

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Iran: The 20th anniversary of 1988 "prison massacre"

Twenty years after the then Iranian authorities began a wave of largely secret, summary and mass executions in September 1988, Amnesty International renews its call for those responsible for the "prison massacre" to be held accountable. There should be no impunity for such gross human rights violations, regardless of when they were committed.

The organisation is also calling on the present Iranian government not to prevent relatives of the dead from visiting Khavaran Cemetery in south Tehran, on or about 29 August to mark the anniversary and demand justice for their loved ones. Hundreds of those summarily executed are buried in the cemetery, many of them in unmarked mass graves.

Amnesty International fears that the Iranian authorities may seek to impede or disperse any protests and reminds the Iranian government of its obligations under international law to allow for those who gather peacefully to express their views without fear of arrest.

International human rights law requires that the Iranian authorities carry out thorough and impartial investigations into violations of the right to life such as those which were committed during the "prison massacre", which began in 1988 and continued into the following year, and to identify and bring to justice those responsible. The failure to do so to date and the time that has elapsed since the killings do not in any way reduce this responsibility.

Those responsible for the killings – one of the worst abuses to be committed in Iran – should be prosecuted and tried before a regularly and legally constituted court and with all necessary procedural guarantees, in accordance with international fair trial standards. If found guilty, they should be punished with appropriate penalties which take into account the grave nature of the crimes but which do not include the death penalty or corporal punishments.

Background

Starting in August 1988 and continuing until shortly before the tenth anniversary of the Islamic revolution in February 1989, the Iranian authorities carried out massive wave of executions of political prisoners – the largest since those carried out in the first and second year after the Iranian revolution in 1979. In all between 4,500 and 5,000 prisoners are believed to have been killed, including women.

For further information, see Amnesty International's report, *Iran: Violations of human rights 1987-1990* (AI Index MDE 13/21/90).

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