

25 May 2001

Further information on EXTRA 05/01 (MDE 13/004/2001, 16 January 2001), follow-up (MDE 13/006/2001, 18 January 2001) and MDE 13/011/2001 - Imminent execution

IRANMaryam Ayoubi (f), aged 31
Hossein Esna 'Ashari, aged 24
Two men aged 20-30, names not known
Ali Hassanzadeh, aged 25
Mostafa Nikbakht, aged 22
Mir Jalil Sayed Nazari, aged 22

A woman has reportedly been stoned to death in Evin prison. This is the first stoning of a woman recorded since 1997, and has increased concern that the authorities are preparing to carry out the stoning of Maryam Ayoubi.

According to newspaper reports of 21 May, a 35-year-old woman was stoned to death in the centre of Evin prison, where she had served eight years on charges of being "corrupt on earth" (see below), for appearing in a pornographic film. The woman had reportedly denied any involvement, but her death sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court, apparently on the basis of witness testimony that she was the woman in the film. The report did not say when the execution was carried out.

Maryam Ayoubi was sentenced to death for the murder of her husband. On 15 March the Iranian press reported that the Supreme Court had upheld her death sentence.

There is no new information about Hossein Esna 'Ashari, her alleged accomplice, who was sentenced to death together with her, or about the other prisoners listed above.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Death by stoning is the punishment for adultery. Article 104 of the Penal Code states that "...the stones should not be too large so that the person dies on being hit by one or two of them, nor so small so that they cannot be called stones." Execution by stoning causes grievous pain before death and is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

The last executions by stoning recorded by Amnesty International were of a man in April 1999, and of three men and three women in October 1997.

Charges of "corruption on earth", detailed in Articles 183 - 195 of the Iranian Penal Code, only refer to acts against national security and do not deal with acts involving morality. It is not known why the woman stoned to death in Evin prison could have faced such charges.

Amnesty International has learned with regret that on 20 May 2001, Mohammad Reza Pedram, 56, a former member of the Iranian air force, was hanged at Evin prison, convicted of espionage. The sentence was handed down by the Judicial Organization of the Armed Forces, and had reportedly been upheld by the Supreme Court.

The number of executions recorded by Amnesty International in Iran this year has now reached 44, although the true figure may be much higher.

Amnesty International acknowledges the right and responsibility of all governments to bring to justice those guilty of recognizably criminal offences. However, the organization is fundamentally opposed to the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate violation of the right to life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging the authorities not to carry out Maryam Ayoubi's sentence, pointing out that the death penalty constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment amounting to torture, all the more so when it is carried out by stoning, and as such violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party;
- urging the authorities to commute her death sentence to a more humane form of punishment;
- asking whether the death sentences passed on the other people named above have been upheld, and, if so, asking for them to be commuted immediately;
- reminding the Iranian authorities of their commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 3, which says that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person".

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran,
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei
c/o The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Ayatollah Khamenei, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Salutation: Your Excellency

President
His Excellency Hojjatoleslam Sayed Mohammad Khatami
The Presidency, Palestine Avenue, Azerbaijan Intersection,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: President Khatami, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Faxes: + 98 21 649 5880
E-mails: khatami@president.ir
Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary
His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi
Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Telegrams: Head of Judiciary, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Faxes: + 98 21 879 6671 (number may be unreliable, please be patient)
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs,
His Excellency Kamal Kharrazi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdolmajid Keshk-e Mesri Avenue
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran
Faxes: + 98 21 390 1999 (Human Rights Department)
E-mails: matbuat@mfa.gov.ir (please ask for the message to be forwarded to the Human Rights Department)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Director, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence
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and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 July 2001