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ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN 2023



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Cover photo: The public hanging of Afghan nationals Mohammad Ramez Rashidi and Naeim Hashem Ghotali in Shiraz, on 8 July 2023¹.

Back photo: Families of death row prisoners protesting outside the Judiciary building in Tehran, on 24 May 2023.

This report has been drafted by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) with the support of ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty). Since 2012, Iran Human Rights² and ECPM³ have been working together for the publication, international release and distribution of annual reports on the death penalty in Iran.

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1 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6042/>

2 <http://iranhr.net/en/>

3 <http://www.ecpm.org/en/>

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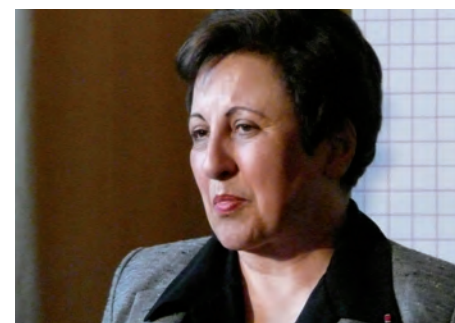
GLOSSARY

Baghy	Armed rebellion against the Islamic ruler
Diya	Blood money
Efsad-fil-arz	Corruption on Earth
Elm-e-qazi	Knowledge of the judge
Ertedad	Apostasy
Estizan	Authorisation required by the Head of Judiciary for <i>qisas</i> executions
Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence
Hadd (pl. hudud)	Fixed punishment for offences mandated by Sharia
Lavat	Sodomy
Moharebeh	Enmity against God
Mosahegheh	Lesbian sex
Qadf	False accusations of sodomy or adultery
Qassameh	Sworn oath
Qisas	Retribution-in-kind
Sabol-nabi	Insulting the prophet
Sharia	Islamic rule
Ta'zir	Punishment for offences at the discretion of the judge
Tafkhiz	Intercrural sex
Zena	Adultery

FOREWORD

Since 2018, five leading personalities, lawyers and human rights defenders have prefaced the Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran. As their timeless and essential words are as relevant today as they were when written, we are resharing them in memory of Robert Badinter, the French Justice Minister who enacted the abolition of the death penalty in France in 1981 who sadly passed away on 9 February 2024.

2018, SHIRIN EBADI (Lawyer and 2003 Nobel Peace Prize laureate):



“Many individuals subjected to this punishment (the death penalty) in Iran come from ethnic groups and, fortunately, legal experts, defenders of human rights and civil society organisations deal with this punishment with increasing importance. Several organisations protest by publishing reports

which aim to draw international attention to this issue. What is in front of you is one of the most authoritative reports in this regard and scrutinising it will shed light on different aspects of this punishment.”⁴

2019, ROBERT BADINTER (The late former French Minister of Justice, Honorary Chair of ECPM):



“Iran and its people, heirs to a long and glorious history, deserve better than this bloody record. The inevitable and imminent day when the death penalty will disappear from Iran will be a day of jubilation, a victory for life over death, for all abolitionists – and first of all those in Iran.”⁵

⁴ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran* - 2018, p. 5, https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/08/Rapport-iran-2018-gb_DEF_BD.pdf

⁵ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran* - 2019, p. 5, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/08/Rapport-iran-2019-gb-070420-WEB.pdf>

2020, NARGES MOHAMMADI (Human rights defender and 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, currently jailed in Evin Prison, Iran):



“One of the most serious causes I have fought for in my life has been the abolition of the death penalty in Iran. It is unacceptable to end a life, no matter what the justification may be. I am not opposed to punishing criminals; criminals will continue to be punished until the root causes of their

crimes are eradicated, but crimes persist and this is neither a desirable, nor an acceptable outcome for society. It is difficult for me to see the children left behind after the execution of their mother and/or father. Not only do those children lose their parents, but they cannot even talk about them due to societal shame. They lose everything, and it remains to be seen what horrific fate awaits them.”⁶

2021, MOHAMMAD RASOULOF (Award-winning Iranian filmmaker and abolitionist):



“Employees at the relevant agencies, as well as military forces, judicial officers, prosecutors, judges and many others who are directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the death penalty, are not sufficiently aware of the important role they play in this system and see their role as insignificant

and ineffective. They need to learn to accept personal responsibility as part of this chain. It is essential for this group to be directly or indirectly educated by abolitionists so that they may have the courage to engage in overt or covert disobedient action.”⁷

⁶ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran - 2020*, p. 7, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/10/Rapport-iran-2021-gb-290321-HD.pdf>
⁷ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran - 2021*, p. 7, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/08/Rapport-iran-2022-gb-260422-MD3.pdf>

2022, ATENA DAEMI (Human Rights Defender and Former Political Prisoner):



“And yet the fight to abolish the death penalty continues, as fortunately, a large part of society has realised the inhumanity of this punishment and its inefficacy in deterring criminal offences. The government’s efforts to present the death penalty as religiously and legally legitimate have failed. The public

demands the complete abolition of the death penalty. We activists of the right to life will continue this struggle until that has been achieved.”⁸

⁸ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran - 2022*, p. 7, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2023/04/Rapport-iran-2023-gb-280623-bdcouv.pdf>

PREFACE

The 16th annual report on the death penalty by Iran Human Rights and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty) provides an assessment and analysis of the 2023 death penalty trends in 2023 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It sets out the number of executions in 2023, the trend compared to previous years, the legislative framework and procedures, charges, geographic distribution and a monthly breakdown of executions. Lists of the female and juvenile offenders executed in 2023 are also included in the tables.

The report also looks into the abolitionist movement within Iran, including the forgiveness movement and its contribution to reducing the use of the death penalty, and provides analysis on how the international community can contribute to limiting the scope of the death penalty in Iran.

The 2023 report is the result of hard work from Iran Human Rights members and supporters who took part in reporting, documenting, collecting, analysing and writing of its contents. We are especially grateful to Iran Human Rights sources inside Iran who incur a significant risk by reporting on unannounced and secret executions in prisons of 30 different provinces. Due to the very difficult context, the lack of transparency and the obvious risks and limitations that human rights defenders face in the Islamic Republic of Iran, this report does not give a complete picture of the use of the death penalty in Iran by any means. There are 46 reported executions which are not included in this report due to a lack of sufficient details or an inability to confirm cases through two different sources. However, it aims to provide the most complete and realistic figures possible in the present circumstances.⁹ The current report does not include suspicious deaths in custody, death row prisoners who died in prison before the executions or those killed under torture.

ECPM supports the elaboration, editing process, publishing and distribution of this report in the framework of its international advocacy work against the death penalty. The problems of transparency on the data and information about the death penalty in Iran should be overcome by a strong strategy of distribution and dissemination. The overall objectives of this report for Iran Human Rights and ECPM are to call attention to and publicise the facts, in order to change national and international views on the situation of the death penalty in Iran, first executioner country in the world.¹⁰

⁹ See below, section “Sources”.

¹⁰ Per capita.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT AT A GLANCE

- At least 834 people were executed in 2023, a 43% increase compared to 582 in 2022.
- 125 executions (15%) were announced by official sources, compared to 12% in 2022, 16.5% in 2021 and an average of 33% in 2018-2020.
- 85% of all executions included in the 2023 report, i.e. 709 executions, were not announced by the authorities.
- At least 471 people (56%) were executed for drug-related charges, compared to 256 in 2022, 126 in 2021 and an average of 24 per year in 2018-2020.
- Only 25 (5%) of the 471 drug-related executions were announced by official sources.
- At least 282 executions (33.8% of all executions) were for murder charges.
- At least 39 people, among them 6 protesters and one woman, were executed for security-related charges (*moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz*).
- At least 8 protesters were executed.
- At least 20 people were executed for rape charges.
- 2 people were executed for blasphemy charges.
- 1 man was executed for adultery charges.
- 7 people were hanged in public spaces.
- At least 2 juvenile offenders were among those executed, one of whom was 17 at the time of execution. Cases of 3 possible others were still being investigated at the time of writing.
- At least 22 women were executed, the highest number since 2013.
- At least 512 executions in 2023 and more than 4,541 executions since 2010 have been based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts.
- At least 857 prisoners sentenced to death for murder charges were forgiven by the families of the murder victims per *qisas* laws.

INTRODUCTION

The 16th Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM), reveals that the Iranian authorities intensified their use of the death penalty to instil societal fear in the year following the outbreak of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests. The report documents a staggering total of 834 executions in 2023, representing a 43% increase compared to the previous year. This is the second highest number of documented annual executions in more than 20 years in Iran.

Eight protesters were executed in 2023, six of whom were arrested in relation to the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests and sentenced to death in grossly unfair trials without due process. While executions of the protesters led to strong international reactions in the beginning of the year, the executions in the second half of the year failed to elicit the same level of condemnation and backlash. The correlation between lack of international attention and the use of the death penalty by the Islamic Republic was especially evident after the onset of the war in Gaza on 7 October 2023. The average number of daily executions rose from 2 before the onset of the war in Gaza to an average of 3-4 executions per day during the war.

Commenting on the report, Iran Human Rights Director, Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam said: *“The Iranian regime uses the death penalty to prolong its survival. We are dealing with a regime that is oppressive, corrupt and incompetent to solve people’s daily problems. Instilling societal fear is the regime’s only way to hold on to power, and the death penalty is its most important instrument. Increasing the political cost of the executions by international pressure can slow down the regime’s killing machine. The inconsistency in the international community’s reaction to the executions in Iran is unfortunate and sends the wrong signal to the authorities.”*

In 2023, the Islamic Republic authorities not only intensified the use of the death penalty, but also expanded the scope of charges for which the death penalty was implemented. For the first time in 10 years, the Islamic Republic executed two men for blasphemy and one man for adultery charges. In addition, two dual-nationals were hanged. One of them, the Swedish citizen Habib Asyoud, had been kidnapped by regime agents in Turkey and forcibly transferred to Iran before his sham trial and execution.

Of particular concern is the dramatic escalation in the number of drug-related executions in 2023, which rose to 471 people, more than 18 times higher than the figures recorded in 2020. Those executed for drug charges belong to the most marginalised communities in society, and ethnic minorities, particularly the Baluch, are grossly overrepresented amongst those executed. The report highlights the alarming silence from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in response to this dramatic surge, despite the organisation signing a new cooperation agreement with the Islamic Republic. This lack of condemnation and intervention from a key international body underscores the urgent need for global attention to this critical issue. Commenting on the alarming rise in drug-related executions, ECPM Director Raphael Chenuil-Hazan said: *“Lack of reaction by the UNODC and donor countries to the dramatic raise in drug-related executions sends the wrong signal to the Iranian authorities. Abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences must be a precondition for all future cooperation between the UNODC and Iran on combating drug trafficking.”*

In 2023, the number of public hangings in Iran tripled compared to 2022, with seven people being hanged in public spaces, including a beach park. Iranian authorities continued to violate international obligations by executing juvenile offenders, with at least two juveniles put to death, one of whom was 17 at the time of execution. Additionally, at least 22 women were executed, marking the highest number in the past decade. Among those executed was Zarkhatoon Mazarzei, a 46-year-old Baluch widow and the sole provider for her family. She was sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court on drug-related charges without access to legal representation, despite denying the allegations. All drug charges and security-related charges are under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts, which were responsible for imposing the death sentences of 512 (61%) of those executed in 2023. One of those unjustly executed for security charges was the Kurdish political prisoner Mohiyedin Ebrahimi. He was a *kolbar* (human mule) who was arrested by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) forces in 2017 after being shot in the leg. His brother had been killed by border forces while also working as a *kolbar*. In a letter to Iran Human Rights shortly prior to his execution, Mohiyedin wrote that he was tortured to accept bogus charges of firearms possession and membership in political groups, denied access to a lawyer at trial, due process and a fair trial. Mohiyedin was the breadwinner for 12 people, including a physically disabled child and his brother’s family.¹¹

¹¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5768/>

In March 2024, at the 55th session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, the International Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFMI) will present its findings on the atrocities committed by the Islamic Republic since the start of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests. The establishment of the FFMI by the UN Human Rights Council was a significant step by the international community to hold Iranian authorities accountable for the grave human rights violations, including the execution of protesters. Impunity and the lack of accountability are among the most important obstacles for improving the human rights situation in Iran. In 2024, the situation of human rights in Iran will be reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the framework of the UN Human Rights Council. With the launch of the 2023 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, Iran Human Rights and ECPM call on the members of the Human Rights Council to renew the mandates of the FFMI and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and to formulate strong recommendations in the framework of the UPR. The Organisations also call on the international community – in particular the UNODC, States with diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic and all other Member States, to put the death penalty on the top of the agenda in any dialogue with Islamic Republic representatives, and to play a more active role in supporting the improvement of the human rights situation by promoting the abolition of the death penalty in Iran.

SOURCES

There is an increasing lack of transparency on case law and the numbers of sentences and executions. The number of executions presented in this report is based on official information and documented cases. It is a minimum and the actual numbers are certainly higher, as the Iranian authorities do not announce all the executions implemented. Therefore, we distinguish between “official” and “unofficial” or “unannounced” executions. Official or announced executions are those announced by the official websites of the Iranian judiciary, the Iranian police, the National Iranian Broadcasting Network, official or state-run news agencies and national or local newspapers. Unofficial or unannounced executions include cases that have not been announced by official sources but have been confirmed by Iran Human Rights through unofficial channels and communications. These include other human rights NGOs or Iran Human Rights sources within Iran. The sources of unofficial reports are often eye-witnesses, family members, lawyers, sources within prisons and within the Iranian judiciary (through unofficial communication). Only unofficial reports that have been confirmed by two independent sources have been included.

Between 2016 and 2021, an average of 25% of all executions were announced by official Iranian media. In 2022, this number dropped to 12%. In 2023, only 15% of the recorded executions were announced by official sources; the remaining 85 were confirmed by Iran Human Rights.

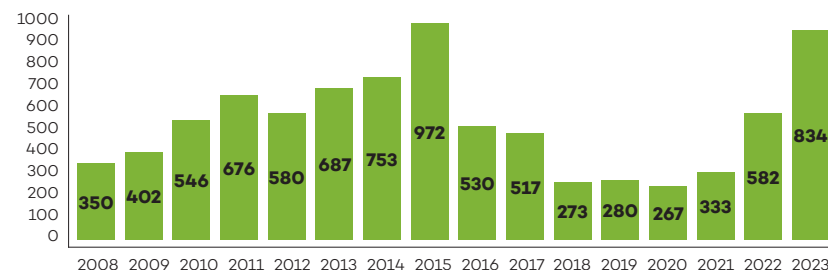
Due to the lack of transparency in the Iranian judicial system and the pressure put on families, 46 of the execution reports received by Iran Human Rights could not be confirmed by two independent sources and have not been included in this report. It is important to note that the charges cited in this report are those issued by the Iranian judiciary.

Most of the trials leading to death sentences are unfair according to international standards. The use of torture to force confessions is widespread in Iran. Due to the lack of transparency in the Iranian judiciary, the charges mentioned in this report have not been confirmed by independent sources.

The figures presented in the report do not include extra-judicial killings inside or outside the prison.

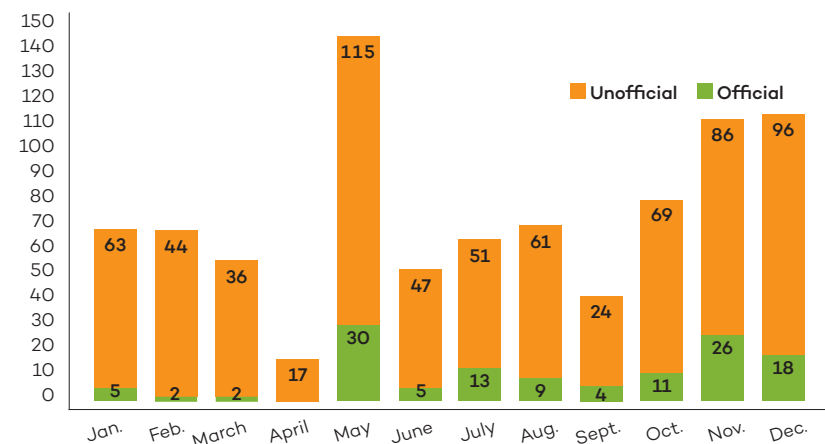
FACTS AND FIGURES

EXECUTION TRENDS IN THE LAST 16 YEARS



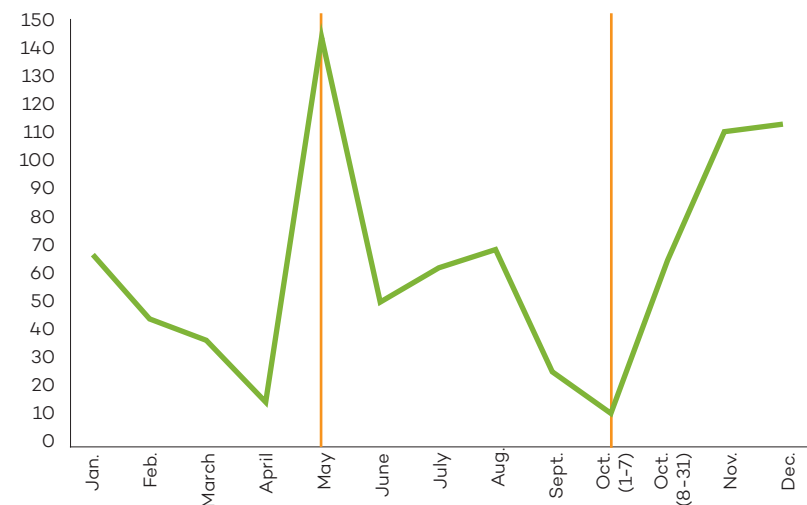
Since Iran Human Rights' first annual report in 2008, Iranian authorities have executed at least 8,582 people, an average of more than 536 executions per year. The number of executions in 2023 is the highest number since 2015 and is significantly higher than the average in the last 16 years.

MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF EXECUTIONS IN 2023



The monthly execution breakdown illustrates a high disparity between the number of officially announced and unannounced executions throughout the year. With 17 executions, April (coinciding with Nowruz and the Muslim month of Ramadan) had the lowest number of executions. With 145 executions, May was the bloodiest month in 2023, followed by November and December, with 112 and 114 executions, respectively.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS AND POLITICAL EVENTS



Although most of those executed are sentenced to death for ordinary crimes, there is a meaningful correlation between the timing of the executions and political events (indicated by an orange line on the graph). According to IHRNGO's recorded execution trends over the last two decades, execution rates typically decrease in the weeks prior to the parliamentary and presidential elections, Nowruz holidays (21 March-3 April) and the month of Ramadan (which fell between 22 March and 21 April in 2023). The first execution surge began in the lead-up to International Workers' Day on 1 May, which was followed by National Teacher's Day on 2 May, when nationwide protests usually take place. The second surge started after the start of the war in Gaza on 7 October.

THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND THE DEATH PENALTY

According to Article 57 of the Iranian Constitution, "the powers of government are vested in the legislative, executive and judicial powers which function under the supervision of the absolute *velayate-ol-amr* and leadership of the Ummah." While the article stipulates that the aforementioned powers, or branches, are independent of each other, this is contradicted in the Constitution and law. This section will provide an overview and detail the positions of each in regards to the use of the death penalty.

THE JUDICIARY

According to Article 156 of the Iranian Constitution: “*The Judiciary shall be an independent power that protects individual and social rights.*” However, Article 157 of the Constitution undermines the impartiality and independence of the judiciary by stating that: “*The Head of the Judiciary is directly appointed and supervised by the Supreme Leader,*” who under the Constitution is the Head of State and holds the State’s highest political position.



On 1 July 2021, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei promoted Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei (known as Ejei) to serve as the new Head of Judiciary. Ejei has held several key positions in the Islamic Republic’s security apparatus, including Minister of Intelligence (2005–2009), Attorney General of Iran

(2009–2014), and Deputy Chief of Judiciary (2014–2021). In 2014, he was granted the power to make the final decision in death penalty cases of drug offenders. The following year, in 2015, at least 642 people were executed on drug-related charges, including the Ghezelhesar Prison mass executions¹² on the direct orders of Ejei, setting the record for the highest annual drug executions since the early 1990s. Ejei is also one of the Islamic Republic officials who were sanctioned in 2010 by both the United States¹³ and the European Union¹⁴ for their role in the suppression of the 2009 post-election protests. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of drug-related executions since Ejei’s appointment as the Head of Judiciary. Of the three leaders in charge of the powers in Iran, Ejei has been the most outspoken in defending death sentences and executions being issued and carried out.

THE LEGISLATURE

The Legislature consists of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament, which seats 290 representatives, 16 of which are women), with Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf as its Speaker, and the Council of Guardians, with Ahmad Jannati as its chairman. Jannati also chairs the Assembly of Experts, which is charged with choosing the Supreme Leader.

¹² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/1217/>

¹³ <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg877.aspx>

¹⁴ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-7-2010-8192_EN.html



Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf is a former senior IRGC commander, Chief of Police (2000–2005), Tehran Mayor (2005–2017) and presidential candidate. He was appointed to the role of Speaker at Parliament in 2020.

In a statement issued on 6 November 2022, 227 of the

290 members of Parliament called on the Judiciary to issue and carry out the death penalty for protesters.¹⁵ Though later retracted due to backlash, the statement was a clear demonstration of the absence of separation between the powers. In his speech before reading the statement, Ghalibaf asserted that the protests were organised by the CIA, Mossad and their followers, with the aim of creating a new ISIS through riots.¹⁶

A resolution adopted by the EU Parliament on 19 January 2023 called on the “VP/HR, the Council and the Member States to consider sanctions against the 227 Members of the Iranian parliament who encouraged the use of death sentences.”¹⁷

THE EXECUTIVE



The government has been led by President Ebrahim Raisi since August 2021. Ebrahim Raisi was Head of Judiciary from 2019 until taking office as President in August 2021. Raisi served on a four-person commission, known as the “death commissions,” during the 1988 prison massacre of political prisoners. Based

on an order by the founder and then Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, commissions were formed across the country and were responsible for the execution of several thousand political prisoners in the summer of 1988. The prisoners, many of whom had been tried and were serving their prison terms, went through very short

¹⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5578/>

¹⁶ <https://www.isna.ir/news/1401081509782/قالیباف-گردانندگان-آغتشاشات-به-دنیال-داعش-ساز-ی-نوین-هستند>

¹⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html

interviews (often just one question) with the death commission, who ruled whether they should be executed or not. Raisi, who is also on the US sanctions list for his role in the massacre, served on the death commission responsible for the Tehran region, where the highest number of political prisoners were held. The 1988 extrajudicial prison massacre of political prisoners is considered by many distinguished lawyers and rights organisations as crimes against humanity.¹⁸

When questioned about his role in the massacre in the first news conference following his inauguration in June 2021, he responded: *“Everything I’ve done in my time of holding office has been to defend human rights. If a legal expert, a judge or a prosecutor has defended the rights of people and the security of the society, he must be lauded and encouraged for preserving the security of people against assaults and threats. I am proud to have defended human rights in every position I have held so far.”*¹⁹

In an interview with CBS 60 Minutes on 18 September 2022, he was questioned again about his role in the 1988 massacre and asked whether he regretted it. Ebrahim Raisi first questioned whether the massacre had happened at all, then falsely claimed that the political prisoners had committed “assassinations” and had received the “appropriate punishment.”²⁰

In his February 2023 report to the UN Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran Javād Rehmān urged the international community to call for accountability with respect to long-standing emblematic events that have been met with persistent impunity, including the enforced disappearances and summary and arbitrary executions of 1988.²¹

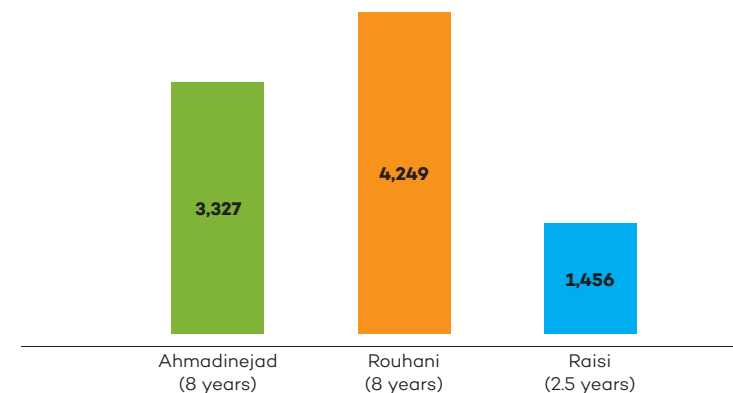
18 <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/MDE1394212018ENGLISH.PDF>

19 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/21/irans-president-elect-raisi-addresses-links-with-mass-executions>

20 <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/iran-president-ebrahim-raisi-60-minutes-video-2022-09-18/>

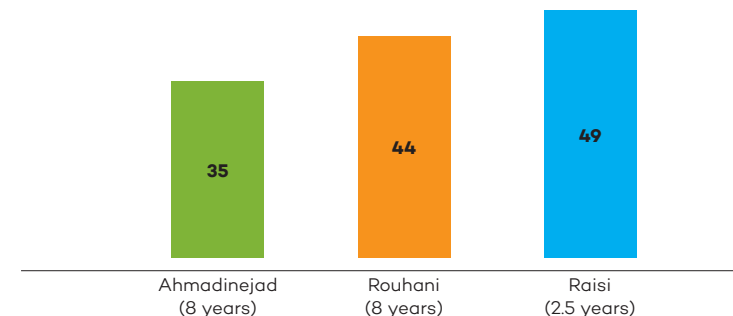
21 A/HRC/52/67, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER PRESIDENTIAL TERM



At least 1,456 people have been executed since Ebrahim Raisi took office in August 2021, compared to the two terms (8 years) of presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013) and Hassan Rouhani (2013–2021), during which at least 3,327 and 4,249 people were executed, respectively.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER MONTH



A comparison of executions under Raisi’s presidency with the previous two presidents, Ahmadinejad and Rouhani, shows that more than one person was executed every day during all three presidencies. However, despite serving the shortest time, Raisi already has the highest average monthly executions with 49, followed by 44 during Rouhani’s two terms and 35 during Ahmadinejad two terms. It is important to note that the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Laws also significantly reduced the monthly average execution count during Rouhani’s presidency.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified three international human rights treaties that apply to the death penalty: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1975, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009.

