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## **Iran executes five political prisoners**

Amnesty International today condemned the executions in Iran of four Kurdish political activists and another Iranian man, all convicted of “moharebeh” (enmity against God”).

The four Kurds – Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydarian, Farhad Vakili, Shirin Alam-Holi - along with Mehdi Eslamian, were hanged on Sunday, 9 May at Evin prison in Tehran.

The five were accused of “enmity against God” for carrying out ‘terrorist acts’ and convicted of this vaguely worded charge which can carry the death penalty and is usually applied to those who take up arms against the state.

“We condemn these executions which were carried out without any prior warning. Despite the serious accusations against them, the five were denied fair trials. Three of the defendants were tortured and two forced to ‘confess’ under duress,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“They were then executed in violation of Iranian law, which requires the authorities to notify prisoners’ lawyers in advance before carrying out executions.”

Three of those executed - Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydarian and Farhad Vakili - were sentenced to death for alleged membership and activities for the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) a Turkish armed opposition group that has been fighting the Turkish government.

Shirin Alam-Holi, the woman who was executed, was accused of belonging to another Kurdish group, the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (known by its Kurdish acronym PJAK), an Iranian armed group that is banned in Iran.

The fifth person executed, Mehdi Eslamian, was accused of providing financial assistance to his brother, who was executed in early 2009 for allegedly bombing a mosque in Shiraz in April 2008.

“These latest executions appear to be a blatant attempt to intimidate members of the Kurdish minority and other critics and opponents of the government in the run up to the first anniversary, on 12 June, of last year’s disputed presidential election,” said Malcolm Smart

Mehdi Eslamian is reported to have been tortured including by being flogged and beaten; he was denied medical attention for injuries sustained while in custody and forced to ‘confess’.

Farzad Kamangar, a teacher, had been held for seven months prior to being allowed to meet with his family.

According to a letter he wrote, circulated on the internet in April 2008, he was repeatedly tortured following his arrest in May 2006. He was whipped, held in a freezing cold room and guards played 'football' with his body, surrounding him and pummelling him as he was 'passed' between guards.

In a letter from prison, Shirin Alam-Holi said she had had nightmares because of what her interrogators did to her.

She was repeatedly beaten, including on the soles of her feet, kicked in the stomach, causing internal bleeding, and when she went on hunger strike, force fed through nasal tubes which she ripped out in protest, damaging her nose. She said she had made a videotaped "confession" after she was hospitalised and given an injection.

Detainees are often held incommunicado for lengthy periods in detention centres outside the control of the judiciary, putting them at grave risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Trials in Iran are frequently unfair, with detainees routinely denied access to a lawyer. Proceedings outside Tehran are often summary, lasting only a few minutes.

Iran has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. To date in 2010, Amnesty International has recorded over 80 executions.

"Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to halt all executions. In the meantime, there should be full transparency over the use of the death penalty in Iran, and - at the very least - the authorities should adhere to their own laws regarding the implementation of executions" said Malcolm Smart.

## Background

In resolution 2005/59, adopted on 20 April 2005, the UN Commission on Human Rights called upon states that still maintain the death penalty "to make available to the public information with regard to the imposition of the death penalty and to any scheduled execution".