

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Ref.: UA IRN 14/2025

(Please use this reference in your reply)

29 August 2025

Excellency,

I have the honour to address you in my capacity as Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 55/19.

In this connection, I would like to bring to the attention of your Excellency's Government information we have received concerning the imminent execution of Mr. Babak Shahbazi.

According to the information received:

On 6 January 2024 Mr. Babak Shahbazi, was arrested at his home by agents of the Ministry of Intelligence. He was reportedly held for several months in "safe houses" where he was subjected to interrogation, threats, psychological torture, and denied access to legal counsel during this period.

Mr. Shahbazi was later transferred to Ward 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran, and shortly thereafter to the Greater Tehran Penitentiary. He was charged with espionage for Israel, despite the absence of specific evidence of espionage against him. His case reflects a broader pattern: espionage cases appear to be increasing. Between January and July 2025, eight men were reportedly executed for espionage for Israel: six out of eight executions occurred during and soon after the military escalation with Israel.

Mr. Shahbazi was placed in cells with prisoners who attempted to suffocate him while he slept, and received threats against him and his family in an attempt to coerce him into incriminating himself.

The authorities also obtained a coerced confession incriminating Mr. Shahbazi from another prisoner. Prior to being executed, this individual reportedly wrote to the Supreme Court and retracted statements against Mr. Shahbazi, explaining that the false confession was made in response to promises of release, threats of death, and the confiscation of assets.

On 3 May 2025, Mr. Shahbazi was tried in Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court. He was sentenced to death for "corruption on earth" through spying for Israel, with reference to article 287 of Iran's Islamic Penal Code and article 6 of the 2020 Law on Countering Hostile Actions of the Zionist Regime. A request for judicial review was submitted to the Supreme Court on 2 August 2025. Three days later, on 5 August 2025, it was rejected by the presiding judge of Branch 9 of the Supreme Court, despite concerns raised regarding contradictions in evidence.

Additional concerns were raised about the credibility of the evidence presented against Mr. Shahbazi, including unverifiable digital communications and implausible claims of online exchanges with Israeli representatives.

On 8 August 2025, Mr. Shahbazi was reportedly transferred to Ghezel Hesar Prison, which is commonly associated with a step preceding execution. On 19 August 2025, Mr. Shahbazi was reportedly moved to the public ward of Ghezel Hesar Prison.

While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations, we express grave concern at the imminent risk of execution faced by Mr. Shahbazi.

I wish to remind Your Excellency's Government of its obligations, notably under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Your Excellency's Government ratified in 1975. Article 6(1) of the ICCPR protects the right to life and prohibits arbitrary deprivation of life. Article 6(2) provides that, where not abolished, the death penalty may be imposed only for the "most serious crimes." In its general comment No. 36 (para. 35), the Human Rights Committee clarifies that "most serious crimes" must be read restrictively to mean crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing, and that 'corruption and other economic or political crimes' do not meet this threshold. Additionally, general comment No. 36 (para. 2) affirms that no derogations from the right to life are permitted, even in situations of armed conflict or other public emergencies that threaten the life of the nation.

I further recall article 7 of the ICCPR, which enshrines the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Article 14 guarantees the right to a fair trial by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal; the presumption of innocence; adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence, including access to legal counsel of one's own choosing; and the exclusion of statements obtained through coercion. Additionally, under article 14(3)(e), the defendant must be able to examine or have examined witnesses against him.

I am also seriously concerned by allegations that the proceedings failed to comply with due-process and fair-trial guarantees notably article 9 and article 14 of the ICCPR.

The full texts of the human rights instruments and standards recalled above are available on [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) or can be provided upon request.

In view of the urgency of the matter, I would appreciate a response on the initial steps taken by your Excellency's Government to safeguard the rights of the above-mentioned person in compliance with international instruments.

As it is my responsibility, under the mandates provided to me by the Human Rights Council, to seek to clarify all cases brought to our attention, I would be grateful for your observations on the following matters:

1. Please provide any additional information and any comment you may have on the above-mentioned allegations.

2. Please clarify whether Mr. Shahbazi had prompt, regular, chosen legal counsel throughout his interrogation.
3. Please explain where Mr. Shabahzi was held before being transferred to Evin prison.
4. Please provide information on any remaining post-conviction reviews available to Mr. Shahbazi. Please also explain the reasons for the reported three-day rejection of his judicial-review request and how the review met the heightened safeguards required in capital cases.
5. Please clarify what evidence was used to convict Mr. Shahbazi, and how this is compatible with your Excellency's Government's obligations under international fair-trial standards, particularly in relation to capital cases and the exclusion of any evidence obtained under torture.
6. Please explain the reported spike in espionage-related executions around the June 2025 Iran-Israel conflict, and how this aligns with the right to life under ICCPR art. 6 as further elaborated in general comment 36 (para. 2).

I respectfully urge your Excellency's Government to halt the execution of Mr. Babak Shahbazi immediately pending an independent and impartial review of his case in full compliance with international legal obligations.

This communication and any response received from your Excellency's Government will be made public via the communications reporting [website](#) within 60 days. They will also subsequently be made available in the usual report to be presented to the Human Rights Council.

While awaiting a reply, I urge that all necessary interim measures be taken to halt the alleged violations and prevent their re-occurrence and in the event that the investigations support or suggest the allegations to be correct, to ensure the accountability of any person responsible of the alleged violations.

I may publicly express my concerns in the near future as, in my view, the information upon which the press release will be based is sufficiently reliable to indicate a matter warranting immediate attention. I also believe that the wider public should be alerted to the potential implications of the above-mentioned allegations. The press release will indicate that I have been in contact with your Excellency's Government's to clarify the issue/s in question.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Mai Sato  
Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran