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Iran: Violations of human rights continue unabated

Amnesty International is greatly concerned by continuing human rights violations in Iran, including new arrests of human rights defenders and the high rate of executions, including the first execution by stoning confirmed by the authorities since a moratorium on stonings was announced in 2002

The organization is again calling on the Iranian authorities to uphold their obligations under international law and ensure that no one is detained for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression or association, and to impose an immediate moratorium on all executions and take steps to remove the death penalty from Iranian law.

Human rights defenders arrested

Two Iranian Kurdish journalists and human rights defenders were arrested earlier this month. Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand, Chair of the Kurdistan Human Rights Organization (RMMK), was taken from his workplace in Tehran by plain-clothed security officers on 1 July. He was facing a one-year prison sentence because of articles he had published in the now banned *Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan* (Message of the People of Kurdistan), but it is not clear if this is the reason for his current detention.

Ajlal Qavami, a member of the RMMK board and former journalist of *Payam-e Mardom-e Kurdistan* and member of the editorial board of the bilingual weekly *Didgah* (Viewpoint), was arrested on or around 9 July after being summoned to the Revolutionary Court in Sanandaj. He had previously been sentenced to three years' imprisonment by Branch 1 of the Revolutionary Court in Sanadaj for organizing a demonstration in July 2005 in protest at the killing of, Showan Qaderi, a member of the Kurdish minority, by security forces. He had appealed against this sentence but his appeal is reported to have been rejected, although this outcome had not been communicated to either Ajlal Qavami or his lawyer before Ajlal Qavami's arrest.

Sa'id Sa'edi, another Kurdish journalist who was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment in the same case, may also now be at risk of arrest.

Students and others arrested on anniversary of '18 Tir' student demonstrations

Sixteen people were arrested on 9 July -- 18 Tir in the Iranian calendar -- the eighth anniversary of student demonstrations in 1999 which were violently suppressed by security forces.

Behareh Hedayat, the head of the Women's Commission of the Office for the Consolidation of Unity (*Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat* -- a student body), and five other members of the OCU's Central Council -- Mohammad Hashemi, Ali Nikou Nesbati, Mehdi Arabshahi, Hanif Yazdani and Ali Vafaqi -- were detained opposite Amir Kabir University of Technology. At the time, they were holding a demonstration to protest against the continued detention of eight other students arrested in May and June 2007 in connection with the publication of articles regarded as insulting to Islam. The eight deny any connection to the articles.

Ten other people were arrested on 9 July at the offices of the Alumni Association of Iran (*Sazman-e Danesh Amukhtegan-e Iran-e Eslami [Advar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat]*). Those held reportedly include members of the association and the mother of Mohammad Hashemi, who had gone there to enquire about her son. The arresting officials reportedly fired guns in the air, and confiscated computers and documents before sealing the office.

The 16 arrests were confirmed by Alireza Jamshidi, a spokesperson for Iran's Judiciary: "They are in prison and the investigation is ongoing regarding their participation in illegal gatherings and acting against

security,"

Trades unionists targeted

Trade unionists are also being targeted. Mansour Ossanlu, head of the unrecognized Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company (*Sherkat-e Vahed*), was reportedly pushed into a car at around 7pm on 10 July by men in plain clothes who beat him. On 12 July it was reported that he was being held in Section 209 of Evin Prison in Tehran. Mansour Ossanlu spent eight months in detention between December 2005 and August 2006, and a further month between November and December 2006 in connection with his trade union activities. He had recently travelled to Europe in order to build international support for an independent trades union movement in Iran.

Women human rights defenders

Women's rights activists also continue to face reprisals for their activities demanding an end to laws which discriminate against women. At least three more women have recently been sentenced for participating in a June 2006 demonstration calling for reform of Iran's discriminatory legislation.

Delaram Ali was sentenced to 34 months of imprisonment and 10 lashes after being convicted on charges of "participating in an illegal gathering", "propaganda against the system", and "disrupting public order and peace". Aliyeh Aghdam Doust was reportedly sentenced to three years and four months of imprisonment and 20 lashes. Both are currently believed to be at liberty pending the outcome of appeals.

A third woman activist, Nasim Soltan Beigi, was sentenced on or around 7 July to two years' imprisonment, suspended for five years, for "participating in an illegal demonstration".

If imprisoned, Amnesty International would consider all three women to be prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate, unconditional release. Amnesty International is also calling for their flogging sentences to be commuted immediately. Amnesty International believes that the use of corporal punishment such as flogging constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment amounting to torture.

Executions

Iran continues to have one of the highest rates of executions in the world. Amnesty International has recorded at least 120 executions since the beginning of 2007, suggesting that by the end of this year the total number of executions could exceed the total of 177 executions that Amnesty International recorded in 2006.

Two recent victims of the Iranian authorities' use of the death penalty were child offenders, whose alleged crimes were committed before the age of 18, and a third was a man who was stoned to death. The two child offenders -- Mohammad Mousavi and Sa'id Qanbar Zahi -- were executed in April and May respectively, in direct contravention of international law, which requires that no-one should be executed for crimes committed while under the age of 18.

The stoning execution of Ja'far Kiani was carried out on 5 July in the village of Aghche-Kand, near Takestan in Qazvin province, despite a 2002 moratorium on the use of stoning issued by the Head of the Judiciary, and a stay of execution which had been ordered in his case. The stoning was confirmed by Judiciary Spokesperson Alireza Jamshidi on 10 July, who said it had been carried out because it was a final sentence, and judges in Iran are independent. It was the first confirmed stoning since the moratorium, although a woman and a man were reportedly stoned to death in Mashhad in May 2006. There are grave concerns that Mokarrameh Ebrahimi, a woman sentenced in the same case, will suffer the same fate unless Iran's Head of the Judiciary intervenes immediately. On 11 July the Islamic Students News Agency reported that a judiciary official had said that the actions of the judge in the case were to be investigated by the Judges' Disciplinary Court.

The Judiciary Spokesperson said that a further 20 executions would be carried out in the coming days of people convicted of crimes such as "repeated rape, 'sodomy' and violent assault and battery".

While Amnesty International recognizes the right of governments to bring to justice those suspected of serious crimes, it opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The organization does not have any details of those whose executions the Judiciary Spokesperson said were imminent, but is appealing to the Iranian authorities to stay the executions and commute all the

death sentences of all of them.

Amnesty International opposes the criminalization of consensual adult sexual relations conducted in private and urges the Iranian authorities to review legislation with a view to decriminalising such acts, although there is no evidence available to Amnesty International that any of these 20 individuals at risk of execution have been sentenced solely for such consensual sexual relations.

Public Document

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