

# International Liberty Association Newsletter

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## EDITORIAL

As we prepare this newsletter, we hear the voices of the people of Iran ringing in our ears as they cry out for justice.

With Summer drawing to a close, we see countries who have worked hard to save their people's lives from the virus being rewarded with a huge reduction of Covid cases enabling them to start carefully opening up their schools and universities and more businesses. In Iran, sadly, we just see more and more people die every minute of every day and the death toll keeps rising, records showing it has currently claimed 100,000 Iranian lives.

But, in spite of the pandemic, all over Iran strikes and demonstrations by people from all walks of life, such as students, teachers, nurses, factory and oil workers, are going on non-stop.

The brave people of Iran are risking their lives protesting against injustice and corruption, and every day the intensity of their anger is increasing.

They want their minimum rights and wages. Most of them haven't received their minimum rights, or any wages, for months.

They cry out that instead of spending their money in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, just pay them the money they are due.

We all know Iran as a very rich country, but the people's riches are on the one hand being spent on fundamentalism, war and the export of terror and on the other used to suppress the Iranian people. What is left keeps getting taken by corrupt officials.

These are the reasons why Iran is exactly like a volcano now, and ready to erupt at any time.

At this time, many peaceful

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## PROTESTS RAMP UP ACROSS IRAN

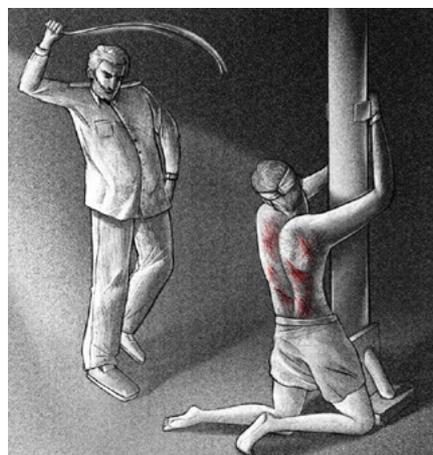


News from Iran indicates that, despite the coronavirus outbreak and the regime's cynical use of this crisis to prevent people from rising up, dozens of protests have been mounted in the country in recent weeks. As these protests increase and spread right across the land, state-run media are reflecting the regime's utter fear of this

new series of Iran protests, expressing their concerns of them escalating into another major national uprising.

Reports show that the numerous protests across Iran are being held by people from all walks of life. These protests once again confirm that Iran is filled with unrest right now as people from all occupations ... continued on p.2

## "TRAMPLING HUMANITY" AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S REPORT ON MASS ARRESTS, DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE SINCE IRAN'S NOVEMBER 2019 PROTESTS



In an 80 page report titled 'Trampling Humanity', published on 1 September 2020, Amnesty International presented a chilling account of the Iranian regime's destructive response to

the peaceful demonstrators of the November 2019 protests across the country.

The report is prepared after extensive review of reports, contacts, video footages, interviews with victims or their relatives and close acquaintances as well as other individuals who were verifiably informed, including teachers, journalists, lawyers, and medical workers.

According to the AI report "In response to nationwide protests in November 2019 by tens of thousands of people across the country following the government's sudden announcement about the significant overnight rise in the price of petrol, the Iranian authorities waged ... continued on p.3



**Protests ramp up across Iran**

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take to the streets in protest over unfair treatment by the Iranian regime and its affiliates.

Bushehr municipal workers went on strike on June 29 over not having received their pay cheques for four months.

Workers from the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company in Shush, southwest Iran, continued their strike for the 73rd day on 26 August, gathering outside the Shush governorate building. Reports indicate that all workers in the “Agriculture, Factory, Livestock, Mechanical, Administrative and Infrastructure” sections of the factory have been on strike since 15 June, 2020. “On 16 June, 2020, about 800 workers from different parts of the company again protested in the industrial area of the company due to non-payment of their salaries and claims and uncertainty about their job status.”

For more than four decades, the Iranian regime has used oppression to quell the society and hold its grip on power. Now, state-run media and officials acknowledge even their brutal oppression cannot stop people from expressing their grievances.

The regime’s wrong economic policies, oppression and export and funding of terrorism by plundering the national wealth, and now the coronavirus outbreak with its rising death toll, have turned the Iranian society into a powder keg. Despite the regime’s brutality during the nationwide Iran protests last November, killing 1,500 protesters, people poured onto the streets in January after the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet. Less than a month after these protests, the people’s unprecedented boycott of the regime’s sham parliamentary elections showed



their conflict with the regime had reached an irreversible point.

In this regard, the state-run Mardom Salari daily on September 1 wrote: “There is one issue which remains. Should we define the current situation as being in a deadlock? And is the only way out using harsh tools and methods, or could we keep up hope that the situation would get better? The protest movements in 2018 and 2019 and the inappropriate manner of dealing with them are not good indicators in this regard. Obviously, harsh movements have many negative consequences.”



**140 WOMEN ON HUNGER STRIKE IN THE CENTRAL PRISON OF URMIA**



Some 140 women started a hunger strike in the women’s ward of the Central Prison of Urmia on Tuesday, 18 August 2020.

They started the hunger strike to protest the deplorable conditions of the ward during the coronavirus pandemic, particularly the presence of four women infected with the virus who are not receiving proper medical care and have not been transferred to hospital.

The female detainees are demanding that the sick prisoners be transferred to the prison’s dispensary to prevent further spread of the virus and infection of more prisoners. The prison authorities, however, have not yet responded to the prisoners’ demands.

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demonstrators are in prison, or have been executed by the regime to spread terror and fear in society.

This bulletin brings you a very good picture of what is going on in Iran, including the heartbreaking plea of the mother of Navid Afkari, the Iranian wrestling champion, begging human rights organisations and anyone who could hear her voice, to help save the life of her son. Despite widespread global campaigns calling for a stop to his execution, his life was taken on Saturday 12 September.

Yes, disgracefully, Iran is the only country killing its own

champions and heroes.

The Iranian people have not been silenced by these injustices and are trying hard to make the world hear their voice with their strikes and demonstrations even in most difficult conditions, because they are sure that one day they will be victorious against all the odds.

Our charity and other human rights organisations have started a massive campaign to save prisoner’s lives and our efforts have already brought a few precious successes.

Together, we can and we must save more and more.



## “CONFESS OR WE WILL GET YOUR BROTHER TO CUT OFF YOUR HEAD”

**Ms Sepideh Gholian**, student activist and freelance journalist, was arrested on 18th November 2018 along with **Esmail Bakhshi**, spokesman for the workers of the Haft Tappeh sugar cane company. Gholian and Bakhshi were held for 31 days before being released on bail. On their release they spoke to Amnesty International about their ordeal.

On 19 January the regime published videos of forced confessions and the next day, 20 January 2019, security forces re-arrested Bakshi and Gholian with her brother.

In Sepideh's own words:

I want to tell people about the 31 days under arrest.

After a while, government agents and plainclothes agents stopped the bus. They first said that we want the student girl who is on the bus and we will not do anything to the workers. When the workers resisted, two of them, Mr Mohsen Armand and Mr Esmail Bakhshi, came with me. We were taken to the Intelligence Headquarters, I think a man named Mr Bahmani was there as a commander. We were beaten; they pulled my bag from my hand so forcefully that for a few days I thought my shoulder was broken. I was then beaten in the chest. They were trying to make me quiet by intimidation and insulting words. Esmail Bakhshi tried to help me to get out of their hands



but they intensified the beating of him, heavily with batons, and put handcuffs on him and blindfolded him.

They said we are taking you to the security police office, and the meeting will be held there. We agreed. Then a plain clothes agent came in and started intimidating and swearing at me and tried to beat me, but Mr Bakhshi and Mr Armand stopped him so they beat Mr Bakhshi to the brink of death. They put us in a car and took us to a place which I don't know if it was a security police station or a news office. Then a man named Mr Sadeghi came and threatened me with death. He said “if you don't tell us what we want, we will bring your brother here and considering the traditional mind-set of your family, we will have him behead you. We can make him cut off your head or you confess all you have done”. Then he insulted me



with offensive dirty words and accused me of doing things in the presence of the Prosecuting Attorney of Shoosh city. They continued intimidating and insulting me and making accusations.

Then we were taken to the room where Judge Noori informed me of my charges, I heard the voice of Mr Bakhshi being beaten again, he was shouting “I am a worker! You broke my ribs!”

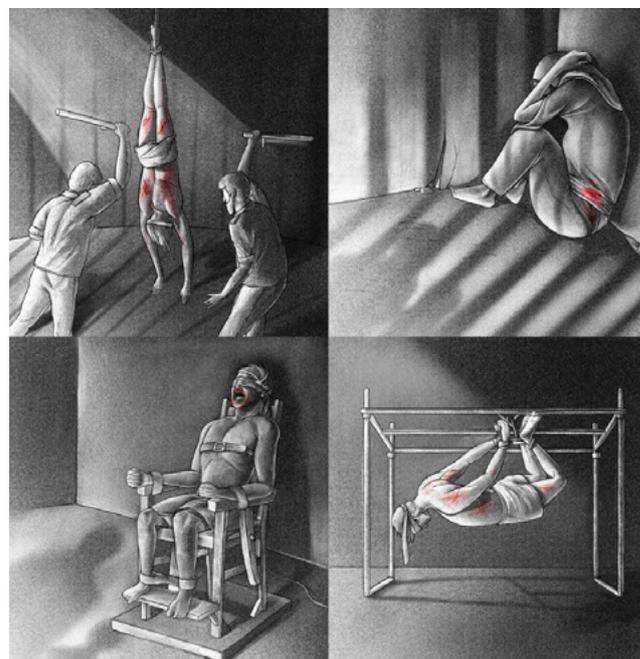
Imprisoned labour rights activist Sepideh Gholian and her family are suffering constant abuse and harassment by Ministry of Intelligence officials and prison authorities. Sepideh Gholian and fellow activist Esmail Bakhshi have been in prison since January 2019 in connection with their participation in peaceful protests. They are prisoners of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally.

### “Trampling Humanity” *continued from p.1*

a campaign of mass repression that led to hundreds of deaths, resulting from the deliberate use of lethal force, and to the arrest of more than 7,000 men, women and children as young as 10-years-old within a matter of days.

“Amnesty International has investigated the actions of the Iranian authorities against those arrested in connection with the protests and concluded that they committed widespread patterns of serious human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and flagrant breaches of the right to a fair trial.”

“They tortured me and hurt me in any way they could. They even said they would have my son suspended from university. I told them I took to the streets to claim our rights and protest against people's poor living conditions. I see my family and friends drowning in poverty – this is the reason I protested, but they [authorities] kept insisting that I tell them who I was in contact with and from which groups I was receiving orders. I told them this was a peaceful protest, nothing else... But they accused me of insulting the Supreme Leader and acting against the state”, a peaceful protester from Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi province, told Amnesty International.





# DEMONSTRATIONS ACROSS IRAN DESPITE ARRESTS AND INTIMIDATION



Despite arrests, torture, and death sentences on protesters, demonstrations are taking place across Iran without stop. The reason is simple, people who take part in these demonstrations have nothing to lose. Whether they are teachers, retirees, factory workers, refinery workers, municipality workers, nurses or railway workers or those who work on telecommunication, people are fed up with the regime authorities and raise their voice because they are starving. While the regime fills the coffers of its proxies across the region, its officials embezzle resources and fill their pockets and bank accounts, and wealthy agencies affiliated with the Supreme Leader bulldoze the homes of deprived people. Ordinary Iranians are suffering the most devastating economic hardship of their lives. Hence they have no choice but to take part in demonstrations to raise their voice and let the authorities know that their patience is wearing thin.

Even as Covid-19 is taking its toll, people risk their lives and take part in demonstrations. The regime, for the most part, deals harshly with demonstrators. Because of the immediate backlash, the regime's repressive forces refrain from attacking protesters in the streets, instead identifying them and going after them, particularly the leaders and organisers, in their homes or places of work.



Immediately after arrest immense pressure is exerted on detainees to force a confession out of them to say for instance that they are linked to outside forces and are following the agenda of foreign countries. Those who survive the tortures and regain their consciousness quickly refute any claim of confession that authorities raise against them.

Unlawful death sentences and long imprisonment await the organisers



of protests. Nonetheless, the protest gatherings go on and on. Their demands are very basic. They want their wages to be paid. Many workers have been working without pay for months. The owners of factories make promises and complain about lack of sales and other excuses not to pay themselves live in luxurious homes, drive luxury cars and spend a lot of money abroad. Many of the protests are staged by workers who work for municipalities and government agencies, including the railway and oil refineries. And the government is not paying them enough for them



to survive. With the hyperinflation rampant across the markets, every passing day the workers, on fixed salaries, even if they are paid those wages, are becoming poorer and less able to afford two meals a day for their families.

The corrupt and inefficient rulers have only themselves to blame for the volcanic atmosphere they have imposed on society. This volcano is ready to erupt at any moment like the mass uprising in November 2019 which was sparked by the sudden tripling of fuel prices. When it happens the lava will cover the whole nation and they will have no place to hide.

The suffering of the people in the rich country of Iran due to mismanagement, corruption and wasteful expenditure on terrorism, is huge. The people risk their lives to cry out for help. Let's be their voice.





## CHAMPION WRESTLER WAS EXECUTED FOR PEACEFULLY PROTESTING

Courts in the Iranian city of Shiraz slapped a champion wrestler with a shocking penalty of two death sentences and whipping for protesting in 2018 against the Iranian regime's disastrous economic policies.

The sentencing of 27-year-old Navid Afkari triggered widespread outrage from human rights activists and athletes who demanded Tehran's clerical rulers to stop the execution. However, the regime executed Navid in the early hours of Saturday 12 September without informing his parents, or their lawyer. Navid was executed without being able to see his parents, which is a requirement even under the draconian laws of the brutal regime.

Navid Afkari was reportedly part of the thousands of protesters who took to the streets in anti-government demonstrations in several cities in August 2018. They were protesting the country's worsening economic situation and inflation.

Afkari's brother Vahid received a sentence of 54 years and six months in prison and 74 lashes. A third brother, Habib, has been given a prison term of 27 years and three months and 74 lashes.

In a video widely distributed on social media and news outlets around the world, the brothers' mother denounced the sham trial against her sons.

"I'm desperately asking for help from anyone who can hear my voice," she said in the video.

Navid Afkari, who also worked as a plasterer, had won several medals in wrestling tournaments. Iran's wrestling champions, like Mohammad Ghorbani and Moslem Eskandar Filabi, who had won several wrestling medals in international events and who had called on world leaders, the international community and athletes to intervene and stop the unjust and barbaric execution decree, called on athletics communities, International Federations, and the Olympic Committee to ban Iran from all international sports. The call has been echoed by athletes all over the world.



In her video recording posted on the internet on August 30, Mrs Afkari (Bahieh Namjou) said: "Plain clothes agents broke into our house at 5 am in September 2018, without showing a warrant, and took away two of my sons, Vahid and Navid. After some time, they came and took away my husband and son-in-law. After three months, they came and arrested Habib."

In another part of her video, the mother of the three young Iranian protesters said: "They tortured Habib psychologically and physically so much that three times, he attempted suicide in prison... Later we learned that he had been tortured to make (false) confessions against Navid."

Describing the regime's due process as unfair and false, Mrs Afkari appealed to "the people of the world, the people of Iran and anyone who can hear" her voice to help in any way possible to save the lives of her three sons.

The three brothers were jailed since 2018 and all three have been viciously tortured. They are accused of participation in opposition gatherings, writing slogans, propaganda against the state, insulting the mullahs' supreme leader, insulting the regime's agents, inciting the



Afkari brothers—from left Navid, Vahid and Habib

public to revolt, disobedience, and "waging war on God."

Navid's body was buried Sunday night, 13 September, and only a few members of his immediate family were allowed to be present.

The injustice has outraged the international community and letters of condemnation poured in from all corners of the world and on social media. A planned meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the E3 countries, UK, Germany and France, and the regime's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, due to take place on 15 September, was subsequently cancelled.

On Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 several protests in Shiraz and other cities in Iran have been reported where protesters condemned Navid's execution.

## EXECUTION OF NAVID AFKARI SPARKS GLOBAL CONDEMNATION AGAINST IRAN

The European Union spokesperson responded to Navid Afkari's execution: "The EU condemns the execution of Navid Afkari in the strongest terms.

"This most recent execution will be taken up with Iran immediately."

White House Communications Director, Alyssa Farah, used the words "cruel, barbaric and backwards" in her description of the mullahs' regime. "The wonderful people of Iran deserve a better, brighter future than this."

Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, said: "It is tragic news and deplorable that the Iranian authorities have executed Navid Afkari."

The International Olympic Committee said it was "shocked" by the execution and "Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Navid Afkari."





# AN HOUR WITH ILA WEEKLY ZOOM EVENTS IN PERSPECTIVE

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown ILA decided to keep in touch with friends and supporters of the charity via weekly Zoom meetings online. The session held on Saturday 29 August was the 24th episode.

During this program we managed to get acquainted with the events of August 1953 when a CIA-MI6 sponsored coup changed the history of Iran, the Middle East and the world.

