

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,

Protester Abbas Deris, 50, is at risk of execution in relation to the November 2019 nationwide protests and is held in Sepidar prison in Ahvaz, Khuzestan province. On 4 July 2023, his lawyer publicly said that Branch 39 of the Supreme Court had upheld his conviction and death sentence for “enmity against God” (moharebeh). According to public statements by his lawyers, the authorities accused Abbas Deris of involvement in the killing of a police official during protests in Mahshahr, Khuzestan province, on 18 November 2019, which Abbas Deris and his family have repeatedly denied. On 15 July 2023, a request for judicial review to the Supreme Court was submitted, which remains pending.

Since intelligence and security agents arrested Abbas Deris in Khuzestan province on 8 December 2019, authorities have grossly violated his due process rights. His trial before Branch One of the Revolutionary Court of Mahshahr, which consisted of two sessions on 10 May 2022 and 13 September 2022, was grossly unfair. His forced “confessions” of firing a gun towards security forces were aired on Iranian state television in late December 2019 weeks after his arrest and prior to his trial. By airing these forced “confessions”, the authorities violated Abbas Deris’ right to the presumption of innocence, to not self-incriminate and to remain silent. Amnesty International has repeatedly documented the Iranian authorities’ pattern of extracting forced “confessions” following torture and other ill-treatment and the reliance by Revolutionary Courts’ judges on such “confessions” to issue convictions and death sentences. On 22 October 2022, Abbas Deris’ lawyers learned that the Revolutionary Court had issued its verdict. Abbas Deris also has a pending case for “murder” before Branch Three of Criminal Court 2 in Khuzestan province on the same allegations as the Revolutionary Court case.

Abbas Deris is a widower and parent of three children. In early July 2023, his mother and three children publicly called for global help in preventing Abbas Deris’ execution.

I urge you to immediately quash the conviction and death sentence against Abbas Deris. If charged with a recognizable criminal offence, proceedings must meet international fair trial standards without recourse to the death penalty and exclude coerced “confessions”. I urge you to immediately grant Abbas Deris access to his family, an independently chosen lawyer, and adequate medical care. I urge you to protect him from torture and other ill-treatment and investigate any torture allegations, bringing anyone found responsible to justice in fair trials. Finally, I urge you to grant independent observers access to capital trials connected to protests and immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,