

Joint Public Statement

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI)

Iran must immediately revoke the death sentences of prisoners of conscience

http://www.fidh.org/Iran-must-immediately-revoke-the-12723?var_mode=calcul

14 January 2013

Karim Lahidji, vice president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and president of the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI), said today:

“The Iranian authorities regularly impose the death penalty for all forms of dissent. The ethnic communities, and in particular the Iranian Arabs, Kurds and Baluchis, are regularly targeted for demanding their rights, and occasionally members of these communities and their family members fall victim to the vengeance of authorities. The authorities also regularly ignore the strict ban under international law on execution of children. The Iranian government must immediately revoke the death sentences of activists from ethnic communities as well as all prisoners of conscience and join the accelerating worldwide trend to abolish the death penalty.”

The Iranian authorities are threatening prisoners of conscience from the Iranian ethnic minorities, notably the Kurds and Arabs, with a new wave of executions.

The spectre of death is threatening two young Kurdish men: **Zanyar Moradi** and **Loqman Moradi**. These two men were sentenced to death for allegedly murdering the son of a local cleric based on confessions that were coerced. The judge admitted their coerced pre-trial confessions despite their denials in court. Furthermore, in keeping up with their unethical and illegal methods, the authorities televised the confessions on Press TV, the extra-territorial TV channel of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in Iran, Dr Ahmed Shaheed, noted in his report in September 2012: “According to reliable sources, both men [Zanyar and Loqman Moradi] vehemently denied the charges, but were forced to confess as a result of severe beatings and threats of rape and arrest of family members... Reliable sources reported that both men were forced to rehearse answers to questions they were asked during the televised interview.”¹ According to the families of the two men, orders have been issued for implementation of their death sentences.

In addition, the Supreme Court has reportedly upheld the death sentences of five Iranian Arab prisoners of conscience, who were arrested in February 2011 and sentenced on ambiguous charges such as *moharebeh* (fighting against God) and corruption on earth: **Mohammad Ali Ammorynejad** (engineer, blogger and former teacher), **Hadi Rashedi** (high school teacher), **Hashem Sha’baninejad** (poet and teacher), **Jaber al-Boushaka**, and **Mokhtar al-Boushaka**. The latter two are brothers.

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Background Information

The Iranian authorities have repeatedly executed cultural, religious and political activists in areas populated by ethnic communities.

In May 2011, at least eight members of the Arab community were executed in Ahvaz, provincial capital of the Khuzestan province. One of them, Hashem Hamidi, was believed to be 16 years old at the time; three of them were hanged in public. The secret execution of four Arab political prisoners, including three brothers, in Ahvaz in June 2012² sparked widespread local protests. "In a video plea to the Special Rapporteur, all four defendants denied the charges and maintained that they were tortured for the purpose of soliciting confessions."³

Ten 'Salafist' Kurdish prisoners, who were charged with involvement in assassination of a cleric, were tried in July 2011 and sentenced to death. Six of them were executed in late December 2012. The fate of the other four is unknown. Also, in recent years, a number of Kurdish, Arab and Baluch minority activists have been victims of extrajudicial killings and others have died in custody possibly as a result of torture.

Currently, more than 40 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners are known to be on death row. These include four more members of the Arab community who were convicted of *moharebeh* and other vague charges, 15-20 Kurdish and several Baluch people, some persons accused of contacts with opposition groups abroad, and a few web and programming experts. The real total number may be much higher as the Iranian authorities do not provide the information regarding the death sentences imposed and carried out, in particular on prisoners of conscience and political prisoners.

Thousands of prisoners are believed to be on death row in Iran. In December 2009, head of the Prisons Organisations estimated that there were 4,000 death-row inmates, but the authorities do not consider *qesas* (retaliatory death) sentence as part of this count. In late October 2012, Mr. Mehdi Mahmoudian, a journalist who is serving a five-year prison sentence in Rajaishahr prison for exposing police atrocities in illegal detention centres, reported that there were 1,117 death-row inmates, including 734 sentenced to *qesas*, in that prison alone that does not even hold drug-related convicts. Most victims of the death penalty in Iran are charged with drugs-related offences. However, the Iranian law denies the death-row drug-related convicts the right to appeal.

There are about 20 categories of offences punishable by death under the laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and it is regularly imposed for charges related to drugs, religion, consensual sex between adults of different sexes or same sex, alcohol, and vague offences such as *moharebeh* and corruption on earth. In the first week of January, two people were even sentenced to death for using knives to extort money from other persons, which has no legal basis.

The trials, and in particular in political cases, often fail to satisfy the legal standards under Iran's own highly flawed justice system, where confessions extracted under torture, and frequently televised, are admitted in court. Under these circumstances, they also fail to meet the standards of fair trial and guarantees of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a State party.

For further information, see the following reports on Iran:

On death penalty:

http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Rapport_Iran_final.pdf

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On ethnic and religious communities:

<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?action=telecharger&arg=4896>

On state policy of repression and compliance with ICCPR:

<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?action=telecharger&arg=5767>

¹ A/67/369, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 13 September 2012

² See: http://www.fidh.org/DP-for-every-case-in-Iran?var_mode=calcul

³ See Endnote 1

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