From the footage it became clear that the mullahs who are now ruling Iran had been part of that coup and their anti-democratic stance goes back to their involvement in the 1953 coup. This is in sharp contrast to recent claims by regime officials who use the coup as a pretext for asking the world to stay silent with regards to their abysmal human rights record. It became clear that organising the coup is a wrong of the past that can not be righted by another wrong. The Western governments should now side with the oppressed people of Iran and condemn the brutal repression and killing of peaceful demonstrators. This is totally different from staging a coup and the deceitful mullahs should be told that.



**Mohammad Mossadegh**  
Prime Minister of Iran  
1951-1953

After the video **Malcolm Fowler**, a retired lawyer who was a member of the Human Rights Committee of the Law Society, explained further details about the coup d'etat.

Then we had **Beryl Hart** singing Jazz, a video about the oil rich Khuzestan Province of Iran and **Reza** who is from the region explained how the residents of Khuzestan use their scarf to keep the heat and the dust away.

Following is some of the feedback for that event and we hope it will inspire you to join in for upcoming online events. You can get more details by sending an email to ILA.

**Malcolm:** I have been meaning to send you an email to say how much I enjoyed last Saturday's event and to say how very informative I found it concerning the inglorious parts played by the US and the UK in the shameful overthrow of Mossadegh.

I did know something about it all as you know but Shaho's introduction and the film taught me much more.



**Malcolm Fowler**

**Paul:** I very much enjoyed the programme and find the presentations about the country of Iran and its history valuable and very interesting. I also was very interested in your excellent presentation on the current situation.



**Beryl Hart**

My views on Dr Mossadegh have changed considerably. I remember the nationalisation of the oil and the outrage in the West leading to him being ousted. I was 13 at the time in 1953 and was no doubt influenced by government propaganda here!

**Mark:** Your Zoom meetings go from strength to strength. I found the content on art and history very interesting. It would be good to learn something about Iranian popular culture e.g. comedy.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### MOTHER OF POLITICAL PRISONER SENTENCED TO 6 YEARS IN PRISON



**Farangis Mazloum**, mother of prisoner of conscience **Soheil Arabi**, has been sentenced to six years imprisonment in absentia for “publicity activities against the state” and “assembly and collusion to commit crime” for her activities to highlight the unjust imprisonment of her son.



Political prisoner Soheil Arabi, 32, married with a small daughter, has been detained for posting notes critical of the clerical regime in his Facebook account.

### BELGIAN LAWMAKERS URGE LABOUR ORGANISATION TO STAND WITH IRAN'S OIL WORKERS



In a letter to the **Belgian Labour Federation**, the **Belgian Committee of Parliamentarians and Mayors for a Democratic Iran** expressed solidarity with the oil and petrochemical workers who are on strike and urged the Labour Federation to stand with the Iranian workers and support their righteous demands.

In their letter the Belgian lawmakers also condemned the Iranian regime's ongoing human rights violations and executions.

### LAWYER ON HUNGER STRIKE SINCE 11 AUGUST



Prominent lawyer **Nasrin Sotoudeh**, is in critical health condition in Evin Prison after being on hunger strike for more than 3 weeks. She started the hunger strike on 11 August in protest to the dire sanitary conditions in prison during the pandemic, demanding the freedom of all political prisoners.

### FAMILIES OF UKRAINIAN PLANE VICTIMS RALLY IN TEHRAN



On Tuesday 25 August, family members of the passengers killed in the **Ukrainian International Airlines flight PS752** that was shot down by the Iranian regime's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), gathered outside the Ukrainian embassy demanding a meeting with the Ukrainian ambassador in Tehran.

All 176 passengers and crew on board flight PS752 were killed as a result of the IRGC shooting down the civilian plane using two surface-to-air missiles.

The families were carrying pictures of their loved ones who lost their lives in the horrific attack.

### JOURNALIST ARRESTED FOR REPORTING ON DESTRUCTION OF VILLAGE

**Kowsar Karimi**, the female journalist who first reported on the destruction of Abolfazl village in Khuzestan was arrested.

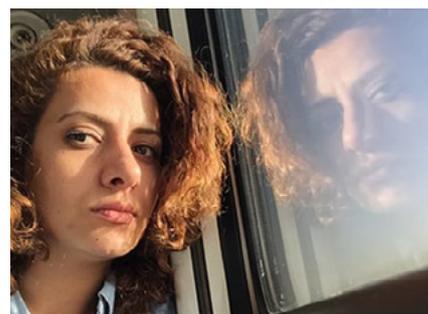
She was the first journalist to report on the destruction of the houses of the residents of Abolfazl village in the media. She was arrested on 28 August.



Hazrat-e Abolfazl village is located near Ahvaz, the capital of the oil-rich Province of Khuzestan, southwestern Iran. Some 300 families have been residing in this village for the last four decades. The Mostazafan (poor people) Foundation which operates under the direct supervision of Ali Khamenei, has been claiming ownership of the land in this village and sought the forced evacuation of its inhabitants. The regime authorities invaded the village on 26 August with bulldozers and destroyed many homes before being confronted and stopped by deprived villagers who risked their lives to defend their homes.

Some 130 villagers were subsequently arrested.

### IMPRISONED KURDISH TEENAGER INFECTED WITH CORONAVIRUS



Kurdish teenager **Aynaz Zare'e** has been infected with the coronavirus while detained with her mother, Shanaz Sadeghifar, in the women's ward of the Central Prison of Urmia.

On Tuesday, August 25, 2020, Aynaz Zare'e was transferred out of prison and to a civic hospital. She is presently hospitalized in the Emergency section of the Taleghani Hospital of Urmia for respiratory problems and shortness of breath.

Reports from inside the Central Prison of Urmia say that at least six detainees in the women's ward have caught the disease.



## CHRISTIAN CONVERT RELEASED AFTER TWO YEARS IN PRISON



Youhan with his wife Maryam and teenage daughters Sara and Sandra

Iranian Christian convert **Mohammad Reza Omid** was released from prison after completing his reduced two-year sentence for “acting against national security by organising house-churches and promoting ‘Zionist’ Christianity”.

Mohammad Reza, 47, who changed his name to Youhan after turning to Christianity, was released from Tehran’s Evin Prison on August 18 and went home to the northern city of Rasht to be reunited with his wife Maryam and two teenage daughters, Sara and Sandra.

Youhan was initially sentenced to 10 years in prison, but his sentence was reduced to two years at a retrial in June.

Although it was initially believed Youhan’s additional two-year sentence of internal exile in the southwestern city of Borazjan had been quashed, before he left prison he was told to report back in 15 days to receive his paperwork and begin his exile. It is not clear what this means, whether it is a joke played by the prison guards or a serious misunderstanding by either party. Nevertheless he has to follow this up via his lawyers.

Meanwhile there are concerns



over the health of four Christian prisoners of conscience after one of them tested positive for Covid-19 while the three others are all displaying symptoms.

**Mohammad Ali (Yasser) Mossayebzadeh** was one of 12 prisoners in Ward 8 of Tehran’s Evin Prison to test positive during a random test of 17 of the ward’s approximately 60 prisoners on 10 August.

Fellow Christian prisoners of conscience **Yousef Nadarhani**, **Zaman Fadaee** and **Nasser Navard Gol-Tapeh** were not among those tested, but they are all displaying symptoms.

The only medical assistance they have received is a few painkillers.

A further 10 Christian prisoners of conscience are being held in other wards of the notorious prison, though as yet there are no reports that any of them are unwell, although there are unconfirmed reports of infections and even a death in another Evin ward.



## TWO YOUNG MEN KILLED BY POLICE FOR NOT SHOWING DRIVER’S LICENCES



The Iranian regime’s state security forces shot and killed two young motorcyclists on Friday, August 21, because they had not shown their driver’s licences.

State security forces opened fire on the two men, **Alireza Goudarzi**, 27, and **Alireza Jafarlou**, 25, in Keshavarz Square, near Tehran. Goudarzi was killed instantly and Jafarlou was severely wounded.

Instead of transferring him to a hospital the state security forces attacked Jafarlou with batons which led to severe internal bleeding. He died before receiving any medical attention.

“State security forces had handcuffed Jafarlou after he was shot and began beating him with batons, punching and even kicking him,” one eyewitness said.

“The police asked them for their driving licence but since Jafarlou didn’t have his documents with him, he tried to leave the scene. The police immediately targeted their upper body”, the eyewitness added.

Authorities refused to hand over the bodies to their families. They have been told they must wait for the forensics report.

Jafarlou was a college student and owned a store, and Goudarzi worked as an electrician.

### Join us at our Saturday specials

### Every Saturday 5pm to 6pm

### An Hour with ILA

Please send us an email so that we can send you details for connection

[info@liberty.org.uk](mailto:info@liberty.org.uk)