



UN Special Rapporteurs condemn ongoing executions in Iran

GENEVA (28 June 2012) – Three United Nations Special Rapporteurs* on Iran, summary executions and torture condemned the recent execution of four members of the Ahwazi Arab minority in Ahwaz’s Karoun Prison in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following a reportedly unfair trial, they were sentenced to death and executed on or around 19 June 2012.

“Given the lack of transparency in court proceedings, major concerns remain about due process and fairness of trials in cases involving the death penalty in Iran,” said the independent human rights experts, recalling the execution of Abdul Rahman Heidarian, Abbas Heidarian, Taha Heidarian and Ali Sharif. The four men, three of whom are brothers, were reportedly arrested in April 2011 during a protest in Khuzestan and convicted of Moharebeh (enmity against God) and Fasad-fil Arz (corruption on earth).

“Under international law, the death penalty is the most extreme form of punishment, which, if it is used at all, should be imposed only for the most serious crimes,” they said. “Defendants in death penalty cases should also receive fair trial guarantees stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Iran in 1975.”

“Any death sentence undertaken in contravention of those international obligations is tantamount to an arbitrary execution,” the three UN Special Rapporteurs stressed.

The rights experts noted with concern the high numbers of executions carried out in public, despite a circular issued in January 2008 by the Iranian Chief Justice that banned public executions. At least 25 executions have been carried out in public this year.

“Executions in public add to the already cruel, inhuman and degrading nature of the death penalty and can only have a dehumanizing effect on the victim and a brutalizing effect on those who witness the execution,” the independent experts underscored.

The Special Rapporteurs regretted that the authorities continue to apply the death penalty with alarming frequency, despite numerous calls to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to establish a moratorium on executions. At least 140 executions are known to have been carried out since the beginning of 2012, with some sources indicating the figure to be as high as 220. The majority of these are for drug-related offences, which the experts do not believe constitute the “most serious crimes” as required by international law.

The UN independent experts urged the Iranian authorities “to halt immediately the imposition of the death penalty for crimes which do not constitute the most serious crimes, as well as ensure stringent respect for fair trial guarantees.”

(*) The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ahmed Shaheed; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns; and the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez.

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