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Iran: UN experts alarmed over execution of Baloch minority prisoners

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GENEVA (4 February 2021) – UN human rights experts today condemned the weekend hanging of Javid Dehghan, an Iranian from the Baloch minority. They fear a disturbing recent increase in executions of Baloch minority prisoners in Iran will continue.

“We are shocked that Mr. Dehghan’s execution on 30 January was carried out despite our urgent appeal last week to the Iranian Government to halt it, as well as calls by the [UN Human Rights Office](#) and civil society,” the experts said.

“We informed the Iranian Government of grave concerns that Mr. Dehghan’s death sentence followed serious violations of his fair trial rights, including claims he was tortured, held in prolonged solitary confinement, subjected to enforced disappearance and forced to confess, concerns that do not appear to have been investigated by the Iranian authorities.”

Dehghan was arrested on 5 June 2015, accused of involvement in an armed group and in an attack which killed two Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officers. He was forcibly disappeared for three months after his arrest and held in solitary confinement in an undisclosed detention centre, before being taken to Zahedan Central Prison in Sistan and Baluchestan Province. He was then reportedly taken back and forth for several months between the prison and an unknown facility, where he was forced through torture to ‘confess’ to allegations. He was denied a lawyer throughout.

In May 2017, a Revolutionary Court in Zahedan sentenced Dehghan to death, despite telling the court he had been tortured, and retracting a forced confession. The court reportedly failed to investigate these claims, and also relied in part on Dehghan’s confession in reaching its verdict. He was denied an appeal and on 25 January his lawyer was informed that the Supreme Court had rejected another request for judicial review.

“International human rights law is clear. A state that has not abolished the death penalty can only implement it for a “most serious crime” involving intentional killing and following a judicial process that strictly adheres to fair trial and due process guarantees,” the experts said.

“The concerns raised in this case of serious fair trial violations, including lack of an effective right of appeal and a torture-induced forced confession, mean that the Iranian Government’s implementation of his death sentence amounts to an arbitrary execution.”

The experts are also concerned that Dehghan’s execution is one of several recently carried out against prisoners from the Baloch minority in Iran. According to information received, at least 21 Balochi prisoners have been executed in Zahedan, Mashhad and Isfahan prisons since mid-December 2020. Many of those executed had been convicted on drug or national security charges, following flawed legal processes. 124 prisoners are reported to be on death row in Zahedan Central Prison alone, including for crimes not involving intentional killing.

“We are very disturbed by this trend of executions against Baloch minority prisoners on death row and by practices of enforced disappearance of persons belonging to minorities. We have [previously communicated concerns](#) of individuals from other minority groups who are at imminent risk or have

communicated concerns of individuals from other minority groups who are at imminent risk or have been executed in Iran. We call on the Islamic Republic of Iran to immediately halt these executions and to overturn all death sentences ordered which are contrary to international human rights law. We also urge the Government to urgently implement a moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its abolition,” the experts said.

ENDS

The experts: **Mr. Javaid Rehman**, Special Rapporteur on [the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#); **Ms. Agnes Callamard**, Special Rapporteur on [extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#); **Mr. Nils Melzer**, Special Rapporteur on [torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#); **Mr. Fernand de Varennes RP**, Special Rapporteur on [minority issues](#); **Tae-Ung Baik (Chair-Rapporteur)**, **Henrikas Mickevičius (Vice-Chairperson)**, **Aua Balde**, **Bernard Duhaime and Luciano Hazan**, [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#).

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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For more information and **media requests**, please contact Mr. Ciaran Murnane (cmurnane@ohchr.org)

For media enquiries regarding other UN independent experts, please contact Renato de Souza (+41 22 928 9855 / rrosariodesouza@ohchr.org)

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