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Iranian footballer's wife to be executed tomorrow

Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately halt the imminent execution of Shahla Jahed, the temporary wife of a prominent Iranian footballer.

Iranian media reports indicate that her lawyer has now received official notice that Khadijeh Jahed, known as "Shahla", is to be executed in Evin prison in Tehran at dawn tomorrow.

"Shahla Jahed must be spared execution - the death penalty represents the ultimate denial of human rights and the most extreme form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"As well, in this case, there are good reasons to suggest that she may have been wrongly convicted. She should not be made to pay with her life."

Shahla Jahed, who had contracted a temporary marriage with Nasser Mohammad-Khani, a former striker for the Iranian national football team, was convicted of stabbing to death her husband's permanent wife.

Under Iranian law, men and women can marry either permanently or temporarily. In a temporary marriage, men and women can commit to be married for an agreed period of time, on payment of an agreed sum of money to the woman, after which the marriage is null and void, although it can be renewed. Men can have up to four permanent wives, and any number of temporary wives. Women can only be married to one man at a time.

Shahla Jahed was initially sentenced to death by the Tehran General Court in June 2004. She withdrew her "confession" of murder in court, but her sentence was upheld by the Iranian Supreme Court.

"There are strong grounds to believe that Shahla Jahed did not receive a fair trial, and may have been coerced into making a "confession" during months of detention in solitary confinement. She retracted that confession at her trial but the court chose to accept it as evidence against her." said Malcolm Smart

Shahla Jahed's lawyer had requested a review of the execution order arguing that Shahla Jahed's case had not been properly investigated.

In November 2005, the then Head of the Judiciary ordered a stay of execution so that the case could be re-examined. However, the death sentence was upheld in September 2006.

In early 2008, the Head of the Judiciary again overturned the verdict and ordered a fresh investigation, citing "procedural flaws". However, Shahla Jahed was again sentenced to death in February 2009 by the General Court.

On 13 September 2010, Shahla Jahed wrote to the current Head of the Judiciary, Ayatollah Sadegh Larijani, asking for a final decision in her case.

Note to editors

In Iran, a person convicted of murder has no right to seek pardon or commutation from the state, in violation of Article 6(4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a state party. The family of a murder victim has the right either to insist on execution, or to pardon the killer and receive financial compensation (diyeh).