

URGENT ACTION

HALT EXECUTIONS OF KURDISH PRISONERS

Three men, members of Iran's Kurdish minority, are at risk of imminent execution. This may be in reprisal for a spate of assassinations and attempted assassinations of officials which took place during September 2009, in the northwestern province of Kordestan.

Habibollah Latifi, Ehsan (Esma'il) Fattahian and Sherko Moarefi have all been sentenced to death for "enmity against God" in unconnected cases over the last two years. They are believed to be on death row in a prison in Sanandaj, the provincial capital of Kordestan.

According to the Sanandaj News website (<http://senanews.blogfa.com>) a judge in Sanandaj has received orders from the Judiciary, in the Iranian capital Tehran, to carry out the executions of these Kurdish prisoners. The Head of the Judiciary in Sanandaj is reported to have written to the Supreme Leader of Iran for permission to carry out the executions. Kurdish sources have reported that some Kurdish political prisoners have recently been moved from Sanandaj prison to other prisons in Iran. They believe that this may be intended to limit disturbances in the prison should the executions go ahead and is another sign that the executions are imminent.

The Iranian authorities have a history of executing political prisoners when the authorities believe that crimes have been committed by people from the same group. Habibollah Latifi, Ehsan (Esma'il) Fattahian and Sherko Moarefi are believed to have been convicted of membership of and activities on behalf of the Kurdistan Independent Life Party (PJAK), a proscribed armed group. Reports from sources in Iran suggest that they may have been moved into solitary confinement, which is often a prelude to execution.

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

- Calling on the authorities not to execute Habibollah Latifi, Ehsan (Esma'il) Fattahian and Sherko Moarefi, and for their death sentences to be commuted;
- expressing concern that their executions may have been scheduled in reprisal for crimes carried out by other people;
- urging the authorities to impose an immediate and comprehensive moratorium on executions, as a first step towards ending the use of this punishment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 NOVEMBER 2009 TO:

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani, Office of the Head of the Judiciary, Pasteur St., Vali Asr Ave. south of Serah-e Jomhuri, Tehran 1316814737, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: Via website:

<http://www.dadiran.ir/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

1st starred box: your given name; 2nd starred box: your family name; 3rd: your email address

Salutation: Your Excellency

Governor of Kordestan Province

Esmail Najjar

Email: In Persian and Kurdish, send via feedback form on the website:

<http://www.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?tabId=150&cv=4@0>

_1 In English, French or other languages, use the feedback form on the website:

<http://en.ostan-kd.ir/Default.aspx?TabID=59>

Salutation: Dear Governor

And copies to:

Director, Human Rights Headquarters of Iran

His Excellency Mohammad Javad Larijani, c/o Office of the Deputy for International Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad (Ark) Square, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 21 5 537 8827 (please keep trying)

Salutation: Dear Director

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kurds, who are one of Iran's many ethnic 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 religious, economic and cultural discrimination. For many years, Kurdish organizations such as the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and the Marxist group *Komala*, have conducted armed opposition against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Another armed group, the Kurdistan Independent Life Party (PJAK), formed in 2004, continues to carry out armed attacks against Iranian security forces.

No group has claimed responsibility for the spate of assassinations and attempted assassinations in Kordestan, which have targeted mainly religious figures and judges between 9 and 19 September 2009, in which the head of Sanadaj city council, a Sunni cleric who had supported President Ahmadinejad's re-election campaign; the Kordestan representative to the Assembly of Experts (the body which appoints the Supreme Leader) were killed. Two judges were also injured in the attacks. The authorities have variously blamed PJAK, and "hard-line Sunni fundamentalists" linked to foreign intelligence services. According to various Iranian media sources on 28 September 2009, several of those believed to have been responsible for the attacks were arrested at the scene of another attack in which two others were killed.

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, and includes "enmity against God", often imposed for armed opposition to the state, but can include other national security offences such as espionage.

At least ten other Kurdish men and one woman are believed to be on death row in connection with their membership of and activities for proscribed Kurdish organizations. They include Farzad Kamangar, Farhad Vakili, Ali Haydarian, Farhad Chalesh (Turkish national), Rostam Arkia, Ramazan Ahmad (Syrian national), Fasih (Fateh) Yasmini, Hossein Khezri, Anvar Rostami, Shaker Baghi and Zeynab Jalalian. For further information on some of the Kurds on death row for political offences, including those named in this UA, please see <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE13/012/2009/en>.

In May 2009, three members of Iran's Baluch minority were executed in public in Zahedan less than 48 hours after an attack on worshippers in a mosque in which up to 25 people were killed. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the People's Resistance Movement of Iran (formerly known as Jondollah). The three men had already been sentenced to death, but their executions were linked to the mosque attack. Officials claimed that following renewed interrogations after the bombing, they had "confessed" to involvement into bringing the explosives into the country.

In 1988, thousands of political prisoners, mostly members of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) or leftist organizations, were executed in what has become popularly known as the "prison massacres". The executions took place following the cease-fire agreement between Iran and Iraq and an armed incursion a few days later by PMOI members based in Iraq which was repulsed by the Iranian army. Most of those executed were already detained or imprisoned at the time of the incursion and could not have been involved in spying or terrorist activities as the government claimed. No one has ever been brought to account for these mass killings.

UA: 271/09 Index: MDE 13/102/2009 Issue Date: 08 October 2009

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