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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Women's Human Rights International Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 August 2013]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Violations of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

According to the 28 February report by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 661 executions were carried out in 2011 and 493 in 2012.

Data from 2013 show that at least 170 persons have been executed to date, although the true number may be significantly higher as many executions are kept secret, as reported by the Special Rapporteur in previous years. The Islamic Republic of Iran applies capital punishment in cases that do not meet “most serious crimes” standards set out in international law; Drug-related executions accounted for over 80% of all executions reported during 2012.

The Islamic Republic of Iran also applies capital punishment in cases of offenses committed by minors; On 16 January of this year, Ali Naderi, was executed for a crime allegedly committed when he has 17 years old.

Judicial procedures in the Islamic Republic of Iran do not meet international standards and executions often follow show trials without possibility for legal representation or defense, forced confessions and torture. In addition, those convicted of certain categories of crimes are explicitly denied the right of appeal, even in the case of the death penalty. More broadly, the judicial system lacks independence and criminal law does not meet international standards of clarity and precision, famously mandating the death penalty in vaguely defined crimes such as “enmity against God”, which has been applied to members of minorities and political opponents.

Women's Human Rights International Association remains particularly concerned about public executions in Iran. On 21 August, two prisoners were hanged in public in Iran; A 33 year old man in Tabriz in the north of Iran and a man identified only by his first name, Mehdi, in the southern city of Jahrom. On the preceding Sunday morning, 18 August, the Islamic Republic hanged three prisoners in the city of Karaj. At the time of writing, a state-run website has quoted the head of the judiciary in the city of Hendijan stating that two prisoner will be hanged in public on Thursday, August 22. Amnesty International reports that at least 63 other public executions have been carried out just in 2013. This is a dramatic increase on top of an already extremely alarmingly high number; 55 public executions in 2012 and at least 40 cases in 2011. Authorities have lifted a ban on photographing public executions imposed in 2008, indicating that officials now mean for pictures of executions to be spread as a threat and deterrent.

Public executions in Iran often take place early in the morning and are often attended by large crowds, including minors and relatives of the condemned. This method of executions is degrading and often exposes convicts and their family members to public contempt and hatred, and constitutes cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, which is prohibited by article 7 of the Covenant of Human Rights. While hanging remains the most common public execution method in Iran, other methods have been employed. At least 10 people are currently on death row awaiting execution by stoning. Several other forms of public, cruel and inhuman punishment frequently have fatal effect, including flogging and amputations.

Women's Human Rights International Association strongly supports the statement by the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: “Executions in public add to the already cruel, inhuman and degrading nature of the death penalty and can only have a dehumanising effect on the victim and a brutalising effect on those who witness the execution.” In the case of stoning, these terrible effects are accentuated since witnesses participate in the execution.

We call on the High Commissioner for Human Rights and all mechanisms of the UN human rights system to act forcefully to condemn the practice of public executions in the Islamic Republic of Iran and prevent future public executions from being carried out.
