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## **Iran must halt execution of prisoner who ‘survived hanging’**

Iran must stop the execution of man who was found alive at a morgue a day after being hanged, Amnesty International urged today after authorities said the prisoner would be hanged for a second time once his condition improves.

The 37-year-old, identified as “Alireza M”, was hanged in Bojnourd prison in north-east Iran last week after being convicted of drug offences.

According to official state media, a doctor declared him dead after the 12 minute-hanging, but when the prisoner’s family went to collect his body the following day he was found to still be breathing.

He is currently in hospital, but a judge reportedly said he would be executed again “once medical staff confirm his health condition is good enough”.

“The horrific prospect of this man facing a second hanging, after having gone through the whole ordeal already once, merely underlines the cruelty and inhumanity of the death penalty,” said Philip Luther, Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

“The Iranian authorities must immediately halt Alireza M’s execution and issue a moratorium on all others.”

Alireza M is now reported to be in a “satisfactory” condition in hospital, and a family member reportedly said the prisoner’s two daughters were “the happiest of all” that he was alive.

He had reportedly been sentenced to death for drug trafficking by the Revolutionary Court, which tries drug offenders in Iran in proceedings that often do not meet international standards of fair trial.

So far in 2013, the Iranian authorities are believed to have executed a total of at least 508 people, including 221 executions that have not been officially confirmed.

The majority of those executed were convicted of drug offences.

“It is natural that the Iranian authorities must combat the serious social, security and economic problems relating to drug trafficking and drug abuse but the reliance on the death penalty to combat drug trafficking is misguided and in violation of international law,” said Philip Luther.

“People want to be protected from crime, but the death penalty does not make societies safer.”

Even the Secretary General of the Iranian Judiciary’s High Council for Human Rights, Mohammad Javad Larijani, expressed doubts in 2011 that the death penalty reduces crimes related to drug trafficking.

“Carrying out a second execution on a man who somehow managed to survive 12 minutes of hanging –

who was certified as dead and whose body was about to be turned over to his family – is simply ghastly. It betrays a basic lack of humanity that sadly underpins much of Iran’s justice system,” said Philip Luther.

## **Background**

Amnesty International acknowledges the suffering of victims of crime, and recognizes the obligation and duty of governments to protect their rights. The organization believes that those found responsible, after a fair judicial process, should be punished, but without recourse to the death penalty.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances.