

URGENT ACTION

KURD AT IMMINENT RISK OF EXECUTION IN IRAN

A Kurdish man, Sherko Moarefi, is scheduled to be executed on 1 May, in the western Iranian province of Kordestan. He was convicted of "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*) for his purported membership of a proscribed Kurdish opposition group.

Sherko Moarefi was detained in October 2008, after which he was sentenced to death for "acting against national security" and "enmity against God". In October 2009, he and two other Kurdish political prisoners, **Ehsan Fattahian** and **Habibollah Latifi**, were at imminent risk of execution after a judge in the capital of Kordestan, Sanandaj, ordered that they be executed. This was possibly a reprisal in response to a spate of attacks on Iranian officials in September 2009, for which the authorities blamed the Party For Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), a Kurdish armed group, although the group denied responsibility. Ehsan Fattahian, was executed on 11 November 2009.

Sherko Moarefi's death sentence was upheld first by an Appeal Court and then by the Supreme Court. His court-appointed lawyer stated in an interview on 18 October 2009 that his request to the Amnesty and Clemency Commission had been rejected and that he had applied for a judicial review. This, too, was denied.

Habibollah Latifi, an industrial engineering student at Ilam University in western Iran was later scheduled to be executed on 26 December 2010, but this was not carried out due to international pressure, from Amnesty International and others. He remains at risk, although no new date is known to have been set for his execution (see UA 271/09, AI Index: MDE 13/102/2009, 8 October 2009 and follow up). At least 14 other Kurdish political prisoners are known to be on death row.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Persian, English or your own language:

- Urging the Iranian authorities to halt the execution of Sherko Moarefi, scheduled for 1 May;
- Calling on them to commute the death sentences of Sherko Moarefi, Habibollah Latifi and all other Kurdish political prisoners;
- Stating that Amnesty International recognizes the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice, in conformity with international standards of fair trial, those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 MAY 2011 TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street – End of
Shahid Keshvar Doust Street, Tehran,
Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info_leader@leader.ir

Twitter: @khamenei_ir (please add
#Iran in the body of the message which
cannot exceed 140 characters,
including spaces and punctuation:
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani
[care of] Public relations Office
Number 4, 2 Azizi Street
Vali Asr Ave., above Pasteur Street
intersection

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: bia.judi@yahoo.com (In subject
line: **FAO Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani**)

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Secretary General, High Council for
Human Rights

Mohammad Javad Larijani
High Council for Human Rights
[Care of] Office of the Head of the
Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave.
south of Serah-e Jomhouri, Tehran
1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@humanrights-iran.ir
(subject line: **FAO Mohammad Javad
Larijani**)

Salutation: Dear Sir

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

KURD AT IMMINENT RISK OF EXECUTION IN IRAN

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kurds, who are one of Iran's many minority groups, live mainly in the west and north-west of the country, in the province of Kordestan and neighbouring provinces bordering Kurdish areas of Turkey and Iraq. They experience discrimination in the enjoyment of their religious, economic and cultural rights (see: *Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority*, (Index: MDE 13/088/2008), 30 July 2008 at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/088/2008/en>). For many years, Kurdish organizations such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and the Marxist group Komala conducted armed struggle against the Islamic Republic of Iran. An alleged member of the KDPI, Farhad Taram, was reported by Kurdish sources to have been executed in secret in February 2011. A further group, the Party For Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), was formed in 2004, and carried out armed attacks against Iranian security forces, but declared a unilateral ceasefire in 2009, although it still engages in armed clashes with security forces in what it terms "self-defence". Hossein Khezri, a member of Iran's Kurdish minority, is feared to have been executed on 15 January 2011 in north-western Iran after being convicted of "enmity against God" on account of his membership of the Party for Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK). The authorities have announced that a PJAK member was executed on 15 January 2011 but without naming the individual. On 16 January 2011, PJAK issued a statement pledging an "appropriate response" to what they clearly believe to have been Hossein Khezri's execution and calling for a week of "resistance" to Iran.

Amnesty International condemns without reservation attacks on civilians, which includes judges, clerics, and locally or nationally-elected officials, as attacking civilians violates fundamental principles of international humanitarian law. These principles prohibit absolutely attacks on civilians as well as indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. Such attacks cannot be justified under any circumstances.

The scope of capital crimes in Iran is broad. The death penalty is one of four possible punishments for those convicted of *moharebeh*, a charge often brought against those accused of armed opposition to the state. Other capital crimes include other national security offences such as espionage. At least 13 other Kurdish men and one Kurdish woman are believed to be on death row in connection with their alleged membership of and activities for proscribed Kurdish organizations. They include Sami Hosseini, Jamal Mohammadi, Rashid Akhkandi, Rostam Arkia, Anvar Rostami, Mostafa Salimi, Mohammad Amin Abdollahi, Ghader (or Aziz) Mohammadzadeh, Hassan Talai, Habibollah Golparipour, Abdollah Sorouri, Loghman (or Loqman) Moradi, Zaniar Moradi (who was only 17 when arrested) and Zeynab Jalalian. Some have had initial prison sentences increased to death sentences.

December 2010 and January 2011 saw an alarming rise in executions, mainly of individuals convicted of offences related to trafficking and possession of illegal drugs. Officially announced executions declined in February and March possibly in advance of a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council calling for a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Iran to be created. Human rights activists in Iran have expressed concern that the rate of executions may resume after the Nowrouz (New Year) holiday which ends in early April. Reports suggest that dozens of prisoners from Qezel Hesar Prison, including many on death row, have been transferred to Evin Prison. A prison riot broke out in Qezel Hesar Prison in mid-March in which at least 14 people were killed, according to official media sources. The cause of the riot was said to include protests at attempts by the authorities to remove some death row prisoners for execution (for further information see *Deaths in Iranian prison must be investigated*, 17 March 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/deaths-iranian-prison-must-be-investigated-2011-03-17>)

In 2010 the Iranian authorities acknowledged the execution of 252 people, including five women and one juvenile offender. Amnesty International received credible reports of more than 300 other executions which were not officially acknowledged, mostly of alleged drugs offenders in Vakilabad Prison, Mashhad.

UA: 95/11 Index: MDE 13/035/2011 Issue Date: 30 March 2011

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

