

On a blink

Violation of Human Rights in Iran during a Week 3 August 2008

Executions

Execution of 29 people in Evin prison in Iran

July 29, 2008

Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union condemns in the strongest terms the 29 simultaneous executions which took place in Evin prison, Iran, on Sunday 27 July 2008.

It considers that the Iranian regime's action of staging these executions and making them the focus of media attention is an affront to human dignity.

The European Union remains convinced that capital punishment cannot form the basis of a fair and effective prosecution policy: the dissuasive effect of this penalty has never been proved and any judicial error is irreversible.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the increasing recourse to the death penalty in Iran in recent months. It urges the Iranian authorities to put an end to death sentences and executions, to establish a moratorium with a view to abolishing the death penalty in accordance with the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 2007 and to respect international human rights standards for all Iranians.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

** Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Amnesty International

Iran flies in face of global execution trend

29 July 2008

Amnesty International is appalled by the mass execution of 29 men in Tehran's Evin Prison on 27 July 2008. Their deaths brought the number of executions carried out so far this year to 187. In 2007, more executions were carried out in Iran – 317 - than in any other country except China. Yet the population of Iran is 18 times smaller than China.

Announcing the executions, the Iranian authorities said those hanged had committed serious crimes such as drug smuggling and murder. However, they named only ten of the men executed and gave no other details about any trials in which the 29 were convicted. In other cases, prisoners have been sentenced to death and executed after unfair trials.

Several of the 29 condemned prisoners were interviewed prior to their execution by the state broadcaster, IRIB, which then broadcast extracts on national TV.

The Iranian authorities continue to fly in the face of the global trend when it comes to executions, despite the UN General Assembly resolution of 18 December 2007 which calls on States “to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.” The resolution, which was passed by a large majority of UN member states, also called on governments to inform the UN Secretary General about their observance of international “safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty.”

Amnesty International unconditionally opposes the use of the death penalty in all cases and under any circumstances, since it violates the right to life and by its very nature constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

RIGHTS: Iran Condemned for Ongoing Juvenile Executions

UNITED NATIONS, Jul 29, 2008 (IPS) - A week after the execution of two juvenile offenders in Iran, who were under 18 at the time of their crime, a coalition of human rights organisations is urging the Iranian parliament to move swiftly to ban such executions.

The groups include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, along with six other international and regional human rights organisations -- Iran Human Rights; the Iranian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LDDHI); Penal Reform International; Stop Child Executions; and Viviere -- strongly condemned



Iran has executed 191 people in 2008, including four juveniles.

Credit: ISNA

Iran's continuing execution of juvenile offenders in a joint statement Tuesday.

"Iran is executing several children every year, despite the fact that it is banned under international law," the organisations said. "It is cruel and inhumane to apply the death penalty even to adults, let alone to those convicted for crimes committed before the age of 18."

"The execution of juvenile offenders is subject to an absolute prohibition in international law. This is testimony to the world's repugnance towards this practice," Drewery Dyke, a researcher with Amnesty International in London, told IPS. "It is high time that Iranian judicial officials and other leaders heed the concerns of the many jurists, lawyers and human rights activists in Iran who repeatedly call on the authorities to end the practice of executing juveniles and find a way to having Iran uphold its international legal commitments."

Iranian authorities executed Hassan Mozafari and Rahman Shahidi on Jul. 22, along with an adult offender, Hussein Rahnama, in the southern city of Bushehr. The Bushehr Criminal Court had convicted them of rape, together with another juvenile offender, Mohammad Pezhman, and two other adults, Behrouz Zangeneh and Ali Khorramnejad. Iranian authorities executed Pezhman in May 2007 and the two other adults in October 2007.

"Mozafari and Shahidi's executions are extremely disturbing," Clarisa Bencomo, Middle East and North Africa researcher in the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch, told IPS.

"The fact that the families of murder victims pardoned two other juvenile offenders just days before these latest executions only underlines how arbitrary the Iranian justice system is," she added. "Iranian authorities should stop making excuses and change their laws to ensure that no one is ever executed for a crime committed when under 18."

