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First UA: 28/24 Index: MDE 13/7895/2024 Iran of April 4, 2024

IRAN DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS SURGING IN IRAN

Concerns are growing as thousands are potentially facing the death penalty, with many either awaiting execution or under investigation for drug-related crimes, amidst a dramatic increase in executions in Iran. In 2023, at least 481 people were executed for such offenses, constituting more than half of the total 853 executions reported. The Baluchi minority, which represents roughly 5% of Iran's population, has been particularly affected, making up 29% of the drug-related executions.

Write to the Head of Judiciary urging the Iranian authorities to:

- Immediately halt all drug-related executions, quash convictions and death sentences issued following grossly unfair trials before Revolutionary Courts, and establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to fully abolishing the death penalty.
- Pending this, take steps to bring national legislation in line with international law and standards, including by removing the death penalty for drug-related offences and repealing mandatory death sentences.

Write to:

Head of judiciary,
Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei
c/o Embassy of Iran to the European Union,
Avenue Franklin Roosevelt No. 15,
1050 Bruxelles, Belgium
Salutation: Dear Mr. Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2023, [Amnesty International reported](#) that Iran witnessed a dramatic increase in executions, with 853 cases recorded. Prisons became venues for mass killings, with over half of these executions (481) being for drug-related offenses. The Baluchi minority, residing mainly in the underdeveloped Sistan and Baluchestan province, was disproportionately affected. Despite representing only about 5% of the population, they accounted for 29% of all drug-related executions. The root causes of drug offenses, such as economic hardship and marginalization, continue to be ignored by Iranian authorities. Furthermore, the executions, especially of Baluchi individuals, were often carried out in secrecy, with families informed only after the fact of collecting the bodies. In a particularly grim instance, at least 11 Baluchi men were executed in secret over two days in July and August 2023, without any prior notice or final visits for their families.

Historically, Iran executed hundreds annually for drug offenses. However, international outcry led to reforms in 2017, requiring larger quantities of drugs for mandatory death sentences. This resulted in a temporary decrease in drug-related executions. The trend reversed following Ebrahim Raisi's presidency in August 2021, with judicial leaders criticizing the 2017 reforms. Efforts are now underway

to pass a new law that would widen the scope of offenses eligible for the death penalty. A new bill with 115 articles was drafted, prompted by a decree from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. By early 2024, parts of this bill had received preliminary approval in Parliament. This push for stricter drug laws coincides with an increase in executions as a form of political repression, particularly following the "Woman Life Freedom" uprising, leading to the highest number of executions since 2015.

The imposition of the death penalty for drug-related offenses, especially mandatory death sentences, violates international standards. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a signatory, stipulates that the death penalty should be reserved for only the "most serious crimes" involving intentional killing. The UN Human Rights Committee has clarified that drug offenses do not meet this criterion. Moreover, the automatic imposition of the death penalty is deemed an arbitrary deprivation of life under international law. [Amnesty International](#), opposing the death penalty in all instances, urges the abolition of this practice globally and calls for a moratorium on executions as a step towards its total abolition, emphasizing its inconsistency with the right to life and its nature as a cruel and inhumane punishment.

Please take action as soon as possible until May 30, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.