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Iran: Amnesty International condemns executions after unfair trials

Amnesty International greatly deplores the execution of four Iranian Arabs on 14 February 2007 and is concerned that other prisoners are at risk of execution after unfair trials.

The organization is calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately halt executions and to ensure that all persons in detention are protected from torture or other ill-treatment. To date in 2007, Amnesty International has recorded no less than 28 executions in Iran, including the four on 14 February 2007.

One of the four men, Risan Sawari, a 32-year-old teacher, was reportedly executed yesterday in an unknown location in Khuzestan. His family was reportedly informed of his execution but his body is yet to be released for burial. Risan Sawari had reportedly been arrested in April 2005, released and arrested again in September 2005.

Although seven men were said to have been convicted of involvement in bomb attacks in October 2005 -- which caused the deaths of at least six people and wounded more than a hundred others, in Ahvaz city, Khuzestan province -- nine men, including Risan Sawari, were shown "confessing" on Khuzestan TV, a local government-controlled television station in Iran, on 1 March 2006. Among them were Mehdi Nawaseri and Ali Awdeh Afrawi, who were hanged in public the following morning.

On 10 June 2006 Branch 3 of the Revolutionary Court in Ahvaz had reportedly confirmed the death sentences against Risan Sawari along with nine other men. According to reports, the 10 men were accused of being *mohareb* (at enmity with God) which can carry the death penalty. Evidence against them reportedly included "destabilising the country", "attempting to overthrow the government", "possession of home made bombs", "sabotage of oil installations" and carrying out bombings in Ahvaz, which took place between June and October 2005. It is not known if the death sentence against Risan Sawari was upheld by the Supreme Court.

In a separate case, the other three men executed together -- believed to be Abdulreza Sanawati Zergani, Qasem Salamat and Majed Alboghbaish -- were reportedly convicted, together with seven others, of being *mohareb* (at enmity with God) on account of their alleged involvement in bomb attacks in 2005 in Ahvaz city, Khuzestan province. They are reported to have been held in solitary confinement for months during, and possibly after, their pre-trial detention and to have been convicted and sentenced after grossly unfair trials, which included denial of access to lawyers.

In an interview at the end of January 2006 with the Netherlands-based Radio Zamaneh, Iranian human rights defender, Emadaddin Baghi, who has been closely following the cases, stated that "they did not have access to lawyers and were kept in solitary confinement for months. They did not receive a fair trial."

On 13 November 2006, Khuzestan TV, broadcast a documentary film in which the three men executed yesterday and six of the seven others convicted in the same case, were shown "confessing" to involvement in causing bomb explosions. They were said to be members of *Al-e*, an Iranian Arab militant group that is not known to have been active since the time of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

On 10 January 2007, three leading UN human rights experts -- Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Leandro Despouy, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; and Manfred Nowak, UN Special Rapporteur on torture -- jointly called on the government of Iran to "stop the imminent execution of seven men belonging to the Ahwazi Arab minority and grant them a fair and public hearing." The UN experts stated: "*We are fully aware that these men are accused of serious crimes... However, this cannot justify their conviction and execution after trials that made a mockery of due process requirements.*"

The seven individuals to whom the UN experts referred were Mohammad Jaab Pour, Abdulamir Farjallah Jaab, Alireza Asakreh and Khalaf Derhab Khudayrawi, all of whom were executed on 24 January 2007 and the three men who were executed earlier today.

Three other Iranian Arabs -- named as Abdullah Suleymani, Malek Banitamim and Ali Matouri Zadeh -- are reported to have been executed on 19 December 2006 in a prison in Khuzestan province.

At least 17 other Iranian Arabs are believed to be facing execution after unfair trials in which they were convicted of involvement in bombings in Khuzestan in 2005.

For further information please see: *Iran: Four Iranian Arabs executed after unfair trials*, MDE 13/005/2007, 24 January 2007,
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130052007?open&of=ENG-IRN>