In 2007, Iran carried out at least eight such executions. The recent hangings of Mozafari and Shahidi bring the number of juvenile executions to four so far in 2008. No other country is known to have executed a juvenile offender in 2008.

"Iran's continued execution of child offenders is very worrisome as it shows a determined will to ignore international law and Iran's obligations," Hadi Ghaemi, coordinator of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, told IPS in a telephone interview. "At the same time, large-scale hangings, such as those of 29 men inside Evin prison on Jul. 27, sends the message of a bloodthirsty judiciary that wants to intimidate the general public with its propensity to rely on extreme violence."

Human rights advocates say that the situation of juvenile offenders facing execution in Iran has reached crisis levels, making Tehran's violation of international standards much greater than any other country. There are at least 132 juvenile offenders known to be on death row in Iran, although the true number could be much higher.

Following intense international protests, two juvenile offenders facing execution for murder, Sa'eed Jazee and Reza Sheshblooki, were spared the death penalty last week after

receiving pardons from the families of their victims.

"It is outrageous that even the names of all of the executed men have not been made public, let alone their crimes and the evidence against them," Ghaemi stated. "Iran is certainly trying to demonstrate that it is in control of the domestic situation as it engages in sensitive negotiations over the nuclear issue. Except that by doing it so violently, they are actually demonstrating their keen sense of insecurity."

On Jul. 8, 24 major international and regional organisations called on the Iranian authorities to immediately stop juvenile executions. In December 2007, the U.N. General Assembly expressed concern about the "execution of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time their offence was committed contrary to the obligations of the Islamic Republic of Iran under article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."

"We've seen far too many cases marked by serious violations of Iranian and international law that have ended in the juvenile offender's execution," said Bencomo.

"There is no justice in a system where lower court judges can repeatedly violate procedure without being properly disciplined and appeals courts rubber stamp bad rulings," she added. "If Iran wants the world to recognise it as a leader it needs act like one, and that means ending all executions of juvenile offenders and committing to serious judicial reforms."

On Jul. 27, Iranian authorities hanged 29 adults inside Evin prison in Tehran. The authorities said the executed men had been convicted of drug smuggling and murder, but provided the names of only 10 of them and did not release the evidence against them or details of their prosecution, according to the joint statement by human rights groups.

"With its practice of executing juvenile offenders, Iran has the unenviable reputation of being the world's last executioner of children," said Dyke. "We find that this is not what Iranians want and in no way builds a stronger human rights culture for tomorrow's Iran."

Ghaemi said that the executions evoke a climate of extreme repression. "Let's remember that this summer is the twentieth anniversary of the mass executions of more than 4,000 political prisoners inside Iranian jails in 1988, just as Iran had agreed to the U.N. resolution ending the Iran-Iraq war," he said. "Increased numbers of executions is a sign of policies from that era to keep any restive elements in check."

Iran leads the world in executing persons for crimes committed under the age of 18. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Iran is obligated to abolish such executions.

Last December, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution calling on states to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, but Iran continues to ignore this global trend towards abolition. Iran has executed 191 people already in 2008, making it likely to maintain its position as carrying out more executions than any country in the world but China, although its population is 18 times smaller than China's.

Human Rights Watch

Iran: End Executions of Juvenile Offenders

29 Adults and Two Juvenile Offenders Hanged

(Geneva, July 29, 2008) – The Iranian judiciary should immediately halt all executions of juvenile offenders and Iran’s parliament should move swiftly to ban such executions, a group of human rights organizations said today.

The groups, which include Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, joined by six other international and regional human rights organizations – named below – strongly condemned Iran’s continuing execution of juvenile offenders in a joint statement.

“Iran is executing several children every year, despite the fact that it is banned under international law,” the organizations said. “It is cruel and inhumane to apply the death penalty even to adults, let alone to those convicted for crimes committed before the age of 18.”

This follows the executions by Iranian authorities on July 22 of Hassan Mozafari and Rahman Shahidi, both juvenile offenders, who were defined as persons under 18 at the time of their crime.

