

URGENT CALL FOR ACTION

Alarming Wave of Executions in Iran Calls for Urgent Global Reaction

JOINT STATEMENT

JUNE 6, 2023



We, the undersigned, are deeply alarmed and appalled by the chilling surge in executions by the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past few months, including the recent wave of executions targeting protesters. These executions are deliberately designed to spread fear among the Iranian population and quash any form of dissent following the unprecedented nationwide protest movement that began eight months ago. Unless the international community takes robust action now, these executions will continue.

On May 19th, 2023, Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Saeed Yaghoubi were executed at Isfahan Central Prison under the hazily-defined security charge of “enmity against God” for alleged acts related to the protests that began in Iran in September 2022. They were sentenced to death after enduring grossly unfair trials, with judges relying on confessions obtained through torture to secure their convictions. The harrowing details of Kazemi, Mirhashemi, and Yaghoubi’s torture and subsequent executions serve as a stark reminder of the Iranian authorities’ unwavering determination to silence dissent at any cost.

This distressing development adds to an ever-increasing list of death sentences and executions documented for the past few months. Since January 1st, 2023, hundreds of persons have been executed, in numbers reaching at least 290 to more than 310 depending on sources, an increase of over 75% in comparison to the same period last

year. Ethnic minorities, mostly Baluch and Kurds, are flagrantly over-represented among those executed. As of today, a majority of 2023's executions have been conducted based on alleged offenses that do not qualify as most serious crimes under human rights law, including drug-related offenses, therefore in clear violation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's binding international obligations. These death sentences were handed down by Revolutionary Courts and regular courts known for disregarding procedural safeguards and the rights of the defense, to the point of "render[ing] most if not all executions in the State an arbitrary deprivation of life"¹ according to the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran. While not explicitly linked to the protests, human rights monitors have documented for the past decade systematic surges in this type of executions following protests in Iran.

Despite wide condemnation in February 2023 from over 50 states from different regions warning the Islamic Republic of Iran against the instrumentalization of the death penalty "to punish individuals participating in protests and to strike fear into the population with the aim of chilling dissent," Iranian authorities have shown little regard for their international obligations. They persistently dismiss, if not openly defy, their binding commitments to human rights and fundamental freedoms, even in the face of repeated calls from UN human rights experts and civil society organizations.

These executions lay bare the Iranian authorities' prioritization of preserving power over upholding their international legal obligations. There is no doubt the Government will continue its ruthless spree of executions unless States, the United Nations, and the international community dramatically and collectively increase the political costs associated with these acts.

The international community's response to this distressing situation has been insufficient. The lack of a strong and meaningful reaction only emboldens the Iranian authorities to use the death penalty as a weapon to suppress dissent and maintain their grip on power. The time for silence, discreet diplomacy, and half-hearted statements has long passed. It is imperative that the international community steps up and responds resolutely, urgently, and unequivocally.

¹ A/76/160, para. 2

Therefore, we call upon Member States and the United Nations to:

1. Urgently, publicly and unequivocally condemn the recent executions in Iran and those that are likely to follow. We urge States and the United Nations to go beyond mere restatements of their traditional opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances and explicitly acknowledge the arbitrary nature of these executions as well as the pressing need to hold accountable those responsible for these arbitrary deprivations of life.
2. Invoke diplomatic channels, both through Embassies for countries with a presence in Iran and through countries' engagement with Iranian Permanent Missions in Geneva and New York. We call on States to inquire about and express grave concern regarding imminent executions that have been announced by human rights monitors, with a view to preventing these executions.
3. Consider implementing targeted measures and restrictions against individuals and entities involved in these arbitrary deprivations of life, with a view to holding them accountable for their actions.
4. Support all endeavors for accountability for those involved in these arbitrary deprivations of life, including the investigations of the International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran ("FFMI") and possible domestic investigations under universal jurisdiction,
5. Make sure that UNODC and other UN agencies in Iran do not undertake activities in the country that contribute to, support, or enable law-enforcement operations resulting in numerous executions, in flagrant violation of international human rights law,
6. Request Iranian authorities to be transparent, share execution data and provide all necessary information demonstrating that legal proceedings resulting in the executions of protesters comply with international human rights law
7. Request access of Embassy or UN observers to trials in death penalty cases
8. Utilize all other available avenues within the United Nations, including the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, to highlight grave concerns about the use of the death penalty in Iran and mobilize international pressure for change.

The recent executions in Iran demand an urgent and united response from the international community. We cannot stand idly by while scores of people are being executed, death row inmates and their families (who may themselves be persecuted for advocating on behalf of their loved ones) are waiting in terror, human rights are trampled upon, and justice is denied. The time for action is now.

SIGNATORIES

Abdorrahman Boroumand Center

All Human Rights for All in Iran

ARTICLE 19

Association for the Human Rights of the Azerbaijani People in Iran (AHRAZ)

Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran-Geneva

Baloch Activists Campaign

Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM)

Impact Iran

Iran Human Rights

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