

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN 2025

IRAN
HUMAN
RIGHTS



EC
PM

TOGETHER
AGAINST
THE DEATH
PENALTY



**ANNUAL
REPORT
ON THE
DEATH
PENALTY
IN IRAN
2025**

This report was prepared by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) with the support of ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty). Since 2012, IHRNGO¹ and ECPM² have been working together on the publication, international release and circulation of annual reports on the death penalty in Iran.

Layout: Olivier Dechaud (ECPM)
Printing: Imprim'ad hoc

© IHRNGO, ECPM, 2026
ISBN: 978-2-491354-37-4
ISSN: 2966-8093

1 <http://iranhr.net/en/>.

2 <http://www.ecpm.org/en/>.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6	Glossary
7	FOREWORD BY NASRIN SOTOUDEH
9	PREFACE
11	2025 ANNUAL REPORT AT A GLANCE
12	INTRODUCTION
15	SOURCES
17	FACTS AND FIGURES
20	THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S POWER STRUCTURE AND THE DEATH PENALTY
21	The Supreme Leader
22	The Judiciary
23	The Legislature
23	The Executive
24	Number of executions per presidential term
25	Average monthly executions per president
26	LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK
26	International treaties
31	Iranian law
37	Anti-Narcotics Law
40	PROCEDURES
40	From arrest to proof of guilt
51	EXECUTIONS IN PRACTICE
51	Charges
52	Executions for <i>moharebeh</i> , <i>baghy</i> and <i>efsad-fil-arz</i> in 2025
56	Executions related to protests in 2025
59	Executions for espionage/treason in 2025
60	Executions for rape and sexual assault in 2025
62	Executions for drug-related charges in 2025
73	Executions for murder charges (<i>qisas</i>) in 2025
79	SHARE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND CRIMINAL COURTS IN 2025 EXECUTIONS
81	PUBLIC EXECUTIONS
82	Executed in public in 2025

84	GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIONS
86	Secret and unannounced executions
87	Documentation of unannounced executions
89	Geographic distribution of announced and unannounced/secret executions
90	EXECUTION CATEGORIES
90	Child offenders
92	Women
96	Ethnic minorities
99	Foreign citizens
101	WAYS TO RESTRICT USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN
101	Sustained domestic campaigning and international pressure
104	CATEGORIES OF THE DEATH PENALTY WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVEMENT
104	Child offender executions
104	Public executions
105	<i>Qisas</i>
107	MOVEMENTS PROMOTING ABOLITION AND MOBILISING CIVIL SOCIETY INSIDE IRAN
108	No Death Penalty Tuesdays
109	Promotion of abolition in the future Iran
111	Forgiveness movement
113	RECOMMENDATIONS
116	ANNEXES
116	ANNEX 1: Executions per capita in each province
117	ANNEX 2: List of resolutions and reports adopted by the United Nations and European Parliament, mentioning the death penalty in Iran
121	ANNEX 3: Extract detailed findings of the independent international fact-finding mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/55/CRP.1, 2024
122	ANNEX 4: Analysis of the UPR recommendations on the death penalty in the last four cycles

GLOSSARY

<i>Baghy</i>	Armed rebellion against the state
<i>Diya</i>	Blood money
<i>Efsad-fil-arz</i>	Corruption on Earth
<i>Elm-e-qazi</i>	Knowledge of the judge
<i>Ertedad</i>	Apostasy
<i>Estizan</i>	Authorisation required by the Head of Judiciary for <i>qisas</i> executions
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Hadd (pl. hudud)</i>	Fixed punishment for offences mandated by <i>Sharia</i>
<i>Lavat</i>	Sodomy
<i>Moharebeh</i>	Enmity against God
<i>Mosahegheh</i>	Lesbian sex
<i>Qadf</i>	False accusations of sodomy or adultery
<i>Qassameh</i>	Sworn oath
<i>Qisas</i>	Retribution-in-kind
<i>Sabol-nabi</i>	Insulting the prophet
<i>Sharia</i>	Islamic law
<i>Ta'zir</i>	Punishment for offences at the discretion of the judge
<i>Tafkhiz</i>	Intercrural sex
<i>Zena</i>	Extramarital sex
<i>Zenaye Mohseneh</i>	Adultery

FOREWORD BY NASRIN SOTOUDEH



Human Rights Lawyer

Global execution statistics are published annually. For many years, Iran has ranked first worldwide in executions per capita and continues to be amongst the countries with the highest number of executions overall.

The reasons for opposing the inhuman punishment of execution are so clear that they hardly require repetition. Nevertheless, governments such as the Islamic Republic of Iran often invoke public opinion to justify this inhuman punishment. They claim, for example, that murderers or drug traffickers are executed because society demands it, as though that settles the matter.

But why does the story continue? Because this heinous and inhuman punishment cannot be legitimised by public pressure.

I wish to address the worst form of execution, namely those carried out in response to public pressure calling for the execution of a particular individual or group. Such circumstances usually arise after revolutions and the experience of harsh dictatorship. We experienced this ourselves within the past half-century. After the 1979 Revolution, many officers and senior officials of the monarchy were executed without fair trials. Yet the cycle of violence did not end, and the execution machine went on to claim the lives of others, including those who had contributed to the revolution's victory. This cycle has not ceased to this day, nearly half a century later, and has in fact accelerated.

From the outset, these executions were strongly criticised by jurists such as Abdol-Karim Lahidji. However, they were supported by most

political groups and by public opinion. When it came time for the revolutionaries themselves to face execution, society had fallen into a profound and fearful silence, as so often happens in revolutions... This is precisely why death sentences should never be issued under the influence of public opinion. Socrates, too, was sentenced to death at the age of seventy by a vote of the Athenian majority and chose to drink the cup of poison rather than leave Athens.

Iran is now openly facing a transfer of power, and there is concern that whichever group replaces the Islamic Republic may once again resort to widespread executions in order to consolidate its authority, thereby perpetuating this inhuman punishment. In the words of Georg Büchner, no revolution can afford to ignore this scythe of death. Therefore, in my view, the first question that must be put to any group seeking to replace the current system is: "Will you explicitly and unequivocally abolish the death penalty?" This is the guarantee that must be demanded in order to prevent further violence. Our concern, as ordinary citizens, is the protection of human life and the elimination of violence.

We renounce violence and execution in order to protect ourselves and our collective future.

Nasrin Sotoudeh
Tehran, 20 February 2026

On 1 April 2026, Nasrin Sotoudeh was arrested at her home in Tehran while on medical furlough. At the time of publication (7 April), she remains held incommunicado, with no information disclosed regarding her fate or whereabouts.³

3 IHRNGO, "Human Rights Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh Arrested", 2 April 2026, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8665/>

PREFACE

The 18th *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty), provides an assessment and analysis of death penalty trends in 2025 in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It sets out the number of executions in 2025, trends compared to previous years, the legislative framework and procedures, charges, geographic distribution and a monthly breakdown of executions. A list of women executed in 2025 is also included in the categories section on page 89. In 2025, Iran's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the United Nations Human Rights Council took place, and recommendations on the death penalty issued by states as part of this procedure are included in Annex 4. The report further documents the abolitionist movement within Iran, including "No Death Penalty Tuesdays," the forgiveness movement and its contribution to reducing the use of the death penalty, and provides analysis on how the international community can contribute to limiting the scope of the death penalty in Iran.

The 2025 report is the result of hard work from IHRNGO members and supporters who took part in reporting, documenting, collecting, analysing and drafting its contents. We are especially grateful to IHRNGO sources inside Iran who incur a significant risk by reporting on unannounced and secret executions in prisons across all 31 provinces. Given the very difficult context, the lack of transparency and the obvious risks and limitations faced by human rights defenders in the Islamic Republic of Iran, this report does not give a complete picture of the use of the death penalty in the country. Due to the lack of transparency in the Iranian judicial system and the pressure exerted on families, each year a number of reported executions cannot be confirmed through two independent sources and are therefore not included in the report. In 2025, IHRNGO received reports of 553 executions that could not be confirmed by two independent sources, a figure more than ten times higher than the annual number of unconfirmed execution reports in the previous four years (between 39 and 48). We cannot rule out the possibility that some of these reports are part of a disinformation campaign by the Islamic Republic aimed at discrediting human rights organisations. However, the report aims to provide the most complete and realistic figures possible under current circumstances.⁴ It does not include

4 See below, "Sources".

suspicious deaths in custody, people on death row who died in prison before execution or those killed under torture.

ECPM supports the preparation, editing, publication and distribution of this report as part of its international advocacy against the death penalty. To overcome the transparency issues surrounding data and information on the death penalty in Iran, a comprehensive strategy for distribution and dissemination is required. The overall aim of IHRNGO and ECPM in publishing this report is to call attention to and publicise the facts, in order to change national and international views on the situation of the death penalty in Iran, the world's top executioner per capita.

2025 ANNUAL REPORT AT A GLANCE

- At least 1,639 people were executed in 2025, a 68% increase compared to 2024 when 975 executions were recorded, marking the highest number of recorded executions since 1989.
- Only 113 executions (under 7%) were announced by official sources compared to 9.7% in 2024 and 15% in 2023.
- Over 93% of the executions recorded (1,524 executions), were not announced by the authorities.
- 795 people (48.5%) were executed for drug-related offences, a 58% increase compared to 2024 (503).
- Only 3 (0.18%) of the 795 drug-related executions were announced by official sources.
- 747 people (45.6% of all executions) were sentenced to *qisas* (retribution-in-kind) for murder, a 79% increase compared to 2024 (419).
- 37 people were executed for rape charges.
- At least 57 people were executed for the security-related charges of *baghy* (armed rebellion), *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and *moharebeh* (enmity against God). They include 2 protesters, 18 political prisoners, 13 espionage defendants and a person convicted of financial corruption.
- The charges against 3 of those executed are unknown.
- At least 48 women were executed, the highest number recorded in more than 20 years and a 55% increase compared to 2024 (31).
- 11 of the executions took place in public spaces.
- At least 84 Afghan nationals were executed in 2025, compared to 80 in 2024, 25 in 2023 and 16 in 2022.
- 852 executions (52%) in 2025 and more than 5,972 executions since 2010 have been based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts.
- At least 566 prisoners sentenced to *qisas* for murder charges were forgiven by the families of the murder victims per *qisas* laws.

INTRODUCTION

The 18th Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, published by Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty), reveals an unprecedented escalation in the use of the death penalty by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2025. At least 1,639 people were executed, marking the highest number of recorded executions since 1989 and a dramatic 68% increase compared to the 975 executions recorded in 2024. This surge continues the sharp rise in executions that began after the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests in 2022, illustrating the authorities’ continued reliance on the death penalty as a tool to instil fear and deter further dissent. Commenting on the unprecedented number of executions in 2025, IHRNGO Director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam said: “By creating fear through an average of four to five executions per day in 2025, authorities tried to prevent new protests and prolong their crumbling rule. But by the end of the year, people took to the streets again to demand their fundamental rights, demonstrating the failure of the policy of the gallows. This sends an important signal to the current and any future leaders.”

A large proportion of those executed were from the most marginalised sectors of Iranian society. Nearly half of the executions were for drug-related offences, while hundreds were carried out under *qisas* (retribution-in-kind) laws for murder. Since poverty is an underlying factor, ethnic minorities were disproportionately impacted. Meanwhile, the right to access counsel, due process and fair trial rights were systematically breached, often in violation of the Islamic Republic’s own laws.

The report also highlights several alarming trends in the use of the death penalty in 2025. At least 48 women were executed, the highest number recorded in at least two decades. The Islamic Republic also continued to target foreign nationals, executing at least 84 Afghan nationals, three Iraqi nationals and a man referred to only as a “foreign national.” In addition, 11 executions were carried out in public spaces, where children were amongst the spectators, a practice intended to spread fear and reinforce the state’s policy of intimidation.

Commenting on the report’s findings, Raphaël Chenuil-Hazan, Executive Director of ECPM, stated: “The death penalty in Iran is used as a political tool of oppression and repression, with ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups disproportionately represented among those executed. In 2025 alone, at least 795

people were executed for drug-related offences, many sentenced by Revolutionary Courts after grossly unfair trials and without due process. Despite this unprecedented surge, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) failed to issue a strong reaction. Such large-scale executions for drug offences may constitute crimes against humanity, and the UNODC must ensure that its cooperation does not contribute to these crimes and must do everything within its mandate to help prevent them.”

In October 2025, the UN Fact-Finding Mission expressed alarm at the extraordinary spike in executions. Fact-Finding Mission expert Max du Plessis stated: “If executions form part of a widespread and systemic attack against a civilian population, as a matter of policy, then those responsible – including the judges who impose capital punishment – may be held accountable for crimes against humanity.”⁵

Despite the extraordinary rise in executions, opposition to the death penalty inside Iran continues to grow. The “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” movement, which began in one Iranian prison, has now entered its third year, expanding to 56 prisons nationwide and gaining increasing support among Iranian civil society and the international community. In October 2025, more than 1,500 people on death row for drug-related offences staged a six-day strike in Ghezelhesar Prison, forcing authorities to halt executions for such offences at the prison. This grassroots movement represents a significant turning point in the Iranian abolitionist movement.

This report is published at a time when the Iranian people were subjected to the largest mass killing of protesters in the Islamic Republic’s history in January 2026. At the time of writing, they are living under the fear and anxiety of daily bombardments amid an ongoing war. The execution of protesters and political prisoners resumed on 19 March with the hanging of three protesters arrested in relation to the January 2026 nationwide protests. In the days that followed, at least ten more were executed, including four protesters and six political prisoners belonging to the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI/MEK), which has been the most disproportionately represented political group on death row.⁶ Hundreds of detained protesters remain at risk of death sentences and execution. Periods of crisis and conflict have historically provided

5 Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, “Iran: UN Fact-Finding Mission alarmed by surge in repression and extraordinary spike in executions”, 30 October 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/iran-un-fact-finding-mission-alarmed-surge-repression-and-extraordinary>.

6 IHRNGO, “Protester Ali Fahim Hanged; 10 Political Prisoners Executed in 8 Days,” 6 April 2026, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8668/>

the authorities with opportunities to intensify repression and carry out executions away from international scrutiny.

The future of the Islamic Republic remains uncertain. It has no legitimacy among the absolute majority of the Iranian population and is weaker than at any time in its history. If it survives the current crisis, there is a serious risk that executions will be used even more extensively as a tool of oppression and repression. The international community must therefore make abolition of the death penalty, or at a minimum its restriction to the most serious crimes, a central demand in any dialogue or negotiations with the Iranian authorities. If political change does occur, the abolition of the death penalty must also be a core demand for any transitional government. In times of transition, public anger may generate strong support for executions of officials associated with the ousted government. However, Iran's experience after the 1979 Revolution demonstrates the dangers of such an approach.

Commenting on the importance of abolition in any future transition, Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam said: "History has shown that executions carried out in the name of justice during times of transition can quickly become tools of repression and are in violation of the right to truth. If Iran is to avoid repeating the tragic cycle that followed the 1979 Revolution, the abolition of the death penalty must be a fundamental principle of any future democratic system."

In this context, IHRNGO has initiated dialogue among Iranian opposition actors on minimum human rights principles for a future Iran. Several political parties and groups participating in this process have already taken a principled stance against the death penalty (see page 109). Establishing a broad consensus among the Iranian opposition on the abolition of the death penalty will be essential to breaking the cycle of violence that has characterised Iran's modern political history.

With the publication of this report, IHRNGO and ECPM call on the international community, including the United Nations, governments with diplomatic relations with Iran, and international organisations, to place the abolition of the death penalty at the centre of their engagement with Iran and to support the growing abolitionist movement inside the country.

SOURCES

There is an increasing lack of transparency on case law and the numbers of sentences and executions in Iran. The number of executions presented in this report is based on official information and documented cases from unofficial sources. These numbers should be considered a minimum; the actual figures are certainly higher as the Iranian authorities do not announce all executions. We therefore distinguish between “official” and “unofficial” or “unannounced” executions. Official or announced executions are those announced by the official websites of the Iranian judiciary, the Iranian police, the National Iranian Broadcasting Network, official or state-run news agencies and national or local newspapers. Unofficial or unannounced executions are cases that have not been announced by official sources but have been confirmed by IHRNGO through unofficial channels and communications. These include other human rights NGOs or IHRNGO sources within Iran. The sources of unofficial reports are often eyewitnesses, family members, lawyers, sources within prisons and within the Iranian judiciary (through unofficial communication). Only unofficial reports that have been confirmed by two independent sources have been included in this report.

Between 2016 and 2021, an average of 25% of all executions were announced by official Iranian media. The transparency level dropped to 12% in 2022, 15% in 2023 and below 10% in 2024. In 2025, less than 7% of the recorded executions were announced by official sources, the remaining 93% were confirmed by IHRNGO.

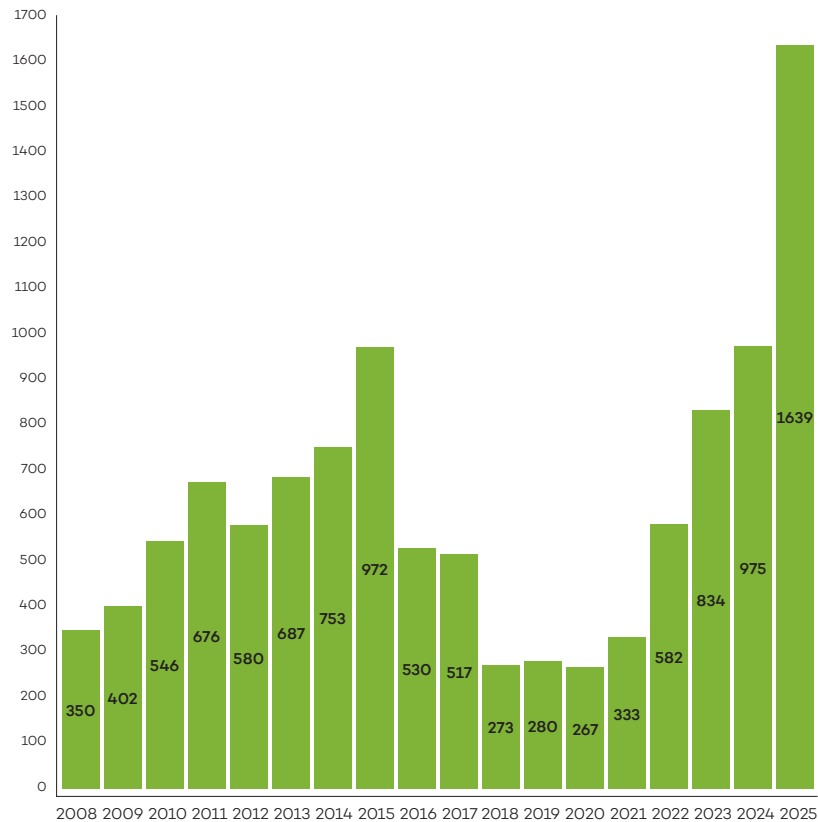
Due to the lack of transparency in the Iranian judicial system and pressure exerted on families, each year a number of reported executions cannot be confirmed through two independent sources and are therefore not included in the report. In 2025, IHRNGO received reports of 553 executions that could not be confirmed by two independent sources, a figure more than ten times higher than the annual number of unconfirmed executions reported in the previous four years (between 39 and 48). We cannot rule out the possibility that some of these reports are part of a disinformation campaign by the Islamic Republic aimed at discrediting human rights organisations.

It is important to note that the charges cited in this report are those issued by the Iranian judiciary. Most of the trials leading to death sentences are unfair according to international standards. The use of

torture to force confessions is widespread in Iran. Due to the lack of transparency in the Iranian judiciary, the charges cited in this report have not been confirmed by independent sources. The figures presented in the report do not include extra-judicial killings inside or outside prisons.

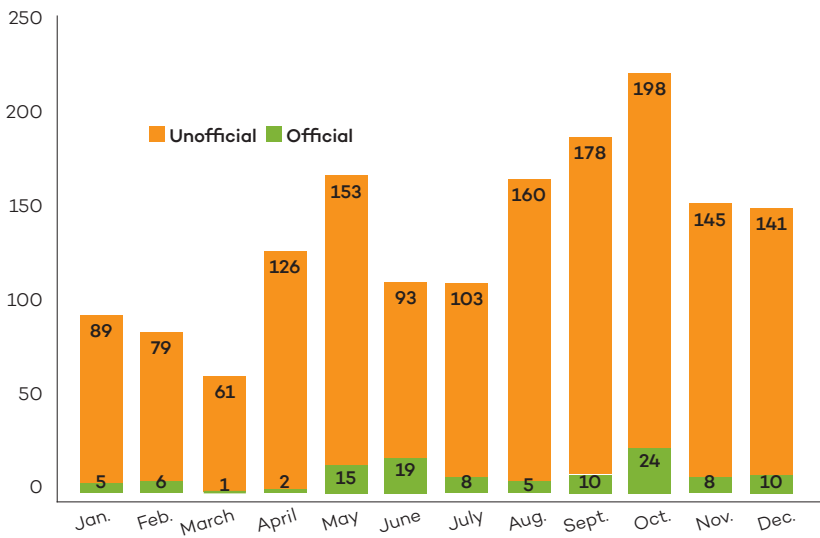
FACTS AND FIGURES

EXECUTION TRENDS IN THE LAST 18 YEARS (2008-2025)



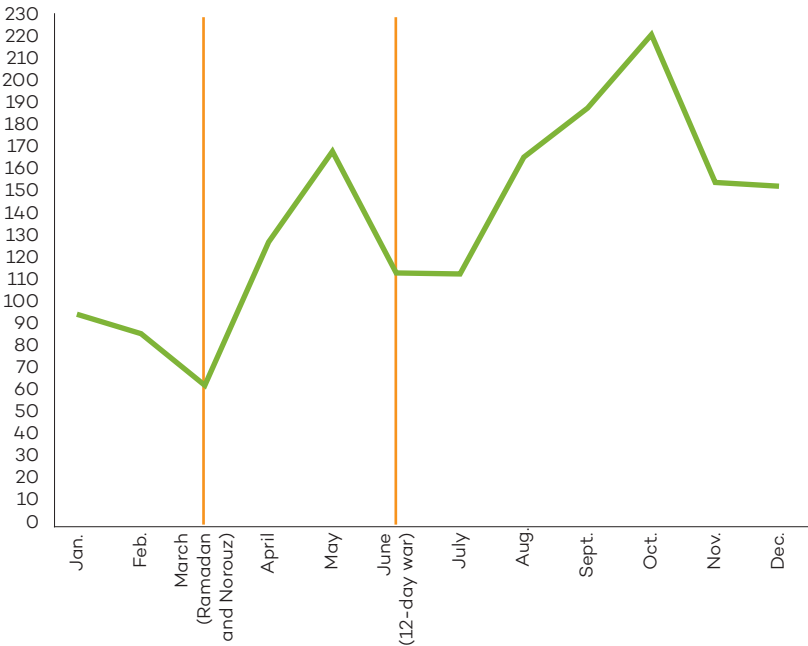
From IHRNGO's first annual report in 2008 to 2025, Iranian authorities have executed at least 11,196 people, an average of 622 executions per year. The number of executions in 2025 is the highest annual total recorded by IHRNGO and the highest reported number since 1989.

MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF EXECUTIONS IN 2025



The monthly breakdown of executions illustrates a high disparity between the number of officially announced and unannounced executions throughout the year. With 62 and 85 executions respectively, March and February had the lowest numbers. However, 62 executions during the Muslim month of Ramadan (1-30 March) which coincided with Nowruz, the Iranian new year, is unprecedentedly high. With 222 executions, October was the bloodiest month in 2025, followed by September and May, with 188 and 168 executions, respectively. 60% of executions took place in the second half of the year.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS AND POLITICAL EVENTS



The majority of those executed in Iran are sentenced to death for ordinary criminal (not political) offences. However, IHRNGO’s data indicate a meaningful correlation between the timing of executions and political developments (indicated with vertical lines in the line diagram above). Execution numbers tend to increase when authorities fear social unrest and when the attention of the international community is focused on other geopolitical issues. Conversely, executions typically decline in the period preceding elections, as well as during major cultural and religious occasions, such as Nowruz and the Muslim month of Ramadan. Since the nationwide “Woman, Life, Freedom” protests in 2022, the number of executions in Iran has steadily increased. Following the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah on 27 September 2024 and the subsequent escalation of tensions between the Islamic Republic and Israel, the surge in executions intensified further. The overall level of executions remained high throughout 2025. Notably, even during periods when executions typically decline, the numbers remained unusually high. In March 2025, despite the overlap of Ramadan (1-30 March) and Nowruz holidays (beginning on 21 March), the number of executions was unprecedentedly high. A new surge in executions began in the months after the 12-day war between Iran and Israel in June, and remained at a higher level for the remainder of the year.

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S POWER STRUCTURE AND THE DEATH PENALTY

According to Article 57 of the Iranian Constitution, “The powers of government are vested in the legislative, executive and judicial powers which function under the supervision of the absolute *velayate-ol-amr* (Supreme Leader) and leadership of the *Ummah*.” While this article stipulates that these powers, or branches, are independent of each other, this is contradicted elsewhere in the Constitution and other laws. Article 156 of the Constitution provides: “The Judiciary shall be an independent power that protects individual and social rights.” However, the impartiality and independence of the judiciary are undermined in Article 157, which states: “The Head of Judiciary is directly appointed and supervised by the Supreme Leader.” Under the Constitution, the Supreme Leader is the Head of State and holds the state’s highest political position, exerting significant influence over all branches of government. The Guardian Council, a pivotal body within the Islamic Republic’s political framework, comprises twelve members: six Islamic jurists (*fuqaha*) appointed by the Supreme Leader and six jurists specialising in various areas of law, nominated by the Head of Judiciary and approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament). This council wields considerable power, including the authority to veto legislation passed by Parliament and to supervise elections. Notably, the Guardian Council is responsible for approving or disqualifying candidates seeking to run in local, parliamentary, presidential, and Assembly of Experts elections. Consequently, the Supreme Leader maintains ultimate control over the nation’s main policies and practices, with the Guardian Council serving as a mechanism to ensure that legislation and electoral processes conform to his vision for the Islamic Republic.

This section provides an overview of the relevant state authorities and their positions in relation to the use of the death penalty.

THE SUPREME LEADER



The Supreme Leader of Iran exerts significant **indirect influence** over the implementation of the death penalty through his control of key judicial and governmental institutions. By appointing the Head of Judiciary and influencing the Guardian Council, he shapes the legal framework

and ensures its alignment with his policies. His oversight of security and intelligence forces further strengthens his role in enforcing capital punishment. However, the Supreme Leader also has **direct involvement** in death penalty cases in the following ways:

Issuing pardons, commuting sentences: The Supreme Leader has the authority to grant clemency or commute death sentences, often on religious or national occasions, based on recommendations from the Head of Judiciary.

Issuing direct *fatwas* (religious decrees): As the Islamic Republic's highest religious authority, the Supreme Leader can issue *fatwas* that justify or mandate executions, particularly in cases of apostasy, blasphemy, or national security threats. These *fatwas* carry binding legal force. An example is the mass execution of several thousand political prisoners in the summer of 1988, based on a *fatwa* issued by then Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini.

Intervening in high-profile or sensitive cases: The Supreme Leader can also intervene in politically sensitive cases, either to enforce or halt executions, especially if they have significant domestic or international implications. For example, the sentence of Babak Zanjani, a billionaire convicted of embezzlement and sentenced to death in 2016, was commuted to a 20-year prison term in 2024. The judiciary stated that a clemency request was approved by both the Head of Judiciary and the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.⁷

Ali Khamenei became the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic after the death of Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989 and remained in this position until his death in February 2026. His son, Mojtaba Khamenei was declared the new Supreme Leader on 8 March 2026.

⁷ BBC News, "Iran commutes billionaire Babak Zanjani's death sentence", 30 April 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68884549>.

THE JUDICIARY



The Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran plays a central role in issuing and implementing death sentences, operating under the direct influence of the Supreme Leader. Its responsibilities encompass legal proceedings, sentencing, and execution enforcement.

According to the Constitution, the Head of Judiciary is responsible for “employment of just and worthy judges, their dismissal, appointment, transfer, assignment to particular duties, promotions, and carrying out similar administrative duties, in accordance with the law.”⁸

On 1 July 2021, former Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei promoted Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei (known as Ejei - see picture above) to serve as the new Head of Judiciary. Ejei has held several key positions in the Islamic Republic’s security apparatus, including Minister of Intelligence (2005–2009), Attorney General of Iran (2009–2014), and Deputy Chief of Judiciary (2014–2021). In 2014, he was granted the power to make the final decision in death penalty cases concerning drug-related charges. The following year, in 2015, at least 642 people were executed for drug-related offences, including mass executions carried out at Ghezelhesar Prison⁹ on Ejei’s direct orders, setting the record for the highest annual number of drug-related executions recorded since the early 1990s. Ejei is also one of the Islamic Republic officials sanctioned in 2010 by both the United States¹⁰ and the European Union¹¹ for their role in the suppression of the 2009 post-election protests. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of drug-related executions since Ejei’s appointment as the Head of Judiciary. For further details on Courts and Trials, see page 44.

8 Constitution, Article 158.

9 IHRNGO, “Ghezelhesar Mass-Executions Continue: 11 Executions on Wednesday 10 June”, 13 June 2015, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/1217/>.

10 US Department of the Treasury, “New Executive Order Targeting Iranian Officials Responsible For Or Complicit In Serious Human Rights Abuses”, 29 September 2010, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/pages/tg877.aspx>.

11 Parliamentary question, “EU sanctions against Iranian officials”, E-8192/2010, 1 October 2010, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-7-2010-8192_EN.html.

THE LEGISLATURE



The Legislature consists of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (*Majles* or Parliament), composed of 290 representatives, 14 of whom are women, with Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf as Speaker, and the Guardian Council, with Ahmad Jannati as Chairman.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf (see picture on the left) is a former senior commander in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Chief of Police (2000–2005), Tehran Mayor (2005–2017) and was a presidential candidate. He was appointed to the role of Speaker of Parliament in 2020.

After the twelve-day war between Israel and Iran in June 2025, the *Law on Intensifying the Punishment for Espionage and Cooperation with the Zionist Regime and Hostile States against National Security and Interests* was adopted by the parliament on 28 September 2025.¹² The law was promulgated on 15 October 2025.

THE EXECUTIVE



According to the Iranian Constitution, the government, led by the president, does not have the authority to issue and implement death sentences. However, public executions seem to be the exception to this rule. At the local level, the governor representing the government has the power to

decide whether an execution should be carried out in public.¹³

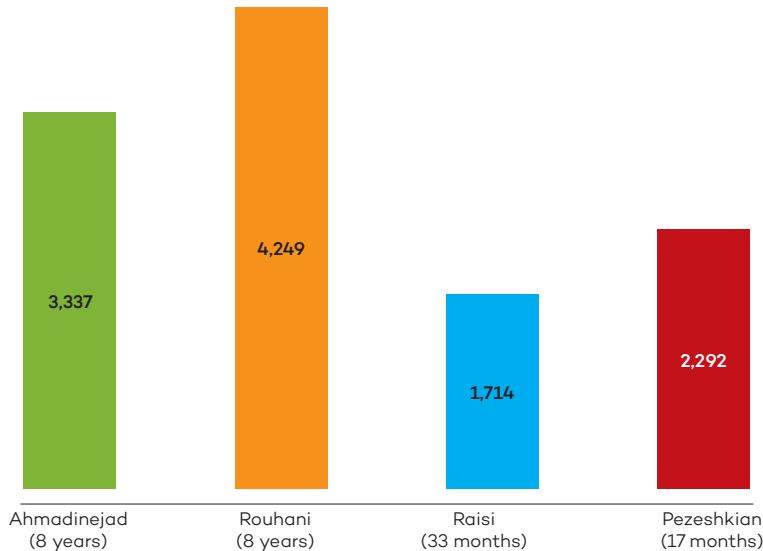
Furthermore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in justifying executions at the international level and engages in bilateral and multilateral dialogue on the situation of the death penalty and

12 For the full text of the law (in Farsi), see <https://nezamat.ir/همکاری-جاسوسی-تشدید-مجازات-جاسوسی-و-همکاری-جاسوسی>.

13 <https://www.asrehamoon.ir/news/استاندار-تنها-مخالف-اعدام-قاتلین-همسر-ملاء-عام-51511>.

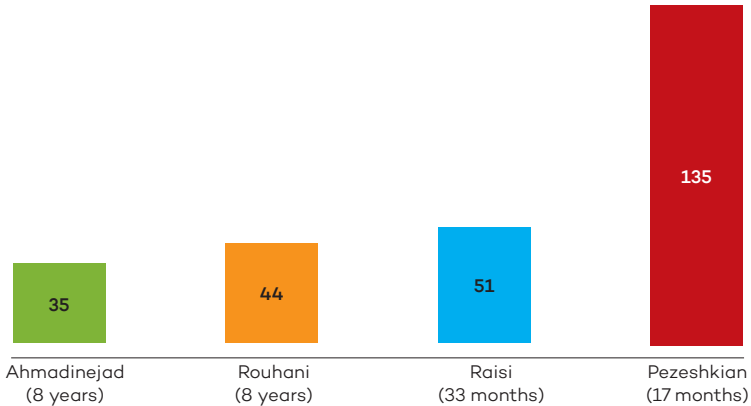
the follow-up of individual cases. Following the death of President Ebrahim Raisi on 19 May 2024, Iran held a presidential election marked by the lowest voter turnout in the history of the Islamic Republic. Masoud Pezeshkian (see picture above), a former member of parliament and one of the very few candidates approved by the Guardian Council, was appointed as the new president. Pezeshkian's presidency has coincided with the largest surge in executions recorded in Iran in the past 35 years.

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER PRESIDENTIAL TERM



At least 2,292 people have been executed since Masoud Pezeshkian took office in July 2024. By comparison, during the less than three years of Ebrahim Raisi's presidency (2021–2024), and the 8-year presidential terms of Hassan Rouhani (2013–2021) and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005–2013), at least 1,714, 4,249, and 3,337 people were executed, respectively.

AVERAGE MONTHLY EXECUTIONS PER PRESIDENT



Average monthly executions: A comparison of execution figures during Pezeshkian's 17 months in office with those recorded under the previous three presidents – Ahmadinejad, Rouhani, and Raisi – reveals a consistent upward trend in the Islamic Republic's use of the death penalty, regardless of the president in power. However, the increase during the first five months of Pezeshkian's presidency was particularly dramatic. The average number of monthly executions under Pezeshkian reached 135 (more than four executions per day), compared to 51 per month during Raisi's tenure, 44 under Rouhani, and 35 under Ahmadinejad. Over the course of all these presidential terms, Iran has maintained an execution rate of at least one person per day.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified three international human rights treaties that apply to the death penalty: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1975, the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2009.

Other applicable treaties, which the Islamic Republic of Iran has neither signed nor ratified, include: the International Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Since 2007, a resolution calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty has been put to a vote at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) every two years. This resolution, consistently adopted by a large majority of states, reaffirms that the application of the death penalty violates human dignity and “calls upon all States that still maintain it to establish a moratorium on executions.” As the resolution is not legally binding, it cannot prevent a state from performing an execution or sanction that state. However, as a firm call from the UN's most senior political body, it carries considerable moral weight and is an important instrument in advancing global efforts toward abolition.

Since the introduction of the resolution in 2007, the number of voters supporting the resolution has steadily increased to a new record high of 130 in 2024.¹⁴ However, Iran has consistently voted against the Resolution since 2007. In December 2024, Iran voted against the Resolution once again.

14 ECPM, “Resolution for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty: Analysis of the Vote in UNGA Plenary Meeting”, December 2024, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2024/12/Vote-pleniere-ENG.pdf>.

STATUS OF RATIFICATION BY IRAN OF RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL TREATIES

TREATY DESCRIPTION	ABBREVIATION	DATE OF SIGNATURE	DATE OF RATIFICATION, ACCESSION (A), SUCCESSION (D)
International Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT		
Optional Protocol to the International Convention against Torture	OP - CAT		
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	CCPR	4 April 1968	24 June 1975
Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty	CCPR-OP2-DP		
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED		
Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED, Art. 32		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	CEDAW		
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD	8 March 1967	29 Aug. 1968
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	CESCR	4 April 1968	24 June 1975
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	CMW		
International Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC	5 Sept. 1991	13 July 1994
Optional Protocol to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	CRC-OP-AC	21 Sept. 2010	
Optional Protocol to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	CRC-OP-SC		26 Sept. 2007 (a)
International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	CRPD		23 Oct. 2009 (a)

LIMITATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY TO THE MOST SERIOUS CRIMES

Article 6 of the ICCPR sets out the inherent right to life and emphasises that the death penalty may only be applied for “the most serious crimes.” Article 6(2) of the ICCPR states: “In countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to the provisions of the present Covenant and to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court.”