Iranian authorities executed Mozafari and Shahidi along with an adult offender, Hussein Rahnama, in the southern city of Bushehr. Bushehr Criminal Court had convicted them of rape, together with another juvenile offender, Mohammad Pezhman, and two other adults – Behrouz Zangeneh and Ali Khorramnejad. Iranian authorities executed Pezhman in May 2007 and the two other adults in October 2007.

Iran leads the world in executing persons for crimes committed under the age of 18. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Iran is obligated to abolish such executions.

However, in 2007, Iran carried out at least eight such executions. The recent executions of Mozafari and Shahidi bring the number of juvenile executions to four so far in 2008. No other country is known to have executed a juvenile offender in 2008.

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On July 8, 24 major international and regional organizations called on the Iranian authorities immediately to stop juvenile executions. In December 2007, the UN General Assembly expressed concern about the “execution of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time their offence was committed contrary to the obligations of the Islamic Republic of Iran under article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.”

“Iran’s insistence on executing juvenile offenders in the face of international law and international protests portrays an image of a judicial system bent on the application of state violence against juvenile offenders, but unconcerned about justice or international law,” the organizations said.

The organizations calling on Iran to end juvenile executions are: Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran; Iran Human Rights; Iranian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LDDHI); Penal Reform International; Human Rights Association; Stop Child Executions; and Vivere.

On July 27, the Iranian authorities hanged 29 adults inside Evin prison in Tehran. The authorities said the executed men had been convicted of drug smuggling and murder, but provided names for only 10 of them, and did not release the evidence against them or details of their prosecution. The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 62/149 on December 18, 2007, in which it called on states to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty, but Iran continues to fly in the face of this global trend toward abolition. Iran has executed 191 people already in 2008, making it likely to maintain its position as carrying out more executions than any country in the world but China, although its population is 18 times smaller than China’s.

“Sending almost 30 people to their death by hanging in a single day invokes a grotesque image of Iranian judges,” the organizations said. “It is abhorrent that there is no information about those executed and it raises serious concerns about due process and the rule of law.”

Iran: Six people hanged in numerous executions

Tehran, 29 July, 2008 (AKI) - Six people have been executed in cities throughout Iran on Tuesday.

Three people were hanged in the central Iranian city of Qom, two in Isfahan and another one in Zahedan, in southeastern Iran.

In the meantime, 250 people accused of selling drugs were arrested in the capital Tehran in the past 24 hours. Due to the nature of their crimes, they all risk the death penalty.

Last Sunday, 29 people were reportedly executed for committing crimes ranging from homicide, drug trafficking, 'hooliganism', having sexual relations outside of marriage, drunks and thieves.

On 24 July, an Italian parliamentarian and editor of an anti-death penalty report said that

the number of executions in Iran has risen considerably since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took office in 2005.

The organisation's 2008 report released in Rome on Thursday said that the number of executions in Iran had increased by one-third, from 215 in 2006 to at least 355 in 2007.

Iran is second only to China, which carried out over 5,000 executions in 2007.

Seven people were hanged in Khorasan province on Thursday July 24



Hanged: Iranian authorities execute 29 criminals in one day

See online : [Seven people were hanged in Torbat-e-jam on Thursday July 24](#)

Iran Human rights, July 28, 2008: According to daily [Khorasan](#) death sentences of 7 people were carried out on Thursday, July 24, 2008 Torbat-e-Jaam, a town in Khorasan Province. According to Torbat-e-Jaam prosecutor, Seyed Mostafa Haghi, they were all convicted of drug trafficking, They were hanged in the prison yard. None of the men were identified by name.

One man was hanged in Abhar

See online : [one man was hanged in Abhar July 31](#)

Iran Human Rights, July 31, 2008: One man identified as Asadollah was hanged in the prison of Abhar (Close to Zanjan, West of Tehran), reported the state run news agency [ISCA news](#) today July 31. He was convicted of murdering his friend 6 years ago, according to the report.



Ebadi rights group protests Iran mass execution



Drug traffickers are hanged in Iran in January

TEHRAN (AFP), 27 July 2008 — The rights group run by Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi on Monday protested at the hanging by Iran of 29 criminals in a mass execution and said it doubted the convicts had been given a fair trial.

"The Defenders of Human Rights Centre... is against capital punishment and believes it should be removed from the list of punishments in any country," the group said in a statement.

"Unfortunately in recent years some have been hanged en masse in Iran so that Iran ranks the second country in the world in terms of the number of executions," it added.

Iran on Sunday hanged 29 men convicted of offences including drug trafficking, murder and rape in the largest mass execution in years.

The latest hangings brought to at least 155 the number of people executed in Iran this year, according to an AFP count.

"It seems that the hanged men were deprived of a fair judicial procedure," the Defenders of Human Rights Centre said.

"No authority has the right to deprive defendants of their rights during the arrest, trial and tribunal procedures as well as the right to legal representation," it said.

The group, a frequent critic of the government over its treatment of dissidents and rights activists, was formed by five prominent rights lawyers and is headed by Ebadi, who was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 2003.

Amnesty International reported that in 2007 Iran applied the death penalty more often than any other country apart from China, executing 317 people.

As part of an unprecedented crackdown to improve security in society, Iran has stepped up its use of the death penalty -- facing repeated complaints by Western right groups.

The authorities have defended the hangings, saying capital punishment is an effective deterrent that is used only after an exhaustive judicial process.

But Ebadi's group dismissed that justification, saying: "The use of capital punishment will have no effect in cutting crime and will rather increase crime."

Capital offences in the Islamic republic include murder, rape, armed robbery, drug trafficking and adultery.

Earlier this month parliament was reported to be considering a bill which could see the death penalty also being imposed on those deemed to promote corruption, prostitution and apostasy on the Internet.

Iran hopes that executing drug dealers and thugs as well as the adoption of stricter punishments will send a strong warning to criminals.

But Ebadi's human rights advocates also voiced concern over what they described as the "faked" charge of being a "thug," saying such terms do not exist in the penal laws.

A year ago, citing "promotion of social security," the authorities launched an unprecedented crackdown against women and "thugs" whose behaviour was deemed an affront to the country's strict Islamic moral code.



Iran executions increasing in number and frequency

[Mike Rosen-Molina](#) at 12:01 PM ET

Monday, July 28, 2008

[JURIST] Iranian officials on Sunday hanged 29 people in the capital Tehran as part of what the government says was a push to enforce Islamic moral codes. Government sources

and local media presented [conflicting reports](#) [Reuters report] regarding what crimes those executed had committed, but offenses ranging from adultery to murder qualify for the punishment under the country's use of [Sharia](#) [BBC backgrounder] penal rules. Human rights groups suggested that Iran intended the mass execution to challenge [international criticism](#) [JURIST report] of its death penalty policies. Before Sunday, Iran had reportedly hanged 20 people..., and human rights groups said that the country executed over 300 people in 2007. Last week, an additional nine people were [sentenced to death by stoning](#) [BBC report] for adultery and sexual offenses, despite a moratorium on the practice imposed by the head of the Iranian judiciary in 2002. *The Times* has [more](#).

International rights advocates increased pressure on Iran following the stoning execution of a man convicted of adultery in July 2007. Iran quickly announced an [investigation into the judge](#) [JURIST report] who ordered the execution. In January, [Amnesty International](#) [advocacy website] called on Iran to [abolish executions by stoning](#) [press release]. Last April, an Amnesty [report](#) [text; JURIST [report](#)] named Iran as having one of the three highest execution rates in the world, along with China and Pakistan. Most executions in the country are carried out by hanging and are related to traditional capital crimes including murder and rape, although an Iranian airport customs officer was [executed for corruption](#) [JURIST report] in January.

<http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/paperchase/2008/07/iran-executions-increasing-in-number.php>

Juvenile Executions

Mosayeb Sharif Transferred to Solitary Confinement in Preparation for Hanging

By IHRV | August 1, 2008

According to reports from young prisoners held in Hall 12, Section 4 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj, Mosayeb Sharif was transferred to solitary confinement on Monday, 7 Mordad (July 28) in preparation for his execution.

Hall 12, Section 4 is isolated from other halls in the prison and communication here is limited. The hall holds about 100 young prisoners, many of whom committed crimes when they were younger than 18 years of age and have been sentenced to death.

Mr. Sharif was born in 1365 (1986) and has spent a long time in jail.

The names of the prisoners who were hanged on Sunday, 6 Mordad (July 27) are as follows:

- 1- Majid Pour-Bagher: Hall 6, Section 2 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj
- 2- Mohammad Enatyati: Hall 5, Section 2 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj
- 3- Ali Dekami: Section 2 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj
- 4- Abas Kahani: Hall 6, Section 2 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj
- 5- Ali Mazloom: Section 4 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj
- 6- Reza Soltani: Section 6 of Gohardasht prison in Karaj

Reports also indicated that another prisoner, identified as Yaser Kiani, 22 years old, was transferred from Section 4 of Isphehon central jail to solitary confinement in preparation for his execution. He has been imprisoned for three years.

Source: Advocates for human rights and democracy in Iran

Saturday, August 02, 2008

15 year old Kurdish boy executed in Iran : report says

[Source: kurdishaspect.com](http://kurdishaspect.com)

On July 31, 2008 Kurdish Aspect website reported that a 15 year old Kurdish Iranian boy was executed along with 4 adults for helping Kurdish PJAK guerrillas.

"Five people, one of whom was a fifteen-year-old boy, were executed in an open field in Tebriz. Iran disregarded the condition in Islam which bans the execution of people before reaching adulthood when it came to the fifteen-year-old Kurdish boy." the website added.

"There are two main international agreements that ban the execution of children: Children's Rights Agreement [of the UN General Assembly] and the [International Covenant on] Civil and Political Rights. Iran had approved both. Iran's executions of children is expected to be brought up in a report in the UN General Assembly in September." The website continued.

There were no mention of the name of the executed juveniles. There are at least 4 more juveniles known to have been executed so far in 2008. No other country is known to have executed a juvenile offender in 2008.

Join more than 17,000 others worldwide by signing the petition to stop child executions in Iran at www.stopchildexecutions.com

Posted by StopChildExecutions.com at 17:39:46

Freedom of Expression

[Athletes Banned from Holding Interviews with Foreign Media](#)

By IHRV | July 27, 2008

Iranian Athletes participating in the 2008 Olympic Games in China are banned from holding press conferences with foreign media and from exposing any tattoos on their bodies.

Mahmood Saidanlo, head of the sport authority and chairperson of the committee overseeing Iran's participation in the Asian World Cup and Olympic Games, held an interview with Mehr news agency. He spoke about new rules of conduct for Iranian athletes participating in the Beijing Olympic Games.

In parts of the interview it was stated that all athletes, trainers and representative sent to the Olympics Games are forbidden from holding any press conferences with news agencies not verified by the Islamic Republic. All athletes and supporting members are warned against such conferences and about exposing tattoos, which are considered immoral.

Mr. Saidanlo did not elaborate on the consequences of such actions, and simply cited a statement made by Ayatullah Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, that “athletes are representatives of Islamic Republic”. Mr. Saidanlo further added: “Iranian athletes are not strong enough to compete with other athletes representing stronger nations. However, as it related to sportsmanship, our athletes are competent, and in such competitions our athletes can win gold medals”.

Tattooing by athletes prohibited:

In reference to tattoos, Mr. Saidanlo stated: “athletes from some teams that planned on being sent to the 2008 Olympic Games have gotten tattoos on certain parts of their bodies that are quite visible. These people will not be allowed to participate in competitions if their tattoo marks become visible”.

He said: “prohibition of tattoos is not limited to Beijing. Whether the competition is inside or outside Iran, tattoos must remain hidden”.

The warning by the country’s sport authority continued: “if an athlete ignores the warning, especially during the Olympic season when the entire world is focusing their attentions on the games, they will be cited in violation of the order. The athletes with visible tattoos must cover them in any way possible so that they are not visible”.

Interviews forbidden:

Mr. Saidanlo also cited a recent interview between several athletes and Voice of America. He stated: “recently, some players on a team visiting the United States held an interview with an American radio station that was not hidden from the sport authorities, and authorities were not happy about this event. Should a similar situation occur during the Olympic Games in China the reaction will be more severe”.

Mr. Saidanlo further added: “the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution has strictly forbidden interviews with foreign media. Similar laws that are applicable to all official organs of the country are also applicable to athletes. According to this order, our athletes should not under any condition conduct interviews with reporters or representatives of the foreign media”.

Source: Amir Kabir Newsletter

Reporters Without Borders

31 July 2008

Internet censorship stepped up in anticipation of next year’s presidential election

Internet censorship is being stepped up in preparation for next year’s presidential election, Reporters Without Borders said today. Online journalist **Massoud Heydari** was given a three-month jail sentence two days ago for allegedly getting his facts wrong while, two

days before that, the conservative news website [Entekhab \(www.tiknews.info\)](http://www.tiknews.info) was blocked for the fifth time in two years.

“Government censorship of the Iranian media has been increasing for some months and even the conservative media are being targeted,” the press freedom organisation said. “President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is tolerating criticism less and less in the run-up to the 2009 presidential election. We urge the authorities to restore access to Entekhab and to stop harassing outspoken journalists.”

A Tehran court sentenced Heydari on 28 July to three months and one day in prison and a fine of 15 million rials (slightly more than 1,000 euros) for publishing “false information” in several articles on the website of the news agency ILNA which elicited complaints from the ministries of labour and health and Tehran’s Amir Kabir University.

A news agency that support’s Iran’s reformers, ILNA was created by Heydari in 2002. It has given a great deal of coverage to the crackdowns on women’s movements, students and workers. Heydari resigned as its editor when it was banned by the authorities on 3 July 2007.

Entekhab, the news website that was blocked yet again on 26 July, criticises President Ahmadinejad from a conservative position and is known to have strong support in conservative and religious circles.

Its editor, Mostafa Faghihi, was summoned before a court last week and accused of publishing “false information” and “insulting what is sacred.” On 6 July, he published an article quoting Hojatoleslam Ali Akbar Mohtashami, a former interior minister and follower of Ayatollah Khomeini, as saying there was no difference between the “sect” led by Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah (President Ahmadinejad’s spiritual mentor) and the Taliban or “the ignorant ones of Islam’s beginnings.”

Faghihi said: “Whenever an article critical of Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah is published, it is filtered and no one will explain to us why.”

Iran is ranked 166th out of 169 countries in the Reporters Without Borders world press freedom index and is on the organisation’s list of “Internet Enemies.”

Violation of Women’s Rights

Parliament Moves To Approve Polygamy, Over Iranian Women’s Protests

By IHRV | July 28, 2008

An Iranian parliamentary committee has approved in the first reading a controversial draft law that allows men to take a second wife, a bill that women’s rights activists have dubbed the “Antifamily Bill.”

The fierce debate on the bill highlights rising social tensions in Iran, where the hard-line government of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad is increasingly targeting women's rights activists.

The bill, officially known as the Bill to Protect the Family, has been on the table in parliament for years, the subject of seemingly endless revision and debate. The controversial clause that gives men the right to have another spouse without the first wife's approval was actually laid aside by the previous parliament because of strong opposition from women's rights activists.

But this time, it was passed quietly by the Legal and Judicial Committee and only became public news after "Etemad," an independent newspaper, reported it. The government reportedly insisted on adding the marriage clause to the bill.

Reaction has been swift and broad. Not only women's rights activists, but some religious leaders have also criticized the bill, questioning the wisdom of purporting to interpret Islamic law and morals...

For his part, Musa Ghorbani, a member of the Legal and Judicial Committee, has said no one should dare oppose the bill, as it is in accordance with Shari'a law, has government support, and was approved in its first reading by the Majlis, or parliament.

Until now, Iranian law has banned men from taking a second wife without the approval of the first wife. The new bill gives married men the right to marry another woman without any need to solicit the first wife's permission.

Dealing with such issues is only one part of the ongoing struggle of Iranian women's rights activists. In recent years, scores of women activists have been prosecuted and at least three of them, including Hana Abdi and Ronak Safazadeh of the One Million Signatures Campaign, remain in prison.

The two women, from the ethnic-Kurdish city of Sanandaj in western Iran, are accused of having contacts with a militant Kurdish rebel group, allied with Turkey's notorious Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Their lawyers and human rights groups reject that accusation, which carries the threat of heavy sentences. They believe such accusations are leveled at women activists to discourage them from participating in collective, nonviolent action.

