

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Iran: Iranian officials must be held accountable for amputating the fingers of two men**

Iranian authorities used a guillotine machine to amputate the fingers of a man convicted of theft on 27 July 2022, Amnesty International can confirm. Pouya Torabi, who is in his late thirties, was transferred on an emergency basis to a hospital immediately after his fingers were cut off in the presence of several officials and a doctor at Tehran's Evin prison.

Less than two months ago, on 31 May, Iranian authorities also amputated the fingers of Sayed Barat Hosseini, without giving him anaesthetic. He has since been imprisoned in isolation in Evin prison and denied adequate mental and physical health care for infections and trauma suffered after the amputation.

"These amputations are particularly harrowing displays of the Iranian authorities' contempt for human rights and dignity. Amputation is judicially-sanctioned torture and, therefore, a crime under international law, and all those who were involved in ordering or implementing these corporal punishments should be prosecuted in fair trials," said Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"At least eight other prisoners in Iran are currently at risk of having their fingers amputated. With impunity rife in Iran, more and more people will be subjected to this unspeakably cruel punishment unless the international community takes action. We call on all member states of the UN to forcefully condemn and do everything in their power to pressure the Iranian authorities to immediately abolish corporal punishments. We further urge all states to exercise universal jurisdiction to criminally investigate and prosecute Iranian officials suspected of criminal responsibility for such crimes under international law."

Pouya Torabi and Sayed Barat Hosseini were sentenced in separate cases to amputation about three years ago after criminal courts in Semnan and Kermanshah, respectively, convicted them of theft. According to an informed source interviewed by Amnesty International, both amputation sentences were carried out at a clinic inside Evin prison in the presence of multiple officials, including the prosecutor of Tehran, the associate prosecutor (*dadyar*) of Evin prison, the judge overseeing the implementation of sentences in Evin prison, the head of Evin prison and the chief doctor at the prison medical clinic.

The same source told Amnesty International that before amputating Sayed Barat Hosseini's fingers, authorities told him he could pay to "freeze" the fingers and then have them surgically reattached. Sayed Barat Hosseini did not have the money to pay for this.

After having his fingers cut off, Sayed Barat Hosseini immediately lost consciousness due to blood loss and severe pain and was transferred to a hospital outside prison. He was returned to prison three days later, before he had recovered from his ordeal, and his wounds became infected. After weeks of being denied adequate treatment, a further trip to hospital followed in mid-July, but he was returned to jail the same day. He has since been held in isolation in Evin prison without contact with the outside world, in an attempt to prevent news of his punishment and current ill health emerging.

Both Sayed Barat Hosseini and Pouya Torabi were transferred to Evin from provincial prisons for the implementation of their amputation sentences. In April, a special guillotine machine was installed in Evin to centralize the implementation of amputation sentences issued across the country.

The victims of judicial amputations in Iran are overwhelmingly from impoverished backgrounds and lack legal representation of their choosing. It is extremely difficult for victims and their families to alert human rights organizations and media of looming amputations due to threats of reprisal from Iranian authorities, who enforce silence and secrecy around the imposition and implementation of amputation sentences.

Amnesty International renews its calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately abolish, in law and in practice, all forms of corporal punishment. They must halt all planned amputations, and grant Pouya Torabi, Sayed Barat Hosseini and all other victims of judicial amputation access to effective remedies and reparation for harm suffered, including restitution, compensation and rehabilitation.

### **Background**

In June 2022, Amnesty International warned that the Iranian authorities were preparing to amputate the fingers of eight other men, including Hadi Rostami, Mehdi Sharfian and Mehdi Shahivand. According to the Abdorrahman Boroumand Centre, since January 2000, the Iranian authorities have amputated the fingers of at least 131 men.

Cruel and inhuman corporal punishments constitute torture, which is prohibited under Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a state party. Despite this, Iran's Islamic Penal Code provides for various corporal punishments amounting to torture, including amputation flogging, blinding, crucifixion and stoning.

The law states that for certain types of theft, those convicted shall "have four fingers on their right hands completely cut off so that only the palm of their hands and their thumbs are left".

Iranian law requires that a physician be present during the implementation of corporal punishments, in direct violation of ethical guidelines and international standards which expressly prohibit health providers' involvement in torture.

The Iranian authorities have consistently defended amputation as the best way to deter theft, and have expressed regret that it cannot be practiced in public because of international condemnation.

**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact: [press@amnesty.org](mailto:press@amnesty.org).**