Other applicable treaties which the Islamic Republic of Iran has neither signed nor ratified include: the International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Since 2007, a resolution for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty has been put to a vote at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) every two years. Through this text, always adopted by a large majority of States, the UN reaffirms that the application of the death penalty violates human dignity and “calls upon all States that still maintain it to establish a moratorium on executions”. As the resolution is not legally binding, it cannot prevent a State from performing an execution or sanction that State. However, a firm call from the UN's most senior political body carries considerable moral weight and is a precious asset in creating a world without the death penalty. Since the introduction of the resolution in 2007, the number of voters supporting the resolution has steadily increased to a new record high of 125 in 2022²². However, Iran has been voting against the Resolution since 2007. In December 2022, Iran voted against the Resolution once again.

²² <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/12/analyse-du-vote-de-la-resolution-moratoire-GB-2022-191222c.pdf>

TREATY DESCRIPTION	TREATY NAME	SIGNATURE DATE	RATIFICATION DATE, ACCESSION [a], SUCCESSION [d] DATE
International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT		
Optional Protocol of the International Convention against Torture	OP - CAT		
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	CCPR	04 Apr 1968	24 Jun 1975
Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty	CCPR-OP2-DP		
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED		
Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED, Art.32		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	CEDAW		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD	08 Mar 1967	29 Aug 1968
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	CESCR	04 Apr 1968	24 Jun 1975
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	CMW		
International Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC	05 Sep 1991	13 Jul 1994
Optional Protocol to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	CRC-OP-AC	21 Sep 2010	
Optional Protocol to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	CRC-OP-SC		26 Sep 2007 (a)
International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	CRPD		23 Oct 2009 (a)

LIMITATION OF THE APPLICATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY TO THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMES

Article 6 of the ICCPR sets out the inherent right to life and emphasises that the death penalty may only be applied for “most serious crimes.” Article 6 §2 of the ICCPR states: *“In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court.”*

Article 6 §5 of the ICCPR specifies: *“Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.”*

Article 6 §6 states: *“Nothing in this Article shall be invoked to delay or to prevent the abolition of capital punishment by any State Party to the present Covenant.”*

Article 7 of ICCPR bans *“Torture and cruel, degrading and inhumane punishments”*.

In the General Comment on Article 6 of the ICCPR, the United Nations Human Rights Committee stated that *“The term ‘the most serious crimes’ must be read restrictively and appertain only to crimes of extreme gravity, involving intentional killing. Crimes not resulting directly and intentionally in death, such as attempted murder, corruption and other economic and political crimes, armed robbery, piracy, abduction, drug and sexual offences, although serious in nature, can never serve as the basis, within the framework of Article 6, for the imposition of the death penalty. In the same vein, a limited degree of involvement or of complicity in the commission of even the most serious crimes, such as providing the physical means for the commission of murder, cannot justify the imposition of the death penalty. States parties are under an obligation to review their criminal laws so as to ensure that the death penalty is not imposed for crimes which do not qualify as the most serious crimes. They should also revoke death sentences issued for crimes not qualifying as the most serious crimes and pursue the necessary legal procedures to re-sentence those convicted for such crimes.”*

The UN Human Rights Committee also stated that *“Under no circumstances can the death penalty ever be applied as a sanction against conduct whose very criminalization violates the Covenant, including adultery, homosexuality, apostasy, establishing political opposition groups, or offending a head of state. States parties that retain the*

death penalty for such offences commit a violation of their obligations under Article 6 read alone and in conjunction with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Covenant, as well as of other provisions of the Covenant.”

In a yearly supplement to his quinquennial report on capital punishment, the UN Secretary General reaffirmed this position: *“States parties to the Covenant that have not yet abolished the death penalty may only impose it for the ‘most serious crimes’. The Human Rights Committee has expressed the view that this means crimes of particular gravity involving intentional killing. States should remove from national laws any application of the death penalty to crimes not involving intentional killing, such as drug-related offences or terrorism-related crimes not involving intentional killing. The death penalty should especially not be imposed as a sanction for forms of non-violent conduct such as apostasy, blasphemy, adultery and consensual same-sex relations.”*

Although Iran did not formulate any reservation while ratifying the ICCPR, the death penalty is still imposed for crimes, that do not meet the threshold of “the most serious crimes” and this despite the Addendum following the Universal Periodic Review (UPR): *“It should be noted that the deprivation of life has been considered as a punishment only for the most serious crimes in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.”*

While it is fundamental to hold perpetrators of rape accountable, the death penalty cannot be the answer. This was recalled by former UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet: *“The main argument being made for the death penalty is for it to deter rape – but in fact there is no evidence that the death penalty deters crime more than other forms of punishment. Evidence shows that the certainty of punishment, rather than its severity, deters crime. In most countries around the world, the key problem is that victims of sexual violence do not have access to justice in the first place – whether due to stigma, fear of reprisals, entrenched gender stereotypes and power imbalances, lack of police and judicial training, laws that condone or excuse certain types of sexual violence or the lack of protection for victims.”²³*

This is the case in Iran, where victims of sexual violence do not have access to justice.

PROHIBITION OF SEVERAL METHODS OF EXECUTION

The HRC highlighted that State parties that have not abolished the death penalty must respect Article 7 of the Covenant, which

²³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/10/rape-monstrous-crime-perpetrators-must-be-held-accountable-death-penalty-and>

bars certain methods of execution, including public executions. Article 7 of ICCPR bans “Torture and cruel, degrading and inhumane punishments.”

Additionally, Article 14 provides fair trial and due process and specifically mentions the importance of an impartial judicial system, access to a lawyer and a fair trial, and not compelling individuals to testify against themselves or to confess guilt.

PROHIBITION ON THE DEATH PENALTY FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN²⁴

Article 6 §5 of ICCPR states: “Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.”

Article 37a of the CRC states: “No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.”

However, upon ratification, Iran formulated the following reservation: “If the text of the Convention is or becomes incompatible with the domestic laws and Islamic standards at any time or in any case, the Government of the Islamic Republic shall not abide by it.”

IRANIAN LAW

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran contains provisions related to the rights of the people. Article 22 states: “The dignity, life, property, rights, domicile, and occupations of people may not be violated, unless sanctioned by law.”

Codified laws relating to the death penalty can be found in the 2013 Islamic Penal Code (IPC) and the Anti-Narcotics Law and its 2017 Amendment.²⁵ While murder, drug possession and trafficking, rape/sexual assault, *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy* are the most common charges resulting in the death penalty in Iran, the IPC sanctions the death penalty for a wide range of offences, the number of which is amongst the highest in the world.

However, there are also uncoded laws relating to the death penalty. Article 220 of the IPC states that Article 167 of the Constitution can

be invoked by the judge to pronounce *hudud* punishments that the law has not addressed: “The judge is bound to endeavour to judge each case on the basis of the codified law.” In the absence of such laws, the judge must deliver his judgement on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic *fatwa* that can carry the mandatory death penalty. The judge cannot refrain from admitting and examining cases and delivering his judgement based on the lack or deficiency of the law in the matter, or its brevity or contradictory nature.

It is important to note that the majority of charges punishable by death in the Islamic Republic cannot be considered as “most serious crimes” and do not meet the aforementioned ICCPR standards.

ISLAMIC PENAL CODE AND CAPITAL OFFENCES

The current Islamic Penal Code (IPC) came into force in 2013. Section Two sets out four types of punishments, three of which are applicable to the death penalty: *hadd*, *qisas* and *ta’zir*.

Hadd (pl. hudud): fixed punishments for which *Sharia* or Islamic law has fixed the measure, degree and method. They can be divided into three subcategories:

- **Sexual offences:** incest, rape, *zina* (adultery), *lavat* (sodomy or consensual homosexual penetrative sex), *tafkhez* (intercruel sex) where the “active party” is non-Muslim and the “passive party” is Muslim.
- **Offences against the State and religion:** *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth), *moharebeh* (enmity against God), *baghy* (armed rebellion), *sabot-nabi* (insulting the prophet) and *ertedad* (apostasy).
- **Repeat offences on the fourth occasion:** theft, adultery, sodomy, *mosahegheh* (lesbian sex), intercruel sex, pimping, insulting the prophet, alcohol consumption, *qadf* (false accusation of sodomy or adultery), *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

Qisas: retribution-in-kind for “intentional murder”, which due to a lack of grading and disregard for intent or circumstances, includes both intentional and unintentional killings.

Ta’zir: punishment for offences at the discretion of the judge. This currently applies to drug-related offences for the purpose of this report.

SEXUAL OFFENCES

INCEST, SEX BETWEEN A NON-MUSLIM MAN AND MUSLIM WOMAN, AND RAPE

According to Article 224 of the IPC: “A death sentence shall be imposed on the male party in cases of incest, fornication with their stepmother, fornication of a non-Muslim man with a Muslim woman

²⁴ https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/Safeguards_Guaranteeing_Protection_of_the_Rights_of_those_Facing_the_Death_Penalty.pdf

²⁵ ECPM, IHRNGO, the death penalty in law and in practice in Iran, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2023/07/flyer-IRAN-gb-040723-bd.pdf>

and fornication by force or reluctance. The punishment for the female party shall be decided by other provisions concerning fornication.”

ADULTERY AND EXTRAMARITAL SEX

Article 221 of the IPC defines *zena* as extramarital sex (defined as vaginal and anal sex between a man and a woman in Note 1 to the Article). *Zena* is punishable by death in the following cases: *zena* with a *mahram* (blood relative), *zena* with the wife of a father (step-mother), *zena* between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman, rape or force (Article 224). Article 225 sets the punishment for *zenaye mohseneh* (adultery) for both men and women as stoning, but provides the courts with the option to impose the death sentence by alternative means upon the approval from the Head of Judiciary “if it is not possible to perform stoning.”

SAME-SEX RELATIONS

LAVAT

Article 233 of the IPC defines *lavat* (sodomy) as male sexual intercourse and Article 234 sets out its punishments. In male homosexual relations, the law distinguishes between what it describes as the “active party” and “passive party.” The death penalty is imposed on the “active party” if he is married or it is rape, but the “passive party” receives the death penalty regardless of their marital status. According to Note 1 of Article 234, a non-Muslim “active party” in a sexual act with a Muslim party shall also receive the death penalty.

TAFKHIZ

Tafkhiz (intercrural/thigh sex) is defined in Article 235 and according to Article 236, the punishment for both parties is 100 lashes. However, the Note to the Article stipulates that the “active party” shall receive the death penalty if he is non-Muslim and the “passive party” is Muslim.

MOSAHEGHEH

Defined in Article 238, in cases of *mosahegheh* (lesbian sex), no distinction is made in punishments set for the “active” or “passive” parties, their religion, marital status or consent (Article 240). Article 239 sets out the punishment for *mosahegheh* as 100 lashes. However, as it is a *hadd* crime, it is punishable by death on the fourth occasion if “offenders” are sentenced and receive the lashing punishments on the first three occasions. This has not been specifically stated in law, but can be inferred from the provisions of Article 136 of the IPC on “Repeat Offences” (see below).

In June 2019, when asked by a journalist why homosexuals are executed based on their sexual orientation, then Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded: “Our society has moral principles. And we live according to these principles. These are moral principles concerning the behaviour of people in general. And that means that the law is respected, and the law is obeyed.” According to some human rights activists, many people have been executed based on charges of homosexuality since the 1979 Islamic revolution.²⁶

OFFENCES AGAINST THE STATE AND RELIGION

MOHAREBEH

Article 279 of the IPC defines *moharebeh* (enmity against God) as: “drawing a weapon on the life, property or honour of the public or causing them terror, in a way that creates an environment of insecurity”. When a person draws a weapon on one or several specific individuals with personal motives, but their action does not have a public element, and also a person who draws a weapon on the public but does not create an atmosphere of insecurity due to their incompetence, they shall not be considered a *mohareb* (person who commits *moharebeh*).

Article 281 stipulates that “bandits, robbers and smugglers who resort to arms and disrupt the security of the public and roads, shall be considered *mohareb*.”

Article 282 of the IPC sanctions the death penalty in cases of *moharebeh*. However, power is granted to judges to impose the alternative punishments of crucifixion, amputation of the right hand and left foot, or domestic exile away from the defendant’s hometown.

Under the previous IPC, which was in force until 2013, the charge of *moharebeh* was frequently used against political dissidents and people with connections to opposition groups abroad, regardless of whether they had personally used violence or not. The current IPC has provided for their punishment under the vague charges of *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

In the last two years, protesters Mohsen Shekari, Majidreza Rahnavard, Saleh Mirhashemi, Saeed Yaghoubi, Majid Kazemi and Hani Shahbazi have been executed on charges of *moharebeh*, and many more protesters are currently facing the death penalty for these charges.

²⁶ https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/State-Sanctioned_Killing_of_Sexual_Minorities_Looking_Beyond_the_Death_Penalty/14069318

EF SAD-FIL-ARZ

Article 286 of the IPC defines *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) as the crime committed by a person “on an extensive level against the physical integrity of others, the domestic or external security, spreads lies, disrupts the national economic system, undertakes arson and destruction, disseminates poisonous, microbiological and dangerous substances, establishes corruption and prostitution centres or assists in establishing them.”

However, this article does not provide concrete definitions for the term “crime” and the scope of “extensive” for its purpose, giving judges more power to interpret the law at their own discretion.

The charges have been used interchangeably with *moharebeh* against protesters. Two protesters, Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, were executed on these charges and many more are facing the death penalty for these charges.

BAGHY

Article 287 of the IPC defines members of any group that stage armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic of Iran as “*baghy*” (one who carries out *baghy* or armed rebellion), and that its members shall be sentenced to death on charges of *baghy* if they used weapons.

Due to its definition, *baghy* charges are predominantly used against members of dissident groups.

OTHER RELIGIOUS “OFFENCES”

Article 262 of the IPC sanctions the death penalty for cursing the Prophet of Islam or any of the other great prophets (blasphemy), and for accusing the infallible imams and the Prophet Mohammad’s daughter, Fatima Zahra, of sodomy or adultery. Apostasy, sorcery, witchcraft and other such issues have not been explicitly specified in the current IPC, although apostasy has been specifically referred to in Article 26. Under *sharia* law, the punishment for apostasy is death, which a judge can impose by invoking Article 167 of the Constitution.

QISAS

Qisas means retribution-in-kind for a physical harm caused, which includes both injuries and death (the concept of “an eye for an eye”).²⁷ A *qisas* death sentence takes away the offender’s life in retribution for having committed murder. However, the law provides immunity from *qisas* for the following individuals:

27 For example, protester Mehdi Mousavian was sentenced to be blinded for allegedly throwing a stone that blinded a repressive force: <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6519/>

- The father and paternal grandfather of the victim (Article 301)
- A man who kills his wife and/or her lover in the act of adultery (Article 302)
- Muslims, followers of recognised religions, and “protected persons” who kill followers of unrecognised religions or “unprotected persons” (Article 310)
- Killing a person who has committed a *hadd* offence punishable by death (Article 302)
- Killing a rapist (Article 302)

The law indirectly encourages arbitrary killings by private individuals. Experts believe, for instance, that Articles 301 and 302 might be contributing to the increased number of honour killings in Iran. In practice, men who have murdered their wives are exempted from *qisas* more than vice versa. In 2023, a man who had murdered his wife on suspicions of having an affair based on text messages, was granted immunity from *qisas* after presenting the evidence to a court in Tehran.²⁸ The law also discriminates against followers of “unrecognised” religions. Article 301 states: “*Qisas shall be established [...] if the victim is sane and has the same religion as the culprit. Note: If the victim is Muslim, the non-Muslim status of the culprit shall not prevent qisas.*” This includes in particular members of the Baha’i faith, which is not recognised as a religion according to Iranian law. If a Baha’i is murdered, the family does not receive *diya* (blood money), and the offender is exempted from *qisas*. In 2013, there were two reported Baha’i murder cases. On 23 April 2013, Saeedollah Aqdasi was murdered in his house in Miandoab (Northwestern Iran) and Ataollah Rezvani was shot in Bandar Abbas (Southern Iran) on 24 August 2013. None of these cases has been properly investigated.

REPEAT OFFENCES

Article 136 stipulates that repeat offenders who commit an offence punishable by *hadd*, and who are punished on the first three occasions, shall be sentenced to death on the fourth occasion. This article fails to provide a complete list of *hudud* offences and only specifies the death sentence for theft on the fourth occasion in Article 278. Nevertheless, Articles 220–288 have defined *hudud* offences as: incest and adultery, *lavat*, *tafkhez*, *mosahegheh*, pimping, *sabol-nabi*, theft, alcohol consumption, *qadf* (false accusations of *lavat* or adultery), *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

28 <https://www.hamshahronline.ir/news/797753/> مرد-همسرکش-از-قصاص-ر-هایی-یافت-خون-ز-نم-جلال-بود-ارائه-مستندات

JUVENILE OFFENDERS

The 2013 IPC retained the death penalty for juvenile offenders. Although Articles 89-95 suggest corrective measures and alternative punishments for children and juveniles, Article 91 is very clear that the offences punishable by *hudud* or *qisas* are exceptions to this rule. It is important to note that almost all juvenile offenders executed in the past 11 years were sentenced to death based on *qisas* and *hudud* laws.

Article 91 states: *“For offences punishable by hadd or qisas, mature persons younger than 18 shall be sentenced to the punishments stipulated in this chapter (Articles 89-95) if they do not understand the nature of the offence committed or its prohibition or if there are doubts about their maturity or development of their reasoning.”*

The Article grants discretion to the judge to decide whether a juvenile offender understood the nature of the offences, whether they were mature at the time of committing the offence and whether they should be sentenced to death. The Note to Article 91 authorises but does not require the court to seek the opinion of the Forensic Medical Organisation or to use any other means to reach a verdict.

Moreover, while Article 146 states that immature persons lack criminal responsibility, Article 147 repeats the provisions of the previous law and the Civil Code regarding maturity and the age of criminal responsibility. Girls are considered mature at the age of 9 lunar years and boys at the age of 15 lunar years. A girl older than 8.7 years and a boy older than 14.6 years can therefore be sentenced to death.

In the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Iranian authorities wrote in their reply to the recommendations: *“Conforming to the recent amendments made in the laws of Iran, the maximum punishment for children shall not exceed five years of detention in correctional facilities. The deprivation of life as a punishment shall be proposed but not enforced in case the culprit with the age of criminal responsibility has not perceived the nature of the crime and therefore lacks mental maturity and perfection, based on the expert assessment and judgement of the competent court.”*²⁹

Of the two confirmed juvenile offenders executed in 2023, one was executed when he was 17 years old and the other kept in prison or correctional facilities until he reached the age of 18 before being executed.

THE ANTI-NARCOTICS LAW

Following the 1979 revolution, the “Legal Bill to Intensify Punishments for Perpetrators of Drug Crimes and Preventive and Medical Measures” was passed into law on 9 June 1980. For the first time, the death penalty was introduced for a range of drug-related offences, including being in possession of or carrying as little as 5 grams, growing, producing, selling, attempted-sale and providing the premises for use of narcotics.³⁰ An Amendment passed on 25 October 1988 provided a more detailed breakdown of offences for each drug type and its Article 9 introduced public execution in the defendant's place of residence if their offences amounted to *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth).³¹ Subsequent Amendments were added in 1997 and 2010 which were aimed at counteracting Iran's growing drug problem by expanding the scope of the law and introducing harsher sentences. The 2010 Amendment introduced the death penalty for the possession of as little as 30 grams of heroin and included new categories of drugs. Altogether, the Anti-Narcotics Law, including the 1997 and 2010 Amendments, imposed the death penalty for 17 drug-related offences, including: a fourth conviction for offences in several instances; planting opium poppies, coca plants or cannabis seeds with the intent to produce drugs; smuggling more than 5 kilograms of opium or cannabis into Iran; buying, possessing, carrying or hiding more than 5 kilograms of opium and the other aforementioned drugs (punishable upon a third conviction); smuggling into Iran, dealing, producing, distributing and exporting more than 30 grams of heroin, morphine, cocaine or their derivatives.

The 2017 Amendment introduced a mechanism to limit the use of the death penalty and commute the sentences of those on death row to life imprisonment. The Amendment increased the minimum amounts of illegal drugs that would subject convicted producers and distributors to a death sentence, raising the level of synthetic substances, such as heroin, cocaine and amphetamines, from 30 grams to 2 kilograms and that of natural substances, such as opium and cannabis, from 5 kilograms to 50 kilograms (Article 45(d)). The punishment for those already sentenced to death or life imprisonment for drug-related offences would be commuted to a maximum of 30 years imprisonment and a fine. It restricted the death penalty for those convicted of carrying (not only using) weapons, acting as the ringleader, providing financial support, or using minors below the age of 18 or the mentally ill in a drug crime; and to those previously sentenced to death, life imprisonment, or imprisonment for more than

²⁹ A/HRC/43/12/ADD.1, <https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?j=G2004446&t=pdf>

³⁰ <https://qavanin.ir/Law/PrintText/118572>

³¹ <https://qavanin.ir/Law/TreeText/84416>

15 years for related crimes. A complete analysis of the 2017 amendments to the Anti-Narcotics Law is available in IHRNGO and ECPM's 2017 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran.³²

The 2017 Amendment created hope that it would eventually lead to a complete halt in drug-related executions. And while it did lead to a decline in male drug executions and a complete drop in female executions until 2021, the outcome was not guaranteed. Since 2021, the 2017 Amendment has been reversed in practice, with drug-related executions rising from an average of 26 per year between 2018-2020 to at least 471 in 2023.