A third member of the signature campaign, Mahboobeh Karami, is also being held in prison without any specific charge. Her lawyer says that she was arrested while protesting a police officer's beating of a peaceful demonstrator.

Women Activists Increasingly Targeted

Last week, in an unprecedented case, an attorney became herself the accused. Nasrin Sotudeh, a prominent female lawyer and activist, was summoned to the revolutionary court along with her client, Mansooreh Shojaee. They were accused of "undermining national security through suspicious contacts with the Iranian diaspora." Their alleged crime

involves an attempt to attend an event last March in Dubai marking International Women's Day.

Shrin Ebadi, the human rights lawyer and Nobel Prize winner, has expressed dismay over how Sotudeh — who used to spend hours each day in front of Tehran's infamous Evin prison, waiting to visit clients, haggle with interrogators, and defend clients in court — has suddenly found herself in a revolutionary court, charged with a first-degree offense.

Sotudeh says that she is completely confused about the affair, which she believes is illegal. She says that no reason for her arrest has been given, and that she and her client "are accused of having relations with foreigners and Iranians who live outside the country. Basically, in our set of laws, there is no such crime. I am Ms. Shojaee's attorney and I have professional immunity by law; but the prosecutor of the revolutionary court summoned me as an accused person. This makes the defense of all women's rights activists, including my client, much more difficult."

Human rights organizations in Iran say the women's movement has come under enormous pressure in recent years and that civil campaigns such as the One Million Signatures Campaign, which aims to achieve greater gender equality, have become prime government targets.

To support the defense of women's rights in Iran, some nongovernmental organizations and Iranian studies societies outside the country have nominated the "Iranian Women's Right Movement" collectively to receive the 2008 UN Human Rights Prize, a prestigious award that is given out every five years on the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It will be awarded this year in December, and past winners include Martin Luther King and Amnesty International.

Roya Kashefi of the Society of Iranian Researchers, a nongovernmental activist group based in Paris, says that the women's movement in Iran deserves to receive such a coveted prize. "It is the 60th anniversary of the international human rights charter, 40 years since this award was established and granted for the first time on December 10, 1968," Kashefi notes. "And we are also at the threshold of 30th anniversary of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

Ironically, among the first group of recipients of the UN Human Rights Prize in 1968 was a female Iranian lawyer, Mehranguiz Manutchehrian.

Radio Farda's Parnaz Azima contributed to this report

Discrimination against Minorities



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA
ACTION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. HOPE FOR HUMANITY.

Discrimination against Kurdish Iranians unchecked and on the rise

30 July 2008

Iran's government is failing in its duty to prevent discrimination and human rights abuses against its Kurdish citizens, according to a new Amnesty International report.

The organization fears that the repression of Kurdish Iranians, particularly human rights defenders, is intensifying, according to the report *Iran: Human rights abuses against the Kurdish minority*.

The report also says that women face a double challenge to their human rights, both as members of a marginalised ethnic minority and as women in a predominantly patriarchal society.

Around 12 million Kurds live in Iran making up 15 percent of the population. Expression of Kurdish culture, such as dress and music, is generally respected and the Kurdish language is used in some broadcasts and publications.

However the Kurdish minority continues to suffer deep-rooted discrimination. Kurds in Iran have their social, political and cultural rights repressed along with their economic aspirations.

Parents are banned from registering their babies with certain Kurdish names and religious minorities that are mainly or partially Kurdish are targeted by measures designed to stigmatize and isolate them.

Discriminated against in their access to employment and adequate housing, the economic neglect of Kurdish regions has resulted in an entrenched poverty which has further marginalized Kurds.

Kurdish human rights defenders, including community activists and journalists, face arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and prosecution when they protest against the government's failure to observe international human rights standards.

When they link their human rights work to their Kurdish identity they risk further violations of their rights. Some, including women's rights activists, become prisoners of conscience. Others suffer torture, grossly unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts and the death penalty.

