

URGENT ACTION

WHEREABOUTS OF DISAPPEARED MAN UNKNOWN

The Iranian authorities have yet to establish the fate and whereabouts of Yousef Silavi, from Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority, who has been missing since November 2009. He may be subjected to enforced disappearance and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, as well as extrajudicial execution.

Amnesty International has recently learned that **Yousef Silavi**, a 57-year-old retired technician from Iran's Ahwazi Arab minority, has been missing since late 2009. He was last seen by a family friend in his home in the city of Ahvaz, Khuzestan province, around 6 November 2009. His wife, who was out of the country visiting their two daughters who had been studying at Damascus University in Syria, reported him as missing to the police when she returned on 8 November 2009. The police closed the missing person's report within six months without adequate investigation. The authorities have continued to deny that they have officially arrested Yousef Silavi, though his family believes he is in their custody because of the restrictions and threats they have come under since he went missing - as well as off-the-record statements made by officials. A few days after he went missing, a friend who had notified the family of Yousef Silavi's disappearance was detained for one night by Ministry of Intelligence officials and questioned about him. The offices apparently beat and threatened him, saying that if he talked about the incident his life would be in danger. Another close contact of the family was threatened and told by an official from the Revolutionary Guards that if she did not stop seeking information about Yousef Silavi, she would be detained alongside him. Yousef Silavi's wife has been subjected to strict travel restrictions and was told by a Revolutionary Guard official that the only way she will be able to see her husband would be to bring their daughters back to Iran. The official alleged that their daughters had been in contact with Iranian opposition groups in Damascus.

Yousef Silavi was not politically active. However, his wife comes from a politically active Arab family. In addition Yousef Silavi's cousin and brother-in-law, Mansour Silavi (who died in 2008) had been a prominent figure in the community, advocating for greater recognition of Ahwazi Arab rights. Mansour Silavi founded a political party called the Democratic Solidarity Party of Ahwaz prior to leaving Iran and had been under surveillance by the authorities because of his political activism.

Please write immediately in English, Persian, Arabic, French, Spanish or your own language:

- Calling on the Iranian authorities to take steps to establish Yousef Silavi's whereabouts and fate;
- Urging them, if he is in custody, to released him unless he is promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence, given immediate access to his family, lawyer and doctor, and tried in proceedings that adhere to international standards for fair trial;
- Urging them to ratify promptly and without reservation the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and its Optional Protocols.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JUNE 2016 TO:

Office of the Supreme Leader
Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
President
Hassan Rouhani

Please send your appeals to the care of diplomatic representatives accredited to your country, listed below. H.E. Mohammad Hassan Habibollahzadeh, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 16 PRINCES GATE LONDON SW7 1PT, Tel: 02072254208 or 02072254209, Email: iranemb.lon@mfa.gov.ir

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Yousef Silavi's eldest daughter, Mona Silavi, had helped the Ahwazi Arab refugee community when she lived in Syria. She was summoned for questioning a number of times by officials from the Iranian embassy in Damascus. In October 2009 when Yousef Silavi was visiting his daughters in Damascus, he and Mona Silavi were both called for questioning by embassy officials before his return to Iran later that month. Yousef Silavi's wife was out of the country at the time of his disappearance. She was visiting their two daughters who had been studying at Damascus University in Syria, when the family was alerted that he had not been seen or heard from for several days. Since he has been missing, Yousef Silavi's wife has visited hospitals and morgues in Ahvaz in search of her husband. She has written letters to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei and a member of parliament from Ahvaz, and has sought help from various judicial and security authorities. The efforts of Yousef Silavi's family to obtain information about him from the authorities have however been ignored. Officials have given them various mixed messages, including telling them "maybe your father is married and is not coming back", "maybe your father has lost his memory", and "maybe he has disappeared due to a tribal matter". The movements of Yousef Silavi's wife are now restricted: the authorities have told her that she is only allowed to leave Iran once a year and, even then, the list of countries to which she is allowed to travel is severely restricted.

The Iranian Ahwazi Arab community in the country's Khuzestan province have long argued that the government systematically discriminates against them, particularly in employment, housing, access to political office, and the exercise of cultural, civil and political rights. The inability to use their mother language as a medium of instruction for primary education is also a source of deep resentment and frustration. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases where security authorities have arrested and detained politically active Ahwazi Arabs, or their family members. In many cases they have held them incommunicado and in solitary confinement in undisclosed detention centres, subjecting them to enforced disappearance and thus placing them at increased risk of torture and other ill-treatment. The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, has also expressed concern via his reports documenting cases of arrest, detention and prosecutions of Ahwazi Arabs for protected activities that promote social, economic, cultural, linguistic and environmental rights. In his October 2013 report, the Special Rapporteur reported of Ahwazi Arabs having been psychologically and physically tortured during interrogation, including by flogging or beatings. They have been made to witness executions, received threats against family members and the actual detention of family members for the purpose of implicating others, or to compel others to report to the authorities. One interviewee reported that a cousin, nephew and brother had been arrested in June 2012 for the purpose of coercing their children, currently living abroad, to return to the country.

International law absolutely prohibits enforced disappearances and specifies that no exceptional circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as justification. Although the word "disappearance" might imply an innocuous or non-violent act, in reality enforced disappearances are particularly cruel and violent human rights violations. Individuals are cut off from the outside world, left knowing that their loved ones have no idea where they are or whether they are dead or alive. They are placed outside of the protection of the law and denied their right to legal representation or a fair trial. Treaty bodies, human rights courts and other human rights bodies have repeatedly found that enforced disappearances also violate the right to liberty and security of the person, the right not to be subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, the right to remedy, and the right to life. An enforced disappearance is also a "continuing crime", which takes place so long as the disappeared person remains missing and information about his or her fate or whereabouts has not been provided by the state. Enforced disappearances also have a profound effect on the family members and friends of the disappeared individuals who are sometimes forced to anxiously wait years before they find out if their loved one is alive or dead.

Name: Yousef Silavi

Gender m/f: m

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