PROCEDURES

The ICCPR, which Iran has ratified, promotes the rule of law and underlines equal legal rights for all individuals regardless of sex, ethnicity, opinion or belief, and bans many forms of discrimination. Article 14 specifically underlines the importance of an impartial judicial system, access to a lawyer and a fair trial, and not compelling individuals to testify against themselves or to confess guilt. However, the lack of due process is probably the biggest obstacle to significant improvements in the human rights situation, and the situation of the death penalty in particular. The lack of an impartial judiciary and inequality before the law are the most important structural reasons for the lack of due process in Iran. The Head of Judiciary is directly selected by the country's highest political authority, the Supreme Leader, and must report to him. The Chief of the Supreme Court and all judges are selected by the Head of Judiciary based on their ideological affiliation and political background, making the judiciary a political wing that is neither impartial nor independent. Citizens are not equal before the law; men have more rights than women, Muslims have more rights than non-Muslims, and *Shia* Muslims have more rights than *Sunni* Muslims. In this section, we will briefly address the typical legal procedures from arrest to a death sentence. Due to the arbitrary nature of the judicial system, not all the procedures are necessarily followed in every death penalty case. A broader and deeper discussion on the legal procedures and due process in Iran is beyond the scope of this report and can be found elsewhere.³³

FROM ARREST TO PROOF OF GUILT ACCESS TO A LAWYER

Article 35 of the Iranian Constitution grants defendants access to legal representation. The 2013 Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) and its 2015 amendments address, among others, a suspect's right to access a lawyer in the pre-trial phase.³⁴ Article 48 of the CCP states: *"When a suspect is arrested, they can request the presence of a lawyer. The lawyer, observing the secret nature of the investigation and the negotiations between the parties, should meet with the suspect. At the end of the meeting, which should not last more than one hour, the lawyer may submit their written notes to be included in the case file."*

³² <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/19/>

³³ <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/ihrdprocess/>

³⁴ <https://iranhrdc.org/amendments-to-the-islamic-republic-of-irans-code-of-criminal-procedure-part-1/>

However, a Note added in the final draft places limitations on the suspect's rights to choose a lawyer. The amended Note states: *"In cases of crimes against internal or external security, and in cases involving organised crime, where Article 302 of this code is applicable, during the investigation phase, the parties to the dispute are to select their attorneys from a list approved by the Head of Judiciary. The names of the approved attorneys will be announced by the Head of Judiciary."*

The Note effectively states that in serious criminal cases and those involving security charges, during the pre-trial investigation phase, defendants may only select lawyers from a list approved by the Head of Judiciary. In June 2018, the judiciary announced a list of 20 lawyers approved to defend citizens with security cases.³⁵

Following objections from lawyers,³⁶ the Iranian Parliament's Judiciary Committee tried to propose a bill to change the law. The proposed bill removes the phrase *"to select their lawyers from a list approved by the Head of Judiciary."* However, it imposes new limitations, including the possibility of limiting the right to access legal counsel for 20 days (which can be extended by order of the judge for an indefinite period) for defendants subject to Article 302 of the CCP. Several lawyers expressed their concern regarding this limitation. Some of these concerns are published in interviews with the Iran Human Rights bi-weekly Farsi law journal, *Hoghoghe-ma* ("Our Rights").³⁷ However, regardless of the charges, none of the people sentenced to death about whom Iran Human Rights has acquired information have had access to a lawyer in the initial (pre-trial) phase after their arrest.

In 2023, all death penalty protesters Iran Human Rights has obtained information about were also deprived of access to their lawyers during legal proceedings until public and international pressure was asserted on the case. In January 2023, a resolution adopted in the European Parliament expressed *"grave concerns about detainees' inability to access legal representation during interrogations."*³⁸

Furthermore, there has been a systematic judicial crackdown on lawyers representing clients with political charges. Lawyers continue to face arrests, summons, charges or convictions for carrying out their professional duties. Worryingly, lawyers are being banned from speaking about their cases as additional punishment even where custodial sentences are overturned.³⁹ Moreover, in June 2023, Iranian Parliament approved

the 'Request to Investigate the Operations of Bar Associations and their Union' bill, which grants the authority to "review the legal qualification" of lawyers who are already members of the bar. This will effectively grant power for authorities to disbar lawyers for political purposes. In August 2023, lawyers protested the Bill in several provinces, with an appeal filed with the Guardians Council by the Iranian Bar Association.⁴⁰ In his February 2023 report, Javād Rehman, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, called on the government to *"ensure that all persons accused of any crime have access to a lawyer of their choosing during all stages of the judicial process, including during the initial investigation and interrogation stage."*⁴¹

TORTURE IN DETENTION

Article 38 of the Iranian Constitution bans all forms of torture and forced confessions. However, reports gathered by Iran Human Rights and other human rights organisations throughout the years indicate that torture is widely used against suspects after their arrest and in the pre-trial phase in order to extract a confession. In the nationwide protests following the state killing of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, Iran Human Rights concluded that physical torture, sexual assault and rape were not merely isolated incidents but were systematically used against protesters to force false, self-incriminating confessions.⁴²

Furthermore, all death row prisoners Iran Human Rights has been in contact with have testified that they were subjected to torture in order to confess to the crime they were charged with. This is not limited only to those with political or security-related charges. Almost all prisoners who were arrested for drug-related offences have been kept in solitary confinement and subjected to physical and psychological torture in the investigation phase following their arrest, while being denied access to a lawyer. In many cases, confessions extracted in detention have been the only evidence available for the judges to base their verdict on. Torture is also used in other criminal cases involving rape or murder where there is not enough evidence against the suspect. Death row prisoners who have received lashing sentences also face torture prior to being executed. Iran Human Rights dedicated an issue of its legal biweekly magazine, *Hoghogh-e-ma*, to the subject of torture.⁴³

35 <https://www.rferl.org/a/lowering-the-bar-tehran-white-list-excludes-most-lawyers-from-politically-charged-cases/29276192.html>

36 <https://iranhr.net/media/files/HoghoheMa-No79.pdf>

37 <https://iranhr.net/media/files/101.pdf> and <https://iranhr.net/media/files/160.pdf>

38 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html

39 See IHRNGO's 2023 Human Rights Defenders Report: https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf

40 <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-lawyers-bar-associations-protest/32565060.html>

41 A/HRC/52/67, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

42 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5687/>

43 <https://iranhr.net/media/files/140.pdf>

In a resolution adopted on 19 January 2023, the EU Parliament condemned “*in the strongest terms the systematic use of torture, including sexual violence as a weapon, in Iranian prisons*” and called “*for the immediate cessation of all forms of torture and ill-treatment of all detainees.*” It called “*on the Iranian regime to treat prisoners with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings; reiterates its call on Iran to ratify without delay the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and to act in full accordance with the provisions contained therein.*”⁴⁴

In his report to the 52nd Human Rights Council session in February 2023, Javaid Rehman, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, called on Iranian authorities to “*immediately end all forms of violence, torture and ill-treatment of protesters*” and to “*ensure that prisoners and detainees are protected from all forms of torture and ill-treatment and that confessions obtained through torture or ill-treatment are never accepted as evidence.*”⁴⁵

COURTS AND TRIALS

Of the death penalty charges most commonly carried out, the security-related charges of *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz*, *baghy* and drug-related offences fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts. While other criminal charges such as murder and rape are tried by the Criminal Courts.

REVOLUTIONARY COURTS

Established in 1979 on the orders of Ayatollah Khomeini to try former officials of the Pahlavi government, Iran’s Revolutionary Courts have continued to operate and are responsible for issuing heavy sentences to human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents and all those criticising the authorities. Additionally, they are responsible for the vast majority of all death sentences issued over the last 43 years.⁴⁶ The Revolutionary Courts are not transparent, and its judges are known for greater abuse of their legal powers than any other judges.⁴⁷

Revolutionary Court judges routinely deny lawyers access to individuals who are subjected to extensive interrogations under severe

conditions. Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, interviewed 133 people facing trial in the country for a 2014 report focused on Iran’s judicial system.⁴⁸ According to the report:

- 45% of those interviewed reported that they were not permitted to present a defence
- In 43% of cases, trials lasted only minutes
- 70% of interviewees reported that coerced information or confessions had been reportedly used by the judge or made up at least part of the evidence presented by the prosecution
- Some 65% of interviewees reported that the judge displayed signs of bias, such as by reproaching or interrogating defendants and limiting their ability to speak and present a defence⁴⁹

A resolution presented at the European Parliament in 2020 set out that Iranian courts regularly fail to ensure fair trials, with the denial of access to legal counsel and denial of visits by representatives from consulates, the UN or humanitarian organisations, and allow the use of confessions obtained under torture as evidence. Furthermore there are no independent mechanisms for ensuring accountability within the judiciary, and serious concerns remain over the politicisation of judges, particularly those presiding over Revolutionary Courts.⁵⁰

In a series of interviews with *Hoghogh-e-ma*,⁵¹ several prominent Iranian lawyers and jurists in the country questioned the constitutionality of Iran’s Revolutionary Courts and called for their dissolution.⁵² The Courts have also faced strong criticism⁵³ for the group show-trials of protesters.⁵⁴

All cases regarded as security-related, such as cases involving protesters and political prisoners and those allegedly involved in corruption, armed robbery and drug offences, are processed by the Revolutionary Courts.

In his report to the 52nd Human Rights Council session in February 2023, Javaid Rehman, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed alarm that “*the Islamic revolutionary courts have been relying on forced confessions extracted through torture and other forms of duress in convicting protesters.*”⁵⁵

48 This was the only research of this kind by the SR on the revolutionary courts

49 <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/25/61>

50 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0112_EN.pdf

51 <https://iranhr.net/media/files/93.pdf>

52 <https://iranhr.net/fa/journals/57/>

53 <https://iranhr.net/fa/journals/191/>

54 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5589/>

55 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

44 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html

45 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

46 <https://www.theglobepost.com/2018/02/22/iran-revolutionary-courts/>

47 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/six-judges-iran-crackdown-journalists-activists>

METHODS OF PROVING GUILT

Confessions are the most common way of proving guilt in death penalty cases. As aforementioned, confessions are often extracted under torture. In security-related charges predominantly used against political dissidents, televised confessions prior to any legal proceedings taking place. As well as being tortured to make self-incriminating confessions, defendants are also forced to testify against each other. This has been particularly prevalent in the current death row protester cases. Eyewitness testimony is another way of proving guilt, but the witnesses may only be two men, as a woman's testimony is valued as half of a man's. Witness testimonies are also used to prove guilt in the absence of a confession. In addition, according to the IPC, when there is no confession or witness testimony in a case, the judge can make a decision based on his exclusive opinion, without any reference to laws and codes.⁵⁶ This is known as *elm-e-qazi* or "knowledge of the judge."⁵⁷ The law requires that rulings based on a judge's "knowledge" derive from evidence, including circumstantial evidence, and not merely personal belief that the defendant is guilty of the offence.⁵⁸ However, there have been cases where *elm-e-qazi* has been arbitrarily applied. For instance, in December 2007, Makwan Moloudzadeh was executed for sodomy charges based on the "knowledge of the judge".⁵⁹ The death sentences against two protesters currently on death row, Manouchehr Mehman Navaz (security-related charges)⁶⁰ and Reza Rasayi (murder charges)⁶¹ were also based on *elm-e-qazi*. *Qassameh*, or a sworn oath is another way to prove guilt of a crime (murder or injury) in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) which is practised in Iran.⁶² Where there is insufficient evidence in cases of *qisas*, but the judge still has doubt either because he believes the victim to be guilty or due to circumstantial evidence, he can declare *los* (insufficient evidence of guilt). In such an event, the victim or victim's next of kin have the right to *qassameh*. *Qassameh* is based on swearing an oath on the Quran by a certain number of the victim's family. In murder cases, 50 male members of the victim's family are required to make a *qassameh*. It is important to note that the people who swear in *qassameh* ceremonies are not required to be and are not usually direct witnesses to the crime.

⁵⁶ <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/ihrdprocess/>

⁵⁷ A. Asghari, S.A. Ashgar Mosavi Rokni, "Changes in Personal Knowledge of the Judge with Emphasis on Islamic Punishment Law", *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, Volume 5, Issue 2, 2015 <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fijse.com%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fissues%2F2015%2Fv5i2%2FPaper-22.pdf>

⁵⁸ New Islamic Penal Code, Article 211

⁵⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/57/>

⁶⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5714/>

⁶¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/6432/>

⁶² New Islamic Penal Code, Articles 313 and 336

In 2018 and 2021, Iran Human Rights dedicated two issues of its legal magazine, *Hoghogh-e-ma*, to *qassameh*, interviewing lawyers and religious scholars on the issue.⁶³ Since then, there has been increasing debate around the issue of *qassameh* inside Iran⁶⁴ and in the Farsi media outside the country.⁶⁵

FORCED TELEVISED CONFESSIONS



Forced televised confessions of some of those executed in 2023.

top left to right: Majid Kazemi, Saeed Yaghoubi and Saleh Mirhashemi. Middle left to right: Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Sarkout Ahmadi. Bottom left to right: Shahrooz Sokhanvari, Mohammad Ghaedi Nasab and Mohammad Ramez Rashidi

⁶³ Issue 75, 15 March 2018: https://iranhr.net/media/files/No_75.pdf and Issue 155, 15 September 2021: <https://iranhr.net/media/files/155.pdf>

⁶⁴ Tabnak, September 15, 2018

⁶⁵ <http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-43185108>

Since its inception in 1979, the Islamic Republic has used televised confessions as a propaganda tool aimed at creating fear and justifying the heavy sentences handed down to its political opponents and activists. Such confessions are extracted after physical and/or psychological torture, lengthy solitary confinement, threats or promises of reduction in the gravity of sentences and threats against family members. The confessions are often aired after arrest, following public protests to a sentence, or immediately prior to or after the execution as a means of reducing backlash. Airing the forced confessions before trial is a clear violation of the defendants' right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and fair trial rights.

Of the political prisoners executed in 2023, the torture-tainted confessions of Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, Saeed Yaghoubi, Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Sarkout Ahmadi were aired prior to the commencement of any legal proceedings.

At trial, not only are forced confessions used as evidence of guilt, but under threats and coercion, the defendants are often forced to repeat the false accounts in court. Once the defendant has been found guilty, their forced confessions are again used as a propaganda tool to justify their death sentences. This has been the case for sentences that have sparked outrage, like that of the defendants in the Karaj case (Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini) and the Khaneye Isfahan case (Saeed Yaghoubi, Majid Kazemi and Saleh Mirhashemi). Forced confessions are also aired post-execution to justify the inhumane punishment of death.

On 19 January 2023, the EU Parliament adopted a resolution in which it strongly condemned *"the Islamic Republic's policy of forcing confessions using torture, intimidation, threats against family members or other forms of duress, and the use of these forced confessions to convict and sentence protesters."*⁶⁶

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES OF THE DEATH PENALTY

After being sentenced to death, prisoners remain on death row in prison. It might take years, months and sometimes weeks from receiving the final verdict to the implementation of the death sentence. All death sentences must be approved by the Supreme Court, whose Chief is appointed by the Head of Judiciary. In addition, the

Head of Judiciary must *estizan* (authorise) all *qisas* executions prior to implementation.

According to Iranian law, the defendant's lawyer must be informed of the scheduled execution 48 hours prior to its implementation. However, this is not always the case in practice, especially in political and security-related cases. Prisoners are transferred to solitary confinement several days prior to their execution, where their hands are cuffed. The prisoner is normally granted a last visit with their family the day before the scheduled execution. Iran Human Rights has published a short report based on witness interviews about death-row conditions and the prisoners' last hours.⁶⁷ Juvenile offender Arman Abdolali, who was taken to the gallows seven times prior to his execution on 24 November 2021, also provided an account of the torture of being transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for the gallows.⁶⁸

METHODS OF EXECUTION

The Iranian Penal Code prescribes several execution methods including hanging, firing squads, crucifixion and stoning. Hanging has been the main method of execution and the only method used from 2008 until 2020, when Hedayat Abdullahpour, a Kurdish political prisoner, was executed by firing squad in Oshnavieh Prison.⁶⁹ Furthermore, a directive issued by the Head of Judiciary in June 2019 gives a detailed description of how death sentences by hanging, stoning and crucifixion should be implemented.⁷⁰

The majority of executions are carried out within prisons. In some facilities, there are dedicated rooms for executions, while in others, they take place in the prison yard.

In murder cases where the defendant is sentenced to *qisas*, the plaintiff (victim's family or next of kin) not only bears the responsibility of choosing execution, but a representative of the next of kin (either the next of kin themselves, their lawyer or a nominated representative) must be present at the scene of the execution. Since Iranian law considers *qisas* to be the right of the victim's family, they are also encouraged to carry out the execution themselves. Iran Human Rights has received several reports where the victim's family members have physically carried out the execution. In 2021, two women's executions were carried out by their own children.⁷¹

⁶⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/3512/>

⁶⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4987/>

⁶⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4294/>

⁷⁰ <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/1152670>

⁷¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5127/>

⁶⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html

In 2023, Hossein Dulkhani was executed by his parents in Ilam Central Prison for the honour killing of his sister, and Mohammad Parhizkar was hanged by his maternal uncle in Rasht Central Prison.⁷²

In death penalty cases, the presiding judge in the case, and in *qisas* cases, the judge as well as the plaintiff (the victim's family) are required to be present at the execution.

Cranes are used in public executions. The prisoners are either pulled up or the object they are standing on is removed from beneath their feet. In this case, the prisoners die of suffocation and strangulation and it often takes several minutes until death occurs. As discussed later in this report, the Human Rights Committee observed that public executions are contrary to the provisions of the ICCPR and that failure to respect Article 7 would inevitably render the execution arbitrary in nature and thus also in violation of Article 6 of the ICCPR. The number of public executions dropped dramatically due to enforced restrictions after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with no public executions recorded in 2021. After two years, two public executions, including that of a protester, were carried out in 2022.⁷³ In 2023, seven executions were carried out in public spaces across the country.

No implemented stoning punishments have been reported since 2010. This is mainly due to the increasing international pressure in the decade prior, reaching its peak following the campaign to save Sakineh Ashtiani in 2010.⁷⁴

⁷² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5956/>

⁷³ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5366/> and <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5818/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/sakineh-mohammadi-ashtiani>

EXECUTIONS IN PRACTICE

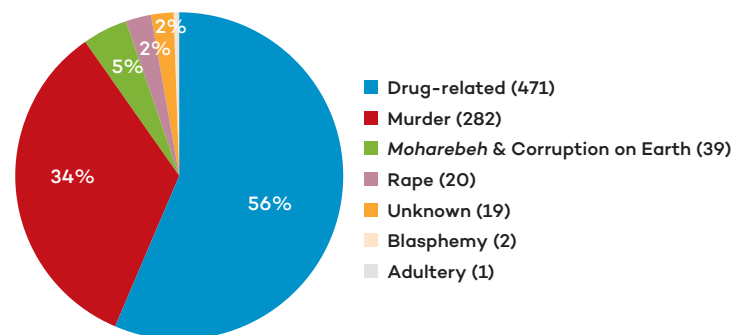
This section provides an overview and analysis of the use of the death penalty in 2023, including its distribution according to charges, courts, geography and implementation. It will provide a sample of the 2023 execution cases for each charge.

CHARGES

While multiple offences are punishable by death, the charges leading to the most executions in recent years have been murder, drug-related offences, *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz*, *baghy* and rape/sexual assault. In addition, two people were also executed for blasphemy and one for adultery in 2023.

The important point to note is the systematic denial of legal due process, unfair trials, use of torture and duress, forced confessions and lack of a transparent and independent judiciary in Iran. The charges in each case are therefore the official account and charges by Iranian authorities, and have not been confirmed by independent sources.

EXECUTIONS IN 2023 BASED ON CHARGES



The chart above shows the distribution of each charge used for executions in 2023. For the first time in seven years, drug-related charges accounted for the majority of executions by a significant margin.

Drug-related (56%) and murder (34%) charges accounted for 90% of all 834 executions in 2023. The security-related charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz* accounted for 4.7% of all executions. 2.4% of executions were for rape and sexual assault. Blasphemy and adultery charges accounted for less than 1% of executions.

Of the charges leading to execution in 2023, murder and rape/sexual assault, blasphemy and adultery are heard before the Criminal Courts, while drug-related and the security charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz* fall within the Revolutionary Courts' jurisdiction.

In the following section, we will provide a more detailed description of executions based on the charges and a selection of their cases.

EXECUTIONS FOR *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EF SAD-FIL-ARZ* IN 2023

The security-related charges of *moharebeh* (enmity against God), *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and *baghy* (armed rebellion) have been used to execute countless political and ordinary crime prisoners in the last 45 years. From the bloody decade of the 1980s to present day, Revolutionary Courts around the country have handed down death sentences based on torture-tainted confessions and trials that have been likened to kangaroo courts. From protesters to dissidents, armed robbers to spies, human traffickers to terrorists, security-related charges have been used for a wide range of so-called offences to intimidate and create societal fear for decades. 2023 saw a significant rise in the number of these cases. At least 39 people were executed for security-related charges, compared to 16 in 2022, 13 in 2021, 15 in 2020 and 9 in 2019.

FACTS ABOUT THE *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EF SAD-FIL-ARZ* EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- At least 39 people were executed on charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz*
- 26 executions were announced by official sources
- 6 protesters were amongst those executed
- 1 political prisoner was executed for a crime he is alleged to have committed over 40 years ago
- 8 Kurdish, 7 Baluch and 3 Arab political prisoners were amongst those executed
- 5 people convicted of armed robbery were executed
- 6 people were executed for espionage for Israel
- 2 Afghan nationals were amongst those executed
- 2 dual-nationals were executed
- 5 of the executions were carried out in public spaces
- 2 of the men executed were former Islamic Republic officials

EXECUTED ON CHARGES OF *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EF SAD-FIL-ARZ*

SARKOUT AHMADI



Sarkout (Arash) Ahmadi was a Kurdish political prisoner who was arrested by IRGC forces at the Iran-Turkey border while trying to leave the country in December 2020. He was sentenced to death for charges of "*moharebeh* through membership of Komeleh party and the murder of a traffic officer" in Ravansar in Kermanshah province. Sarkout's torture-tainted confessions were aired by state media. He was secretly executed in Kermanshah Central Prison on 22 February 2023 without his family being notified.⁷⁵

MOHIYEDIN EBRAHIMI



Kurdish political prisoner Mohiyedin Ebrahimi was a *kolbar* (human mule) who was arrested by IRGC forces on 3 November 2017 after being shot in the leg. His brother had been killed by border forces while also working as a *kolbar*. Mohiyedin was the breadwinner to 12 people, including a physi-

cally disabled child and his brother's family. Tortured to accept bogus charges of firearms possession and membership in political groups, he was denied access to a lawyer at trial, due process and a fair trial. He recounted the injustices against him to Iran Human Rights⁷⁶ before being executed in Urmia Central Prison on 17 March 2023.⁷⁷ The day prior to his execution, at his last visit, his son Fakhredin was beaten by prison guards and detained for hours. Fakhredin was later sentenced to a year imprisonment and a two-year suspended sentence for "destruction of the security glass in the Court of Appeals" by Branch 113 of the Urmia Second Criminal Court.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5742/>

⁷⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5768/>

⁷⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5782/>

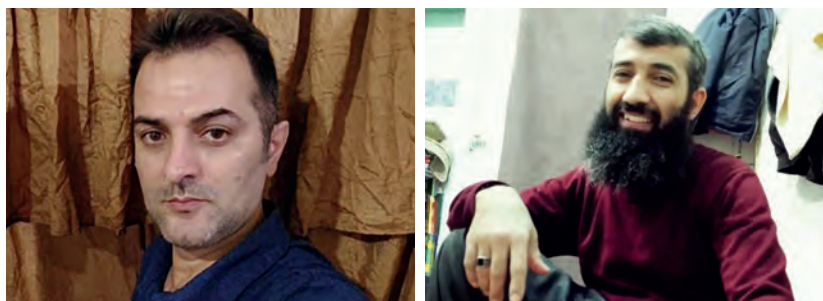
⁷⁸ Iran Human Rights 2023 Human Rights Defenders Report, page 44: https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf

EDRIS BILRANI, MOHAMMAD BARAHOUYI ANJOMANI AND MOHAMMAD KARIM BARKAZAYI AKSON



Edris Bilrani, Mohammad Barahouyi Anjomani and Mohammad Karim Barkazayi Akson were Baluch political prisoners who were severely tortured by the IRGC Intelligence Organisation to extract forced confessions. They were sentenced to death for charges of “*efsad-fil-arz* through terrorist bombings of the 12 Zahedan police station on 29 January 2018, participation in the terrorist explosion in the path of a police patrol car on 25 June 2019, resulting in the injury of several police officers and the destruction of public and government property, and smuggling bomb-making equipment.” Their executions were secretly carried out without their families being notified on 13 November 2023 in Zahedan Central Prison.⁷⁹

GHASEM ABASTEH AND AYOUB KARIMI



Ghasem Abasteh (left) and Ayoub Karimi (right) were Kurdish-Sunni minorities who were arrested with Anwar Khezri, Davoud Abdollahi,

⁷⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6307/>

Farhad Salimi, Khosro Besharat and Kamran Sheikheh in January 2010. According to one of Ghasem’s relatives, the seven men were “physically and mentally tortured to extract forced confessions. Despite years passing, the signs of torture were still visible on Ghasem’s body.” They were sentenced to death for charges of *moharebeh* and *efsad-fil-arz* through “armed action and membership in a Salafi jihadi group” by Branch 28 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court in February/March 2016. Ghasem was executed in Ghezelhesar Prison on 5 November 2023,⁸⁰ and Ayoub was executed at the same prison on 29 November 2023.⁸¹

ALI SABER MOTLAGH



Ali Saber Motlagh was a political prisoner in the 1980s who had been jailed for supporting the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI/MEK). He was later released and had moved abroad before returning to Iran around four years prior to his execution. Ali Saber was arrested and

sentenced to death for allegedly killing a government official on 28 August 1981, though no information is available about his case or whether he was retried. He was executed in silence in Rasht Central Prison on 25 November 2023.⁸²

EXECUTIONS RELATED TO PROTESTS IN 2023

While the Islamic Republic has a bloody history of executing protesters, the execution of protesters in recent years began in 2020 after a series of nationwide protests in 2016-2019. Protesters Mostafa Salehi and Navid Afkari were both sentenced to death for fabricated charges of *moharebeh* and murder, but were executed for the latter to remove responsibility from the authorities.⁸³ Following mass public backlash and international pressure, other known protesters on death row were released. At least two November 2019 protesters remain at risk (see Annex 4) and one was executed in 2023.

⁸⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6290/>

⁸¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6364/>

⁸² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6370/>

⁸³ 2020 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, page 41: https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2021-gb-290321-BD.pdf

The execution of “Woman, Life, Freedom” protesters began in December 2022 with Mohsen Shekari and Majidreza Rahnavaard’s hasty executions and continue to this day. In 2023, eight more protesters were executed for security-related and murder charges. Information and news on protester death penalty cases have been opaque and intentionally marred with disinformation to cause confusion and conflict from the outset. Families have also been threatened to stay quiet with false promises of lesser sentences and release in exchange. In cases of available information, all protesters facing death penalty charges, sentences or execution have been tortured to force self-incriminating confessions which have been used as evidence of their charges. In some cases, defendants have been forced to stage the state accounts of events on camera, which are also used as evidence. Furthermore, per the Note to Article 48 of the CCP, protesters were not only denied access to their lawyers in the initial interrogation phase, but were also systematically denied access in the trial and appeal stages of their legal proceedings. The court-appointed lawyers, whose fees are also often beyond the families’ means, do not provide adequate legal representation, and protesters are denied all due process and fair trial rights at show trials that lack any legitimacy.

The charges brought against protesters have been security-related or murder, or in some cases, double jeopardy. While security-related charges of *moharebeh* and *efsad-fil-arz* have led to the highest number of executions amongst protesters since 2020, all but one case (Mohsen Shekari) was linked to the death of armed forces, with their families used in propaganda to incite support for the execution of the supposed perpetrators. As international and domestic pressure mounts, authorities will likely use *qisas* charges more to evade accountability and shift responsibility to the victims’ families. The majority of protester death penalty cases in 2023 were reported by families and human rights defenders at their own risk.⁸⁴ It is important to acknowledge the expansive campaign by Iranians and the international community to stop protester executions; in its absence, the number of executions would have been much higher.

A resolution adopted by the EU Parliament on 19 January 2023 condemned “in the strongest terms the death sentences against and executions of peaceful protesters in Iran” and demanded an immediate and unconditional halt to “any plans to carry out executions and refrain from seeking further death sentences.”⁸⁵

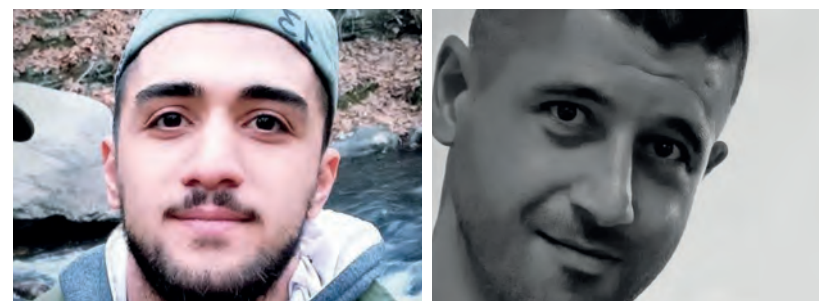
84 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5669/>

85 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html

In his report to the 52nd Human Rights Council session in February 2023, Javaid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed his alarm “at the execution of two protesters and the reported sentencing to death of several others after sham trials, violating the right to a fair trial and denying the right to due process.” He reiterates that “all death sentences and consequent executions constitute arbitrary deprivation of life.”⁸⁶

PROTESTERS EXECUTED IN 2023

MOHAMMAD MEHDI KARAMI AND SEYED MOHAMMAD HOSSEINI



Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini were arrested after taking part in the 40th-day ceremony for slain protester Hadis Najafi in Karaj on 3 November 2022. Their torture-tainted confessions were aired in a program about the case before the commencement of any legal proceedings. They were also forced to reconstruct the scene as dictated. In a group trial of 16 that included juvenile offenders, the defendants in the case were accused of taking part in an IRGC agent’s death, and tried over two days on 30–31 November 2022. Five men, including Mohammad Mehdi Karami and Mohammad Hosseini, were sentenced to death for charges of *efsad-fil-arz*. Their sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court on 3 January 2023 while the other three men were granted appeal. Mohammad Mehdi Karami was on a dry hunger strike for his lawyer to be granted access to his case when he and Seyed Mohammad were executed in Karaj Penitentiary on 7 January 2023.⁸⁷ As Mohammad Hosseini had no relatives, he was immediately adopted by Mohammad Mehdi’s father, Mashallah Karami. Mohammad Hosseini’s lawyer, Ali Sharifzadeh Ardakani, was later

86 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

87 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5685/>

arrested for revealing details of torture his client had been subjected to.⁸⁸ Mashallah Karami has been jailed since 22 August 2023 for seeking justice for his two sons,⁸⁹ and his lawyer was detained for over three months for representing the family.⁹⁰

SALEH MIRHASHEMI, SAEED YAGHOUBI AND MAJID KAZEMI



Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were Isfahan protesters arrested in relation to the death of three repressive forces in Isfahan on 16 November 2022 in what became known as the “*khaneye Isfahan*” case. Ten people, including Majid and Saleh’s brothers, were tortured to force, televised self-incriminating confessions, to testify against each other and to take part in a reconstruction of the alleged crime scene, during which they were forced to repeat the scenario as it was dictated to them. Their torture-tainted forced confessions were aired prior to legal proceedings. Of the ten defendants, Saleh, Majid and Saeed were handed death penalties for charges of *moharebeh* on 9 January 2023, which were upheld by the Supreme Court on 9 May 2023.⁹¹ On 17 May 2023, their families called for people to gather outside the prison in an attempt to save their lives.⁹² Despite all efforts, Saleh, Majid and Saeed were executed in Isfahan Central Prison on 19 May 2023.⁹³

88 Iran Human Rights 2023 Human Rights Defenders Report, page 25: https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf

89 Iran Human Rights 2023 Human Rights Defenders Report, page 45: https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf

90 Iran Human Rights 2023 Human Rights Defenders Report, page 18: https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf

91 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5901/>

92 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5917/>

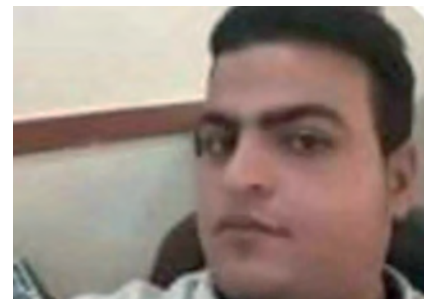
93 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5925/>

MILAD ZOHREVAND



Milad Zohrevand was a 21-year-old Malayer protester arrested on 27 October 2022, on the 40th-day anniversary of Jina (Mahsa) Amini’s death. State media alleged that Milad Zohrevand had killed an IRGC officer that day, for which he was sentenced to *qisas*. Very little information was available about his case. On 15 November 2023, Milad’s sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court and he was secretly executed in Hamedan Central Prison on 23 November 2023.⁹⁴ He was buried in the Christian cemetery amid heavy security two days later, and his mother Afsaneh was arrested for “wailing” while burying her son.⁹⁵

HANI ALBU-SHAHBAZI



Hani Albu-Shahbazi was a 32-year-old Arab protester who was originally reported to have been shot dead during the 2019 nationwide protests in Shadegan. Arrested on 3 December 2019, he was tortured into making false confessions to killing two repressive forces. Hani was sentenced to death for charges of *moharebeh* through the two murders by the Abadan Revolutionary Court. According to state media, his execution was carried out in Ahvaz Sepidar Prison after his sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court. While the exact date of his execution was not specified, it was reported on 28 November 2023.⁹⁶

94 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6339/>

95 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6354/>

96 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6362/>

ear. Informed sources told IHRNGO that “he always said he was innocent and would be released.” Kamran had lost his father at the age of 8 and lived with his step-mother and “didn’t have any family or anyone that cared to do anything for him or publicise his case,” per IHRNGO sources. He was sentenced to *qisas* for the murder of an IRGC officer and executed in Shiraz Central Prison on 30 November 2023.⁹⁷

Rape and sexual assault are among charges which, according to the IPC, are punishable by the death penalty. In 2023, at least 20 people were executed for rape charges, compared to 23 in 2022 and 10 in 2021. As with other charges, there are reports of torture and forced confessions being used against defendants. Due to the lack of transparency and social taboos, only official information is often available about such cases. In addition to the 20 recorded rape executions, a man named **Milad Bahmanzadeh** suffered a heart attack after being transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for his planned execution on 21 May 2023. He passed away in the Tabriz Central Prison infirmary at 3:30 am on 22 May 2023.⁹⁸

- At least 20 people were executed on rape charges
- 12 executions were announced by official sources and 8 were unannounced
- Executions were carried out in 8 different prisons

98 <https://www.rokna.net/> - بخش حادثه - 895799/245 - جزئیات مرگ - یک محکوم لحظاتی قبل از اعدام در زندان - مرکز ی-تیریز دادستان - اعلام کرد

KAMAL ELHAMI



Kamal Elhami was a 43-year-old Kurdish man arrested in Saqqez on 5 November 2019. He was sentenced to death for allegedly raping a conscript soldier by Branch One of the Kurdistan Criminal Court and executed in Saqqez Central Prison on 6 December 2023.⁹⁹

According to Article 262 of the IPC, insulting the prophet or blasphemy is punishable by death, however, Article 263 stipulates that “if the defendant states in court that they made the insulting statement out of anger, coercion, mistake or slip of the tongue, or quoting someone else... their death sentence shall be changed to a punishment of 74 lashes.” While many have been jailed for the charges over the decades, blasphemy executions are rare. In 2023, two men were executed for blasphemy charges in Iran for the first time in nine years.

Yousef Mehrad and Sadrollah Fazeli Zare were arrested for their involvement in running a Telegram channel called “International Religious Freedom.” Yousef, a father of three, was arrested at his home in Ardabil on 24 May 2020 and held incommunicado in solitary confinement for 8 months.¹⁰⁰ Sadrollah was also later arrested. They were sentenced to death for charges of “insulting the prophet,

100 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4710/>

apostasy, accusing the prophet's mother of adultery, desecrating the Quran by burning, insulting the sanctities and publishing private photos without permission." Yousef and Sadrollah were executed in Arak Central Prison on 8 May 2023.¹⁰¹

EXECUTIONS FOR ADULTERY IN 2023

Article 225 sets the punishment for *zenaye mohseneh* (adultery) for both men and women as stoning, but provides the courts the option to impose the death sentence by alternative means upon the approval from the Head of Judiciary "if it is not possible to perform stoning." In 2023, an adultery execution was carried out for the first time since 2009.¹⁰² At least five people are also currently at risk of execution for adultery charges. Leila Kholghi Sakachayi, Abolfazl Barat Vakili,¹⁰³ and two women and a man only identified as Sareh, Mitra and Meysam are all currently on death row for adultery.¹⁰⁴

AHMAD NIKOUYI

Ahmad Nikouyi was a 38-year-old man arrested for having consensual sex with a married woman. He was sentenced to death for *zenaye mohseneh* (adultery) charges and executed in Karaj Penitentiary on 24 April 2023. No information is available about the married woman in the case.¹⁰⁵

EXECUTIONS FOR DRUG-RELATED CHARGES IN 2023

Drug executions have been steadily rising since 2021. Those executed for drug-related charges are amongst the most voiceless victims of the death penalty in Iran. Along with security charges, drug-related charges fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts which, as mentioned above, systematically deny defendants their right to due process and a fair trial. According to reports gathered by Iran Human Rights, at least 471 people were executed for drug-related offences in 2023.

FACTS ABOUT DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- At least 471 people were executed, an 84% rise compared to 2022 (256) and about 18 times the average of drug-related executions in 2018-2020

101 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5885/>

102 <https://iranhr.net/fa/articles/1389/>

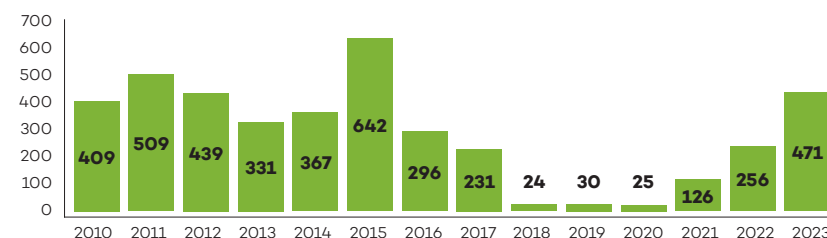
103 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6283/>

104 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4965/>

105 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5842/>

- Only 25 drug-related executions were announced by official sources
- Executions took place in 26 different provinces
- Baluch minorities, who make up 2-6% of Iran's population, are overrepresented, with 138 executions (31%) compared to 47% (121) in 2022 and 43% (55) in 2021
- 3 women were executed for drug-related offences

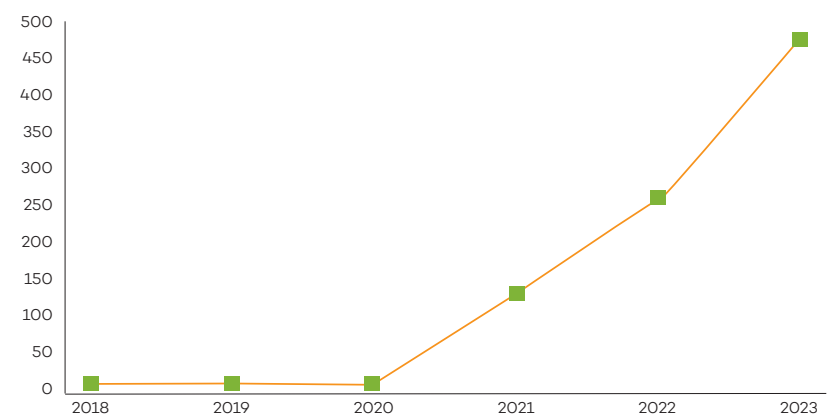
DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS 2010-2023



According to Iran Human Rights reports, an annual average of at least 403 people were executed for drug-related offences between 2010 and 2017. The diagram above shows the reduction in the number of drug-related executions observed in the three years following the enforcement of the Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law at the end of 2017.

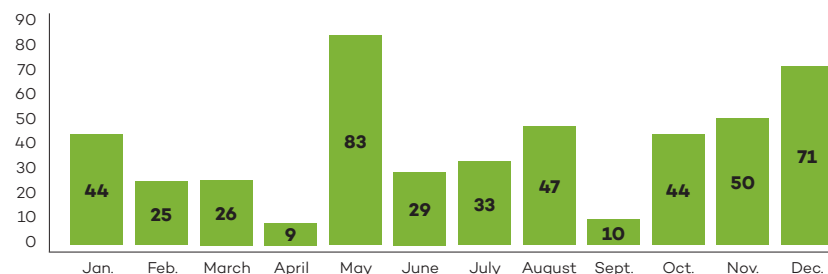
In 2023, drug-related executions were 18 times higher than the average of 2018-2020 drug executions.

DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS 2018-2023



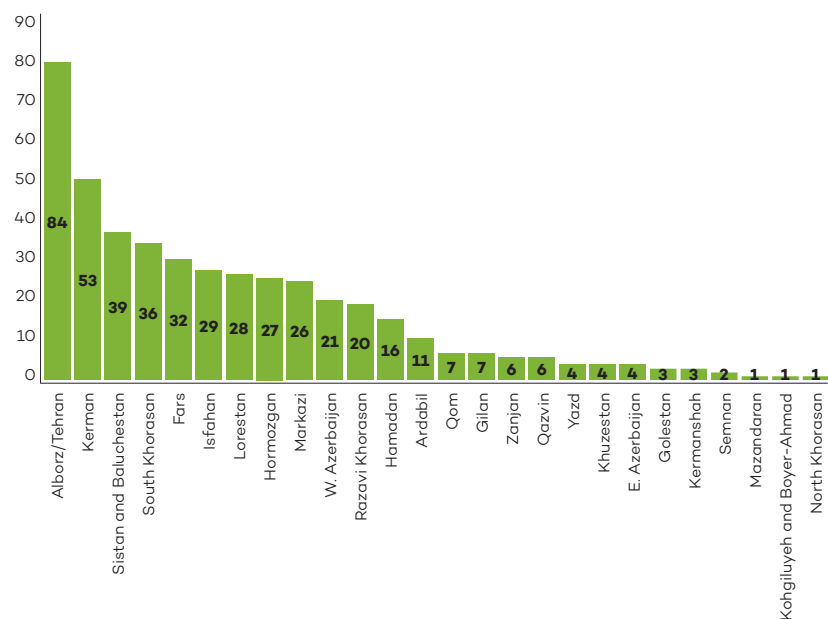
Drug-related executions increased by eighteen-fold in 2023 compared to the average number of drug-related executions between 2018 and 2020.

MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS 2023



Executions for drug-related offences were carried every month of the year. The peak was in May, following the Nowruz and Ramadan holidays, when fewer executions are carried out.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2023



In 2023, drug-related executions were carried out across 27 different provinces, an increase from 21 in 2022 and 15 in 2021. The highest number of drug-related executions were carried out in Alborz/Tehran provinces.

MAP 1: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2023



In 2023, Iran Human Rights reported drug-related executions in 27 provinces, compared to 21 in 2022, 15 in 2021, 12 in 2019 and 2020 and 7 provinces in 2018.

EXECUTED FOR DRUG-RELATED CHARGES

The following are a very small sample of the people executed for drug-related charges in 2023.

MOHAMMAD RASOUL SHEHBAKSH



Mohammad Rasoul Shehbakhsh (Notizehi) was a 44-year-old Baluch man arrested for drug charges after being shot 8 times in the abdomen and legs. He was sentenced to death by the Kerman Revolutionary Court without a lawyer present. Despite his sentence being overturned by the Supreme

Court four times, he was told by Judge Ghorbani at Branch 1 of the Kerman Revolutionary Court that he “had to be executed.” Mohammad was executed in Kerman Central Prison on 8 January 2023.¹⁰⁶

NAZIR SORKHKAMAN



Nazir Sorkhkaman was a 28-year-old undocumented Baluch man from the village of Milak in Zabol. He was arrested for drug-related charges and sentenced to death by the Roudan Revolutionary Court. His execution was carried out in Roudan Prison on 9 January 2023 without notification,

depriving him of the right to say goodbye to his family.¹⁰⁷

EHSAN DEGHANIPOUR



At 25, Ehsan Dehghanipour’s father was executed for drug-related charges in Khorramabad. Three months later, Ehsan himself was arrested for the same charges. He was sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court and spent 10 years on death row before being executed aged 35

in Boroujerd Prison on 29 August 2023.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5692/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5693/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6179/>

SAEED AND ESMAIL ALIZEHI



Esmail Alizehi, 29, and his brother, Saeed Alizehi, 25, were arrested at the Zabol border region in 2021 without any drugs ever being found. They vehemently denied the charges in court, but were ignored by the judge who sentenced them to death without any evidence.

Their executions were carried

out in Zahedan Central Prison on 4 November 2023 without prior notification, denying them the right to say goodbye to their family who lost two sons that day.¹⁰⁹

HOSSEIN MOHAMMADI



Twelve years prior to his execution, Hossein Mohammadi, a Kurdish father, was organising his son’s wedding and needed to go to Tehran to bring back his sister. His neighbour offered him a lift and said “you can help me on the way there.” Unbeknown to Hossein, his neighbour was carrying drugs

for which they were arrested. Hossein Mohammadi was executed in Rasht Central Prison on 12 October 2023. He was the third of his relatives to be executed. One of his relatives, Esmail Mohamad was executed for membership in the Komala party in 2005.¹¹⁰

DRAMATIC INCREASE IN DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS: THE UNODC REMAINS SILENT ON EXECUTIONS AND SIGNS NEW COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The last Amendment to Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Law came into force on 14 November 2017, leading to a significant drop in the number of drug-related executions, from an annual average of 403 to an average of 26 executions in the proceeding three years. The number of commuted death sentences as a result of this Amendment could be as high as 6,000, according to Islamic Republic lawmaker Hassan

¹⁰⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6289/>

¹¹⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6234/>

Norouzi.¹¹¹ However, this trend was reversed in 2021, and the number of drug-related executions has dramatically increased since (see diagram on page 57). The number of drug-related executions in 2023 was more than 18 times higher than the number in 2020.

Iranian authorities introduced the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law mainly due to international pressure. Crucially, European states funding UNODC projects to combat illegal drugs in Iran were unwilling to fund any further projects due to the high number of drug-related executions.¹¹²

In both the 2021 and 2022 Annual Reports on the Death Penalty in Iran, Iran Human Rights and ECPM have expressed grave concern about the alarming rise in the number of drug-related executions and called on the UNODC to react.¹¹³ However, not only has the UNODC not acknowledged this dramatic rise, in March 2023, the organisation signed a new agreement to enhance its cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹¹⁴ This cooperation includes a sub-program on “Border management and illicit trafficking”, which aims to provide “technical training and support designed to upgrade and enhance the capacities and technical knowledge of law enforcement and Anti-Narcotic Police (ANP).¹¹⁵ Such support can lead to more arrests, convictions and executions.

Moreover, Iranian authorities use the cooperation with the UNODC as an argument to justify the execution of alleged drug offenders.¹¹⁶ UNODC’s silence on the execution of hundreds annually, in addition to its support of Iran’s law enforcement and providing political legitimacy for the executions, makes it complicit in the executions.

