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Execution of Iranian footballer's wife condemned

Amnesty International has today condemned the Iranian authorities for carrying out the execution of Khadijeh Jahed, known as "Shahla", the temporary wife of a prominent Iranian footballer, at Evin Prison, Tehran this morning.

Shahla Jahed's hanging for the alleged murder of Laleh Saharkhizian, the permanent wife of footballer Naser Mohammad-Khani, is understood to have taken place today at 5am local time, her lawyer, Abdolsamad Khoramshahi, told the state News Agency, IRNA.

"Shahla Jahed's execution, like all such executions, is an example of premeditated and cold-blooded killing by the state, and is particularly distressing as there were serious concerns over the fairness of the trial, and the evidence used against the defendant." said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

According to the Iranian news agency ISNA Laleh Saharkhizian's brother carried out the final stage of the execution of Shahla Jahed by kicking away the stool on which she was standing with the noose around her neck.

In Iranian law, in a murder case, the victim's family have the right to either insist on execution, in which case they are allowed to be directly involved in carrying it out, or to pardon the perpetrator and to accept compensation (diyeh).

Shahla Jahed was sentenced to death in June 2004 by the Tehran General Court accused of stabbing to death Laleh Saharkhizian.

Mohammad-Khani was a prominent and well known Iranian footballer in the 1980's who more recently became the coach for the Persepolis Club in Tehran.

Although Shahla Jahed initially confessed to the murder in court, she later retracted her confession, stating "everyone knows the conditions I confessed under", raising fears it may have been coerced. Nevertheless, she was sentenced to death, and her sentence was upheld by the Iranian Supreme Court.

Men and women can marry both permanently or temporarily according to Iranian law. Temporary marriage usually lasts for an agreed period of time and involves the payment of an agreed sum of money to the women involved. At expiration of the agreed temporary marriage duration it is considered null and void, though it can be renewed. Men can have any number of temporary wives, though women may only have one husband at a time.