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Iran must not carry out retribution blinding sentence

Amnesty International today called on the Iranian authorities to not carry out a sentence ordering a man to be blinded by having acid dropped in both eyes as part of a retribution punishment.

Majid Movahedi was sentenced to “retribution in kind” (qesas) in 2008 after he poured a bucket of acid over Ameneh Bahrami, who had rejected his marriage proposal several times.

A Tehran court ordered that five drops of acid be placed in each of his eyes and the sentence is reportedly due to be carried out on 14 May.

“It is unbelievable that the Iranian authorities would consider implementing such a punishment,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Programme.

“Regardless of how horrific the crime suffered by Ameneh Bahrami, being blinded with acid is a cruel and inhuman punishment amounting to torture, and the Iranian authorities have a responsibility under international law to ensure it does not go ahead.”

On 3 November 2004, Majid Movahedi poured a bucket of acid on Ameneh Bahrami's head as she was leaving work, after she had rejected his marriage proposal several times.

Two weeks after the attack Majid Movahedi turned himself in to the police. During a preliminary hearing, he acknowledged attacking Ameneh Bahrami and was detained to await trial.

“Women in Iran are subject to many forms of violence – in their homes, in the street and at the hands of the government, which the authorities have a duty firstly to prevent and then to provide redress for victims,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui ;

“However, in doing so they cannot violate international law by imposing cruel punishments such as that which Majid Movahedi is facing. Obliging a doctor to administer such a punishment would violate international medical ethics codes.”

Since her attack, Ameneh Bahrami has undergone 17 operations, including in Spain in an unsuccessful attempt to reconstruct her face. Her injuries led to the loss of one eye and although she recovered 40 per cent of her sight in the remaining eye, an infection in 2007 left her totally blind.

Ameneh Bahrami has consistently demanded retribution for her injuries, and is insisting that the punishment be carried out.