In its General Comment on Article 6 of the ICCPR, the UN Human Rights Committee states that “[t]he term ‘the most serious crimes’ must be read restrictively and appertain only to crimes of extreme gravity, involving intentional killing. Crimes not resulting directly and intentionally in death, such as attempted murder, corruption and other economic and political crimes, armed robbery, piracy, abduction, drug and sexual offences, although serious in nature, can never serve as the basis, within the framework of Article 6, for the imposition of the death penalty. In the same vein, a limited degree of involvement or of complicity in the commission of even the most serious crimes, such as providing the physical means for the commission of murder, cannot justify the imposition of the death penalty. States parties are under an obligation to review their criminal laws so as to ensure that the death penalty is not imposed for crimes which do not qualify as the most serious crimes. They should also revoke death sentences issued for crimes not qualifying as the most serious crimes and pursue the necessary legal procedures to resentence those convicted for such crimes.”¹⁵

In a yearly supplement to his quinquennial report on capital punishment, the UN Secretary-General reaffirmed this position: “States parties to the Covenant that have not yet abolished the death penalty may only impose it for the ‘most serious crimes’. The Human Rights Committee has expressed the view that this means crimes of particular gravity involving intentional killing. States should remove from national laws any application of the death penalty to crimes not involving intentional killing, such as drug-related offences or terrorism-related crimes not involving intentional killing. The death penalty should especially not be imposed as a sanction for forms

15 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, Article 6: right to life, 3 September 2019, CCPR/C/GC/36, <https://docs.un.org/en/ccpr/c/gc/36>, para. 35.

of non-violent conduct such as apostasy, blasphemy, adultery and consensual same-sex relations.”¹⁶

Although Iran did not enter any reservations upon ratification of the ICCPR, the death penalty is still imposed for crimes that do not meet the threshold of “the most serious crimes”. This contradicts Iran’s own statement in the Addendum submitted following the country’s third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2020: “It should be noted that the deprivation of life has been considered as a punishment only for the most serious crimes in accordance with Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.”¹⁷

While it is essential to hold perpetrators of crimes such as rape accountable, the death penalty cannot be the answer. This was underlined by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet: “The main argument being made for the death penalty is for it to deter rape – but in fact there is no evidence that the death penalty deters crime more than other forms of punishment. Evidence shows that the certainty of punishment, rather than its severity, deters crime. In most countries around the world, the key problem is that victims of sexual violence do not have access to justice in the first place – whether due to stigma, fear of reprisals, entrenched gender stereotypes and power imbalances, lack of police and judicial training, laws that condone or excuse certain types of sexual violence or the lack of protection for victims.”¹⁸ This is the case in Iran, where victims of sexual violence do not have access to justice.

PROHIBITION ON THE DEATH PENALTY APPLIED AS A SANCTION AGAINST A CONDUCT THE VERY CRIMINALISATION OF WHICH VIOLATES THE ICCPR

The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) also states that “Under no circumstances can the death penalty ever be applied as a sanction against conduct whose very criminalization violates the Covenant, including adultery, homosexuality, apostasy, establishing political

16 Human Rights Council, *Capital punishment and the implementation of the safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty*, Yearly supplement of the Secretary-General to his quinquennial report on capital punishment, 28 August 2019, A/HRC/42/28, <https://docs.un.org/A/HRC/42/28>, para. 46.

17 Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Islamic Republic of Iran, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 20 February 2020, A/HRC/43/12/Add.1, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/43/12/Add.1>.

18 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Press Statement, “Rape is a monstrous crime, perpetrators must be held accountable – but death penalty and torture are not the answers – Bachelet”, 15 October 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/10/rape-monstrous-crime-perpetrators-must-be-held-accountable-death-penalty-and>.

opposition groups, or offending a head of state. States parties that retain the death penalty for such offences commit a violation of their obligations under Article 6 read alone and in conjunction with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Covenant, as well as of other provisions of the Covenant.”¹⁹

In Iran, several provisions of national law clearly contradict the state’s obligations under international human rights law (see below).

PROHIBITION OF TORTURE, INCLUDING SEVERAL METHODS OF EXECUTION

Article 7 of the ICCPR bans “[t]orture [and] cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

The HRC underlines that state parties that have not abolished the death penalty must respect Article 7 of the ICCPR, which prohibits certain methods of execution, including public executions. The HRC further notes that “criminal convictions resulting in the death penalty that are based on information procured by torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of interrogated persons would violate articles 7 and 14(3)(g) of the Covenant, as well as article 6.”²⁰

Article 14 guarantees the right to a fair trial and due process and specifically mentions the importance of an impartial judicial system, access to a lawyer, and protection against self-incrimination or coerced confessions.

In Iran, in 2025, as in previous years, people accused of crimes were tortured and forced to confess. Criminal convictions are frequently based on information extracted under torture. Methods of execution include hanging in public.

PROHIBITION ON THE DEATH PENALTY FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN²¹

Article 6(5) of ICCPR states: “Sentence of death shall not be imposed for crimes committed by persons below eighteen years of age and shall not be carried out on pregnant women.”

Article 37(a) of the CRC states: “No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility

19 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, op. cit., para. 36.

20 Ibid., para. 54.

21 ECOSOC, Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, approved by Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50 of 25 May 1984, https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/Safeguards_Guaranteeing_Protection_of_the_Rights_of_those_Facing_the_Death_Penalty.pdf.

of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age.”

However, upon ratification, Iran formulated the following reservation: “If the text of the Convention is or becomes incompatible with the domestic laws and Islamic standards at any time or in any case, the Government of the Islamic Republic shall not abide by it.”

In 2024, at least one child offender was executed. In 2025, Iran executed at least 48 women, the highest number recorded in more than 20 years.