DRUG EXECUTIONS: COSTLESS VICTIMS OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR POLITICAL REPRESSION

Iranian authorities use the death penalty as a tool of political repression. Iran Human Rights’ analysis has shown that there is a meaningful correlation between the number of executions and political events.¹¹⁷ Following the outbreak of the nationwide

“Woman, Life, Freedom” protests, officials publicly threatened protesters with the death penalty. However, the strong international backlash made the execution of protesters politically costly for the Islamic Republic. Since then, we have observed a great increase in the number of drug-related executions, despite the Islamic Republic’s own repeated admission that the death penalty does not deter drug crimes.¹¹⁸

Thus, the authorities’ need to instil fear in society in order to prevent further protests is the most likely reason for the sharp increase in the number of drug-related executions. Drug offenders are predominantly from the most marginalised groups in society, and ethnic minorities – the Baluch in particular – are grossly overrepresented among those executed. This, together with the international community’s silence, and in part UNODC’s cooperation, makes the political cost of their execution very low. All drug-related offences are processed by the Revolutionary Courts. Reports collected by Iran Human Rights demonstrate that those arrested for drug-related offences are systematically subjected to torture in the weeks following their arrest. They often do not have access to a lawyer while in detention, and by the time a lawyer gains access to their case, they have already “confessed” to the crime.¹¹⁹ Revolutionary Court trials are also typically very short, with lawyers often not even given a chance to present a defence for their clients. As such, the authorities can accuse anyone with drug-related charges and sentence them to death anytime they desire to do so.

EXECUTIONS FOR MURDER CHARGES: QISAS

As murder is specifically punished under *qisas* laws, the IPC does not explicitly state that convicted murderers are subject to the death penalty but rather to *qisas*, or “retribution-in-kind”. The law effectively puts the responsibility for executions for murder in the hands of the victim’s family or next of kin. *Qisas* death sentences are also imposed for juvenile offenders as, according to *Sharia*, the age of criminal responsibility for girls is 9 and for boys 15 lunar years. Furthermore, the death penalty is generally subject to discriminatory application based on gender, ethnicity and religion.¹²⁰

In addition to the inequality of citizens before the law, there are countless reports of violations of due process in *qisas* cases. Examples include the use of torture to extract confessions, summary

111 <https://www.rokna.net/-بخش-اخبار-سیاسی-957563/74-نوروزی-رئیس-یاس-محافظ-به-پژند-رفت-نوری-قزلجه-> از اعدام هزار جوان-یسجرم-مواد-مخدر-جلوگیری-کردیم

112 <https://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1108/485366-ireland-anti-drug-iran/>

113 https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2022_PirQr2V.pdf

114 <https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/unodc-and-iran-enhance-cooperation-in-the-field-of-drugs-and-crime.html>

115 <https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/border-management-and-illicit-trafficking.html>

116 <https://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/4713713/-نقش-مهم-ایران-در-مبارزه-با-قاچاق-مواد-مخدر-و-تروریسم-4713713-%E2%80%8Eهامی-%E2%80%8Eوقتی-که-غرب-حامی-قاچاقچیان-و-تروریست-شود-%E2%80%8E>

117 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/982/>

118 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/2408/>

119 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/16/iran-bid-end-drug-offence-executions>

120 See pages 30-31 of this report.

trials without sufficient time to conduct independent investigation of the evidence, and ineffective counsel.

FACTS ABOUT *QISAS* EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- 282 executions were carried out for murder charges based on *qisas* laws (288 in 2022 and 183 in 2021)
- This is the second highest number of annual *qisas* executions since 2010
- 58 *qisas* executions were announced by official sources (20%)
- At least 2 juvenile offenders (under 18 years of age at the time of offence) were executed, one of whom was 17 at the time of execution
- 15 of those executed for murder charges were women (68% of all women executions)
- 63 *qisas* executions were carried out in Alborz prisons

EXECUTED FOR MURDER CHARGES IN 2023

The 282 *qisas* executions in 2023 include a variety of cases, including two protesters (pages 53-54), all of which involve defendants being denied their rights to due process and a fair trial. The execution of juveniles and women can be found in “Execution Categories” on pages 82-88.

HAMED MOUSAVI

Hamed Mousavi was 19 when he was arrested for the accidental murder of his wife. He had thought there were no bullets in the rifle when he pointed it at her. “I was in love with my wife, it was a joke and I never wanted to lose my wife.” He was transferred from the youth ward and executed in Ardabil Central Prison on 4 May 2023.¹²¹

SAEED NAJAFI

Saeed Najafi was arrested for murder in 2018 and subjected to torture for four months in police custody. “He said he confessed under torture and was under medical care as a result of the torture,” an informed source told IHRNGO. Saeed was 28 years old when he was executed in Kermanshah Central Prison on 17 May 2023.¹²²

121 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5860/>

122 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5936/>

HEMEN MOSTAFAYI



Hemen Mostafayi, a 33-year-old Kurdish man, was arrested in 2013 and subjected to months of severe torture to force self-incriminating confessions to the murder of an IRGC officer. He had previously been transferred for execution in December 2020 which was postponed due to backlash.

Hemen was executed in Sanandaj Central Prison on 21 June 2023.¹²³

MEHDI BABOLI-BAHMAEI



Mehdi Baboli-Bahmaei was arrested and sentenced to *qisas* for a death caused by a car accident. He was executed in Sepidar Prison in Ahvaz on 1 August 2023.¹²⁴

SHOURESH MOROVATI



Shouresh (Gholamreza) Morovati was arrested for a murder committed during an armed robbery in 2009 and sentenced to *qisas*. He had escaped prison during the unrest at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, due to the authorities' failure to take effective measures in prisons. Upon rearrest, he was subjected to months of torture in the Sanandaj detention centre, the signs of which were still on his body when he was executed in Sanandaj Central Prison on 22 August 2023.¹²⁵

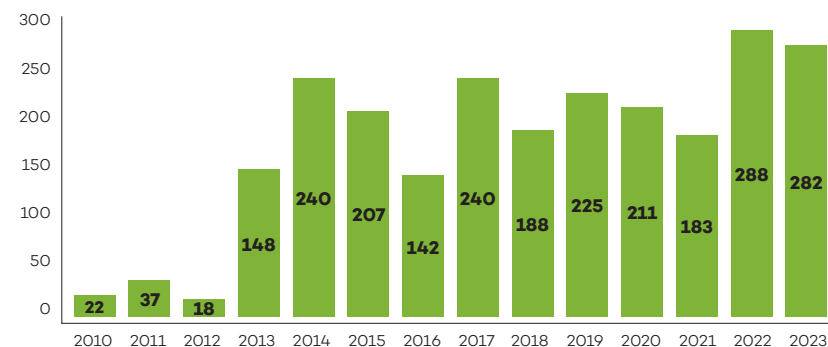
123 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6009/>

124 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6119/>

125 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6163/>

Q/ISAS EXECUTIONS SINCE 2010

According to data gathered by Iran Human Rights, at least 2,431 *qisas* executions were carried out between 2010 and 2023. The diagram below shows the trend of *qisas* executions during this period.



The number of *qisas* executions, which was relatively low between 2010 and 2012, increased dramatically in 2013 and has remained at a high level since. This coincides with growing international criticism of Iran's drug-related executions. In 2023, at least 282 people were subjected to *qisas* executions.

RAJAI SHAHR PRISON CLOSURE

Formerly known as Gohardasht Prison, Rajai Shahr Prison was not only the site of thousands of political executions in the bloody decade of the 1980s and thereafter, but has been specifically the *qisas* capital in the last eight years. In April 2023, Ejei announced the closure of the prison, with evacuation set to begin in July. According to informed IHRNGO sources, "Prison authorities told the prisoners that the prison had been sold for 10,000 billion tomans (€200 million) without naming the buyer and would soon be evacuated." The closure is part of the intentional and systematic efforts by Islamic Republic authorities to erase all traces of the crimes they have committed at the prison throughout their years in power, particularly that of the 1988 prison massacre. The closure and planned demolition took place after a Swedish court sentenced Hamid Noury to life imprisonment for his role in the 1988 Massacre of political prisoners in Gohardasht Prison.¹²⁶ The last executions at the prison took place on 12 July 2023.¹²⁷ Following its closure, most prisoners were transferred to Ghezelhesar Prison and executions for the Tehran/Alborz

¹²⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6130/>

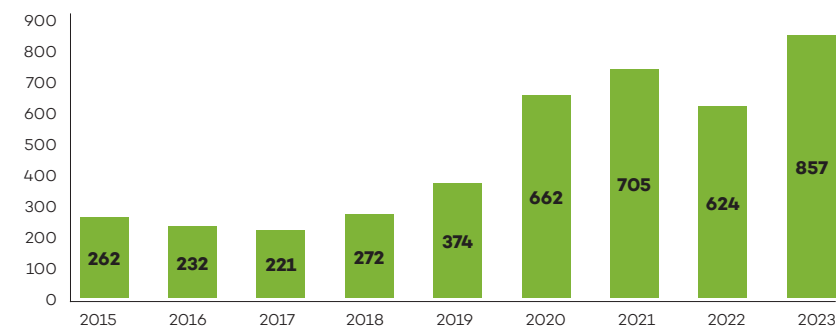
¹²⁷ Fatemeh Yousefzadeh and two unidentified men were executed on 12 July: <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6051/> and <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6056/>

area were moved to Karaj Penitentiary and Ghezelhesar Prison. The latter, which is also scheduled to be closed, was the prison with the highest number of executions (85) in 2023. The most number of *qisas* executions were carried out in Alborz/Tehran provinces in 2023 (35 in Ghezelhesar Prison, 21 in Rajai Shahr Prison, 7 in Karaj Penitentiary).

BLOOD MONEY (DIYA) OR FORGIVENESS INSTEAD OF DEATH PENALTY IN Q/ISAS CASES

According to the IPC, murder is punished by *qisas*, where the victim's next of kin can demand a retribution death sentence. But they can also demand *diya* (blood money) instead of retribution or can simply grant forgiveness. The Head of Judiciary sets an annual indicative amount for *diya* based on inflation and other considerations, but the victim's family can choose their own amount. They can demand a lower or higher amount than the judiciary's indicative number but crucially, no upper limit is set. The *diya* indicative amounts, which are determined every March, were set at 900 million tomans (€18,000) for a Muslim man and 450 million tomans (€9,000) for a Muslim woman in March 2023. The amount set by families is usually higher than the indicative amount and even the indicative amount is higher than what most families can afford.

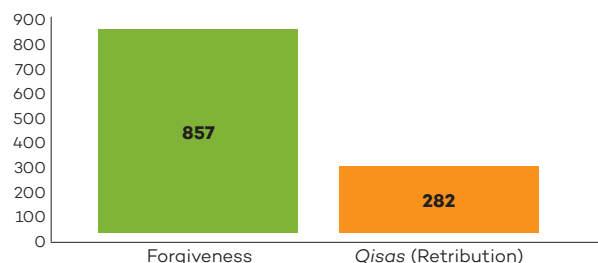
Iran Human Rights has collected forgiveness reports since 2015. According to the reports gathered in the past nine years, the families of murder victims who chose forgiveness or *diya* for murder convicts outnumber those who chose the death penalty. For the sake of simplicity, we will use the term forgiveness in the following section, regardless of whether there has been a demand for *diya* or not.



As with execution numbers, not all forgiveness cases are reported by the Iranian media. Based on reports by the Iranian media and, to a lesser extent, through its own network inside Iran, Iran Human Rights has identified 857 forgiveness cases, compared to 624 cases in 2022, 705 cases in 2021 and 662 cases in 2020.

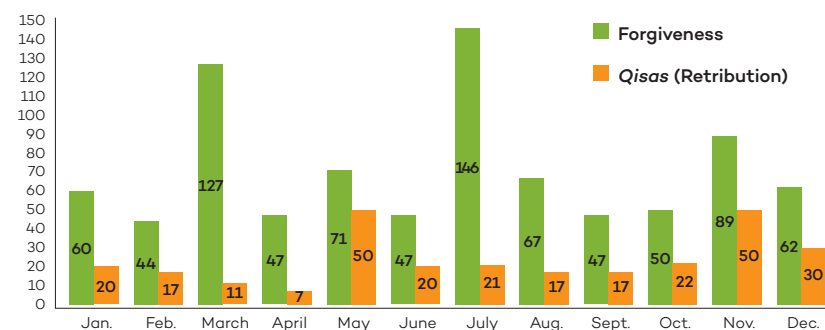
As in the previous six years, the forgiveness cases outnumbered those of implemented *qisas* executions in 2023. The actual numbers for both forgiveness and *qisas* death sentences are believed to be higher. IHRNGO estimates that the number of forgiveness cases might be several times higher than the numbers presented in this report.

The increasing trend of forgiveness in Iran correlates with a survey conducted for Iran Human Rights and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) in September 2020, which found that the majority of people prefer alternative punishments to the *qisas* death penalty for murder victims.¹²⁸ Iranian authorities assert that *qisas* is the right of the plaintiff (the victim's family/next of kin) and that most *qisas* executions take place upon the plaintiff's request. However, when questioned about their preferred punishment if an immediate family member was murdered, only 21.5% of respondents chose *qisas*, while more than 50% preferred alternative punishments such as imprisonment.



A comparison of the number of implemented *qisas* death sentences and forgiveness cases in 2023.

QISAS (RETRIBUTION) AND FORGIVENESS: MONTHLY BREAKDOWN



The diagram above shows the monthly breakdown of implemented *qisas* death sentences compared to forgiveness cases. Forgiveness cases outnumber those of *qisas* executions throughout the year.

¹²⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4458/>

QISAS AND FORGIVENESS: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

In 2023, Iran Human Rights recorded forgiveness cases in all 31 provinces in Iran. In comparison, *qisas* death sentences were reported in 26 of the provinces. *Qisas* executions only outnumbered forgiveness cases in 4 provinces and in one, the numbers were equal.

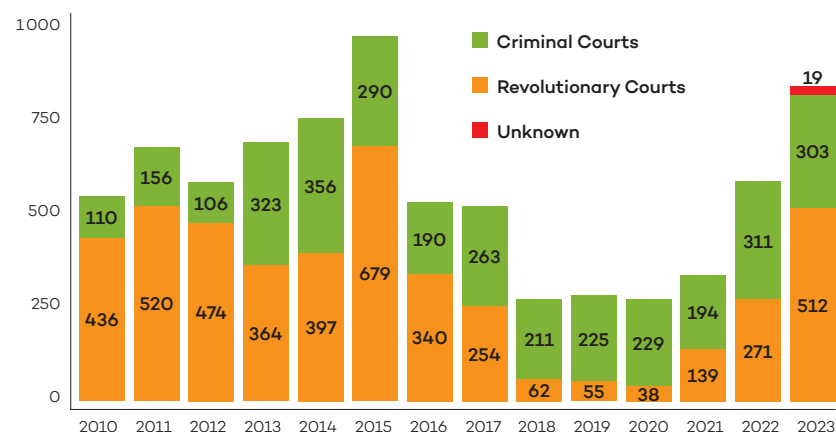


The number of *qisas* executions were higher than forgiveness in only four provinces, while the forgiveness numbers were higher than *qisas* executions in the rest of the provinces except one where they were equal. The number of forgiveness cases in Khuzestan was around 22 times higher than the *qisas* numbers.

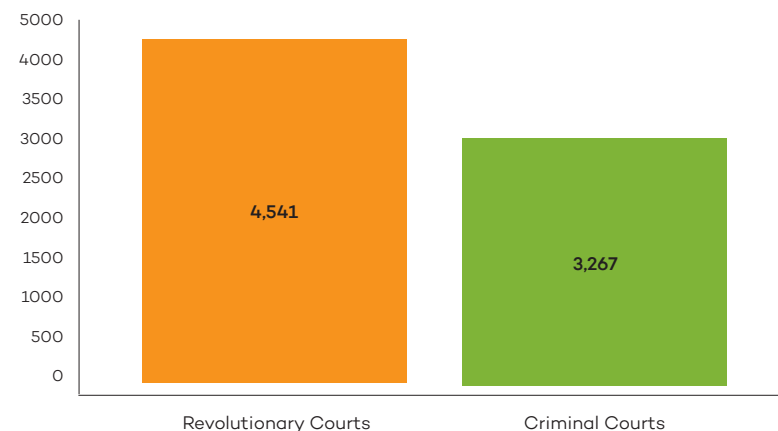
SHARE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND CRIMINAL COURTS IN 2023 EXECUTIONS

As mentioned in the previous section, rape and murder (*qisas*) cases fall within the jurisdiction of the Criminal Courts, while cases of *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy* charges, as well as the drug-related charges, fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts.

After the enforcement of the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics law, the number of implemented death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts saw a significant decrease. However, in 2021 these numbers increased due to the rise in drug-related executions and have continued to rise in 2022 and 2023. The following diagrams show the share of the Revolutionary Courts and the Criminal Courts in the implemented executions of the last 14 years.



512 of the 834 executions in 2023 (61%) were based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts. Numbers for the previous 14 years are presented in the diagram above. This is a significant rise compared to 2022, when they represented 42% (271) of the executions.



The diagram above is based on Iran Human Rights reports since 2010 and shows that 4,541 of the 7,763 executions (58%) in the last 14 years were based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts.

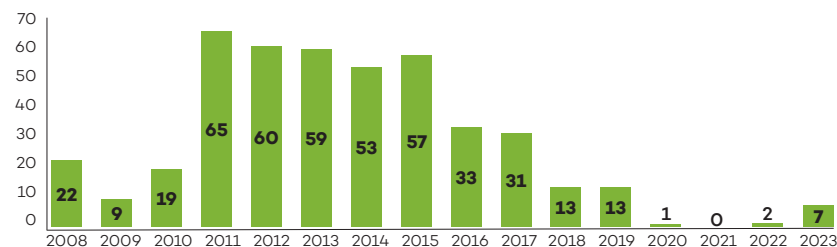
The Revolutionary Courts are infamous for the summary execution of the political opposition during the first decade of establishment of the Islamic Republic in the 1980s.¹²⁹ However, data collected by Iran Human Rights shows that the Revolutionary Courts have been responsible for the majority of the death sentences leading to executions throughout the ensuing decades.

129 Inside Iran's Revolutionary Courts, BBC News, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34550377>

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

For 45 years, Iran has been one of the few countries to carry out executions in public spaces. Public executions have been repeatedly criticised by the international community and domestic civil society in Iran. Both the UN Secretary General and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran have expressed concern about the continued practice of public executions. During Iran's second UPR,¹³⁰ the government rejected recommendations aimed at ending public executions.¹³¹ Criticism against the Islamic Republic's practice of public executions has also been emphasised in the reports of the Special Rapporteur.¹³²

Following massive media attention and international pressure in 2007-2008, then Head of Judiciary, Mahmoud Shahroudi issued an order calling for limitation in the use of public executions. Consequently, the number of public executions in 2008-2010 were relatively lower than the previous years. However, following the post-election protests of 2009, the number of public executions increased dramatically after 2010, reaching an annual average of 50 to 60 between 2011-2015. With increased international focus again, the number of public executions decreased to 33 in 2016, 31 in 2017 and then 13 in 2018 and 2019. Public executions dropped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with one execution reported in 2020 and none in 2021. In 2022, two people were publicly hanged. The number more than tripled in 2023, with seven public executions.



The diagram above shows public executions since 2008. In 2020, public executions dropped significantly due to COVID-19 restrictions, with none recorded in 2021. However, starting in 2022, public executions began to increase, more than tripling in 2023 compared to 2022.

130 A/HRC/DEC/28/108, https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A%2FHRC%2FDEC%2F28%2F108

131 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session20/IR/IranMatriceRecommendations.doc>

132 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

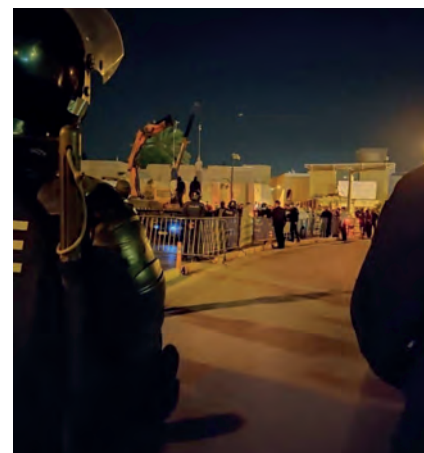
RIISING NUMBER OF PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

In 2023, seven men were hanged in public spaces across the country.



Soleiman Salamat was publicly hanged in Maragheh, East Azerbaijan province, for charges of *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) through “widespread corruption and prostitution” on 25 May 2023.¹³³

An **unnamed** man was publicly hanged in a beach park in Bandar-e-Deylam, Bushehr province, on 18 June 2023. He had been sentenced to *qisas* for the murder of two policemen on 29 March 2022.¹³⁴



Afghan nationals **Mohammad Ramez Rashidi** and **Naeim Hashem Ghotali** were publicly hanged in Shiraz for charges of *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and *baghy* (armed rebellion) in the “Shahcheragh” case on 8 July 2023.¹³⁵

133 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5943/>

134 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6003/>

135 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6042/>

Mohammad Ghaedi Nasab and **Sadegh Mahmoudi Baram** were publicly hanged for charges of *moharebeh* and *efsad-fil-arz* in Fouladshahr, Isfahan province, on 13 July 2023.¹³⁶

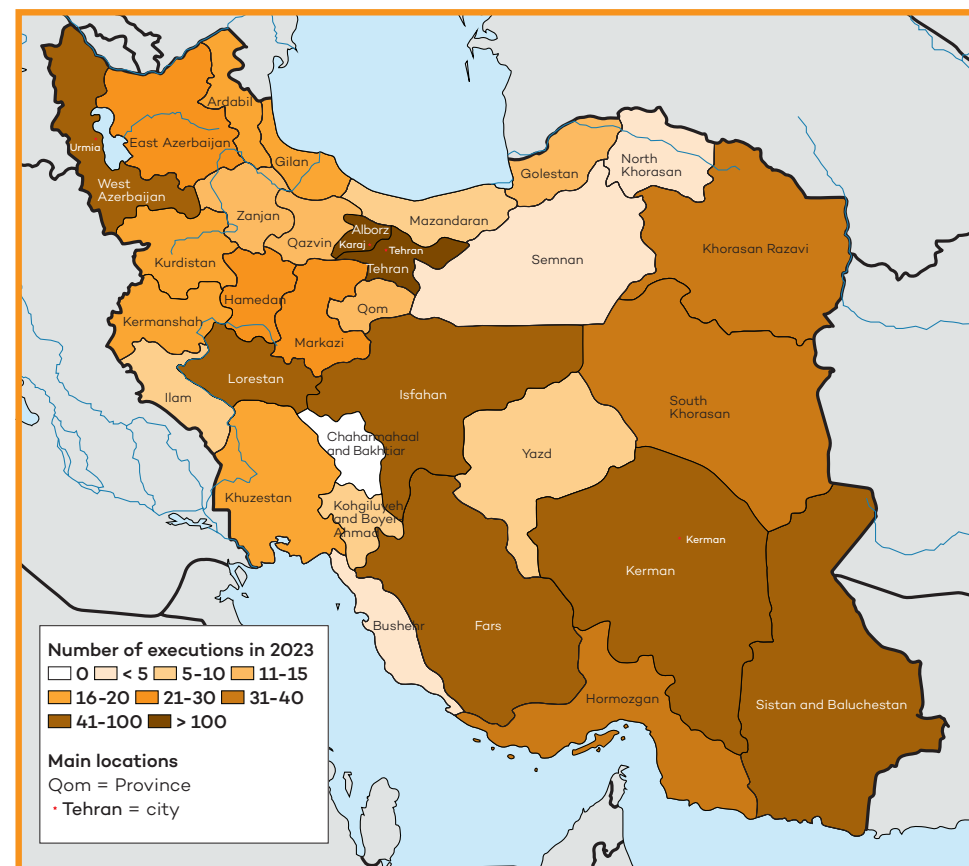
Another **unnamed** man was publicly hanged in Najaf Abad, Isfahan on 28 December 2023. He had also been sentenced to *qisas* for the murder of a policeman.¹³⁷

According to a survey commissioned by Iran Human Rights and the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty in 2020, more than 86% of the 20,000 participants living in Iran said that they are opposed to public executions.¹³⁸

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIONS

Executions were carried out in 30 Iranian provinces in 2023. The following maps show the geographic distribution of the executions. Map 2 lays out the total number of executions while Map 3 shows the number of executions per capita for each province. As mentioned above 85% of the executions included in the 2023 report were not announced by official sources. The next section will provide more details about unannounced and secret executions.

