

6.1 Suspension

Organizations or individuals perceived as opposition or anti-government entities face various forms of punishment, including suspensions. These suspension penalties can manifest in different dimensions, such as employment suspension, activity suspension, academic suspension, and more.

6.1.1 Activities Suspension

On August 9th, 2023, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences announced that the activities of the Islamic Association (a student club) have been suspended for 6 months. All the activities of the Islamic Association of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences were stopped by a decision of the central board of supervision of student organizations.

In 2022, during nationwide Woman, life, freedom protests in Iran, over two thousand students of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences demanded the cancellation of severe disciplinary actions against students by signing a petition. This call for action was

in response to nationwide Woman, life Freedom protests in 2022 and objections to serial poisonings of female high school students.

The signatories of the petition expressed support for freedom of speech, the right to assemble, and all legal and declared rights of individuals. They declared that the suspended sentences issued at the university should be entirely revoked. They also insisted on addressing the cases of ten students sent to the Ministry of Science to prevent further injustice against them.

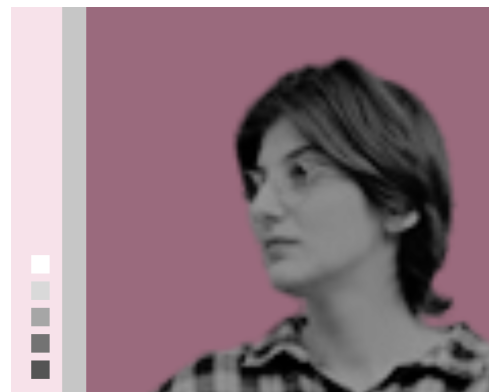
During approximately six months following the commencement of nationwide protests in 2022, Tabriz University of Medical Sciences became a focal point of the student movement in Azerbaijan. During this period, some students from this university were summoned and detained by security forces, leading to their academic suspension for several terms.

6.1.2 Academic Suspension

Universities and other educational institutions exert significant influence in anti-government protests. In light of this, civil activists find their academic careers, among other aspects of their lives, under pressure. Intelligence forces, aiming to curb civil activities coerce universities into imposing academic suspensions on activist students.

Narges Fadakar, a dedicated student majoring in Economics at Urmia University, West Azerbaijan, admitted in 2019, has been unjustly barred

from continuing her education and accessing the university for four semesters. Despite the duration, no official verdict has been issued by the relevant committee. According to student councils' reports, on October 29th, 2022, the head of security at Urmia University summoned Fadakar to collect her student ID card. Since that date,



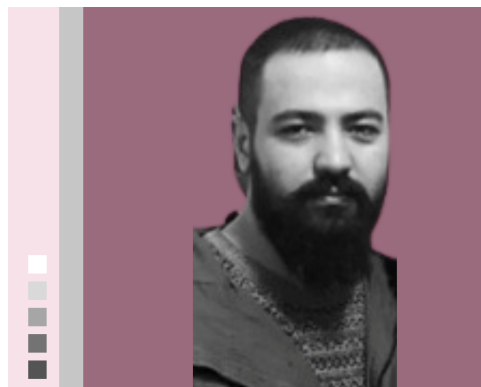
she has been prohibited from entering the university, and the educational system has been

completely blocked. Earlier, the university's disciplinary committee verbally informed this student that a proposed suspension verdict for four terms had been sent to the central committee of the Ministry.

6.1.3 Banned from Telephone Calls in Prison

Security forces restrict phone calls to exert pressure on prisoners, particularly political activists. This method is utilized to punish and control prisoners, aiming to compel them to comply with the authorities' directives.

Arash Johari, an Azerbaijani labor rights activist serving his sentence in Evin prison, has been denied the opportunity to make phone calls since September 9th, 2023. Additionally, he has not been granted leave during the nearly three years of his 7-year sentence due to illegal actions and obstruction by judicial and prison authorities. In a video file released on her son's birthday, Johari's mother revealed the authorities' failure to grant leave despite the prosecutor's approval.



This activist from Parsabad was arrested on October 6th, 2020, by IRGC intelligence agents in Tehran. He was later transferred to the detention center known as Ward 2A of Evin Prison. In January 2021, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison by Branch 26 of Tehran Revolutionary Court headed by Judge Iman Afshari for the charge of "managing illegal gangs to disrupt the security of the country", and to five years in prison for the charge of "association and collusion". He was sentenced to one year of imprisonment for the charge of "propaganda activity against the regime." After submitting the verdict, his sentence was reduced to seven years and six months of imprisonment.

