



## COMMITTEE IN SUPPORT OF REFERENDUM IN IRAN

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# Human Rights in Iran – December 2004

## U.N. condemns Iran's human rights situation

*The Associated Press, Dec. 20, United Nations* -- The U.N. General Assembly on Monday approved a resolution criticizing Iran for human rights violations, citing new restrictions on freedom of expression and the persecution of political and religious dissenters.

The world body said there is a "worsening situation" regarding freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom of the media, "especially the increased persecution for the peaceful expression of political views, including arbitrary arrest and detention without charge or trial."

It cited "crackdowns by the judiciary and security forces against journalists, parliamentarians, students, clerics and academics; the unjustified closure of newspapers and blocking of Internet sites." It also criticized the disqualification of large numbers of candidates and harassment of opposition activists in the run-up to parliamentary elections in February...

It urged Iran to abide by its human rights obligations and to fully implement the ban on torture, expedite judicial reform, eliminate religious discrimination, end cruel and degrading punishments such as amputation and flogging, eliminate stoning, and institute prison reforms.

The resolution, which was co-sponsored by 34 countries, deplored Iran's execution of children under the age of 18 in violation of international statutes...

## Tehran snubs UN resolution

*Mehr News Agency, Dec. 21* - Assefi said the [UN] resolution issued on the human rights situation in Iran is political and unreal. Assefi stated, "This resolution is undocumented and far-off from the existing realities

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in Iran. It has been compiled based on distorted, unreliable and inaccurate sources and is not credible."

### **Norwegian protest to Iran**

*The Norway Post, Dec. 21* - Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Petersen has condemned the planned execution of the mentally retarded 19 year-old Leila M in Iran. Among other things, the girl has been accused of prostitution.

Norway has sent a formal protest to Iran about the matter. A representative from the Iranian embassy in Oslo was on Monday summoned to the Foreign Office to receive the Norwegian protest. Petersen says the planned execution is totally unacceptable.

### **FM spokesman: Violation of human rights is worrisome in Europe!**

*Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB News), Dec. 26, Tehran --* Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said here Sunday that Iranian officials themselves are seeking promotion of human rights and the country needs no lesson by Europeans in this regard.

Talking to the press at his weekly briefing, Asefi recommended Europeans to think about minorities and refugees in their own countries whose rights are violated if they really have any concern about human rights .

"Today, violation of human rights is seriously worrisome in certain European states and Europeans should think about this issue," he said.

## **Death sentences**

### **Public hanging**

*Iran daily, Dec. 1* - Hossein Hassanvand was hanged in Eslam Abad's Azadegan Park on Wednesday.



### **Boy dies from blow to the head while in custody**

*Iran National Television, Dec. 2* – A young man named Kaveh Ajeq Habibi Nezhad born in 1985 in Sanandaj has died from being flogged. The forensics paper states that the youth died because the back of his skull was broken due to blows with a hard object, which tore the fibers there and resulted in cerebral hemorrhage.



### **Execution in public**

*Kayhan daily, Dec. 5* – A man by the name of Ababakr Damani was publicly executed in the city of Zobal.

### **Teenager to be executed**

*Reuters, Dec. 7, Tehran, Feature* - Instead of celebrating his 18th birthday at home with friends and family this month, Ali Torabi will be wondering if it will be his last year.

Torabi is one of at least 12 juvenile offenders sentenced to death by Iran's hard line courts and held in detention centers until they are deemed old enough to be executed without attracting international criticism, human rights activists say.

Although it is a signatory of U.N. conventions which forbid the execution of young offenders, Iran continues to sentence them to death and carry out the verdict when they reach 18.

"Ali is my only son, my life. I want to see him grow old. He is too young to die," sobbed his father, Mohammad Torabi...

### **Death sentence in Shahryar**

*Khorassan daily, Dec. 7, Tehran* – A man in Shahryar was sentenced to death.

### **Seven more executed in public**

*AFP, Dec. 7* -- Seven drug traffickers have been hanged publicly in a park in the south-eastern Iranian city of Zahedan, the Kayhan evening newspaper reported.

It said the men had been found guilty of involvement in international narcotics trafficking and attacks on security forces.

They were hanged in Zahedan's Laleh Park...

At least 94 people have been executed in Iran this year, according to reports in Iran's main newspaper.

Amnesty International has reported that at least 108 executions took place in 2003 and 113 in 2002.



### **18-year-old sentenced to death**

*Sharq daily, Dec. 12* – An 18-year-old boy named Bahram was sentenced to death by Judge Nurollah Aziz Mohammadi.



### **Man, 52, hanged in public**

*Kayhan daily, Dec. 12* -- A 52-year-old man, by the name of Hossein, was hanged in public in Islamabad, Karaj, on the orders of the clerical regime's judiciary.

### **Man, 26, hanged in Semnan**

*AFP, Dec. 14* -- A 26-year-old Iranian man was hanged in prison in the northern city of Semnan, the daily Jomhuri Eslami reported on Tuesday. Quoting local judiciary officials, the paper indentified the man, who was hanged on Monday, as Qadir Zamaemi-Fard.

### **Man, 28, sentenced to death**

*Hamshahri daily, Dec. 18* – A young man by the name of Reza F. (28) was sentenced to death by the Judge of the 71<sup>st</sup> branch of the Penal Court of Karaj Province.

### **Iran: Rights groups shine spotlight on capital punishment in Iran**

*RadioFreeEurope, Dec. 21, Prague* - "Unfortunately, every year there are some 300 to 400 executions in Iran," said Abdolkarim Lahiji, vice president of the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (IFHRL). "When we look at a number of executions, we have to consider it in proportion with the population of that country. Considering the population of China and the U.S., I have to say that Iran is on top of the list."...

The IFHRL's Lahiji notes that Iran condemns young alleged offenders to death and then executes them when they turn 18.

"According to our figures, 25 teenagers under the age of 18 who have been sentenced to death are awaiting their unfair sentences to be applied," Lahiji said.

### **Imminent execution of a 18-year-olds**

*Iran Focus, Dec. 28, Tehran* – A teenager [only identified as Mohammad T.] who is currently in one of Iran's Centers for Reform and Education (Juvenile Prison) is to be hanged to death within three weeks for a crime allegedly committed when he was fourteen...

The acting judge at the time, cleric Mohammad Sultan Hematyar, sentenced Mohammad to spend time in the Center for Reform and Education until he turned eighteen and then be executed.

Under Iranian law, girls above the age of nine and boys above the age of fifteen are considered to be adults and can be executed for capital offences.



The sentence was later approved by Iran's Supreme Court which called for him to be hanged by the end of the Iranian calendar month. Mohammad now faces imminent execution.

### **Death sentence for boy, 18**

*Hamshahri daily, Dec. 28* – An 18-year-old by the name Mehdi has been sentenced to death by the Supreme Court. His sentence has been upheld.

### **21-year-old to be executed**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 28* – Hamshahri daily has reported the execution of a 21-year-old man by the name of Iman. He is to be executed on Friday.

### **Two hanged in public**

*Iran Focus, Dec. 28, Tehran* - Two young men were hanged in public in the Iranian city of Mashad (northeastern province of Khorrasan) yesterday and on Sunday after authorities accused them of rape. One of the young men identified only by his first name, Mohammad-Reza, was publicly hanged in Hedayat blvd. in the city-center. The second individual only identified as Mostafa was hanged in public yesterday morning in the Doost-Abad region of Mashad in Old Ghoochan street.

## **Arrests, Tortures and inhumane punishments**

### **Student leader arrested**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 6* – The secretary of the Students Committee in Defense of Political Prisoners, Shiva Nazar Ahari, was arrested outside her residence on the national Students Day.

### **Torture used to force detained Internet journalists write "confession letters."**

*AFP, Dec. 6, New York* - Human Rights Watch said Monday that secret squads operating under the Iranian judiciary have used torture to force detained Internet journalists and activists to write self-incriminatory "confession letters."

The New York-based group said it had evidence confirming that secret squads of interrogators -- primarily former intelligence officers purged in the late-1990s by President Mohammed Khatami forced the



detainees to write letters under extreme pressure as a condition for their release on bail.

"The Iranian government shouldn't think for a minute that anyone will believe in the authenticity of these letters. They're fooling no one," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "With stunts like these, Tehran is rapidly losing its already meager credibility on human rights."

### **Women's activist arrested in Iran after being deported from Canada**

*Vancouver Sun, Dec. 10* -- An Iranian woman deported from Vancouver was arrested within minutes of her return to Tehran, but was released after spending many hours in detention.



Haleh Sahba, 30, now faces charges of leaving Iran illegally.

Sahba lived in the Vancouver area for three years after fleeing her home country, where she had been jailed for defending women's rights.

She told Immigration Canada that she feared for her life if she was forced to return to Iran, but was refused refugee status and deported on Tuesday.

Sahba's family has now sent letters to every MLA in the province asking for their support to win her return to Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

### **Killed under torture**

*Fars News Agency, Dec. 12* – Eshrat Shayeq, Majlis deputy from Tabriz, said one of the injured of the Iran-Iraq War has been killed under brutal torture in Karaj Prison. The torture was so severe that his wife was not able to identify him. His son recognized him because of a mark on his ear. She added, "They had cut off his medicine in prison."

### **Amputation of a man's fingers**

*Jomhuri Islami daily, Dec. 16* - A man by the name of K.K. was sentenced to have four fingers of his right hand cut off in public.



## Freedom of expression

### Five web loggers jailed

*Reporters Without Borders, Dec. 1* - Reporters Without Borders has strongly protested against the Iran's relentless efforts to stifle free expression online after the arrest of five web loggers in less than two months, the latest on 28 November 2004.

"The government is now attacking blogs, the last bastion of freedom on a network that is experiencing ever tighter control," said the worldwide press freedom organization. "At the same time, an Iranian delegate is sitting on an UN-created working group on Internet governance. The international community should condemn this masquerade," it added.

### Murdered Canadian photographer's lawyer barred from leaving Iran

*AFP, Dec. 1, Tehran* - A member of the team of Iranian lawyers representing the family of murdered photographer Zahra Kazemi has been barred from leaving the country, local media reported Wednesday.

The student news agency ISNA said Mohammad Seifzadeh... was told he could not leave Iran when he tried to fly out on personal business... Last week the European Union lodged a formal protest with Iranian authorities over the arrest and harassment of journalists, staff of non-governmental organizations and members of religious minorities.

### Tehran rebukes EU for human rights abuses!!

*AFP, Dec. 5, Tehran* - Iran responded to fresh EU criticism of its human rights situation by saying it was "seriously concerned" over what it alleged were ongoing violations in Europe and a wave of anti-Muslim sentiment in the Netherlands.

"We are seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Europe," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters.

### Iran's judiciary arrests three cultural officials

*Reuters, Dec. 9, Tehran* - Iran's judiciary has arrested three cultural officials for organising a festival containing a brief display of dancing by a male and female theatre group, the government-run Iran newspaper reported on Thursday.

One hardline newspaper said the festival in the southern city of Ahvaz contained "obscene and repulsive scenes of lewdness and ethical violations in the guise of art."...

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Festival organiser Alireza Ajang, head of the Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry in southern Khuzestan province, and two of his colleagues were arrested on charges of "encouraging immorality". The three were later released on \$19,500 bail...

The hardline Kayhan newspaper, in an editorial, called for the officials to be sacked.

"The dancing of women in revealing gowns under the light of strong projectors, the mixed dancing of men and women, and other ugly scenes ... were just some of the scandalous incidents of that day," the paper said.

### **Iranian woman journalist freed on bail, hospitalised**

*AFP, Dec. 11, Tehran* - An Iranian woman arrested in a judicial crackdown on reformist journalists was freed on bail but needed hospital treatment due to her detention, her husband told AFP on Saturday.

According to Ahmad Beigloo, journalist Fereshteh Ghazi "was kept in solitary confinement for 38 days and had to be checked into hospital as she was not in a good physical or mental shape".

The woman was arrested over her articles on women's rights published on Internet sites. She was released on bail of 500 million rials (about 57,000 dollars).

## **Women**

### **4,000 girls spend nights on Tehran streets**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 11* - Every night in Tehran, 4,000 girls spend the night on the streets and most of them become victims of violence. The head of Iran's Social Charity Society says, "Official sources have announced this figure and yet the actual number of girls who sleep on the streets is not known." Dr. Mostafa Eqlima said the most important cause of girls running away from home is poverty.

### **Teenage sex slave sentenced to death**

*Daily Telegraph, Dec. 14* -- A 19-year-old Iranian girl with a mental age of eight who was forced into prostitution by her mother has been sentenced to be flogged and executed for 'morality-related' offences, Amnesty International said yesterday.

The human rights pressure group has asked Iran's Supreme Court to stay the execution. The girl, named only as Leyla M, had suffered a "litany of abuse", it said.



"Sold into prostitution at the age of eight, she has experienced horrific sexual violence...

Leyla, who was born in the central Iranian city of Arak, was sold by her family to an Afghan man to become his "temporary wife", aged 12. The man's mother became her new pimp, according to an Iranian newspaper report.

Two years later, Leyla became pregnant and received 100 lashes before being sold on to a 55-year-old man who continued to force her into prostitution.

### **Majlis deputy threatens female reporter**

*Radio Farda, Dec. 15* – Hassan Hossein Tabataba'ii, deputy from Zabol, angrily told a female reporter, "Fix your veil, this is not the Sixth Majlis, else I will punch you in the mouth!"

The deputy from Zabol then approached the reporter, intending to hit her, but Ahmad Nateq Nouri and another reporter held him back.

### **Runaway teenage girl**

*Iran Focus, Dec. 23, Tehran* - A 15-year-old girl who ran away from home because of being forcefully married to a man twice her age was arrested and is currently in a juvenile correctional facility in Tehran.

The girl, who is of Afghan origin, ran away from home after she was sold by her father to another 30-year-old Afghan man for 50 million rials (the equivalent of \$5,000). She, along with her boyfriend, ran away to the town of Damqan, northern Iran.

Her father went to the local police station and filed a missing-persons report and security officials soon discovered that she had escaped to Damqan. The pair were apprehended and put under arrest within a few days. The girl subsequently appeared in court yesterday and defended her actions, saying that it was unjust for her father to be allowed to sell her to a man twice her age with whom she had never had any contact.

The judge ordered that she be kept in the juvenile correctional facility as it was more likely that she would be killed by her husband or father if she were released. He ruled that the older man is the girl's lawful husband and that that could not be changed as the \$5,000 had already been paid.