MAP 2: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF ALL EXECUTIONS BY NUMBER

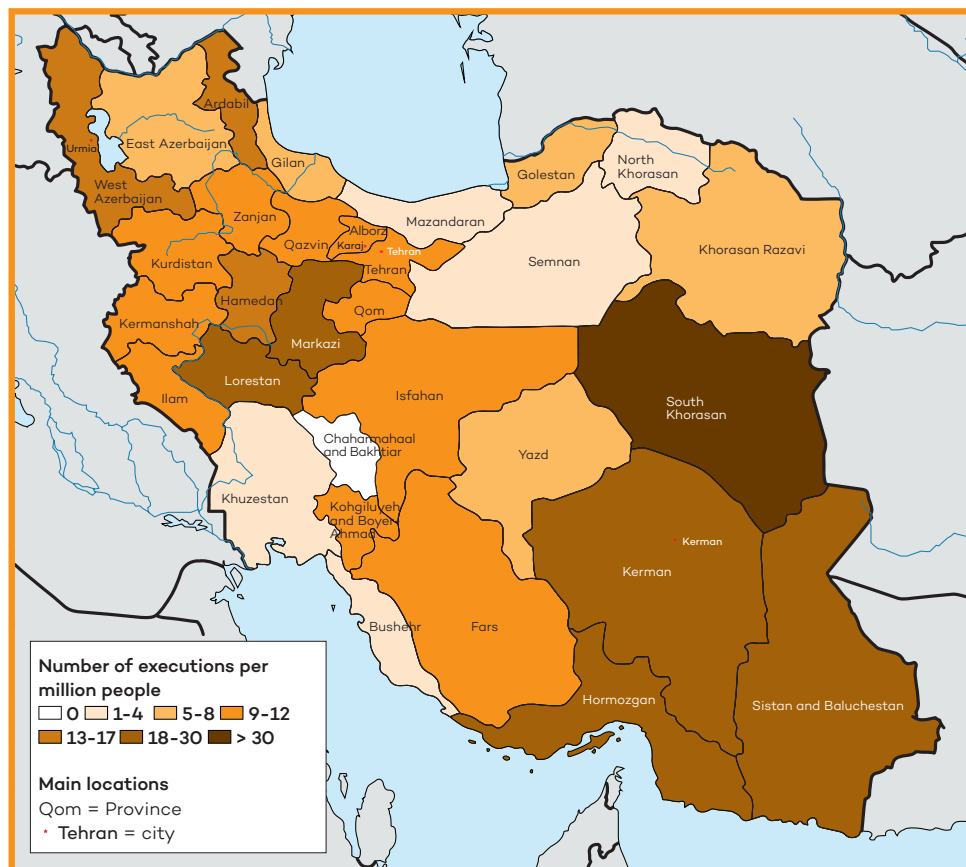


136 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6054/>

137 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6438/>

138 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4458/>

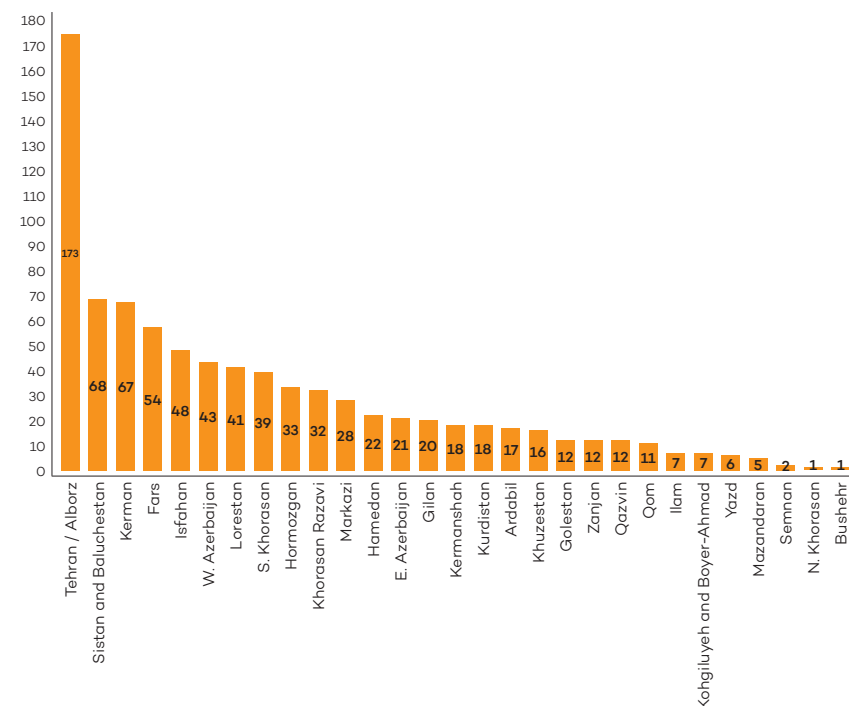
MAP 3: NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER CAPITA



In 2023, Tehran/Alborz provinces had the highest number of executions (173), followed by Sistan and Baluchistan province (68) and Kerman (67). South Khorasan and Sistan and Baluchistan provinces had the highest number of executions per capita.

In 2023, Iran carried out 10 executions per million people.¹³⁹ South Khorasan province had the highest execution rate, with 51 executions per million inhabitants, followed by Sistan and Baluchistan with 25 executions per million and Lorestan with 23 executions per million. Numbers for all provinces are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

¹³⁹ Population based on amar.org.ir.



Executions were carried out in 30 of the 31 provinces in Iran. The only province that did not carry out any executions in 2023 was Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province.

SECRET AND UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS

85% of all executions recorded by IHRNGO in 2023, i.e. 709 executions, were not announced by the authorities. Some of the executions were carried out secretly, without the family or the lawyer being informed, and some have simply not been announced by the official media. This is while according to the Islamic Republic's own laws, the defendant's lawyer must be notified of the planned execution. The actual numbers are believed to be much higher. Officially announced executions have been decreasing in recent years. In 2023, 15% of the recorded executions were officially reported, compared to 12% in 2022, 16.5% in 2021 and an average of 33% in 2018-2020.

FACTS ABOUT SECRET AND UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- At least 709 executions (85% of the total) were not announced by official Iranian sources
- Only 25 (5%) of the 471 drug-related executions were announced by official sources
- Drug offences accounted for 63% of unannounced executions
- Murder charges accounted for 31% of unannounced executions
- Tehran/Alborz provinces had the highest number (128) of unannounced executions, followed by Kerman (66) and Sistan and Baluchistan (62)
- At least 30 people were secretly executed, without their families and lawyers being notified
- All the recorded secret executions were Baluch minorities

DOCUMENTATION OF UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS



Photographs of some of the people whose executions were not announced by official sources, but whose execution was documented by Iran Human Rights in 2023.

Only unofficial reports with a sufficient amount of information have been included in this report. IHRNGO's network inside the

country receives information about many executions which are not announced by domestic media or officials. Confirming these reports is a challenging task, as the media is either directly controlled or under strong scrutiny by the authorities. Reporting human rights violations to human rights organisations is also regarded as a crime, and those involved face criminal prosecution. Notwithstanding, every year Iran Human Rights manages to confirm several hundred cases of executions that are not announced by the authorities. In many of these cases, information on executions is verified by two or more independent sources. In some cases, Iran Human Rights receives photographs that can document the execution. Often, photographs with information about the executed person are sent to Iran Human Rights.

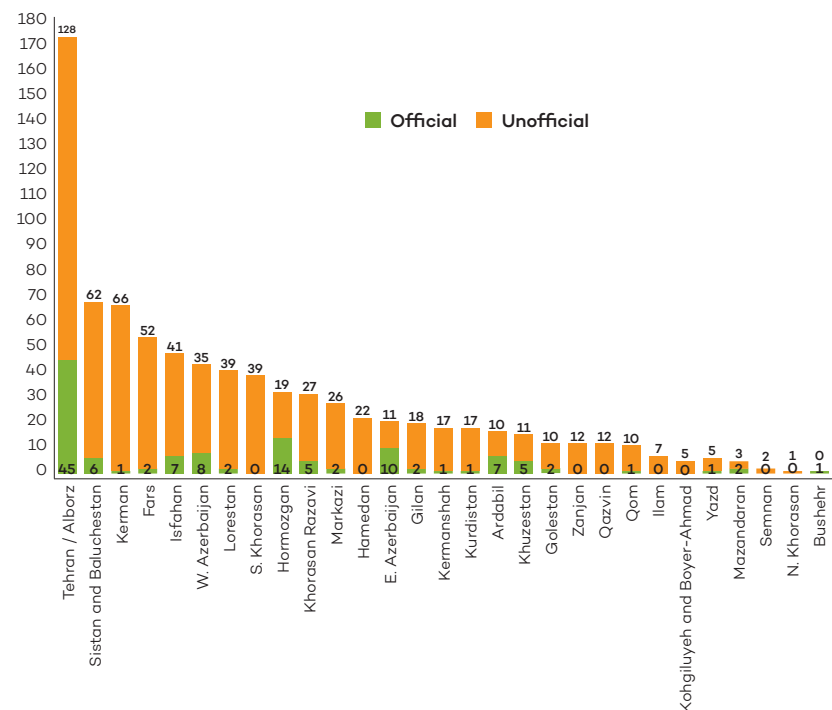
Death or funeral notices are also used as documentation to support reports of unannounced executions received by Iran Human Rights. 46 executions reported to Iran Human Rights were not included in the 2023 figures due to lack of sufficient documentation or confirmation by two independent sources.



Death notices showing some of the people whose executions were not announced by official sources but were documented by Iran Human Rights.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF ANNOUNCED AND UNANNOUNCED/ SECRET EXECUTIONS

In 2023, the highest number of unannounced executions took place in three Alborz province prisons (Ghezelhesar, Karaj Penitentiary and Rajai Shahr Prison) and in Zahedan Central Prison in Sistan and Baluchistan province.¹⁴⁰



The diagram above shows the geographical distribution of the official (green) and unofficial/unannounced (orange) executions in Iran. The prisons in the provinces of Tehran and Alborz, Sistan and Baluchistan (southeast), and Kerman (southeast) had the highest number of recorded executions. This was followed by Fars, Isfahan and West Azerbaijan.

¹⁴⁰ Further details are provided in the following section.

EXECUTION CATEGORIES

JUVENILE OFFENDERS

JUVENILE EXECUTIONS: TRENDS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Iran is one of the last remaining countries to sentence juvenile offenders to death and executes more juvenile offenders than any other country in the world. In violation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Iran has ratified, Iranian authorities executed at least two juvenile offenders in 2023. According to Iran Human Rights' reports, at least 70 juvenile offenders were executed between 2010 and 2023 in Iran.¹⁴¹

Due to lack of transparency in the Iranian Judiciary, there is no information about the number of juvenile offenders on death row in Iranian prisons. However, according to a 2021 report by UN experts, at least 85 juveniles could be on death row in Iranian prisons.¹⁴²

The international pressure on Iran on this matter increased during the 2000-2010 decade. As a consequence of the criticism from the international community and domestic civil society, Iran made changes regarding juvenile offenders in the 2013 Islamic Penal Code (IPC). However, these changes have not led to a decrease in the number of juvenile executions. The 2013 IPC explicitly defines the "age of criminal responsibility" for children as the age of maturity under *Sharia* law, meaning that girls over 9 lunar years of age and boys over 15 lunar years of age are eligible for execution if convicted of "crimes against God" (such as apostasy) or "retribution crimes" (such as murder). Article 91 of the IPC states that juvenile offenders under the age of 18 who commit *hudud* or *qisas* offences may not be sentenced to death if the judge determines the offender lacked "adequate mental maturity and the ability to reason" based on forensic evidence.¹⁴³ The article allows judges to assess a juvenile offender's mental maturity at the time of the offence and, potentially, to impose an alternative punishment to the death penalty on the basis of the outcome. In 2014, Iran's Supreme Court confirmed that all juvenile offenders on death row could apply for retrial.

However, Article 91 is vaguely worded and inconsistently and arbitrarily applied. Between 2016 and 2023, Iran Human Rights identified 21 cases where the death sentences of juvenile offenders were

¹⁴¹ Iran Human Rights Execution Counter: <https://iranhr.net/en/>

¹⁴² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2021/12/iran-un-experts-say-executions-child-offenders-must-stop>

¹⁴³ <https://undocs.org/A/68/377>. See also Iran Penal Code (2013), Art. 91

commuted based on Article 91. In the same period, at least 31 juvenile offenders were executed according to Iran Human Rights' reports and several remain at risk of execution. It seems that Article 91 has not led to a decrease in the number of juvenile executions. The Iranian authorities must change the law, unconditionally removing all death sentences for all offences committed under 18 years of age.

According to the report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran published in August 2021 at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly: *"While article 91 of the Penal Code gives judges the discretion to exempt children from the death penalty, the continued imposition of death sentences for child offenders shows that that article has failed to have a significant impact."* He further stated that: *"the application of the death penalty on child offenders calls for a revision of the Penal Code to prohibit the imposition of the death penalty on individuals who were under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged crime, as well as the abolition of the death penalty."*¹⁴⁴

In his October 2022 report to the 77th session of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General called on Iran's government to *"prohibit the execution of child offenders in all circumstances and to commute their sentences."*¹⁴⁵

International human rights mechanisms have also repeatedly called on Iran to put an end to the execution of juvenile offenders. When Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, criticised the Islamic Republic's use of the death penalty in June 2021, stating that *"over 80 child offenders are on death row,"* it was dismissed by Islamic Republic officials. The Deputy for International Affairs at Iran's High Council for Human Rights told AFP that the Islamic Republic uses the death penalty *"three to four times a year"* and that such uses of the death penalty *"are not a symbol of violations of human rights."*¹⁴⁶ He also called the criticism *"unfair."*¹⁴⁷ Noting that 85 juvenile offenders were on death row in Iran, a resolution passed in the European Parliament in February 2022 called on Iran to *"urgently amend Article 91 of the Islamic Penal Code of Iran to explicitly prohibit the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age, in all circumstances and without any discretion for judges to impose the death penalty or life imprisonment without the possibility of release."*¹⁴⁸

144 A/HRC/47/22, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3928681?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

145 A/77/525, <https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?j=N2263251&t=pdf>

146 <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210630-iran-says-executing-child-offenders-not-a-rights-violation>

147 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4786/>

148 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0050_EN.html

In November 2023, the UNGA expressed *"serious concern at the continued imposition of the death penalty by the Islamic Republic of Iran against minors, and urges the Islamic Republic of Iran to cease the imposition of the death penalty against minors, including persons who were under the age of 18, at the time of their offence, in violation of the ICCPR and to commute the sentences for child offenders on death row."*¹⁴⁹

In his 2022 report, Javid Rehman, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, called on the Islamic Republic to *"Urgently amend legislation to prohibit the execution of persons who committed a crime while under the age of 18 years, and urgently amend legislation to commute all death sentences for child offenders on death row."*¹⁵⁰ In 2023, he noted that *"Iranian authorities have continued to execute persons sentenced as children in violation of the State's international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ICCPR."*¹⁵¹

FACTS ABOUT JUVENILE EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- At least 2 juvenile offenders were executed
- Both were on death row for murder
- One of those executed was 17 years old at the time of execution
- 3 others executed in 2023 are believed to have been juvenile offenders which IHRNGO has been unable to verify at the time of writing

JUVENILE OFFENDERS EXECUTED IN 2023

ALI NAJAFI



24-year-old Ali Najafi from Kouhdasht was sentenced to *qisas* for the murder of his cousin (maternal uncle's son), which he insisted was an accident. He was 17 years old at the time of the offence. Ali was taken back and forth to the gallows nine times and despite his father offering a

149 A/RES/78/220, <https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?j=N2342162&t=pdf>

150 A/HRC/49/75, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/49/75>

151 A/HRC/52/67, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5267-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

\$2.25 million *diya*, his uncle insisted on his retribution. Ali was executed in Khorramabad Central prison on 27 September 2023.¹⁵²

HAMIDREZA AZARI



Hamidreza was born on 1 August 2006 and was alleged to have committed murder on 28 April 2023, when he was 16 years old. In aired forced confessions following his arrest and state media reports, his age was given as 18, a deliberate attempt to evade accountability for violating international laws. Hamidreza was executed in Sabzevar Prison on 24 November 2023 when he was just 17 years old.¹⁵³

TABLE 1: LIST OF CONFIRMED JUVENILE OFFENDERS EXECUTED IN 2023

	DATE	NAME	AGE*	CHARGE	LOCATION	SOURCE	UN/OFFICIAL
1	27 September 2023	Ali Najafi	17	Murder	Khorramabad Central Prison, Lorestan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
2	24 November 2023	Hamidreza Azari	16	Murder	Sabzevar Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial

TABLE 2: LIST OF UNCONFIRMED JUVENILE OFFENDERS EXECUTED IN 2023

	DATE	NAME	AGE*	CHARGE	LOCATION	SOURCE	UN/OFFICIAL
1	19 August 2023	Abdolsamad Shahuzehi	17	Murder	Zahedan Central Prison, Sistan and Baluchistan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
2	19 August 2023	Mahmoud Rigi	17	Murder	Zahedan Central Prison, Sistan and Baluchistan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
3	26 November 2023	Adel Damani	16	Murder	Chabahar Prison, Sistan and Baluchistan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial

* Age at the time of committing the alleged offence

152 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6211/>
153 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6350/>

WOMEN

Iran is the world's top executioner of women, with at least 22 executed in 2023, the highest number of women executions since 2014. As mentioned above, there was a sharp drop in the execution of women on drug-related charges after the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Laws, but in 2021, five women were executed on these charges, consistent with the rise in overall drug-related executions. On the occasion of World Day Against the Death Penalty in 2021, Iran Human Rights published a 12-year analysis of "Women and the Death Penalty in Iran" which provides broader socio-economic and legal context and background.¹⁵⁴ It is important to note that women do not have the right to divorce, which is reflected in the number of domestic violence cases reported.

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2022

- At least 22 women were executed in 2023
- 15 were sentenced to *qisas* for murder
- 3 women were executed for drug-related charges
- 1 woman was executed for alleged espionage for Israel
- The identities of 8 of the women are unknown
- The charges against 3 women are unknown
- 5 of the women were Baluch minorities
- 6 women were executed for the murder of their husbands
- At least 2 women were child brides
- Only 2 of the executions were announced by official sources
- At least 210 women were executed between 2010 and 2023

WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2023

ZARKHATOUN MAZARZEHI

Zarkhatoun Mazarzehi was a 46-year-old widow who was the breadwinner of her family. She was carrying raw materials for cosmetics when she was arrested at a Kerman checkpoint on 30 December 2017. Zarkhatoun vehemently denied being in possession of illegal drugs at every opportunity.¹⁵⁵ She was denied access to a lawyer and sentenced to death for drug-related charges by Branch One of the Kerman Revolutionary Court in March 2022. Zarkhatoun was executed in Kerman Central Prison on 15 November 2023.¹⁵⁶

154 https://iranhr.net/media/files/Women_and_the_Death_Penalty_2021.pdf
155 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5150/>
156 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6314/>

SAMIRA SABZIAN



Samira Sabzian was a child bride and mother to two young children who was arrested for the murder of her husband. She was sentenced to *qisas* and spent 10 years on death row. To obtain the forgiveness of her husband's family who were the plaintiffs in her case, Samira had refrained from seeing her children for 10 years. Her final visit to say goodbye was the first time she had seen her children who were now aged 17 and 10 years old.¹⁵⁷ Despite all efforts, Samira was executed in Ghezelhesar Prison on 20 December 2023.¹⁵⁸

TABLE 3: LIST OF WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2022

	DATE	NAME	AGE*	CHARGE	PLACE	SOURCE	COMMENT
1	7 January 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Karaj Penitentiary, Alborz	IHRNGO	Unofficial
2	3 March 2023	Leila Bameri (Baluch)	Unknown	Murder	Kahnuj Prison, Kerman	Haal Vsh	Unofficial /secret
3	19 March 2023	Maryam Najar	Unknown	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
4	30 April 2023	Unidentified (Baluch)	Unknown	Murder	Zahedan Central Prison, Sistan and Baluchistan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
5	30 April 2023	Madineh Sabzevan Shibak (Baluch)	Unknown	Drug-related	Birjand Central Prison, South Khorasan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
6	28 May 2023	Monireh Nourikia	30	Murder	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
7	2 July 2023	Afsaneh Shahiki (Baluch)	50	Murder	Kerman Central Prison, Kerman	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
8	9 July 2023	Monireh Sayadat	32	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial

¹⁵⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6391/>

¹⁵⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6415/>

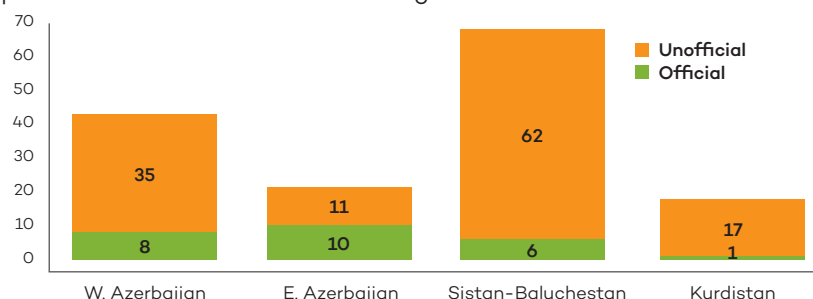
9	9 July 2023	Farzieh Shokrollahi	Unknown	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
10	12 July 2023	Fatemeh Yousef Abadi	Unknown	Murder	Rajai Shahr Prison, Alborz	HRANA	Unofficial
11	10 August 2023	Roghieh Abedini	40	Murder	Hamedan Central Prison, Hamedan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
12	4 September 2023	Mahboubeh Roshandel	27	Murder	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	HRANA	Unofficial
13	5 September 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Qom Central Prison, Qom	IHRNGO	Unofficial
14	21 October 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
15	1 November 2023	Maryam Foroughmanesh	Unknown	Murder	Yasuj Central Prison	IHRNGO	Unofficial
16	15 November 2023	Zarkhatoun Mazarzei	46	Drug-related	Kerman Central Prison, Kerman	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
17	25 November 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Rasht Central Prison, Gilan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
18	20 December 2023	Samira Sabzian	30	Murder	Ghezelhesar Prison, Alborz	IHRNGO	Official
19	27 December 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Unknown	Birjand Central Prison, South Khorasan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
20	27 December 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Unknown	Birjand Central Prison, South Khorasan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
21	27 December 2023	Unidentified	Unknown	Unknown	Birjand Central Prison, South Khorasan	Haal Vsh	Unofficial
22	29 December 2023	Nasim Namazi	Unknown	Moharebeh/ Efsad-fil-arz for espionage	Urmia Central Prison	Mizan	Official

* Age at the time of execution

ETHNIC MINORITIES

As this report and previous annual reports demonstrate, ethnic minorities in Iran are overrepresented in death penalty statistics. Furthermore, with 25 executions per million inhabitants, Sistan and Baluchistan province had the second highest number of executions per capita in 2023. According to the present report, 150 people were executed in the 4 ethnic provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and Kurdistan in 2023. This number was 130 in 2022, 62 in 2021 and 60 in 2020.

Because the executions of ethnic minorities are not implemented exclusively in their home provinces, it is difficult to specify the exact number of each ethnic minority groups' execution. Furthermore, information about those executed does not always include their ethnicity. The execution of Baluch prisoners are in many cases carried out in prisons outside the Baluchistan region.



In 2023, more than 84% of the executions recorded by Iran Human Rights in East and West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchistan were not announced by the authorities.