6.2 Sentenced to a Fine

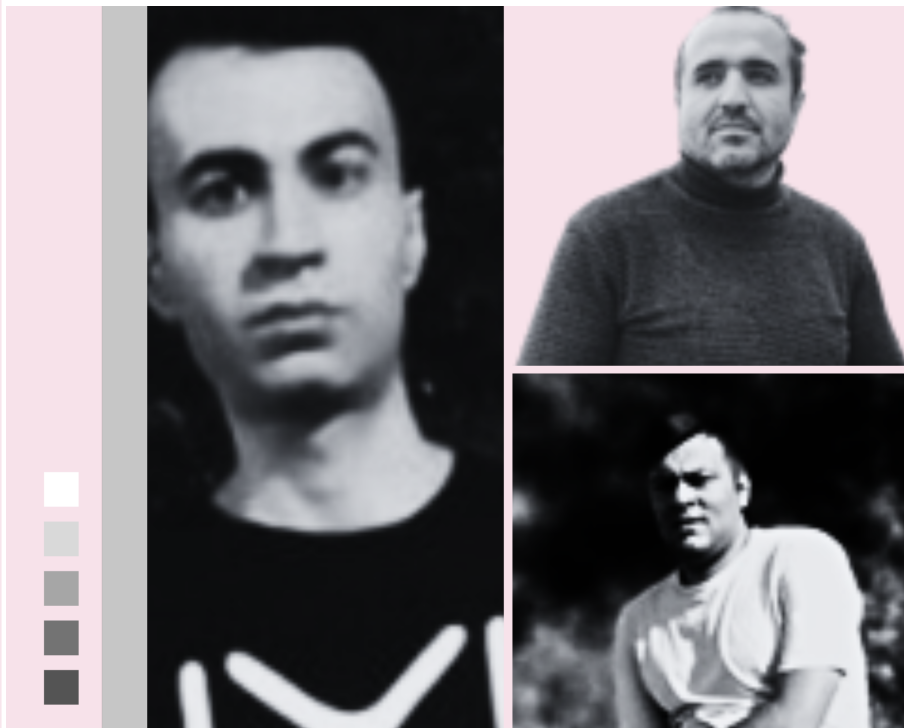
In some instances, the judiciary may opt to replace a prison sentence with a fine as part of its decision. On September 25, Azita Eskandrion, a women's rights activist, received a fine of 40 million Rials instead of a 91-day 7th-degree imprisonment sentence.

This decision was made by Zanzan Revolutionary Court Branch 2 on the charge of "propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran". Azita Eskandrion had been temporarily released earlier after settling the charges, and she was released on bail pending the conclusion of the legal proceedings.



6.3 Threatened

In reaction to the protests related to Lake Urmia in various Azerbaijani cities in Iran, there has been a rise in threats. The Iranian government utilizes diverse tactics, including the use of threats, to discourage activists from engaging in activities perceived as opposing the government.



On August 26th, 2022, Azerbaijani civil activists Behnam Sheikhi and Hashem Panahi received threats of arrest during a phone call from the Intelligence Department. Security forces conveyed that these activists were not permitted to engage in work or disseminate information about Lake Urmia, warning of potential arrest if they continued such activities.

On September 11th, 2023, security agents contacted the family of Behzad Dashti in Ardabil city, urging them to dissuade Behzad from engaging in civil activities. The intelligence agents explicitly conveyed a warning to the family, stating that if Behzad persisted in such activities, he would be subjected to severe treatment by security forces and faced with the

Recommendations

This human rights report highlights the grave violations faced by Azerbaijani Turks in Iran and calls for immediate action to address these injustices. The Iranian government must release arbitrarily detained individuals and end the use of torture and physical abuse during detention and interrogation processes. Freedom of expression and assembly should be respected, allowing civil activists to voice their concerns and participate in peaceful protests without fear of reprisal. Unjust sentences should be repealed, and legal transparency and accountability must be ensured in all judicial proceedings.

Additionally, the practice of exiling activists to remote areas within the country should be halted, and Iran should abolish the death penalty. Academic freedom should be respected, and universities should refrain from penalizing students based on their activism. International scrutiny and pressure should continue to be exerted on Iran to uphold the rights of all its citizens. By implementing these recommendations, Iran can move towards a more just and inclusive society for Azerbaijani Turks and all individuals within its borders.

Contact Information

www.inclusivevision.org

