

# ARRESTED PROTESTANTS IN IRAN FACE DEATH SENTENCES

ACHRS STATEMENT | ZELAL AG



In light of the current protests in Iran, the first death sentence has been issued this week against one of the protesters who was arrested. It is estimated that over 300 people have already died during the ongoing protests over the last 2 months, and thousands have been arrested. More than 20 others could also face the death penalty.

After two months of protests, which began with the death of 22-year-old Kurdish Mahsa Amini the Iranian people do not seem to have given up the fight for their rights. All this despite the estimated numbers of around 15 000 arrests and more than 300 deaths among the demonstrators, including more than 40 children and 25 women. Officials in Tehran have not confirmed any numbers. Yet, this week's latest developments are the trials that have started against those arrested in relation to the so-called "riots". Tehran prosecutor Ali Salehi and judicial chief Asadollah Jafari have reported more than 300 people that have been charged.

On November 13th, an Iranian court sentenced one of the alleged demonstrators with its first death sentence over recent protests. The person in question, about whom not much is being released, was convicted on charges of setting fire to a government building, "disturbing public order", threatening "national security" and was found guilty of enmity against God. Five other people were punished with 5 to 10 years of prison sentence. According to the Norway-based organization Iran Human Rights, 20 others may face the death penalty. In Iran, the death penalty is usually performed by hanging. Just as with the rate of arrests, minorities such as the Baluch and Kurds in the country may be the most affected.

The protests are aimed at criticising the Islamic regime in Iran, which is particularly oppressive to women's freedoms in the country. The arrests are not surprising news for the Iranian people, as journalists, activists and individuals fighting for people's rights have been targeted by the Islamic Revolutionary Courts since the 1979 revolution.

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## **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**

Although international laws do not prohibit the use of the death penalty, Article 6 (1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states that "every human being has the inherent right of life [which] shall be protected by law." More importantly, it draws attention to the fact that one's right to life must not be arbitrarily deprived.

The article further states that under 6(2) countries that have not abolished the death penalty shall only be "imposed only for the most serious crimes."

In the light of Article 6 and in view of the alleged punishment of the convicted person for "setting fire to a government building" to impose the death penalty, it can be assumed, on the one hand, that the sentence violates both (1) because an arbitrary charge was brought against the convicted person and, on the other hand, (2) because the charges on the basis of which the conviction was justified cannot be classified as the most serious crime for which one should be sentenced to death.

### **ACHRS' Position**

ACHRS condemns the Iranian government and The Islamic Revolutionary Courts for imposing the death sentence on peaceful protesters pursuing their right to stand up for their freedom. The death penalty is an inhuman act used as a weapon of repression and intimidation to facilitate discrimination against minorities, activists, and protesters. Hence, ACHRS urges the Iranian authorities to release the affected detainees from punishment.

In addition, ACHRS would like to express its support for all protesters who risk their lives every day to demonstrate for their right to freedom.

(VOANews; Tagesschau; AlarabiaNews; CNN; OHCHR; BBC; OHCHR)