



## COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF REFERENDUM IN IRAN

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# Human Rights in Iran – MAY 2005

## **Amnesty International censures Iran rights abuses**

*Amnesty International Annual Report, May 25* – The London-based international human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, in its 2005 annual report, released today, strongly criticised Iran's theocratic regime for its continuing gross violation of human rights.

"Scores of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, continued to serve prison sentences imposed following unfair trials in previous years", the report noted. "Scores more were arrested in 2004, many in connection with press articles or publications both in print and on the Internet which were alleged to 'endanger national security' or defame senior officials or religious precepts. Many of the families of those arrested also faced intimidation", the rights groups said.

"The emerging political trend in parliament gave impetus to members of the semi-official Hezbollah, which occasionally attacked gatherings of people they believed supported opposition political movements. It also encouraged the judiciary and its security force to limit public dissent, resulting in arbitrary arrests and the detention of prisoners in secret centres. In the latter half of the year in particular, practices employed by the judiciary – including arbitrary arrest, denial of legal representation and detention in solitary confinement – were responsible for most of the human rights violations reported in the country".

On the current European dialogue with Tehran, the human rights group said, "The ongoing Human Rights Dialogue process between the EU and Iran led to few lasting benefits. In March, the EU stated that it had seen little improvement in human rights and that violations remained widespread".

"The death penalty continued to be handed down for charges such as 'enmity against God' or 'morality crimes' that did not reflect internationally recognizable criminal charges", it said.

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"Torture continued to be routine in many prisons", Amnesty's report added

### **Middle East's biggest Prison for journalists, RSF**

*Reporters Without Borders – Iran 2005 Annual report, May 3* - Press freedom shrank daily during 2004 in Iran, one the world's 10 countries most repressive of the media. Countless threats hang over journalists and they are beaten when thrown in jail. The country has for years been the Middle East's biggest prison for journalists.

Journalists are threatened or summoned to the justice or intelligence ministries, sometimes unofficially. Many buy their freedom by paying enormous bail that often forces their families into debt or to sell their belongings. Even then, they remain the target of prosecution or under threat of suspended jail sentences.

Parliament has been dominated since 20 February 2004 by the hardliners and President Khatami has effectively yielded power to the country's conservative Supreme Guide, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Dangerous topics for the media to raise include relations with the United States, nuclear matters, Islam, religion, morals and dissident mullahs. The presidential elections due in mid-2005, as well as rivalry between reformists and hardliners and also within each camp make the political climate very poisonous. Journalists must walk a difficult tightrope between the shifting political divisions.

## **Death sentences, executions**

### **Young man hanged in Iran for acting against the state**

*Daily Iran (State-run), May 2* - A young man was hanged in public in the northeastern Iranian town of Bojnourd for "acting against the state", according to the daily Iran. Hadi Safdari was accused of creating public disorder and acting against the state.

### **Young man hanged, two sentenced to death**

*Iran Focus (Website), May 2, Tehran* - Iran's authorities have recently stepped up executions and death sentences for political prisoners, despite international condemnation.

On Monday morning a man, only identified as Yaqoub R., was executed in Karoon Prison in the southern Iranian city of Ahwaz, according to the state-run news agency. He was accused of murder.

Separately two other men were sentenced to death by a Tehran court, accused of murder. A 21-year-old man was sentenced to execution while another young man was sentenced to five times execution in public.

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## 5 hanged in Iran cities in one day

*Iran Focus, May. 4, Tehran* – One man was publicly hanged in the southern Iranian city of Ahwaz, while four other prisoners were executed in the Iranian capital today, charged with armed robbery or murder. Reza H. was hanged in public in Ahwaz in the early hours of the day.

The four other men identified as Hatam Gorgi, Ali-Reza Hojabri, Mohammad Faranaki, and Ali-Reza Akbarian were all executed in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison. Fanaki was charged with armed robbery while the other three were accused of murder.

## Man hanged in Iran, convicted of murder



*AFP, May 10, Tehran* - An Iranian man convicted of murder has been hanged in prison in the Caspian Sea town of Noshahr, the Jomhuri Eslami newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Quoted by the paper, a judiciary official in the port city said 23-year-old Majid Alghosi was executed for killing Siavosh Abassian in a family feud some four years ago. No further details were given.

In 2004 at least 159 people, including three minors, were executed in the Islamic republic -- the highest rate in the world after China -- according to human rights watchdog Amnesty International.

## Three convicted murderers publicly hanged in Iran

*Iran Focus, May 12, Tehran* - Three Iranian men were hanged in public yesterday in the southern town of Susangerd, in the Iranian province of Khuzestan, according to the state-run news agency.

The young men were identified as Nasser Ch., Aref S. and Ali S.

A week earlier five men were hanged in the Iranian capital and in the city of Ahwaz, also in Khuzestan.

Reza H. was hanged in public in Ahwaz in the early hours of the day.

The four other men identified as Hatam Gorgi, Ali-Reza Hojabri, Mohammad Faranaki, and Ali-Reza Akbarian were all executed in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison.

Iran has the highest annual rate of executions in proportion to its population.

## Iranian diplomat accused of murder

*Times Online, May 12* - A former Iranian diplomat has been charged in absentia with the murder of an Iranian opposition leader shot dead in Rome 12 years ago.



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Italian prosecutors said that Amir Mansur Assl Bozorgian was responsible for the killing in 1993 of Mohammed Hossein Naghdi, 42, who had joined the exiled National Council of Resistance of Iran in 1981.

Mr. Bozorgian's whereabouts are not known, but Iranian exiles say that he returned to Tehran after the killing and remains an intelligence official.

Mr. Naghdi, before his defection the chargé d'affaires at the Iranian Embassy in Rome, was given Italian police protection on joining the opposition. Carlo Taormina, the lawyer for his widow, Ferminia Moroni, said documents proved that Mr Bozorgian acted on orders from Iran's leadership to eliminate opponents.

### **Iran: Woman sentenced to stoning**

*Etemaad daily (state-run), May 17*– An Iranian woman was sentenced to death by stoning in Tehran, according to the Etemaad daily.

The young woman, only identified by her first name Fatemeh, 25 years old, was given two death sentences, for murder and having an affair. The daily reported that a Tehran court found Fatemeh guilty of strangling to death a 22-year-old neighbour, whom she allegedly also had an affair with. The court also sentenced her husband to prison time for taking part in the murder.

The first death sentence was issued for the murder, while the stoning to death sentence was issued for the alleged affair.



### **Man sentenced to execution**

*Iran Focus, May 18, Tehran* - A man, identified as Hossein Gholi, was sentenced to death by execution in Tehran, for the murder of a friend whom he suspected of having an affair with his wife. Hossein Gholi denied that he had murdered his friend; however the court ruled that he was guilty and sentenced him to execution.



### **Three death sentences**

*Etemaad daily, May 23* – Death sentence to a mother-in-law who in a violent act had killed her husband's son was upheld by the Supreme Court.

A 17-year-old boy who had killed his friend because of flirting with a girl will face death by hanging. The boy named Satar, had stabbed his friend Mohammad to death some time ago.

The Supreme Court approved the death sentence for a young boy who had killed a 70-year-old man with a drinking bottle.



### **Death sentence of four upheld**

*Sharq daily (State-run) May 23* - The death sentence of four accused of murder that was issued by the 71 branch of the Tehran Criminal Court was upheld by the Supreme Court.

### **Man publicly hanged in southern Iran town, another sentenced to death**

*Iran Focus, May 25, Tehran* - A young man was hanged in public in the southern Iranian city of Ahwaz, accused of armed robbery and disturbing the peace.

The original sentence of the man, only identified as Akbar M., had been upheld by the State Supreme Court, according to state-run news agency IRNA.

The state-run daily Javan reported yesterday that another man by the name of Mohammad Reza was sentenced to execution, accused of murdering a 37-year-old man.

### **20-year-old hanged for sexual charges**

*IRNA(State-run news agency), May 31* – Rahmatollah Ghanbarzehi, 20 years and married, who was convicted for sexual charges, was condemned to 50 lashes and execution in public. The sentence, issued by 9<sup>th</sup> branch of Zahedan Court and upheld by the Supreme Court, was carried out.

### **Iran exile group screens video of public hanging**



*AP, Jun 1, London* – An Iranian opposition group screened a gruesome video Wednesday showing two men being hanged before crowds in Iran, saying the executions were punishment for adultery.

With hundreds gathered to watch, nooses hanging from lowered cranes were placed around the men's heads. The arm of each crane was then straightened, killing the men and leaving their bodies dangling.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran said the video footage was shot in August 2004 in the Iranian town of Khoramabad by an opponent of the government. It was smuggled out of the country several days ago, the group said. The footage was screened in central London Wednesday.

"This is only the tip of the iceberg of human rights abuses in Iran," said Hossein Abedini, a member of the council's foreign affairs committee. "The situation has badly deteriorated" in recent years, he said.



## Arrests, Tortures and inhumane punishments

### Iran security forces open fire on residents in Kurdish city

*Iran Focus, May. 3, Tehran* – A young man was injured when Iran's State Security Forces (SSF) opened fire on residents in the Kurdish city of Mahabad (Western Iran) late Saturday evening.

The incident took place in the city centre and Ash-Mam Ahmad district, where officials of the SSF were seen to be pursuing unknown people.

Rahmat Khakpour, a 23-year-old first year Electronics university student, was injured after being shot at as he was returning home.

Khakpour was shot in the right hand side of his neck and was taken to a local hospital, but doctors have not yet been able to remove the bullet from his neck.

The shooting caused panic among the city's population and no official responsibility has been taken by the SSF.

### Judiciary admits human rights violations in Iran

*DPA, May 6, Tehran*- Iran's conservative judiciary has for the first time admitted human rights violations in the country, local media reported on Friday.

Head of the judiciary Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahrudi said late Thursday that rights of political dissidents had in some cases been violated by investigators in Iran's detention centres. He also accused the investigators of violating Islamic and ethical principles to elicit confessions from dissidents.

Iran's administration, especially the judiciary which is regarded as a stronghold of the conservative clergy, has until now rejected criticism from human rights groups, the United Nations and international governments as "interference in the country's internal affairs".

The European Parliament in a report compiled last January accused the Iranian judiciary of human rights violations including execution, stoning, torture and persecution of dissident or liberal media.

Iran has however accused international human rights organizations of lacking an "accurate understanding of Islamic norms", saying human rights criteria cannot be standardised but must be assessed according to the culture and beliefs of the relevant countries.

## Freedom of expression

### United States Commission on International Religious Freedom censures Iran's violations of religious freedoms

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*USCIRF Annual Report, May 2* - The government of Iran engages in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, including prolonged detention, torture, and executions based primarily or entirely upon the religion of the accused. Over the past year, the Iranian government's poor religious freedom record deteriorated, particularly for Baha'is, Evangelical Christians, and Muslim dissidents, all of whom have faced intensified harassment, detention, arrests, and imprisonment. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, significant numbers from all religious minority communities have fled Iran for fear of persecution.

### **Four Iranian web-loggers protest being forced to confess**



*AFP, May 2, Tehran* - Four Iranian web-loggers arrested during a crackdown last year have written to the judiciary head to complain of having been subjected to "physical and moral pressure" that forced them to confess, the official news agency IRNA said Monday.

"During our detention, (we were) subjected to physical and moral pressure and all of our confessions were false and have no legal value," wrote Mahbubeh Abbas-Golizadeh, Fereshteh Ghazi, Massud Ghoreyshi and Hanif Mazruwi. They appealed to the head of the judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmud Hashemi Shahrudi, to intervene because the "confessions of several of those accused were extracted by force." A group of around 20 Internet writers and technicians working for pro-reform websites were arrested in a crackdown that began in September last year on possible charges of "propogating against the regime", "insulting religious values" and "disturbing public order".

### **Imprisoned blogger goes on hunger-strike**

*RSF, May 16* - Reporters Without Borders today called on bloggers throughout the world to post messages in support of Iranian blogger Mojtaba Saminejad, who has been in prison since 12 February and who began a hunger-strike on 14 May.

"The life of this young blogger is in danger as he is being held in a prison where several detainees have died or have been injured in violence between inmates," the press freedom organization said.

According to his family, Mojtaba initially tried to file a complaint about mistreatment but his interrogators replied they were going to put him in a detention centre where he would "regret having complained." He is currently held in Gohar Dashat prison (in a Tehran suburb), which has a reputation for mistreatment of detainees. He shares his cell with non-political prisoners.



Mojtaba's hands and feet were in chains when he appeared in court on 11 May.

Two other bloggers and cyber-journalists have been detained since February. They are Mohamad Reza Nasab Abdolahi and Mojtaba Lotfi.

### **Appeal over slain photojournalist**



*AFP, May 16, Tehran* - A Tehran appeals court handling the case of murdered Iranian-Canadian photographer Zahra Kazemi on Monday wrapped up its first hearing in less than one hour after surfing out reporters and refusing to hear arguments from family lawyers.

The intelligence agent accused of the murder but acquitted in the first trial was absent from the hearing, which may prove to be Iran's last look into a controversial case that has badly damaged relations with Canada.

### **Zahra Kazemi supporters protest in Toronto**

*Canadian Press, May 16, Toronto* - About 60 Iranian-Canadians staged a raucous rally outside a downtown courthouse Monday to protest the Iranian government's handling of the case of slain Canadian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi.

Waving Iranian flags and holding Kazemi's cardboard portrait, the group gathered in front of Toronto's Old City Hall to protest the Iranian government and its perceived role in the death of Kazemi, who died two years ago while in Iranian custody.

For nearly two hours, the protesters chanted, "Democracy, yes, mullahs no," and, "Down with Khathami" as they called for the ouster of Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami.

"We want to raise awareness internationally for the people to know what women in Iran are going through," said Shanaz Fallah, director of the International Coalition of Women Against Fundamentalism.

### **EU 'disappointed' over exclusion of candidates from presidential elections**



*AFP, May 23, Brussels* - The European Union voiced deep disappointment Monday over the decision by Iran's election watchdog to eliminate many pro-reform candidates for June presidential polls.

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, whose country currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, also presses Tehran to abide by its nuclear commitments ahead of crunch talks with European negotiators this week.



The Guardians Council, an unelected watchdog body that vets all candidates for public office, announced on Sunday that just six men out of 1,014 would-be candidates can stand to succeed incumbent reformist President Mohammad Khatami.

"We were very disappointed by the decision of the Guardians Council not to authorize many candidates for the elections, particularly those who were reformists," he said after regular monthly talks with his EU counterparts.

## Other news

### Many university graduates homeless in Iran

*Iran Focus, May 27* - Nearly a thousand homeless people rounded off the streets of Tehran in the past five months had university degrees, according to the head of the social affairs section of the city's Office of the Mayor.

"948 of these people had university degrees or higher credentials", Mohammad-Reza Fardin said today, adding that altogether some 61,975 had been rounded off the streets of Tehran's of which 60,409 were mentally competent.

