

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Iran: Chilling execution spree with escalating use of death penalty against persecuted ethnic minorities**

The Iranian authorities have executed at least one Ahwazi Arab, 14 Kurds and 13 Baluchis following grossly unfair trials, and sentenced at least a dozen others to death since the start of the year, marking a chilling escalation in the use of the death penalty as a tool of repression against ethnic minorities, Amnesty International and Abdorrahman Boroumand Center said today.

The authorities executed at least 94 people in January and February alone, amid horrific sexual violence and other torture allegations, in a notable rise in executions compared to the same time last year, according to research by the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center and Amnesty International.

“The Iranian authorities are carrying out executions on a frightening scale. Their actions amount to an assault on the right to life and a shameless attempt not only to further oppress ethnic minorities but to spread fear that dissent will be met with brute force, either in the streets or in the gallows,” said Roya Boroumand, Executive Director of Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, an Iranian human rights organization.

#### **Executions following unfair trials and torture**

In late February, Iranian officials executed an Ahwazi Arab man and a Kurdish man in secret following grossly unfair trials. The authorities have also sentenced to death at least another six Ahwazi Arabs and six Baluchis in recent weeks, some of whom were convicted in relation to protests that have engulfed Iran since September 2022.

On 20 February, Hassan Abyat, an Ahwazi Arab man, was executed in Sepidar prison in Khuzestan province, while Arash (Sarkawt) Ahmadi, a Kurdish man, was executed on 22 February in Dizel Abad prison in Kermanshah province. Informed sources told Amnesty International that, following their arrests, interrogators subjected both men to torture and other ill-treatment, forcing them to “confess”. Their forced “confessions” were broadcast on state media in violation of the right to presumption of innocence and in an attempt by the authorities to vilify them and justify their executions. They were also denied access to legal representation and were executed in secret, with no final visit or notice given to their families.

Hassan Abyat was sentenced to death twice — once by a Revolutionary Court for “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) and once by a Criminal Court for murder (*ghesas*) — in relation to the death of an agent from the paramilitary Basij force in 2011 and alleged membership of an “opposition group”. Hassan Abyat had denied any involvement in the agent’s death. After subjecting him to enforced disappearance, interrogators tied Hassan Abyat to a special bed made for torture, beat him with cables and administered electric shocks to his testicles, according to a witness who also told Amnesty International that scars remained on Hassan Abyat’s body from the torture. The court convicted him without investigating his torture allegations.

Arash (Sarkawt) Ahmadi, who was arrested in January 2021, was sentenced to death for “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) in connection with his previous membership in a banned Iranian-Kurdish opposition group and the death of a member of the security forces. According to Kurdish human rights activists, Revolutionary Guards interrogators forced him to give “confessions” under torture and other ill-treatment.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Under international law, the imposition of the death penalty following an unfair trial constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of the right to life.

### **Ahwazi Arab and Baluchi men sentenced to death**

In recent weeks, at least 12 individuals from the Ahwazi Arab and Baluchi ethnic minorities have been sentenced to death following grossly unfair trials.

On 14 February, six Ahwazi Arab men — Ali Mojadam, Moein Khanfari, Mohammad Reza Moghadam, Seyed Salem Mousavi, Seyed Adnan Mousavi, and Habib Deris — were informed that they had been sentenced to death following a group trial before a Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz on the charge of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) for alleged “membership in illegal groups”, in a case dating back to 2017. According to Ahwazi Arab human rights activists, their torture-tainted “confessions” were used to convict them.

Between December 2022 and January 2023, at least six young men from the Baluchi minority were sentenced to death in separate trials in relation to protests that took place in Sistan and Baluchestan province in September 2022. Shoeib Mirbaluchzehi Rigi, Kambiz Khorout, Ebrahim Narouie, Mansour Hout, Nezamoddin Hout, and Mansour Dahmaredeh, who has a physical disability, were sentenced to death on charges of “spreading corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*)

and/or “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) for arson and stone-throwing. International law prohibits the use of the death penalty for offences that do not meet the threshold of “most serious crimes” involving intentional killing.

According to sources with knowledge of the matter, interrogators subjected the men to torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence, to force them to make “confessions”. Interrogators stuck needles into Ebrahim Narouie’s genitals and beat Mansour Dahmardeh so severely that they broke his teeth and nose, informed sources told Amnesty international.

Of the 28 members of minorities executed in 2023, 19 were convicted of drug-related offences, seven of murder, and two of overly broad and vaguely worded charges of “spreading corruption on earth” (*efsad-e fel arz*) and/or “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) that do not meet the principle of legality.

“It is harrowing that executions routinely occur amid the systematic use of torture-tainted ‘confessions’ to convict defendants in grossly unfair trials. The world must act now to pressure the Iranian authorities to establish an official moratorium on executions, quash unfair convictions and death sentences, and drop all charges related to the peaceful participation in protests,” said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“We also urge all states to exercise universal jurisdiction over all Iranian officials reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law and other grave violations of human rights.”

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