

UN rights experts urge Iran to halt execution of two Ahwazi Arabs



Credit: OHCHR

21 May 2014 – UN human rights experts today appealed to Iranian authorities to halt the scheduled execution of two members of Iran’s Ahwazi Arab minority after their death sentences were reportedly upheld by the Iranian Supreme Court.

Ali Chebeishat and Sayed Khaled Mousavi, who were arrested in November 2012 and sentenced to death on charges of Moharebeh (enmity against God) by a Revolutionary Court in September 2013, according to the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

“The accused were convicted either primarily or solely on the basis of a televised ‘confession’ which appeared on Iranian State TV in June 2013,” OHCHR [quoted](#) the human rights experts as saying, and were apparently not allowed legal representation of their own choosing and were later denied regular access to their court-appointed lawyer.

Reported footage showing Ali Chebeishat and Sayed Khaled Mousavi “confessing” to their role in an explosion of a natural gas pipeline was aired on Iran’s State-controlled television.

“The timing of the video release, as well as its content, beg serious questions about its legitimacy as evidence in the conviction and sentencing of these men to the most serious and irreversible fate possible,” the OHCHR press release said.

Just last month, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, said he regretted the spike in executions this year in Iran and renewed his call to the Government to immediately halt them. Over 170 persons including at least two women have been executed since the beginning of 2014 and a large number of prisoners on death row risk imminent execution.

In addition to Shaheed, the experts involved in today’s appeal are: the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns; Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák; and the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Gabriela Knaul; and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Independent experts or special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to monitor, report and advise on human rights issues. The experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any Government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

In issuing the appeal on the eve of the reported executions of the two men, OHCHR says both Ali Chebeishat and Sayed Khaled Mousavi have reportedly been subjected to severe mistreatment and beatings, possibly amounting to torture.

The two men have now been held incommunicado for over two months, and neither their lawyer nor family members have been able to obtain official information regarding their current whereabouts or the status of their cases, says OHCHR.

“First and foremost, the Iranian authorities must stop the executions and the accused should be permitted a new, fair trial,” the press release says. “The authorities must also cease any and all retribution against family members for allegedly speaking with international organizations, including the United Nations.”

“The Iranian authorities must promptly inform Messrs. Chebeishat and Mousavi’s families of their whereabouts, and allow their families and their lawyers’ access to details regarding the status of their cases, in accordance with both international and Iranian law,” it said.

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