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IRAN: REPORTS OF LATEST ASHTIANI TV ‘CONFESSION’ CONDEMNED

Amnesty International today condemned reports that Iran’s state-controlled Press TV will tonight broadcast a new “confession” by an Iranian woman who faces possible execution by stoning or hanging.

“If reports are accurate that tonight’s broadcast will contain another televised ‘confession’ from Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, its potential impact on her case should not be underestimated,” said Philip Luther, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Amnesty International.

“If the authorities are seeking to use this ‘confession’ to try to construct a new case against her, for a crime that she’s already been tried and sentenced for, we would condemn this in the strongest terms.”

Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani was sentenced to a 10-year prison term in 2006 for the murder of her husband, which her lawyer has said was subsequently reduced to five years for “complicity” in the murder.

She was also sentenced to death by stoning for “adultery while married”. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani is held in Tabriz Prison, East Azerbaijan province, awaiting the outcome of a judicial review of her stoning sentence.

According to media reports a production team from Press TV collected Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani from prison, along with her son Sajjad Qaderzadeh, who is also currently detained, and took them to her former home to produce a “visual recount of the crime at the murder scene”, apparently for a “documentary”.

International standards for fair trial guarantee the right not to be forced to incriminate oneself or to confess guilt.

Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani’s current lawyer Javid Houtan Kiyani, arrested and detained along with Sajjad Qaderzadeh for campaigning for her life to be spared, is also understood to have been interviewed by Press TV for the programme.

“It appears that the Iranian authorities are using the Iranian media as a tool to portray her as a dangerous criminal who deserves to be executed. Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani must not be executed by any means, and if she continues to be held solely on the grounds of consensual sexual relations, the Iranian authorities must release her,” said Philip Luther.

“At the same time, the international community, which has rightly expressed serious concerns about this case, must also step up the attention it gives to the other ongoing and very serious human rights violations in Iran. As Student Day was celebrated in Iran on Tuesday this week, student activists Milad Assadi, Behareh Hedayat, Majid Tavakkoli, Majid Dorri and Zia Nabavi were all serving lengthy prison

sentences imposed solely for their peaceful activism. They and hundreds of other prisoners of conscience in Iran must be released immediately and unconditionally.”

Iran: Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani: A life in the balance