Furthermore, the absolute majority of those executed for their political affiliation belong to ethnic groups, the Kurds in particular. An overview of Iran Human Rights reports between 2010-2023 shows that at least 154 people were executed for affiliation with banned political and armed groups. Of those, 76 (49%) were Kurdish, 45 (29%) were Baluch and 24 (16%) were Arab, with a majority of them being Sunni Muslims. There are several possible reasons for the overrepresentation of ethnic groups in execution figures. One explanation might be that the authorities use more violence to create fear due to higher opposition amongst the population in those regions. During the nationwide protests following Jina (Mahsa) Amini's state killing, Kurdish regions and Baluchistan were the areas with the longest-lasting protests, and almost half of all protesters killed on the streets were from Baluchistan, Kurdistan and other Kurdish towns in other provinces.

The authorities targeted propaganda labelling its critics in the ethnic regions as separatists, and the presence of armed groups in those regions makes it easier for authorities to justify death sentences under the pretext of fighting terrorism and separatism. All this has led to less domestic and international sensitivity to the execution of people from ethnic regions, and thus, a lower political cost for the atrocities. Finally, with these four ethnic provinces already suffering from poor socio-economic conditions, local judicial offices also act more lawlessly and arbitrarily.

EXECUTION OF BALUCH MINORITIES

With 68 executions, Sistan and Baluchistan province had the second highest number of total executions, and with 25 executions per million inhabitants, it was the province with the second-highest number of executions per capita in 2023. There are no official figures for the population of Baluch minorities in Iran, but different sources estimate the number to be between 1.5¹⁵⁹ and 4.8 million¹⁶⁰, accounting for 2-6% of Iran's total population. However, research and monitoring by Iran Human Rights shows that at least 167 Baluch prisoners were executed in 2023, accounting for 20% of all recorded executions in Iran. 110 of the 167 executions took place in prisons outside Sistan and Baluchistan province. The gross overrepresentation of Baluch people in the execution figures in Iran has elicited reactions from rights groups and the international community.¹⁶¹

FACTS ABOUT BALUCH EXECUTIONS IN 2023

- At least 167 Baluch minorities were executed, accounting for 20% of the total executions in 2023
- 138 were executed for drug-related offences, accounting for nearly 30% of all drug-related executions
- 22 were executed on murder charges (*qisas*)
- 7 were executed for security-related charges
- 3 of those executed were Baluch women
- Only 5 (3%) of the executions were officially announced
- 27 executions were secretly carried out
- Executions took place in 27 different prisons, compared to 22 in 2022 and 10 in 2021

¹⁵⁹ <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/sep/03/iran-minorities-2-ethnic-diversity>

¹⁶⁰ <https://unpo.org/members/7922>

¹⁶¹ UN Experts Alarmed Over Execution of Baluch Minority Prisoners: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1083772>

FOREIGN CITIZENS

Afghans constitute the largest group of non-Iranian execution and death row cases in Iranian prisons. In 2021, no execution of Afghan nationals was recorded until September, when five men were executed in the space of 35 days. On 10 October 2021, Iran Human Rights expressed its concern that the Taliban takeover in August had facilitated the execution of Afghan nationals.¹⁶² That number more than tripled in 2022, with 16 Afghan nationals executed, including a juvenile offender and a woman. In 2023, the number of Afghan nationals rose to 25 people, with two publicly executed.

There is no public information available about the number of Afghan nationals on death row in Iranian prisons, but the numbers are believed to be high, particularly in prisons in the eastern part of the country. In June 2023, a spokesperson for the Taliban told the media that *“the death sentences of 200 Afghan citizens which had recently been issued in Iran, have been commuted to imprisonment and they have been returned to Afghanistan.”*¹⁶³ In July 2023, informed sources told IHRNGO that around 250–300 prisoners are held in the foreign ward of Isfahan Central Prison, the majority of whom are Afghan and Pakistani nationals and on death row for drug-related charges. An Afghan national named Jalal Amanedin, who is currently on death row for drug-related charges with his uncle Shafi Amanedin, was 17 years old at the time of arrest.¹⁶⁴

It is important to note that Afghan executions are not normally announced by authorities and they do not have a family network or lawyers who can raise awareness about their situation. As such, their number may be higher than those we have been able to verify.

Mirajan Mohammadi was secretly executed for drug-related charges in Roudan Prison on 9 January 2023.¹⁶⁵ **Yousef Jomeh Hossein** was executed for drug-related charges in Shiraz Central Prison on 5 April 2023.¹⁶⁶ A man only identified as **Saeed** was executed for murder in Rajai Shahr Prison on 8 May 2023.¹⁶⁷ **Two unidentified men** were executed for murder in Ghezelhesar Prison on 10 May 2023.¹⁶⁸ **Najaf Soleiman Reshad** was executed for murder charges in Khorramabad Central Prison on 18 May 2023.¹⁶⁹ **Mohammad Ramez Rashidi** and **Naeim Hashem Ghotali** were publicly hanged in Shiraz for charges of

¹⁶² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4917/>

¹⁶³ <https://www.parsine.com/افغانستان-عوت-مهاجر-طالبان-825449/106-بخش-سياست>

¹⁶⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6059/>

¹⁶⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5704/>

¹⁶⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5802/>

¹⁶⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5927/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5914/>

¹⁶⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5919/>

efsad-fil-arz and *baghy* in the “Shahcheragh” case on 8 July 2023.¹⁷⁰ **Jahedollah Marouf** was executed for *qisas* or drug-related charges in Isfahan Central prison on 15 July 2023.¹⁷¹ **Mohammad Arbab** was executed for drug-related charges in Zabol Prison on 30 July 2023.¹⁷² **Assadollah Amini** was executed for drug-related charges in Zabol Prison on 31 July 2023.¹⁷³ **Massoud Eshaghizehi** was executed for drug-related charges in Zabol Prison on 1 August 2023.¹⁷⁴ An **unidentified man** was executed for drug-related charges in Kerman Central Prison on 7 August 2023.¹⁷⁵ **Sobhan Eftekharedin** was executed for murder charges in Aligudarz Prison on 27 August 2023.¹⁷⁶ An **unidentified man** was executed for unknown charges in Kerman Central Prison on 9 October 2023.¹⁷⁷ **Nazir Mohammad Tajik** and **Nour Mohammad Barbari** were executed for murder in Ghezelhesar Prison on 11 October 2023.¹⁷⁸ **Sadeqh Tajik** was executed for murder in Ghezelhesar Prison on 1 November 2023.¹⁷⁹ **Reza Arbabzehi** was executed for murder in Zahedan Central Prison on 11 November 2023.¹⁸⁰ **Nazir Mohammad** was executed for drug-related charges in Ghezelhesar Prison on 15 November 2023.¹⁸¹ A man only identified as **Arsalan** was executed for murder charges in Ghezelhesar Prison on 15 November 2023.¹⁸² A man only identified as **Jamil** was executed for murder charges in Shiraz Central prison on 14 December 2023.¹⁸³ **Abdollah Zamani** was executed for drug-related charges in Ghezelhesar Prison on 19 December 2023.¹⁸⁴ **Two unidentified men** were executed for unknown charges in Karaj Penitentiary on 23 December 2023.¹⁸⁵

DUAL CITIZENS

Iran does not recognise dual nationality and thus denies consular access to dual citizens. It also uses imprisoned dual nationals and foreign nationals as bargaining chips in political and economic negotiations with the West. In April 2019, then Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad

¹⁷⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6042/>

¹⁷¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6059/>

¹⁷² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6106/>

¹⁷³ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6106/>

¹⁷⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6111/>

¹⁷⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6132/>

¹⁷⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6173/>

¹⁷⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6225/>

¹⁷⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6235/>

¹⁷⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6281/>

¹⁸⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6304/>

¹⁸¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6316/>

¹⁸² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6318/>

¹⁸³ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6402/>

¹⁸⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6414/>

¹⁸⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6447/>

Javad Zarif declared that he had the authority to exchange Iranian-Americans imprisoned in Iran with the US, an admission that these prisoners are being used as political hostages.¹⁸⁶ As well as arresting foreign and dual-nationals to use as pawns in their hostage diplomacy, three dissidents were kidnapped from neighbouring countries with assistance from an international drug-cartel and transferred to Iran: Ruhollah Zam from Iraq in October 2019, Jamshid Sharmahd from the United Arab Emirates in July 2020 and Habib Asyoud from Turkey in October 2020. Of the three, only one is still on death row. Ruhollah Zam was executed in December 2020¹⁸⁷ and Habib Asyoud was executed in 2023.¹⁸⁸ There are currently two dual citizens on death row in Iran, Ahmadreza Djalali¹⁸⁹ and Jamshid Sharmahd.¹⁹⁰

DUAL-NATIONALS EXECUTED IN 2023

ALIREZA AKBARI



Alireza Akbari was an Iranian-British national and former senior Ministry of Defence employee who was sentenced to death for charges of *efsad-fil-arz* through espionage. He was executed at an unspecified location on 14 January 2023.¹⁹¹

HABIB ASYUUD



Habib Asyoud (Chaab) was an Iranian-Swedish national and Arab minority who was kidnapped from Turkey in October 2020¹⁹² and sentenced to death for charges of *efsad-fil-arz* through forming, administering and leading a group called the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz,

and planning and implementing terrorist operations, and destruction of public property carried out through various operations.”¹⁹³ Habib’s public trial lacked all fair trial standards. He was executed at an unspecified location on 6 May 2023.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/world/middleeast/iran-zarif-prisoner-exchange.html>

¹⁸⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4527/>

¹⁸⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5874/>

¹⁸⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5217/>

¹⁹⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5738/>

¹⁹¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5700/>

¹⁹² <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4485/>

¹⁹³ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5773/>

¹⁹⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5874/>

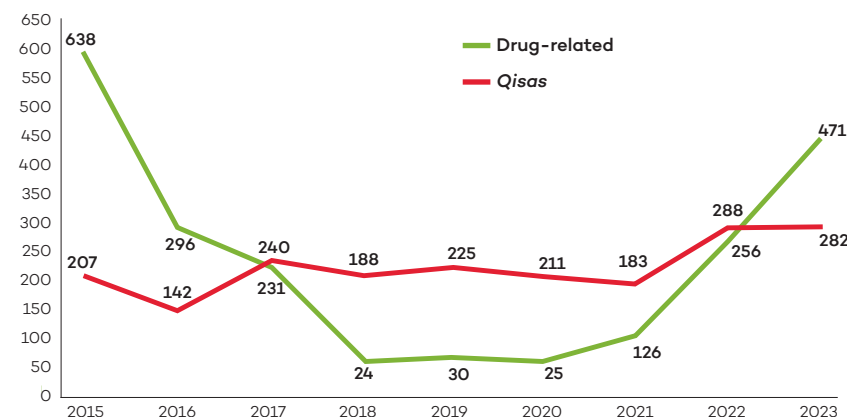
WAYS TO RESTRICT THE USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN

SUSTAINED DOMESTIC CAMPAIGNING AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

The 2017 Amendments to the Anti-Narcotics Law, which was impelled by international pressure on the Islamic Republic to decrease drug-related executions, led to the most significant reduction in the number of implemented death sentences in the Islamic Republic's history. From an average of about 403 annual executions between 2010-2017, the numbers dropped to less than 30 drug-related executions per year.

At the time of the 2017 Amendment, Iran Human Rights warned that the Amendment would not lead to sustained reduction in the use of the death penalty as it did not address the issue of lack of due process and unfair trials. As feared, the impact of the Amendment only lasted for three years. In 2021, the number of drug-related executions increased by fivefold, a ten-fold increase in 2022, and eighteen fold increase in 2023 compared to the three years after enforcement of the new Amendment (2018-2020). This trend is likely to continue as this hike has not been met with appropriate international condemnations.

Between 2018-2020, when the number of drug-related executions were relatively low, *qisas* executions (death penalty as retribution-in-kind) accounted for the majority of all executions. These two charges together have accounted for more than 80% of all executions in the last 10 years. Reducing the use of the death penalty in Iran is therefore dependent on a change in *qisas* laws and practices, in addition to an abolition of the death penalty for drug offences.



While the number of drug-related executions decreased significantly after the peak in 2015, the number of *qisas* executions had small fluctuations in both directions. In 2023, at least 282 people were executed for murder, a slight decrease compared to 2022 but higher than 2015-2021. Drug-related executions increased eighteenfold compared to the annual average of 2018 to 2020.

Experience over the past two decades have shown that the international community and Iranian civil society are the main driving forces behind any reform aimed at limiting the use of the death penalty in Iran. Halting the implementation of stoning punishments, which were carried out for adultery, and reducing the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences from 2018 to 2020 are two significant steps taken by the Iranian authorities to restrict the death penalty's scope. Both changes occurred as a result of simultaneous domestic campaigns and international pressure. The EU made the ban on stoning a condition for improved economic relations with Iran.¹⁹⁵ While the reduction in the number of drug-related executions was the result of a change of law and anticipated to be long-lasting, the recent rise in drug-related executions has demonstrated that the 2017 Amendment was not sustainable in restricting the use of the death penalty. Death sentences for drug offences can be issued by authorities through the Revolutionary Courts as long as capital punishment is sanctioned for drug offences and as long as the right to due process and fair trial are not guaranteed.

Likewise, the halt in implementing stoning punishments should be regarded as temporary, as it too is still written in law. A directive from the Head of Judiciary on the implementation of punishments

195 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2726009.stm

published in June 2019 describes in detail how stoning sentences should be carried out. Stoning punishments can therefore be implemented again if international human rights mechanisms reduce scrutiny on the human rights situation in Iran.

Thus, sustained international pressure and domestic campaigns must call for a total abolition of these sentences in the law. A more detailed description of the events leading to changes in law and practice in the case of drug-related executions and stoning punishments can be found in the 2018 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/21/>

CATEGORIES OF THE DEATH PENALTY WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVEMENT

JUVENILE EXECUTIONS

Iran has amassed the highest number of juvenile executions in the last 20 years. According to reports by Iran Human Rights and Amnesty International, between 1999 and 2022, Iranian authorities implemented 105 (77%) of at least 136 juvenile executions worldwide. Iran has also been the only country to carry out the execution of juvenile offenders every single year for the last 10 years. Both Iranian civil society and the international community are highly sensitive to this issue. Due to sustained international pressure between 2007 and 2013, Iranian authorities introduced some changes in the Penal Code regarding the death penalty for juvenile offenders. However, these changes did not lead to a decrease in the number of executions. Stronger, co-ordinated pressure by the international community can lead to the end of child executions in Iran. Islamic Republic authorities refer to Islamic jurisprudence, which states that the age of “maturity” and thus the age of criminal responsibility is 9 lunar years for girls and 15 lunar years for boys. This is while 18 is already used as the age for a person to be considered to have reached “maturity” in other circumstances. For instance, passports are issued to citizens above 18 upon presentation of their birth certificate and national ID card. But children below 18 and unmarried women above 18 must obtain the permission of their father or closest male relative, and married women must present their husband’s permission in order to be issued with a passport. Changing the age of criminal responsibility to 18 would therefore not represent a complex deviation from Islamic law.

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

Iran is one of the very few countries still carrying out public executions. The issue has been raised repeatedly by the international community. There has also been debate amongst Iranian civil society and even in the Iranian Parliament on the topic.¹⁹⁷ Several senior Iranian

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-execution-whipping-law/29314017.html>

clerics (ayatollahs) have even stated that implementing punishments in public is not a religious necessity and should not be carried out if the negative side effects outweigh the benefits.¹⁹⁸ One of the biggest negative side-effects is international condemnations. Although the government (led by the president) does not have the authority to issue and implement death sentences according to the Iranian Constitution, public executions seem to be the exception to this rule. At the local level, the governor representing the government has the power to decide whether an execution should be carried out in public or not.¹⁹⁹ As the government is the counterpart of Iran's dialogue partners, it is easier to exert pressure on them in order to stop the practice of public executions. Hence, stopping the practice of public executions demands focused and sustained pressure from the international community. Moreover, the pause in the implementation of public executions caused by COVID-19 restrictions lowered the public's tolerance of public executions. The authorities are gradually resuming public executions, with two in 2022 and seven in 2023. International pressure, especially from countries with closer diplomatic dialogue with the Islamic Republic, can raise the political cost of public executions.

QISAS

Unlike public executions, *qisas* for murder is specified by *Sharia* law, and as long as the Penal Code is based on *Sharia*, Iranian authorities consider its removal a red line that cannot be crossed. They claim *qisas* to be a private right of the victim's family that they cannot deny or control. According to the IPC, murder is punishable by *qisas*, allowing the victim's family to demand death as retribution. However, they can also demand blood money (*diya*) instead or can simply grant forgiveness. Although opposing *qisas* is considered a serious crime according to Iranian law, promoting forgiveness is regarded as a good deed according to Islam. This offers several possibilities in reducing the number of *qisas* executions, which is the second highest execution category. A brief description of actions which might contribute to reducing the number of such executions are presented below.

- **Distinction between murder and manslaughter:** Those charged with the umbrella term of "intentional murder" are sentenced to *qisas* regardless of intent (*mens rea*) or circumstances due to a lack of grading in law. Many are executed each year for murders committed

unintentionally or in self-defence. Taking these into account would reduce the number of executions.

- **Long prison terms for murder convicts forgiven by the plaintiff:** One of the arguments used by those defending *qisas* death sentences is that once forgiven (by paying *diya* for instance), someone who has committed a serious crime and who can be dangerous will be released in society after a short prison term. This notion makes the plaintiff hesitate in choosing *diya* or forgiveness instead of *qisas*. This issue can be solved by the introduction of a compulsory minimum prison term for all murder convicts who have been forgiven by the plaintiff. The prison term should be long enough so that the plaintiff feels a sense of justice that the convict is being punished.
- **One rate for *diya* and state support to cover if necessary:** The minimum rate of *diya* is set by the authorities. However, because there are no caps on *diya* amounts, the victim's family can demand a sum much higher than the minimum rate. Besides adding to the discriminatory nature of *qisas* (the poor are executed while the rich can afford to pay their way out), it also makes it difficult for the state to at least partially subsidise the *diya*.
- **Promoting forgiveness through civil society:** Over the past few years, an increasing number of civil society groups have been working to promote forgiveness instead of *qisas*. Disturbingly, the Imam Ali Popular Student Relief Society (IAPSRs), which was at the forefront of the forgiveness movement,²⁰⁰ particularly for juvenile offenders, was disbanded as a result of a motion by the Ministry of Interior. Both the Iranian authorities and the international community must support, not hinder, efforts and groups advocating for forgiveness instead of *qisas*.

198 <https://www.ekhtebarebar.ir/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/نحوه-اجرای-احکام-حدود-سلب-حیات-و-...pdf>

199 <https://www.asrehamoon.ir/news/51511/استاندار-تنها-مخالف-اعدام-قاتلین-همسر-م-جاء-عام-51511>

200 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4663/>

MOVEMENTS PROMOTING ABOLITION AND MOBILISING CIVIL SOCIETY INSIDE IRAN

Over the last three years, there has been a growing trend of Iranians expressing their opposition to the death penalty. This trend reached its 44-year peak to save “Woman, Life, Freedom” protesters with protests held inside and outside prisons, hunger strikes, acts of protest, including wall writing, and online activism.



On 9 January 2023, following news that protesters Mohammad Ghabadlu and Mohammad Boroughani were transferred to solitary confinement, their families were joined by ordinary citizens outside Rajai Shahr (Gohardasht) Prison to stop their executions. Their brave action helped save the two protesters' lives that night.



Families of drug death row prisoners who began organising protests in September 2022 have continued their protests despite brutal crack-downs and arrests. On 16 January 2023, families of drug-related death-row prisoners travelled from all over Iran to gather outside the Judiciary

building. They held signs that read “no to drug executions”, “don’t execute my dad” and “no death penalty”.

On 25 January 2023, families gathered outside Ghezelhesar Prison after three prisoners on death row for drug-related charges were transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for their executions. On 16 March 2023, protesters gathered outside Urmia Central Prison to save the life of five prisoners including Kurdish political prisoner Mohiyedin Ebrahimi (see page 47).²⁰¹

Protests also took place outside Isfahan Central Prison on 14 and 17 May 2023, when protesters Saleh Mirhashemi, Saeed Yaghoubi and Majid Kazemi were transferred to solitary confinement (see page 52).



On 24 May 2023, families of people on death row for drug-related charges gathered outside the Judiciary building once again as executions and drug-related executions in particular were being carried out at an unprecedented rate in recent years.

In addition to public protests on the streets and outside prisons, prisoners have also made their voices heard against the death penalty on a regular basis. This includes messages from prison and physical protests behind bars. When Samad Moradi was transferred for execution on 29 September 2023, other prisoners protested and set their blankets on fire to prevent his transfer. Ultimately, prison guards took Samad out of the ward. Eight prisoners were injured by prison guards.”²⁰²

201 See video: <https://x.com/IHRights/status/1636492125083774976?s=20>

202 <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6214/>

Anti-death penalty graffiti and signs have also become more common since the start of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement.



The 2020 اعدام_نکنید (don't execute) online campaign, which successfully saved the lives of seven protesters from death row, has expanded to نه_به_اعدام (no death penalty). Online campaigns shed light on cases and mobilise protests. Anti-death penalty posts have been effectively criminalised through charges and sentences.

FORGIVENESS MOVEMENT

As mentioned under the section on *qisas* executions, according to the IPC, murder is punished by *qisas*, where the family of the victim can demand a retribution death sentence. But they can also demand blood money (*diya*) instead of a death sentence or can simply grant forgiveness. This opens an opportunity for citizens to counter the death penalty by promoting forgiveness without being subjected to persecution by the authorities. In the past six years, the movement for forgiveness has grown significantly. Ordinary citizens, celebrities, civil society and other local and national campaigns have been active in promoting forgiveness instead of the death penalty.



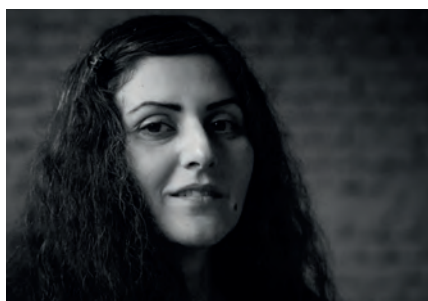
One of the most moving stories was that of Morad Biranvand, whose mother was murdered during the course of an armed robbery while he was on death row for drug-related charges. In an interview, he explained how his views had changed on death row, where he shared cells with the same people he watched being taken to the gallows. “Life is short, and I decided to forgive my mother’s murderer after I gained a better understanding in prison. I don’t expect anything in return and did it for God’s sake.” Morad was executed in Khorramabad Central Prison on 29 November 2023.²⁰³

²⁰³ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6365/>

REPRESSION OF ABOLITIONIST ACTIVISTS

The crackdown on abolitionist civil society intensified in 2023 through increased pressure and new trumped-up charges for activists. Below are just three of the many abolitionist activists targeted in 2023.

