

URGENT ACTION

AUSTRIAN-IRANIAN PRISONER AT RISK

Massud Mossaheb, a 73-year-old Austrian-Iranian dual national, is serving a 10-year prison term imposed after a grossly unfair trial for vague national security offences. He is being held in Tehran's Evin prison and has serious medical conditions, including heart failure and diabetes. He is at heightened risk of severe illness or death if he contracts COVID-19.

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

Head of judiciary, Ebrahim Raisi

C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

The health of **Massud Mossaheb**, a 73-year-old Austrian-Iranian dual national arbitrarily detained in Tehran's Evin prison, is declining and his life may be at risk. He has serious medical conditions, including heart and kidney failure, diabetes and high blood pressure, for which he needs ongoing specialist medical care and daily access to medication. According to informed sources, the authorities have refused to transfer him to a heart specialist outside prison despite recommendations by a prison doctor. The spread of COVID-19 in Iran's prisons puts him at heightened risk of severe illness or death due his age and pre-existing medical conditions.

Massud Mossaheb was arrested in Tehran on 29 January 2019 by plain clothes ministry of intelligence agents. According to informed sources, they held him in a hotel room for three days, where they subjected him to torture through sleep deprivation, interrogated him without a lawyer present, and coerced him into signing two documents by falsely promising to release him and allow him to return to Austria. They then transferred him to Section 209 of Evin prison where, according to informed sources, he was tortured including through prolonged solitary confinement, denial of medical care, threats of flogging and bombardment with bright electric lights for 24 hours a day, causing him sleep deprivation and mental distress. On three separate occasions between 31 July and 7 August 2019, he was removed from prison, taken to the same hotel in which he was held after arrest and forced to read pre-written incriminating "confessions" on camera. He was denied access to a lawyer during the investigation phase and his chosen lawyer was rejected by the presiding judge in Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran who, instead, appointed one from a state-approved list. The first time he had access to his state-appointed lawyer was on 2 October 2019. On 27 April 2020, he was convicted of "espionage for Germany", "collaborating with a hostile government", in reference to Israel, and "receiving illicit funds" from both governments. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison. He has denied all charges. His trial was grossly unfair, with the court relying on torture-tainted "confessions", which he retracted in court and told the judge he had made under torture. His sentence was upheld without an appeal hearing. Under Iran's sentencing guidelines, he will be required to serve 10 years. On 13 August 2020, state media broadcast his forced "confessions" in a propaganda video. Amnesty International considers Massud Mossaheb's imprisonment to be arbitrary on the grounds that the criminal proceedings to which he was subjected were grossly unfair and failed to meet international fair trial standards.

I ask you to quash Massud Mossaheb's conviction and sentence and release him unless he is charged with an internationally recognizable offence and tried in accordance with international fair trial standards. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, I further call on you to urgently release him on medical grounds because, as an older person with pre-existing medical conditions, he is at heightened risk of severe illness or death if he contracts COVID-19 in prison. Pending his release, ensure that he is provided with adequate medical care, access to his relatives, a lawyer of his choosing and consular assistance from the Austrian authorities.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Massud Mossaheb was in poor health prior to his imprisonment and regularly received medical treatment from specialists. According to information available to the organization from informed sources as well as a letter that Massud Mossaheb wrote to the authorities from inside prison on 5 August 2020 requesting medical treatment, he suffers from several serious medical conditions and has had numerous operations in the past. He suffers from heart disease; diabetes; kidney failure; fatty liver; and musculoskeletal problems of the knee, feet and back. He also suffers from recurrent episodes of the inflammatory bowel disease diverticulitis, for which he was due to have surgery to remove parts of his bowel when he was arrested in January 2019. He previously had a transient ischaemic attack, also called a "mini stroke", which is a serious condition where the blood supply to the brain is temporarily disrupted. In 2011, he suffered complications following the surgical removal of the prostate. Several years ago, his thyroid gland was surgically removed, and he is required to take thyroid medication. He has been denied access to adequate medical care and to specialist medical professionals outside prison. For a time, he was also denied access to his daily medication.

Massud Mossaheb is a mechanical engineer and has worked in the aerospace industry for decades. In recent years, he worked as a consultant with different companies, and was arrested in Tehran while he was accompanying a delegation representing Med Austron, a radiation therapy technology company which provides cancer treatment and research. In a joint venture with Iran, the company worked with the Austrian authorities and Iran's ministry of health, ministry of foreign affairs and the Atomic Agency Organization of Iran to build a hospital providing ion therapy treatment. Massud Mossaheb was also one of the co-founders of the Iran-Austrian Friendship Society, which is a non-governmental group established in Austria to build closer ties with Iran.

After his arrest in January 2019 and during his detention in a hotel room, ministry of intelligence interrogators told him they had monitored and observed him for the past two decades and considered every trip and vacation he had taken to Iran during that time as a sign of espionage. Three days after his arrest, he was transferred to Section 209 of Evin prison, which is under the control of the ministry of intelligence, where his interrogators subjected him to torture and other ill-treatment including through the denial of his spectacles without which he is unable to see properly. He was not allowed any family visits until 16 April 2019. Around 50 days into his detention, he was moved from solitary confinement to an overcrowded cell in the quarantine section of the prison and is currently being held in Section 7 of the prison. On 29 July 2019, the authorities instructed Massud Mossaheb's wife to bring a suit to prison for him to do a TV interview. They threatened him with solitary confinement if he failed to do the TV interview and forced him to wear the suit and to read "confession" statements, doing numerous takes in front of two cameras.

During Massud Mossaheb's trial, which took place between 1 February and 26 April 2020, these forced "confessions" were used as admissible evidence against him. In the court verdict, the prosecution claimed that he had worked with the intelligence services of Israel and Germany for the past two decades, that he had used his position with the Iran-Austrian Friendship Society as a guise under which to carry out his activities and pass intelligence about Iran to Israel and Germany. They also alleged that he had received money as "financial compensation for his espionage services". On 13 July 2020, his lawyer was told by the authorities that the verdict had been upheld and was final. On 11 August 2020, the spokesperson of the judiciary, Gholamhossein Esmaili, announced Massud Mossaheb's conviction and sentence during his weekly press conference. This was followed by a propaganda video published on 13 August 2020 by the state-owned Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting which showed Massud Mossaheb forced "confessions".

Amnesty International has previously expressed concern about the situation of prisoners in Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic, as the Iranian authorities have failed to sufficiently protect the country's prison population. Leaked official letters have revealed that the Ministry of Health ignored repeated requests from the Prisons Organization for adequate resources to tackle the spread of the virus in prisons. According to the World Health Organization, prison populations are particularly exposed to infectious diseases like COVID-19 and conditions of detention can exacerbate the risks. These include the risk of higher transmission rates, especially in overcrowded prisons and when health systems are of poorer quality than in the community.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Persian or English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 31 December 2020.

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Massud Mossaheb (he/him)

And copies to:

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