



For Immediate Release

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Rights groups condemn recent execution of Kurdish prisoners and call for an immediate moratorium on all executions in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iranian authorities must immediately put a halt to the execution of Kurdish political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, 22 human rights organizations stated. These organizations also urged for an immediate moratorium on the death penalty and a right to due process and fair and public retrials for all prisoners sentenced to death.

Since the beginning of August 2016 until today, Iranian authorities summarily executed at least twenty-four Kurdish political prisoners.

On Tuesday August 9, 2016, at dawn, five Kurdish prisoners were hanged on narcotic charges in Urmia Central Prison in Iran, official sources and Iran Human Rights (IHR).¹ One man, Mohammad Abdollahi, is also believed to have been executed. Abdollahi was charged with the capital offense *moharebeh* (enmity against God) for his alleged membership in a Kurdish political party. Abdollahi insisted that he had simply obtained a membership card from the group.

These Urmia executions followed the August 2, 2016 execution of twenty Kurdish political prisoners in Rajai Shahr Prison in Karaj, which was confirmed by Iranian authorities.² According to multiple human rights organizations, these men were part of a larger group of thirty-three Kurdish and Sunni prisoners subjected to a pattern of severe human rights abuses and procedural violations. Many of these men were convicted of *moharebeh* based on confessions allegedly obtained by means of torture. Many were held for months, some for more than two years, in solitary confinement, and convicted in hasty unfair trials in which they were denied the right to proper defense and judicial safeguards.

Politically-motivated executions are the gravest violation of the right to freedom of expression, and foster a climate of fear in which individuals and group self-censor, further limiting freedom of expression in the country.

According to a report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country had the highest rate of executions per capita in the world in 2015.³ The executions have not stopped in 2016. According to the database Iran Prison Atlas, 915 political prisoners and prisoners of conscience are in detention as of August 2016 – 390 of whom are Kurds.⁴ The vast majority of prisoners sentenced to *moharebeh* are Kurds. Meanwhile, nearly all executions in the ethnic regions of Iran are carried out secretly or not announced

¹ Iran Human Rights (IHR), August 9, 2016 <<http://iranhr.net/en/articles/2609/>>

² Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, the Attorney General of Iran, has confirmed the execution of 20 Sunni prisoners at Karaj's Rajai Shahr Prison on Tuesday August 2, 2016.

³ Shaheed, Ahmed, Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, United Nations General Assembly, October 2015: <<http://shaheedoniran.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SR-Report-Iran-Oct2015.pdf>>

⁴ Iran Prison Atlas at United4Iran: <<https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/>>

by official Iranian media.⁵ Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, thousands of prisoners have been reportedly executed for drug-related offenses,⁶ a significant number of whom include ethnic minorities.⁷

We call for the following immediate actions:

- ✓ We urge the Islamic Republic of Iran to impose an immediate a moratorium on the death penalty.
- ✓ We urge the members of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to pressure Iran to facilitate a fact-finding mission by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the U.N. Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to investigate the alarming use of the death penalty, including against Kurds and other minority groups. One focus of the investigation should be the extent to which executions are being carried out as a means to silence political dissent and free association in the country.
- ✓ We urge the European Union (E.U.) to call on Iran to impose a moratorium on the death penalty in light of its upcoming human rights dialogue with the E.U. The E.U. should insist that as a sign of good will Iranian authorities should cease all executions at minimum for the duration of the dialogue. We also urge the E.U. to insist on the right to fair trials in all cases.

Sincerely,

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⁵ Iran Human Rights' (IHR) Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran (2015), March 2016:
< http://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2014-GB-120314-BD.pdf> and < <http://iranhr.net/en/print/5/2467/>>

⁶ According to a Danish anthropologist Dr. Christensen Janne Bjerre, a, between 1979 and 2011 approximately 10,000 people were executed for drug-related offenses in Iran. Further, in the last 5 years, an estimated 3800 prisoners were executed for drugs according Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran. For more context, refer to:

- Aliassi, Taimoor, *Drug Addition as a Human Rights Issue in Iran: Advoacy and Mobalization of NGOs and Media in Kurdistan of Iran*, Université de Genève, June 2013: <

http://www.cerahgeneve.ch/files/9213/9506/6893/Cerah_Dissertation_Taimoor_Aliassi_2013.pdf>

- Christensen, Janne Bjerre. 2011. *Drugs, Deviancy and Democracy in Iran: The Interaction of State and Civil Society*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, p. 123-124

- Iran Human Rights: <<http://iranrights.org/newsletter/issue/74>>

⁷ Hhinnomaz, Ota ; Sheeran, Scott ; & Bevilacqua, Catherine, *The Death Penalty for Drug Crimes in Iran : Analysis of Iran's International Human rights Obligations*, Human Rights in Iran Unit of University of Essex, March 2014 :

< <https://www.essex.ac.uk/hri/documents/research-paper-iran-death-penalty-drug-crimes.pdf>>

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