Ethnic Kurds Farzad Kamangar, Ali Heydariyan and Farhad Vakili were sentenced to death in February 2008 after conviction of "moharebeh" (enmity against God), following a grossly flawed process that fell far short of international standards for a fair trial.

This is a charge levelled against those accused of taking up arms against the state, apparently in connection with their alleged membership of the armed group, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which carries out attacks in Turkey. Ali Heydariyan and Farhad Vakili were also sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, apparently for forging documents. Under Iranian law, they must serve their prison sentences before being executed.

In May this year Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand was sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment

by Branch 15 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. The sentence apparently comprises 10 years' imprisonment for "acting against state security by establishing the Human Rights Organization of Kurdistan (HROK)" and one year's imprisonment for "propaganda against the system".

The verdict followed a closed trial session. Amnesty International considers Mohammad Sadiq Kabudvand to be a prisoner of conscience, held solely on account of the peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and association during his work as chair of the HROK and his activities as a journalist. Such rights are expressly recognized in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party.

"Iran's constitution provides for equality of all Iranians before the law. But, as our report shows, this is not the reality for Kurds in Iran," said Malcolm Smart, director of the Middle East and North Africa programme of Amnesty International.

"The Iranian government has not taken sufficient steps to eliminate discrimination, or to end the cycle of violence against women and punish those responsible."

Although women and girls form the backbone of economic activity in the Kurdish areas, strict social codes are used to deny their human rights.

Such codes make it difficult for government officials to investigate inequalities in girls' education, early and forced marriages, and domestic violence against Kurdish girls and women - and the severe consequences of some of these abuses, including "honour killings" and suicide.

"Kurdish women are victims of violence on a daily basis and face discrimination from state officials, groups or individuals, including family members." Malcolm Smart said.

Prisoners of Conscience

Detention of Abed Tavoncheh and Continuation of Pressure on Leftist Students

By IHRV | July 31, 2008

According to reports, Mr. Abad Tavancheh, a member of the Democratic and Equal Rights student organization, was sent to Arak prison after confirmation of his sentence.

Mr. Tavoncheh, a student, web log publisher and managing editor of the student newsletter "Osyan", is among more than twenty leftist students associated with students supporting democracy and equality who were detained last year and have already spent a number of months in jail.

Ramezon Haji Mash-hadi, Mr. Tavancheh's lawyer, stated in an interview with Radio Farda: "Mr. Tavancheh was sentenced to eight months imprisonment, and his sentencing was communicated via telephone contact and without written confirmation. I protested this action and called it illegal, and told him [Mr. Tavancheh] that until he receives an official warrant he should refuse to comply with the verbal order. However, since the individual

who had provided his bail bond was under increasing pressure and threats, Mr. Tavancheh decided to submit to the verbal order and report to Arak prison officials”.

During Mr. Tavancheh’s court session he was not given the opportunity to appear before the court and state his last defense. Such an opportunity was denied to his lawyer as well. Mr. Haji Mash-hadi, in describing the charges against his client, further added: “the charges consisted of activities against national security, participation in demonstrations and publishing communist ideas”.

Mr. Haji Mash-hadi believes in the innocence of his client and claimed that his client has committed no wrongdoing.

Mr. Haji Mash-hadi has protested the detention order and has sent a petition to the office of Ayatullah Shahroodi, head of judicial branch, in which he draws the justice’s attention to violation of Article 168 of the constitution (relating to the method used in issuing the detention order), whereby according to this violation, Mr. Tavancheh should be released.

Source: Radio Farda

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
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Iran slaps security charges on physician brothers

The Associated Press

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TEHRAN,Iran: Iran's semiofficial ISNA news agency says that two brothers — physicians known for their work on AIDS — have been charged with violating national security.

The report Saturday quotes deputy Tehran prosecutor Hassan Haddad as saying the two used conferences on AIDS to "recruit individuals" to topple Iran's government.

Haddad did not name the suspects, but accused them of plotting a "velvet revolution" in Iran and said Washington supported the brothers.

ISNA is not an official agency, but authorities sometimes use it to leak sensitive information.

The New-York-based Human Rights Watch in July said two brothers, Arash and Kamyar Alaei, who are known internationally for AIDS research, were arrested in late June in Iran.