

PUBLIC

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19 December 2005

UA 321/05 Death Penalty/Fear of Imminent Execution

IRAN Akram (f), aged 30
Behnam (m)

A woman and a man identified only as Akram and Behnam are at imminent risk of execution. Their death sentences, handed down by Branch 71 of the Criminal Court in Tehran, have been upheld by the Supreme Court. At this stage the Head of the Judiciary has the power to order a stay of execution and a review of the case.

Akram was arrested following a fire at her home in Tehran, which took place at midnight on 16 August 2005. The body of her 75-year-old husband, who had been stabbed to death, was found in the house. Akram was not present at the time of the fire. Following her arrest, Akram reportedly admitted that on 12 August she had met Behnam, who had persuaded her to help plot the murder of her husband. Akram claimed that her dissatisfaction with her marriage had led her to agree. She was sentenced to death for adultery. Behnam reportedly admitted his part in the murder and was sentenced to *qisas* (retribution in kind).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Iran is a State Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 6 (2) of which states: "In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes." This does not include crimes such as adultery. Amnesty International opposes the criminalisation of consensual adult sexual relations conducted in private.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization has recorded 83 executions in Iran so far this year, although the true figure may be much higher.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, English, Arabic or your own language:

- urging the authorities to commute the death sentence imposed on Akram and Behnam;
- asking for details of their trial and any appeals, and of their legal representation;
- reminding the authorities of their responsibilities under Article 6(2) of the ICCPR under which the death penalty may only be imposed for the most serious crimes, which do not include crimes such as adultery;
- urging the authorities to review legislation to end the criminalisation of consensual adult sexual relations conducted in private;
- acknowledging that governments have a responsibility to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences such as murder, but stating your unconditional opposition to the death penalty, as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment and violation of the right to life.

APPEALS TO:

(Please note that it may be difficult to get through to fax numbers in Iran. Please keep trying. If you are unable to get through, please send appeals via email or by post).

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic
His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Shoahada Street

Qom

Islamic Republic of Iran

Fax: + 98 251 7 774 2228 (mark "FAO the Office of His Excellency, Ayatollah al Udhma Khamenei")

Email: istiftaa@wilayah.org OR info@leader.ir

Salutation: Your Excellency

Head of the Judiciary

His Excellency Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi

Ministry of Justice, Park-e Shahr,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: irjpr@iranjudiciary.org (mark "Please forward to His Excellency Ayatollah Shahroudi")

Or via the Judiciary's website: www.iranjudiciary.org/feedback_en.html

Fax: + 98 21 8 879 6671 / 6 640 4018 / 6 640 4019

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Minister of the Interior

Hojatoleslam Mustafa Purmohammadi

Ministry of the Interior

Dr Fatemi Avenue

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel

Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami

Imam Khomeini Avenue,

Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

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and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 January 2006.