

URGENT ACTION

KURDISH ACTIVIST NEEDS URGENT MEDICAL CARE

Detained labour rights activist, Bakhtiar Rahimi, from Iran's Kurdish minority, was arrested on 27 November 2019 in Marivan, Kurdistan province. Bakhtiar Rahimi has serious heart and kidney conditions, which he needs daily medication for. The Iranian authorities have denied him access to a lawyer and permitted him only one very brief phone call to his family since his arrest.

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

*Prosecutor General of Sanandaj Mohammad Jabbari
c/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland*

Dear Mr Mohammad Jabbari,

*Kurdish labour rights activist, **Bakhtiar Rahimi**, aged 45, was arrested at his place of work in Marivan, Kurdistan province, on 27 November 2019 by security forces, and forcibly disappeared until around 11 December 2019, when he was permitted to make a very brief phone call to his family. During this call, he was able only to say that he was being held in a Ministry of Intelligence detention facility in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, before the phone was cut. He has not been able to speak to them again and has been denied contact with a lawyer since his arrest.*

Following his arrest, Bakhtiar Rahimi's family visited the Ministry of Intelligence office in Marivan multiple times to inquire about his fate and whereabouts, but officials there refused to provide them with any information about him and threatened them with violence. On one occasion, officials told them they would be shot if they returned. In the weeks following his arrest, a post on a pro-government Telegram channel named Bakhtiar Rahimi among a number of individuals arrested in relation to the nationwide protests that began on 15 November 2019, and alleged that they had ties to Kurdish opposition groups and had "confessed" to harming and killing some of the people in the protests. The Iranian authorities have a track record of attempting to link Kurdish civil society activists to Kurdish opposition groups and of obtaining forced "confessions" under torture or other ill-treatment to convict individuals in unfair trials.

Bakhtiar Rahimi suffers from serious heart and kidney conditions, which he requires daily medication for, and the regular care and monitoring of a specialist doctor. Earlier this year, Bakhtiar Rahimi suffered a heart attack. He also requires daily medication for high blood pressure.

*I call on you to release **Bakhtiar Rahimi** immediately and unconditionally, as he has been arbitrarily detained for exercising his right to freedom of peaceful assembly. Pending this, I ask you to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, immediately provided with any medical care and medication he may require, and given access to his family and a lawyer of his choosing.*

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Following the outbreak of nationwide protests on 15 November 2019, the Iranian authorities implemented a deadly crackdown, killing at least 304 people – according to credible reports gathered by Amnesty International – and arresting thousands of protesters as well as journalists, human rights defenders and students. Various government officials, including the Supreme Leader and the head of the judiciary, have labelled protesters as “villains” and “rioters”, associating protesters with foreign powers. State media has called for the death penalty to be used against protest “leaders”.

Amnesty International believes that, under the guise of national security, the Iranian authorities are using the protests opportunistically to arrest large numbers of people from ethnic minority groups, including human rights defenders, like Bakhtiar Rahimi. Several sources have independently told the organisation that the arrests are still ongoing, including in provinces with large ethnic minority populations such as Kurdistan.

Amnesty International’s research has found that, in the days and weeks during and following the protests, the Iranian authorities have held some detainees incommunicado and subjected them to torture and other ill-treatment. In dozens of cases reported to Amnesty International, detainees have had little or no contact with their families since their arrest, with some being held in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance.

Relatives have told Amnesty International that they have visited police stations, prosecution offices, Revolutionary Courts, prisons and other detention centres to search for loved ones who have been forcibly disappeared, but the authorities are refusing to provide them with information. Eyewitness accounts and video evidence verified by Amnesty International indicate that some detainees have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment – including through being beaten, punched, kicked and flogged. See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/12/iran-thousands-arbitrarily-detained-and-at-risk-of-torture-in-chilling-post-protest-crackdown/> for further information.

Bakhtiar Rahimi previously spent nearly one year detained without trial in Section 209 of Evin prison, under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, following an arrest in 2008 related to his labour rights activism and support of trade unions.

International law absolutely prohibits enforced disappearances, specifying that no exceptional circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as justification. Individuals who are forcefully disappeared are cut off from the outside world and left knowing that their loved ones have no idea where they are or whether they are dead or alive. They are placed outside the protection of the law and denied their right to legal representation or a fair trial. They are often at heightened risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Enforced disappearances also have a profound effect on the family members and friends of those who are forcibly disappeared. The disappeared’s loved ones are sometimes forced to anxiously wait before they find out their loved one’s fate and whereabouts, which results in a form of ill-treatment.

Ethnic minorities in Iran, including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen, face entrenched discrimination, curtailing their access to education, employment and adequate housing. Continued economic neglect of regions with large minority populations has exacerbated poverty and marginalisation. The Persian language is the sole medium of instruction in primary and secondary education in Iran.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 January 2020

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Bakhtiar Rahimi (he/his)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 Princes Gate, Knightsbridge, London SW7 1PT