GOLROKH EBRAHIMI-IRAEI



Golrokh Ebrahimi-Iraee is a human rights activist and abolitionist who was first arrested in 2014. Behind bars, she received additional punishment for speaking out against the death penalty. She was released in May 2022 and violently rearrested on 26 September 2022 during the

“Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests. Her trial took place at Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court on 4 January 2023 and she was subsequently sentenced on 13 April 2023. Golrokh was sentenced to six years imprisonment for charges of “assembly and collusion against national security,” a year for “propaganda”, a two-year ban on membership of groups and parties and the confiscation of her phone. In April 2023, she sent a message to the “Dialogue to Save Iran” online conference, for which she was banned from visits. Her family reported that she had refused to attend her appeal hearing or request amnesty on 19 June 2023. On appeal, a five-year prison term and additional punishments were upheld. Golrokh continues to speak out against the death penalty and for the most voiceless prisoners while serving her sentence in Evin Prison.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/people/6092/>

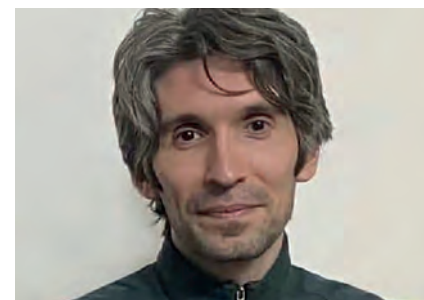
NARGES MOHAMMADI



Narges Mohammadi is a prominent human rights defender, 2023 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and member of the anti-death penalty campaign LEGAM. She was first arrested in 1998 and has served multiple sentences since. She was released from prison after five years behind bars on 8 October

2020.²⁰⁵ She was rearrested on 16 November 2022, the nationwide “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests.²⁰⁶ On 24 January 2022, Narges was sentenced to eight years imprisonment and 70 lashes in a trial that only lasted five minutes.²⁰⁷ On 4 August 2023, she was sentenced to another year imprisonment for the charge of “propaganda against the system” for a statement issued from behind bars about the rape and sexual assault of jailed women and a letter to Javaid Rehman, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran, which was published by BBC World News. Narges received an additional 15 months imprisonment for charges of “propaganda against the system” on 15 January 2024, in addition to a two-year ban on using a mobile phone, leaving Iran, residing in Tehran and neighbouring provinces and holding membership in social and political groups.²⁰⁸ She is currently held at Evin Prison and continues to speak out against the death penalty and other human rights violations via messages through her family.

ARASH SADEGHI



Arash Sadeghi is a human rights activist and abolitionist who was first arrested in 2009 and has spent years behind bars despite suffering from chondrosarcoma, a rare type of bone cancer. He was most recently arrested during the nationwide “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests on 12

²⁰⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4459/>

²⁰⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4973/>

²⁰⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5071/>

²⁰⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/people/6086/>

October 2022. Arash was released on bail on 21 January 2023. On 25 January, Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court sentenced him in absentia to five years of imprisonment for “assembly and collusion against national security” and eight months for “propaganda,” in addition to a two-year ban on leaving the country and presence in Tehran, his city of residence. On appeal, the sentence was reduced to three years and eight months for the first charge and eight months for the charge of propaganda. He also received additional punishments, including a two-year exile and a two-year ban from leaving the country, holding membership in political groups, and having an online presence. The sentence was upheld by Branch 36 of the Tehran Court of Appeal on 14 September 2023 and sent for implementation. His lawyer has presented evidence to the Forensic Medical Organisation that Arash is not fit to serve his sentence.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/people/5554/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty) call on:

The international community to:

- Prioritise human rights violations and Iran's treaty obligations in any future talks and negotiations with Iran.
- Support the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the UN Fact-Finding Mission in Iran (FFMI) on holding to account those responsible for grave human rights violations in Iran.
- Encourage Iran to ratify the International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol to ICCPR (OP2), and to seriously consider abstaining or voting in favour of the UNGA Resolution calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty in 2024.
- Strongly encourage Iran to respect its international obligations, including the ICCPR and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by putting a permanent end to public executions, abolishing the death penalty for offences that do not qualify as "the most serious crimes", removing mandatory death sentences from the Penal Code, putting an end to sentences and executions of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged crime for which they were sentenced, and ensuring due process.
- Call on Iran to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to move towards the abolition of the death penalty.
- Advocate for major reforms within the country's judicial system, which does not currently meet minimum international standards, including ending the practice of forced confessions, torture and the existence of the Revolutionary Courts.
- Determine bilateral and international funding and cooperation, in particular of the UN Office on Drug and Crime, for the achievement of clear results in terms of compliance with human rights standards, and ensure that any investment, funding, trade and cooperation programme in Iran is not used to participate in, facilitate or support the commission of executions, or any other violation of human rights law.

- Call for the protection, cessation of harassment and immediate release of all human rights defenders and anti-death penalty activists, including Narges Mohammadi and Golrokh Iraee, and drop the charges against Arash Sadeghi and Nasrin Sotoudeh, all of whom have endured long prison terms for peaceful activities against the death penalty.

The Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately impose a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.
- Ratify the International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the UN Fact Finding Mission (FFMI) established by the Human Rights Council (HRC); permit access to visit the country; and provide all information necessary to allow the fulfilment of the mandates.
- Provide access to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, to the Special Rapporteur on torture, to the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and to other Special Rapporteurs who have requested a visit to the country, in line with Iran's standing invitation to all Special Procedures extended on 24 July 2002.
- Respond positively to individual communications by international human rights mechanisms.
- Implement structural fundamental reforms to ensure complete independence of the judiciary.
- Dismantle the Revolutionary Courts, and ensure the right to a law - yer, due process and fair trials according to international law.
- Implement and fully respect the provisions of its international human rights obligations.
- Demonstrate complete transparency regarding the implemented death sentences and number of executions, including by publishing (or communicating to the UN) the list of all prisoners on death row, including juvenile offenders and women.
- Cease the criminalisation of human rights advocacy on the issue of the death penalty and allow and facilitate a public and open debate about the question of the death penalty in Iran.
- Release all political prisoners, including imprisoned human rights defenders, lawyers and anti-death penalty activists.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EXECUTIONS PER CAPITA IN EACH PROVINCE

Province	Executions per million inhabitants
S. Khorasan	51
Sistan and Baluchistan	25
Lorestan	23
Kerman	21
Markazi	20
Hormozgan	19
Hamadan	13
Ardabil	13
W. Azerbaijan	13
Ilam	12
Kurdistan	11
Zanjan	11
Fars	11
Alborz/Tehran	11
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	10
Qom	9
Qazvin	9
Isfahan	9
Kermanshah	9
Gilan	8
Golestan	6
Khorasan Razavi	5
E. Azerbaijan	5
Yazd	5
Semnan	3
Khuzestan	3
Mazandaran	2
Bushehr	1
N. Khorasan	1

ANNEX 2: LIST OF RESOLUTIONS AND REPORTS ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, MENTIONING THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN

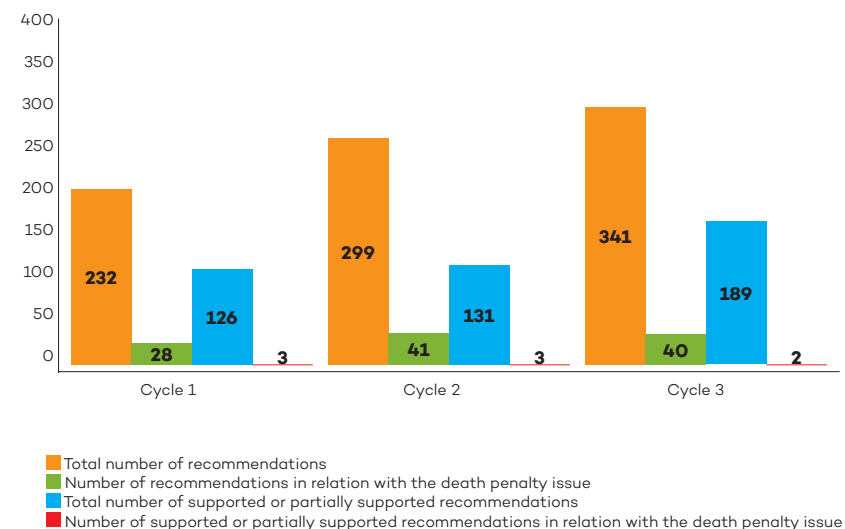
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → The UN Human Rights Committee expresses deep concern over Iran's high execution rates, emphasising the need for reforms to ensure the death penalty is reserved for the most serious crimes and urging consideration of a moratorium. It calls for an end to the disproportionate use of capital punishment on minorities and minors.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>UN Human Rights Committee publishes findings on Iran, Kuwait, Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Venezuela</i> , 3 November 2023	United Nations Organisation	3 November 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → UN experts demand immediate release of Iranian Nobel laureate and anti-death penalty advocate Narges Mohammadi, jailed for her activism against death penalty and the oppression of women in Iran.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>UN experts demand immediate release of jailed Iranian Nobel laureate Narges Mohammadi</i> , 11 October 2023	United Nations Organisation	11 October 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → One year after the death of Mahsa Amini, the repression against women, girls and demonstrators continues: "Anyone who participates in the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement, including through protesting or sharing their support publicly for instance on social media, is at risk of arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment and prosecution for serious crimes that may lead to the imposition of the death penalty".	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: On one-year anniversary of Jina Mahsa Amini's death in custody, heightened repression of women and girls and reprisals against protesters and victims' families is deeply troubling</i> , UN Fact-Finding Mission says, 14 September 2023	United Nations Organisation	14 September 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → Fact-Finding Mission reveals "at least 26 individuals have been sentenced to death in connection with the protests since November 2022, while dozens more have been charged with or face offences carrying the death penalty" and "at least 7 men have been executed following hasty proceedings, amid serious allegations of rights violations, including of confessions extracted under torture".	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran must end crackdown against protesters and uphold rights of all Iranians, especially women and girls</i> , Fact-Finding Mission says, 5 July 2023	United Nations Organisation	5 July 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → UN Experts condemn executions of three protesters; call on Iran to halt the appalling wave of executions amid concerns of unfair proceedings and torture, and violation of the international law.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>UN experts urge Iran to stop "horrific wave" of executions</i> , 19 May 2023	United Nations Organisation	19 May 2023

Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → The Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran is deeply alarmed at the continuing executions of protesters pending investigations of alleged human rights violations.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Statement by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran on the execution of protesters</i> , 19 May 2023	United Nations Organisation	19 May 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → UN experts condemn recent executions in Iran as arbitrary deprivation of life and urge the authorities to abolish the death penalty and commute all death sentences.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: UN experts condemn recent executions, urge moratorium on death penalty</i> , 9 May 2023	United Nations Organisation	9 May 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → UN Human Rights Chief condemns alarming surge in executions in Iran, calls for a moratorium with a view to abolishing the death penalty.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: "Frightening" number of executions as Türk calls for end to death penalty</i> , 9 May 2023	United Nations Organisation	9 May 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Latest News → Following the death of Mahsa Amini, 17 protesters sentenced to death, and over 100 facing death penalty charges in Iran, prompting strong opposition from some speakers who condemn the use of death penalty against peaceful demonstrators, urging an immediate moratorium on executions.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Human Rights Council Hears about Reports of Massacres of Civilians in Myanmar and Possible Crimes against Humanity in Iran Following Mass Protests in Both Countries</i> , 20 March 2023	United Nations Organisation	20 March 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → UN experts condemn the arbitrary detention of a Belgian aid worker and the execution of a British Iranian man sentenced to death for "corruption on earth and harming the internal and external security of the country".	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: UN experts say arbitrary detention of Belgian aid worker a flagrant violation of international law</i> , 17 January 2023	United Nations Organisation	17 January 2023
Office of the High Commissioner, News & Statements, Press Release → The High Commissioner accuses the Iranian government of weaponizing criminal proceedings and the death penalty to punish individuals participating in protests and prevent dissent through fear : 4 people secretly executed in December 2022 and January 2023 for protesting.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Respect lives, voices of Iranians and listen to grievances, pleads UN Human Rights Chief</i> , 10 January 2023	United Nations Organisation	10 January 2023
SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN			
A/HRC/52/67	United Nations, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/52/67: Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javād Rehmān, 7 February 2023	United Nations Organisation	7 February 2023

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS			
A/78/481/ADD.3	United Nations, General Assembly, Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 19 December 2023	United Nations Organisation	19 December 2023
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT			
2023/2979(RSP)	European Parliament resolution B9-0478/2023, The latest attacks against women and women's rights defenders in Iran, and Iran's arbitrary detention of EU nationals, 23 November 2023	European Parliament	23 November 2023
2023/2511(RSP)	European Parliament resolution RC-B9-0066/2023, The EU response to the protests and executions in Iran, 19 January 2023	European Parliament	19 January 2023

ANNEX 3: ANALYSIS OF THE UPR RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE LAST THREE CYCLES



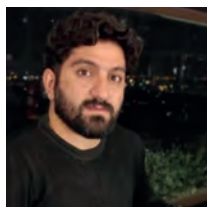
ANNEX 4: AT RISK OF EXECUTION PROTESTERS



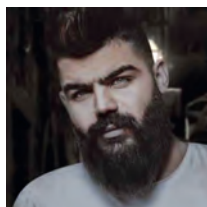
Name: Abbas Deris (Arab)
Age: 51
City: Mahshahr
Protests: November 2019
Charges: *Moharebeh*
Status: Death sentence upheld and appeal rejected. His lawyer has filed an Article 477 judicial review application.²¹⁰



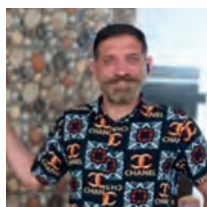
Name: Mohammad Javad Vafayi Sani
Age: 27
City: Mashhad
Protests: November 2019
Charges: *Efsad-fil-arz*
Status: Death sentence overturned on appeal. Resentenced to death by Branch 2 of the Mashhad Criminal Court in July 2023. There are reports that his sentence has been upheld.



Name: Reza Rasayi (Kurd)
Age: 24
City: Tehran
Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom 2022
Charges: *Qisas*
Status: Death sentence upheld in December 2023.²¹¹



Name: Saman Seydi AKA Saman Yasin (Kurd)
Age: 24
City: Tehran
Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom 2022
Charges: *Moharebeh*
Status: Sentenced to death. Has been awaiting retrial since December 2023.²¹²



Name: Manouchehr Mehman Navaz
Age: 45
City: Karaj
Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom 2022
Charges: Arson with *moharebeh* set as punishment
Status: Sentenced to death. Has been held in limbo since.²¹³

²¹⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6551/>
²¹¹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6551/>
²¹² <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/6429/>
²¹³ <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/6431/>



Name: Farshid Hassanzehi (Baluch)
Age: 26
City: Zahedan
Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom 2022
Charges: Arson
Status: Sentenced to death in November 2023.²¹⁴

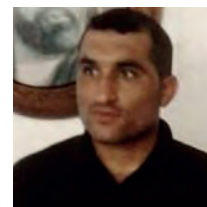


Name: Mojahed (Abbas) Kourkour (Bakhtiari)
Age:
City: Ahvaz
Protests: Woman, Life, Freedom 2022
Charges: *Efsad-fil-arz, baghy, moharebeh* and *qisas*
Status: Death sentence upheld in first case. Indicted in murder case.²¹⁵

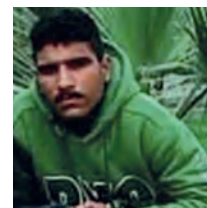
POLITICAL PRISONERS²¹⁶



Name: Ali Mojadam (Arab)
Age: 41
City: Khuzestan
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.



Name: Mohammadreza Moghadam (Arab)
Age: 30
City: Khuzestan
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.

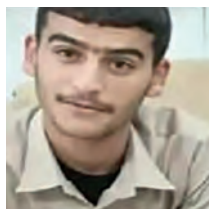


Name: Moein Khanfari (Arab)
Age: 30
City: Ahvaz
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.

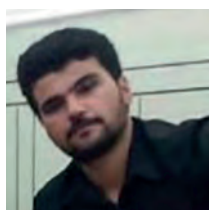
²¹⁴ <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/6565/>
²¹⁵ <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/6427/>
²¹⁶ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5796/>



Name: Habib Deris (Arab)
Age: 40
City: Khuzestan
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.



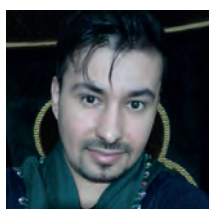
Name: Adnan Ghabishavi (Arab)
Age: 39
City: Khuzestan
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.



Name: Salem Mousavi (Arab)
Age: 39
City: Khuzestan
Charges: *Baghy* (armed rebellion) in relation to Habib Asyoud case
Status: Sentenced to death.

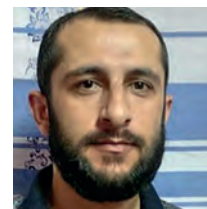


Name: Anwar Khezri (Kurd)
Age:
City: Urmia
Charges: *Moharebeh* and *baghy*
Status: Death sentence upheld, 4 co-defendants executed in 2023/2024.²¹⁷

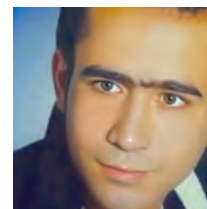


Name: Khosro Besharat (Kurd)
Age:
City: Urmia
Charges: *Moharebeh* and *baghy*
Status: Death sentence upheld, 4 co-defendants executed in 2023/2024.²¹⁸

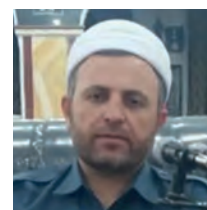
²¹⁷ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6523/>
²¹⁸ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6523/>



Name: Kamran Sheikheh (Kurd)
Age:
City: Urmia
Charges: *Moharebeh* and *baghy* and *qisas*
Status: Security-related death sentence upheld. Four co-defendants executed in 2023/2024.²¹⁹
 He has also been separately sentenced to *qisas*.



Name: Shahab Nadali Jozani
Age: 41
City: Tehran
Charges: *Baghy*
Status: Sentenced to death. Lawyer has filed appeal.



Name: Mohammad Khezrnejad (Kurdish-Sunni cleric)
Age: 45
City: Bukan
Charges: *Efsad-fil-arz*
Status: Sentenced to death.

DUAL NATIONALS AT RISK



Name: Ahmadrza Djalali
Age: 50
City: Tehran
Nationality: Swedish-Iranian
Charges: *Efsad-fil-arz*
Status: Death sentence upheld.



Name: Jamshid Shadmahd
Age: 66
City: Tehran
Nationality: German-Iranian
Charges: *Efsad-fil-arz*
Status: Sentenced to death.²²⁰

²¹⁹ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6523/>
²²⁰ <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5738/>



Iran Human Rights is a non-profit, politically independent organisation with members and supporters inside and outside Iran. The organisation started its work in 2005 and is registered as an international non-governmental organisation based in Oslo, Norway.

Abolition of the death penalty in Iran as a step towards the universal abolition of the death penalty is the main goal of Iran Human Rights.

IHRNGO has a broad network among the abolitionist movement inside and outside Iran:

Besides supporters and collaborators among the civil society activists in the central parts of Iran, Iran Human Rights also has a wide network in the ethnic regions which are often not the focus of the mainstream media. In addition, Iran Human Rights has a network of reporters within many Iranian prisons, and among Iranian lawyers and the families of death-row prisoners. This enables Iran Human Rights to be the primary source of many execution reports in different Iranian prisons, as well as of reliable reports on the atrocities committed by the Islamic Republic in the nationwide protests. Iran Human Rights has been a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) since 2009 and a member of its Steering Committee since 2011. Iran Human Rights is also a member of Impact Iran, a coalition of more than 13 Iranian human rights NGOs. Iran Human Rights' close collaboration with abolitionist networks inside and outside Iran makes it a unique actor in the struggle against the death penalty in the country with the highest number of executions per capita.

IHRNGO's core activities include:

Fighting for abolition of the death penalty through monitoring, reporting, empowerment of the abolitionist Iranian civil society and international advocacy.

Promoting due process and rule of law through raising the legal debate in Iran and encouraging legal reforms. Iran Human Rights

publishes a bi-weekly legal journal with contributions from Iranian lawyers, jurists, law students and religious scholars.

Defending human rights defenders by creating safer working conditions, giving voice to the imprisoned human rights defenders and supporting human rights defenders in danger.

IHRNGO's work in the past 17 years has contributed to:

Raising awareness about the situation of the death penalty in Iran: Through careful research, monitoring and continuous reporting, IHRNGO has given a more realistic picture of the death penalty trends in Iran. The organisation is regarded as a credible source of information and its annual reports are points of reference for the international community,²²¹ the media,^{222, 223} and civil society.

Limiting the use of the death penalty in Iran through international campaigns and advocacy: IHRNGO activities have contributed to saving the lives of several death row prisoners through focused domestic and international campaigns.

Raising the national debate on the death penalty, and empowering and educating the abolitionist movement inside Iran: Iran Human Rights was the first NGO focusing on all death penalty cases in a sustainable manner. By publishing news, reports and interviews, and through its one-hour weekly TV program launched in 2015,²²⁴ Iran Human Rights has contributed significantly to educating abolitionists and raising the national debate on the death penalty in Iran.

221 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N14/518/83/PDF/N1451883.pdf?OpenElement>

222 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-64108551>

223 <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/middle-east-matters/20220504-death-penalty-on-the-rise-in-iran-report-reveals-executions-increased-by-25-in-2021>

224 <https://iranhr.net/fa/multimedia/#/all/all/1>



ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty) is a not-for-profit organisation based in Paris, France. ECPM has been campaigning since 2000 for the universal abolition of the death penalty through advocacy, awareness-raising activities and by uniting international abolitionist forces.

FEDERATING ABOLITIONISTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

ECPM is the founder and organiser of the World Congresses Against the Death Penalty. These events bring together more than 1,300 people representing the world abolitionist movement. Ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats, activists, civil society organisations, researchers and journalists come together every three years to strengthen their ties and develop strategies for the future.

ECPM also organises Regional Congresses to strengthen dialogue on the death penalty in key areas.

ECPM initiated the creation of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty in 2002, which today has more than 180 members – including NGOs, bar associations, local authorities, unions – throughout the world.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS AND TAKING ACTION WITH THEM

ECPM fights against the isolation of activists wherever the death penalty remains by supporting the formation of national and regional coalitions against the death penalty (in the Maghreb, sub-saharian Africa and Asia), as well as the creation of networks of abolitionist parliamentarians and lawyers.

ECPM supports local partners and actors to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the abolitionist movement and its advocacy impact by providing and promoting capacity development, facilitation, exchange of good practices, mutual transfer of expertise and networking.

ADVOCATING FOR ABOLITION

ECPM conducts advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty, using targeted, context-specific approaches, and engaging in dialogue with relevant political stakeholders at national, regional and international levels.

ECPM provides material for advocacy and contributes to increased transparency and knowledge by documenting the realities of the death penalty and publishing fact-finding reports, thematic studies, country factsheets on the death penalty in law and in practice, and practical guides.

ECPM encourages States to increase their international commitments by carrying advocacy work at the heart of UN bodies (Geneva, New York) and intergovernmental, regional fora. The organisation is the first NGO devoted to the fight against the death penalty to have obtained consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2016. The organisation also obtained an observer status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 2018.

TEACHING HUMAN RIGHTS AND ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

ECPM leads a vast educational project on human rights and the abolition of the death penalty, promoting youths' abolitionist and civic engagement. The organisation carries out visits and participative presentations in middle and high schools with the participation of specialists and witnesses of the death penalty.

ECPM is a co-founder of the Teaching Abolition International Network, an informal grouping of associations promoting the exchange of good practices and the development of collaborative educational tools on the abolition of the death penalty. The Network is the organiser of the international drawing competition "Draw me abolition", designed to spark the interest of younger generations in the universal abolition through their creativity.

ECPM raises awareness among the public on the death penalty by organising events on key dates in the abolitionist and human rights calendar such as the World Day Against the Death Penalty, World Human Rights Day, World Women's Rights Day, Pride March, etc.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN 2023

A year after the state killing of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, which sparked protests across the country, the execution rate in Iran has surged by 43% compared to 2022—from 582 to 834, the highest toll since 2015. Although this increase is to a large extent attributed to the dramatic rise in drug-related executions, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has failed to acknowledge this alarming hike and has instead signed a new cooperation agreement with the Islamic Republic. The scope of death penalty charges was also extended in practice, with executions for apostasy and adultery charges carried out. At least 8 protesters, 22 women and 2 juvenile offenders are amongst those executed and ethnic minorities continue to be grossly overrepresented in both political and ordinary crime cases. With this report, we call on the international community to increase efforts to support the demands of the Iranian people for respect of their fundamental human rights and the abolition of the death penalty.



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Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and ECPM have been working together since 2011 for the international release and circulation of the Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran. IHRNGO and ECPM see the death penalty as a benchmark for the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.



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