



**amnesty
international**

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT
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EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**URGENT
ACTION**

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Death Penalty

11 January 1989

IRAN : Mandatory death sentence for possession of drugs

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A new law to combat drug abuse is scheduled to come into effect in Iran on 21 January 1989. It will provide for a mandatory death sentence for anyone found in possession of more than 5kgs of hashish or opium, or more than 30 grams of heroin, morphine, codine or methadone. Coupled with proposals for more stringent control of Iran's borders with Pakistan and Turkey the new law is likely to lead to an increase in the already large numbers of people executed for drug related offences each year.

The new law is part of an anti-drug campaign launched by Prime Minister Mir Hussein Musavi at a press conference in Tehran on 8 December 1988. A previous clamp down on drug offenders announced in September 1987 was followed by an upturn in the number of executions recorded by Amnesty International.

In addition to the thousands of people executed for political offences who have been the subject of numerous Amnesty International appeals, hundreds of people have been executed for drug related offences since the establishment of the Islamic Republic. The death penalty was also enforced against drug traffickers under the Shah. Drug trafficking and drug abuse remains a serious problem in Iran.

Amnesty International recognizes the right of governments to seek effective measures to counter illicit drug trafficking. However, the organization is opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances as the ultimate cruel inhuman and degrading punishment and a violation of the right to life. Despite the hundreds of executions carried out worldwide each year there is no evidence that the death penalty has had any identifiable effect in alleviating drug trafficking and abuse. On the other hand, there are numerous risks involved in its use including a greater risk of injury to law enforcement personnel or passers-by as drug offenders resort to violence to evade capture, a risk which is particularly pronounced if a mandatory death penalty is enforced.

Some drug offenders have been sentenced to death by Islamic Revolutionary Courts, where procedures fail to comply with international standards for a fair trial. Some of those convicted have been executed in public.

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Telephone 01-833 1771 Telegrams: Amnesty London WC1 Telex: 28502

Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement working for the international protection of human rights. It seeks the *release* of men and women detained anywhere because of their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religious creed, provided they have not used or advocated violence. These are termed *prisoners of conscience*. It works for *fair and prompt trials* for all *political prisoners* and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial. It opposes the *death penalty* and *torture* or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of *all prisoners*.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:

- urging that the death penalty for drug offences be replaced by some other punishment, and that no mandatory death penalty for any category of offenders should be introduced;
- expressing regret at the hundreds of executions of convicted drug offenders carried out in the last decade, and requesting details of the court and trial procedures followed in such cases.

APPEALS TO:

H.E. Mir Hussein Musavi
Prime Minister
Pasteur Avenue
Palestine Intersection
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Dr Hassan Ebrahim Habibi
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Park-e Shahr
Tehran
Islamic Republic of Iran

Telegrams: Prime Minister,
Tehran, Iran
Telexes: 212777 prim ir
212332 ir

Telegrams: Justice Minister,
Tehran, Iran
Telexes: 214231 miti ir
213113 prim ir
Attention of Justice Minister

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of Iran in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 February 1989.

— Please take action as soon as you receive this Urgent Action appeal. Carefully read the recommended action. If possible, send a telegram or express letter immediately to one or more of the addresses given. Other letters can be sent afterwards.

— Telegrams and letters should be brief and courteous. Stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. Refer to relevant provisions in international law, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 3 — "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Article 5 — "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Article 9 — "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

— The name of Amnesty International may be used, although letters written in a private or personal capacity may be more effective.

— Copies of appeals should be sent to relevant diplomatic representatives in your country.

— In Urgent Action cases, Amnesty International has to act rapidly to prevent the ill-treatment of prisoners. An appeal is issued when Amnesty International believes it has received reliable and accurate information in such cases. It is not always possible to verify all details independently and in some instances the situation outlined in the appeal may change. Urgent Action participants are always notified of any significant new facts.

— Copies of any replies received from government authorities should be sent immediately to your section's Urgent Action coordinator or direct to the Campaign and Membership Department of the International Secretariat. If appropriate, thank the official who has replied and ask to be kept informed about the case.