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Clemency call for Kurdish law student facing execution in Iran

Amnesty International today called on the Iranian authorities to halt the imminent execution of a Kurdish law student scheduled for 26 December, and to commute his death sentence.

The lawyer of Habibollah Latifi, a law student at Azad University in the south western province of Ilam, has been informed by the Iranian authorities that Habibollah Latifi's execution will take place on 26 December at Sanandaj Prison, Kordestan, in western Iran.

"We are urgently appealing to the Iranian authorities to show clemency, halt the imminent execution of Habibollah Latifi, and commute his death sentence," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"While we recognise that governments have a responsibility to bring to justice those who commit crimes, this must be done according to international standards for fair trial. Amnesty International is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty - the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment - in all cases."

Habibollah Latifi was arrested on 23 October 2007 in Sanandaj, the Kordestan provincial capital, north-western Iran. His trial was held behind closed doors and his lawyer was not allowed to be present to defend him. Nor was his family allowed to attend the trial.

He was convicted of moharebeh (enmity against God), by the Sanandaj Revolutionary Court, in connection with his alleged membership of and activities on behalf of the Kurdish Independent Life Party (PJAK), a proscribed armed group.

On 3 July 2008 Habibollah Latifi was sentenced to death, his death sentence was upheld by the Appeal Court in Sanandaj on 18 February 2009.

It is not known whether the Iranian authorities have notified Habibollah Latifi's family of his planned execution.

"It is clear that Habibollah Latifi did not receive a fair trial by international standards, which makes the news of his impending execution all the more abhorrent," said Malcolm Smart