

URGENT ACTION

UNJUSTLY DETAINED STUDENTS HARSHLY BEATEN

Iranian university students Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi, arbitrarily detained without trial in section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison since 10 April 2020, are at risk of being convicted in a grossly unfair trial of a spurious charge that carries the death penalty. Ministry of intelligence agents beat them and held them in prolonged solitary confinement in harsh conditions to extract forced "confessions". They are prisoners of conscience targeted for exercising their right to family life.

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

Head of judiciary, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei

c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union

Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium

Dear Mr Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

*University students **Ali Younesi**, aged 21, and **Amirhossein Moradi**, aged 22, are arbitrarily detained in section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison, which is under the control of Ministry of Intelligence. Following their arrest on 10 April 2020, they were held in solitary confinement for 60 days in violation of the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment. Ali Younesi revealed to his family that he had been denied adequate healthcare for injuries to his left eye sustained during beatings by Military of Intelligence agents and that lights in his cell were turned on 24 hours a day, which left him with no sense of day or night and caused him distress and pain. Amirhossein Moradi reported being beaten harshly during his arrest. Ministry of Intelligence agents repeatedly interrogated them without their lawyers present and forced them to make "confessions," in violation to their right to remain silent and not to incriminate themselves. During a hearing before Branch 29 of the Revolutionary Court of Tehran held on 3 July 2021, they were accused of "corruption on earth" (efsad-e fel-arz), which carries the death penalty, "gathering and colluding to commit crimes against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system". The authorities violated their right to be presumed innocent by publicly accusing them of ties to "counterrevolutionary" groups apparently based on their families' real or perceived association with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI), an opposition group based outside of Iran. Authorities also made spurious accusations of having found "explosive devices" in their possession. Both students denied these accusations. Their interrogators also accused them of removing posters of Iranian officials and participating in peaceful protests in January 2020.*

The two students were denied access to a lawyer of their own choosing for the first 13 months of their detention. They remain held in separate parts of Section 209 without trial, where, according to a relative, they are denied adequate healthcare and fresh air and sleep on the floor. Ali Younesi has never been examined by an eye doctor.

I call on you to release immediately and unconditionally Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi detained solely based on their families' real or perceived ties to opposition groups. Pending this, I ask you to ensure that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment, provided urgently with the medical care they require, and given access to their families and a lawyer of their choosing. I also urge you to open an independent investigation into allegations that the two were beaten upon arrest and held in conditions violating the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment with a view of bringing those responsible to justice in proceedings meeting international standards of fair trial.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ali Younesi and Amir Hossein Moradi are award-winning students at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran. Ali Younesi is a silver and gold medal recipient in Iran's National Astronomy Olympiad and the 2018 gold medal winner in the International Astronomy and Astrophysics Olympiad held in China. Amirhossein Moradi is the silver medal recipient in Iran's National Astronomy Olympiad.

On 10 April, 2020, ministry of intelligence agents arrested Ali Younesi on the street after leaving university. Later that day, 12 agents brought him, handcuffed, to his family home – his forehead was split open with a gash and he had blood all over his face and wounds on his body. The agents searched it without showing a warrant and then took him away. During a weekly press conference on 6 May 2020, Iran's then judiciary spokesperson Gholamhossein Esmaili stated that two university students had been arrested for being in contact with "counterrevolutionary" groups, in apparent reference to Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi. He used a pejorative term to refer to one such group – the PMOI, and failed to provide any evidence for the accusations. In a video response posted on social media later the same day, Ali Younesi's sister, Aida Younesi, that "after 26 days of detention where it is not even clear what disaster you have inflicted on my brother [Ali], you come and make these ridiculous charges." In response to the spokesperson's allegation that "explosive devices" were found in the homes of the university students, Aida Younesi also added that security officials told them that that they had found nothing suspicious after searching Ali Younesi's home. Moreover, in the days following Ali Younesi's arrest, his family was told every few days he would be soon released.

On 13 July 2020, without prior notice and without any lawyers present, Ministry of Intelligence agents took Ali Younesi and Amirhossein Moradi to the Tehran prosecution and judicial offices for interrogations to make forced "confessions", which they refused to do. The interrogations took place in the presence of the deputy chancellor, two professors, and student representatives of Sharif University of Technology.

On 20 November 2020, Iran's High Council for Human Rights, which is supervised by the judiciary, wrote to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that "the abovenamed [Ali Younesi] has – under no circumstances whatsoever – been under duress to make confessions. He was being temporarily held in Section 209 of the Evin Detention Centre; however, taking into consideration the aforesaid's age and his noncooperation with other inmates, he was transferred to a general population prison"; however, Amnesty International's investigations found that intelligence agents repeatedly attempted to obtain forced "confessions" from Ali Younesi, including as reported in state media in July 2020, and that he remains arbitrarily held in section 209 despite requests from his lawyer and family to transfer him to the public ward.

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

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

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 17 January 2022

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

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

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/2306/2020/en/>