



**amnesty  
international**

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT  
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EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**URGENT  
ACTION**

AI Index: MDE 13/20/89  
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Further information on UA 08/89 (MDE 13/02/89, 11 January) and follow-ups  
MDE 13/07/89 (24 January) and MDE 13/13/89 (15 March) - Death Penalty

**IRAN: Mass Executions of Drug Traffickers Continue**

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Seventy-nine convicted drug traffickers were executed in one day on 19 August 1989. The executions took place in Tehran and in 21 provincial cities, some in public. These executions brought the total number of officially announced executions for drug-related offences in 1989 to 851, out of a total of over 1,200 executions for criminal offences.

The Iranian State News Agency reported that the 79 executed on 19 August 1989 had been guilty of continuous involvement in the purchase, sale and distribution of several tonnes of opium and hundreds of kilos of heroin. They were sentenced by Revolutionary Courts, where procedures fall far short of international standards for fair trial.

The dramatic increase in the number of executions in recent months was apparently facilitated by instructions given to the judiciary in January 1989 by Chief Justice Ardebili. He recommended that trials in serious criminal cases should take place immediately, and that cases be dealt with in "a matter of three, four or five days" from arrest to execution. Defendants have no right to call witnesses in their defence, and no right to legal representation. Without such safeguards miscarriages of justice are very likely to occur.

The majority of these executions have been carried out as part of a major government initiative aimed at putting an end to drug trafficking. Prosecutor General Khoeniha is reported to have said on 5 April 1989,

"We hope that we shall solve this social problem through the decisiveness of the security forces, and that the executions will continue until the last smuggler in the country is eliminated."

Despite the hundreds of executions carried out worldwide each year there is no evidence that the death penalty has had any significant effect in alleviating drug trafficking and abuse. Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the anti-drug campaign has led to increasingly arbitrary arrest and summary trial procedures rapidly followed by executions. In such circumstances there is insufficient time for evidence to be gathered and assessed.

Amnesty International recognizes the right of governments to seek effective measures to counter illicit drug trafficking, but it does not believe that what amounts to a policy of summary execution of suspected traffickers has any place among such measures. It also opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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Telephone: 01-833 1771 Fax: 01-833 5100 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:** Telexes/airmail letters:

- expressing shock at the 851 executions carried out for drug trafficking since the beginning of 1989, in particular the 79 executions on 19 August;
- inquiring what trial proceedings occurred in the cases of the 79 people executed on 19 August 1989 and expressing concern that they may not all have received fair trials;
- asking if the defendants were permitted to call witnesses in their defence, whether they were represented by lawyers and whether there was any review of the court's verdict and sentence by a higher tribunal;
- expressing the view that the death penalty has not been shown to have a deterrent effect and inquire whether any evidence is available in Iran to prove that the purchase and distribution of drugs has been reduced by the policy of execution;
- urging that drug offences should not be punished by death or by any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment.

**APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani  
President of the  
Islamic Republic of Iran,  
Majles-e Shuray-e Eslami  
Imam Khomeini Avenue  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

H.E. Ayatollah Abdulkarim Musavi  
Ardebili  
Chief Justice and President  
of the Supreme Judicial Council  
Ministry of Justice  
Park-e Shahr, Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

Telexes: 212450 ext ir  
212600 ext ir  
214242 ext ir

Telexes: 214231 miti ir  
213113 prim ir  
marked for attention chief justice

**COPIES TO:**

H.E. Ali Akbar Velayati  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Sheik Abdolmajid Avenue  
Kooshk-e Mesri  
Tehran  
Islamic Republic of Iran

and 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 October 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.