

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 13/015/2004

26 February 2004

Further Information on UA 364/03 (MDE 13/041/2003, 15 December 2003) and follow-ups (MDE 13/041/2003, 25 February 2004; MDE 13/002/2004, 09 January 2004) - Fear of imminent execution

IRAN

Kobra Rahmanpour (f), aged about 22

According to the newspaper *Ete'mad*, Kobra Rahmanpour is to be executed on 28 February 2004. Her only hope of escaping execution is for the family of her alleged victim to decide to accept payment of blood money (*diyeh*) rather than retribution in kind (*qesas-e nafs*).

New information has emerged about the events leading up to the death of Kobra Rahmanpour's mother-in-law, for which she was sentenced to death in January 2002. According to an article on the Iranian women's rights website, <http://www.womeniniran.org/>, in 1999 Kobra Rahmanpour went to work at the house of Alireza Niakaniyan, possibly as a domestic servant, for a three-month trial period. He reportedly sexually abused her, and she lodged complaints with the authorities. He reportedly paid compensation to her, and may have been imprisoned. However, possibly under pressure from Kobra Rahmanpour's father, the two entered into a *sigheh*, or "temporary marriage". Nevertheless, according to this report, one day in September or October 2000 Alireza Niakaniyan drove Kobra Rahmanpour to a busy market area in north Tehran, called Tajrish, where he reportedly gave her US\$20,000 in cash, and told her to leave him. She reportedly made her way back to his house, where the struggle which resulted in the death of his mother took place.

She was arrested some weeks later, and put on trial. She said that she had acted in self-defence, after her mother-in-law attacked her with a kitchen knife, but was sentenced to death by Branch 1608 of Tehran's Criminal Court in January 2002. A year later the sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court.

In a 3 February 2004 letter to Amnesty International, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in London stated that legal proceedings in the case had been completed and that the sentence could only be commuted if the victim's heirs were to forgo their right to retribution and ask instead for compensation. It appears that efforts by public figures and certain officials have not deterred the family of the victim from seeking the execution of Kobra Rahmanpour.

Kobra Rahmanpour was scheduled to be executed in January 2004, but a shortage of the equipment (allegedly a lack of handcuffs to use on the way to the execution site) reportedly contributed to a decision by judicial authorities to stay her execution and seek a pardon from Alireza Niakaniyan and his family.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing sympathy with the family of the victim;
- welcoming the previous decision to stay the execution of Kobra Rahmanpour;
- urging the authorities to extend the stay of execution with a view to commuting the sentence;

- urging the authorities to ensure that the victim's family are made aware that, under Islamic law, they can pardon Kobra Rahmanpour;
- stating that Amnesty International recognizes the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but opposes the death penalty as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- reminding the authorities that article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party, encourages the abolition of the death penalty

APPEALS TO:

President

His Excellency Hojjatoleslam val Moslemin Sayed Mohammad Khatami

Telegram: President, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

E-mail: khatami@president.ir (please resend your message if it does not get through the first time)

Salutation: Your Excellency

Influential parliamentarian for Tehran

Gholamali Haddad Adel

Fax: +98 21 646 1746

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Islamic Human Rights Commission

Mr Mohammad Hassan Zia'i-Far

Fax: + 98 21 204 0541

Public Relations Director of the Guardian Council

Vahid Jalalzadeh

Fax: +98 21 648 2000

Email: info@irisn.com (please try again if it bounces)

Salutation: Dear Sirs

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.