

PRESS RELEASE

Iran Human Rights Documentation Center Releases Report on Iran's 1988 Massacre of Thousands of Political Prisoners

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT - The Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC) today released a report documenting and analyzing the Iranian government's massacre of political prisoners during the summer of 1988. Much of the material presented in the report, *Deadly Fatwa: Iran's 1988 Massacre*, is the result of interviews conducted by IHRDC with survivors and family members of victims.

In late July 1988, pursuant to a *fatwa* issued by then-Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian government began systematically interrogating, torturing and summarily executing thousands of political prisoners. The interrogations of prisoners who supported leftist parties began twenty-one years ago today. Although the exact number of victims is not known, thousands of prisoners were tortured and executed over the course of only a few months.

The victims included prisoners who had served their sentences but had refused to recant their political beliefs, prisoners who were serving sentences of imprisonment, people who had been detained for lengthy periods but had not been convicted, and former prisoners who were rearrested. Many families were never informed about the executions and many of the victims were buried in unmarked mass graves. Families who received the remains of their loved ones were not allowed to hold funeral services and, to this day, are forbidden from mourning their loss. The government recently bulldozed a mass grave site at Khavaran Cemetery in Tehran.

The Iranian government has never identified those who were secretly executed and tortured, and has never issued an explanation for this crime. However, many of the men who were responsible for the massacre continue to hold positions of power in the Iranian government.

Deadly Fatwa: Iran's 1988 Massacre, is available in English on IHRDC's website www.iranhrdc.org. A Persian translation of the report will be available this fall.

IHRDC is a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut that was founded in 2004 by a group of human rights scholars, activists, and historians. Its staff of human rights lawyers and researchers produce comprehensive and detailed reports on the human

rights situation in Iran since the 1979 revolution. The Center's goal is to encourage an informed dialogue among scholars and the general public in both Iran and abroad. The human rights reports and a database of documents relating to human rights in Iran are available to the public for research and educational purposes on the Center's website.

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