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Iran: The broadcast of self-incriminating interviews made by detainees facing charges violate fair trial standards

Amnesty International condemns the broadcast by Iranian television of "interviews" with two dual, US-Iran nationals, Haleh Esfandiyari, 67 (f) and Kian Tajbakhsh, 45 (m), who have been detained in Tehran's Evin prison since 8 and 11 May, respectively.

Amnesty International is concerned that the "interviews" could prejudice their defence in any trial proceedings that may be brought against them. Both reportedly face charges of "acting against state security" and engaging in "propaganda and espionage for foreigners" but, to date, more than two months after they were arrested, they are still being denied access to lawyers and no court date has been set for their trial.

The interviews, broadcast on 18 July, have been described as "confessions" by Iran's press. They reportedly made no reference to the two detainees' imprisonment or the charges they face and there are fears that they were made under coercion or duress. The two detainees were shown acknowledging that they had participated in academic conferences and exchanges, which the Ministry of Intelligence claims were intended to establish networks intended to "further the interests of foreign powers" -- generally understood to mean the US.

Further "interviews" with the two detainees are due to be shown on 19 July.

The broadcast of these interviews violates the principle of presumption of innocence, a fundamental fair trial guarantee, set out in Article 14 (3)(g) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which recognizes the right of defendants "[n]ot to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt", as well as article 11(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees for his defence".

Amnesty International considers Haleh Esfandiyari, Kian Tajbakhsh, and a third US-Iran dual national, peace activist Ali Shakeri, to be prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. The organization is also calling on the Iranian authorities to return the passport confiscated from journalist Parnaz Azima, also a dual US-Iran national, and to allow her to leave Iran.