



Dear Mss Sato,

**Brief: Call for Input to *The Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran to the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council Covering August 2024 -December 2024***

Owing to the absence of an invitation from the office of the Special Rapporteur on Iran and our late discovery of the Call for Input, we have put together the following Brief (hereafter, the Brief), as a damage minimization exercise. It is focused on the period from 1 August 2024 to 31 December 2024, as specified in the Call for Input.

## 1. Brief Response to the Required Information Items

The Brief informs the Special Rapporteur on some aspects of the intriguing behavior of the Iranian authorities against the nation of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran. As the Call for Input does not hint at any such intriguing behaviors, we aim to manage the risks, so that you have the opportunity to avoid the appeasement of the discriminatory policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are compelled to state that the usual discourse in Iran is in the denial of the ongoing discriminatory policies and culture against the minority nations including Azerbaijanis and if your report sidelines these serious underlying issues, it is likely to be a violation of a host of UN principles including the principle of inclusivity. We suffice to two themes on burning issues to illustrate some aspects of the problem.

## 2. The Goals

The goal of the Brief is to inform the Special Rapporteur on Iran related to human rights violations of the Islamic Republic of Iran in defense of Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran. Beneath the goal, the Brief underlines specific existential risks to the social cohesion of the nation of Azerbaijan in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran. As it happens, such deeds and acts of the Iranian authorities are not declared but detectable. For instance, the desiccation of Lake Urmia forced by the Iranian authorities is diffused in a highly convoluted political atmosphere but detectable in their acts and deeds. Unfortunately, we did not have time to bring the latest situation to your attention but suffice to the following two themes.



### 3. Themes

#### 3.1 *Arbitrary Detentions*

Our database shows that some 250 arbitrary prosecution cases (including female activists) were pressed by Iranian authorities against Azerbaijani activists arresting, detaining, or imprisoning them in 2024. Of these, more than 80 cases took place from 1 August 2024 to 31 December 2024, although a few of these cases are believed to be bogus cases to expedite the wishes of the Iranian authorities. The Iranian authorities violate the human rights of Azerbaijani activists in many different intriguing ways including:

- Proactively arresting the activists before certain anniversaries or events,
- Implanting conflicts among the activists by bogus activists, such as aiming to implant conflict between the activists in Tabriz and Ardabil
- Arresting very moderate individuals/activists to encourage heated discussions among them as a portrayal of democratic processes
- Planning long-term such as placing bogus activists in other countries to warm up certain communication channels with internal activists as a way of preparation for stitching them up with espionage charges

This makes our tasks difficult in defending our activists, as each step is full of disinformation. Without our risk management approach, we can be drawn into unnecessary disrepute. To illustrate some aspects of the above, please consider the following cases.

#### 3.2 *The Cases of the Activists in Evin Prison – A Total of 95 Years of Imprisonment*

**Background:** It was reported in February 2024 that some 26 Azerbaijani activists were arrested in various Azerbaijani cities of Ardabil, Astara, Karaj, Khuyov (Meshginshahr), Tabriz, Urmia, as well as in Islamshahr, Rasht and Tehran. Many of them were directly transferred to Evin prison and the remaining activists, somewhat afterward. They were reportedly deprived of all their rights and the emerging picture was that there was something very serious. Murtaza Parvin, Tahir Naqavi, and some others resorted to several hunger strikes as their last resort to press their rejection of charges. Eventually, it appeared that the Iranian authorities were working very hard to stitch them up with spying charges, seemingly in the wake of the Protests Against Mandatory Hijab 2022/2023. Many others attributed the whole saga to the revenge of the Iranian authorities against the celebration of the victory of neighboring countries, where the policies of the Iranian authorities were exposed and defeated. One theory was that a number of bogus activists were already embedded in neighboring countries to establish hotlines with several activists, already earmarked for being stitched up as spies, by leaving trails for the detection of the Iranian authorities to document the charge of spying.



**Key Details of the Case:**

**Arrest:** 5, 6, 7 February 2024

**Trial:** 25 October 2024

**Court:** Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court, Tehran,

**Judge:** The court was chaired by the notorious Judge Salavati

**Appeal:** The appeals were launched on 9 January 2025 and transferred to Branch 36 of the Appeal Court in Tehran

**Detainees:** They are listed below with their status in three sets together with the charges they are accused of:

**(a) Activists below were accused of**

- Assembly and collusion with the intention of disrupting internal/external security
- Propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran
- Espionage

*An Appeal is launched on behalf of the following*

1. Araz Aman Ziynabad: sentenced to 13-years
2. Ayaz Seyfkhah: sentenced to 13-years
3. Baqer Hajizade: sentenced to 13-years
4. Murtaza Parvin Joda: sentenced to 6-years (This renowned artist demanded the trial to be in Azerbaijani Turkish and therefore translators

**(b) Activists below were accused of**

- Assembly and collusion with the intention of disrupting internal/external security
- Propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran

*An Appeal is launched on behalf of the following*

5. Abulaziz Azimi Qadim: sentenced to 6-years
6. Huseyn Piri: sentenced to 5-years

**(c) The status of the following activists is unknown**

1. Fatemeh Atashi Khiavi: sentenced to 5-years
2. Hasan Ebrahimi Shiran: sentenced to 3-years
3. Kamal Nouri: 3-years
4. Kerem Mardane Mustaali Beyglu: sentenced to 5-years
5. Salar Taher Afshar: sentenced to 5-years
6. Seid Minaei: sentenced to 5-years
7. Suleyman (Aydin) Mohammadi: sentenced to 3-years
8. Taher (Naghavi): sentenced to 6-years (a human rights defender and lawyer, see: <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/taher-naghavi-sentenced-six-years-prison>)
9. Vadud Asadi: sentenced to 4-years

**(d) Activists Release on Bail at Early Stages**

1. Abdollah Vahedi, released on bail
2. Alireza Shirzad Kuchnaghi, released on bail
3. Amir Ali Beradaran, released on bail



4. Ayda Sedighi Khorasanlu Qishlaq, released on bail
5. Fatemeh Atashi, released on bail
6. Keramat Ruhnava, released on bail
7. Lotfali Jabbari, released on bail
8. Seid Dostan, released on bail
9. Seid Jamalzade, released on bail
10. Soheyla Asghari, released on bail
11. Yashar Huseynzade, released on bail
12. And possibly four more activists.

**Corroborated Evidence:** The serious risk of death sentence loomed throughout the period over the Azerbaijani activists that the Iranian authorities had earmarked them to be victimized in their revenge game. The risk was reduced when the spying charge was removed. The accusation of spying could also explain the absence of authentic information. Even then, the audacity of the arbitrary sentences is astounding as a total of 95 years of imprisonment have been pressed against these activists. We then reckoned that raising their cases before you could have been counterproductive, and we now see that we were to keep silent.

It now appears that the Iranian authorities had arrested some of the above individuals possibly for expediting the creation of fear within the society, some were possibly suspect, bogus or double agents and were not even in prison most of the time. It looks likely that Iranian authorities targeted the above Azerbaijani cities for revenge for celebrating their foreign policy failures.

We are not theorizing the proceedings and the above details. The facts are that the human rights of most of the above activists were violated, they have and still are suffering poor health, they were tortured for confession, and they are still victims of arbitrary acts of the Iranian authorities.

Now that the charge of spying has been deleted due to the acumen of genuine activists, it is time to defend their cases, and the best time is now. We rally for your support to campaign for the unconditional release of the above activists in the Secretary-General's report, who have been tried and imprisoned. Depending on your mandates and the scope of your willingness, you can call their sentences void but in your own words.

### ***3.3 Prosecution of Human Rights Defenders***

We bring two cases of Azerbaijani lawyers and human rights defenders to your attention:

- The case of Mr. Taher Naghavi, as outlined above, see: Taher Naghavi, above
- Mohammadreza Faghihi (محمد رضا فقیهی), as detailed below.

#### **The Case of Mr. Faghihi**

**Background:** Was arrested together with two other attorneys by security forces taking part in a protest by lawyers outside the Central Bar Association (Argentina Square, Tehran), calling for attention to the “violation of protesters’ rights and Article 27 of the Constitution.”



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A registered human rights defender since 2004 and a devoted defender of human rights of Azerbaijani activists since 2006; often represented Azerbaijani activists without financial return; handled cases that other lawyers refused fearing reprisals from Iranian authorities; was arrested several times to this end.

An Azerbaijani, originally from Ardabil province, *Hir* Town, and now a resident of Tehran.

An active contributor to the first generation of “*the Association in Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Iran*” formed in 2004, where his roles included a member of its Board of Trustees and the Secretary of its Legal Board.

See also: <https://protect-lawyers.org/en/item/mohammadreza-faghihi-2/>

#### Case Details

**Arrest/Detention:** Was arrested on 12 October 2022,

**Release:** Released on bail on 25 October 2022

**Accusations:** “Assembly and Collusion to Act Against National Security.”

**Preliminary Trial:** 11 September 2024; at Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran, Branch 15

**Sentence:** 5-years of imprisonment,  
2-years ban on travel  
2-years prohibition on practicing law & participating in political groups.

**Appeal:** The Tehran Court of Appeals, Branch 36, upheld the prison sentence. Delivered The verdict on 4 November 2025

**Imprisonment:** 21 January 2025

**Corroborated Facts:** The violation of human rights of Mr. Faghihi and Mr Naghavi is a fact and your campaign for their release will go a long way to uphold their human rights by calling for their unconditional release in the Secretary-General’s report.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

Each human rights violation of the Iranian authorities against Azerbaijanis in Azerbaijani provinces in Iran is often unique but your format of the Call for Input does not allow us to share our *prima facie* information with you. Also due to a short notice, we are unable to share our



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latest information on a diverse range of Azerbaijani-specific issues with you, which came about in the course of the last six months.

We hope you will use your mandate and campaign for the unconditional release of Azerbaijani activists and lawyer, whose information has been shared with you above.

We are happy to provide you any information or consent you may seek. We hope the situation will be different next time.