PROHIBITION ON THE DEATH PENALTY AGAINST PERSONS WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES

In a Resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (the predecessor of the Human Rights Council), states are urged “not to impose the death penalty on a person suffering from any form of mental disorder or to execute any such person.”²²

IRANIAN LAW

Chapter III of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran contains provisions related to the rights of the people. Article 22 states: “The dignity, life, property, rights, domicile, and occupations of people may not be violated, unless sanctioned by law.”

Codified laws relating to the death penalty can be found in the 2013 Islamic Penal Code (IPC), as well as the Anti-Narcotics Law and its 2017 Amendment.²³ While murder, drug possession and trafficking, rape and sexual assault, *moharebeh* (enmity against God), *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and *baghy* (armed rebellion) are the most common charges resulting in the death penalty in Iran, the IPC provides for the death penalty for a wide range of offences, the number of which is amongst the highest in the world.

In addition, there are uncoded laws relating to the death penalty. Article 220 of the IPC states that Article 167 of the Constitution can be invoked by the judge to pronounce *hudud* punishments that the law has not addressed. While “[t]he judge is bound to endeavour to judge each case on the basis of the codified law”, in the absence of such laws, the judge must deliver his judgement on the basis of authoritative Islamic sources and authentic *fatwas* that can carry the mandatory

22 UN Commission on Human Rights, The Question of the Death Penalty, 25 April 2003, E/CN.4/RES/2003/67, 4(g).

23 ECPM, IHRNGO, The death penalty in law and in practice in Iran (2024), <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2024/10/Country-factsheet-Iran-2024.pdf>.

death penalty. The judge cannot refrain from admitting and examining cases or delivering his judgement, due to the lack, deficiency, brevity or contradictory nature of the law in the matter.

It is important to underline that the majority of charges punishable by death in the Islamic Republic cannot be considered “the most serious crimes” and therefore do not meet the ICCPR standards.

ISLAMIC PENAL CODE AND CAPITAL OFFENCES

The current Islamic Penal Code (IPC) came into force in 2013. Section Two sets out four types of punishments: *hadd*, *qisas*, *ta'zir* and *diyat*. Of those, *diyat* or monetary compensation, is not applicable for the purpose of this section.

Hadd (pl. hudud): fixed punishments for which *Sharia* or Islamic law has determined the measure, degree and method. They can be divided into three subcategories:

- **Sexual offences:** incest, rape, *zina* (adultery), *lavat* (sodomy or consensual homosexual penetrative sex), *tafkhez* (intercruel sex) where the “active party” is non-Muslim and the “passive party” is Muslim.
- **Offences against the state and religion:** *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth), *moharebeh* (enmity against God), *baghy* (armed rebellion), *sabot-nabi* (insulting the prophet) and *ertedad* (apostasy).
- **Repeat offences on the fourth occasion:** theft, adultery, sodomy, *mosahegheh* (lesbian sex), intercruel sex, pimping, insulting the prophet, alcohol consumption, *qadf* (false accusation of sodomy or adultery), *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

Qisas: retribution-in-kind for “intentional murder,” which due to a lack of grading and disregard for intent and mitigating circumstances, includes both intentional and unintentional killings.

Ta'zir: punishment for offences at the discretion of the judge.

HADD

SEXUAL OFFENCES

INCEST, SEX BETWEEN A NON-MUSLIM MAN AND A MUSLIM WOMAN AND RAPE

According to Article 224 of the IPC: “A death sentence shall be imposed on the male party in cases of incest, fornication with their stepmother, fornication of a non-Muslim man with a Muslim woman and fornication by force or coercion. The punishment for the female party shall be decided by other provisions concerning fornication.”

ADULTERY AND EXTRAMARITAL SEX

Article 221 of the IPC defines *zena* as extramarital sexual intercourse (defined as vaginal and anal sex between a man and a woman in Note 1 to the Article). *Zena* is punishable by death in the following cases: *zena* with a *mahram* blood relative, *zena* with a stepmother, *zena* between a non-Muslim man and a Muslim woman, rape or force (Article 224). Article 225 sets the punishment for *zenaye mohseneh* (adultery) for both men and women as stoning but provides the courts with the option to impose the death sentence by alternative means “if it is not possible to perform stoning” subject to the approval of the Head of Judiciary.

SAME-SEX RELATIONS

LAVAT

Article 233 of the IPC defines *lavat* (sodomy) as sexual intercourse between males and Article 234 sets out the corresponding punishments. In male homosexual relations, the law distinguishes between what it describes as the “active party” and “passive party.” The death penalty is imposed on the “active party” if he is married or if the act is rape, but the “passive party” receives the death penalty regardless of their marital status. According to Note 1 to Article 234, a non-Muslim “active party” in a sexual act with a Muslim party shall also receive the death penalty.

TAFKHIZ

Tafkhiz (intercrural or “thigh sex”) is defined in Article 235 and according to Article 236, the punishment for both parties is 100 lashes. However, the Note to the Article specifies that the “active party” shall receive the death penalty if he is non-Muslim and the “passive party” is Muslim.

MOSAHEGHEH

Defined in Article 238, in cases of *mosahegheh* (lesbian sex), no distinction is made for the purposes of punishment based on whether parties were “active” or “passive”, their religion, marital status or consent (Article 240). Article 239 sets the punishment for *mosahegheh* as 100 lashes. However, as it is a *hadd* crime, it is punishable by death on the fourth occasion if “offenders” have already been sentenced and received the lashing punishment on the first three occasions. While this is not explicitly stated in law, it can be inferred from the provisions of Article 136 of the IPC on “Repeat Offences” (see further below).

In June 2019, when asked by a journalist why homosexuals are executed based on their sexual orientation, then Iranian Foreign

Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif responded: “Our society has moral principles. And we live according to these principles. These are moral principles concerning the behaviour of people in general. And that means that the law is respected, and the law is obeyed.” According to some human rights activists, many people have been executed based on charges of homosexuality since the 1979 Revolution.²⁴

REPEAT OFFENCES

Article 136 stipulates that repeat offenders who commit an offence punishable by *hadd*, and who are punished on the first three occasions, shall be sentenced to death on the fourth occasion. The law does not provide a complete list of *hudud* offences. Article 278 provides for the death penalty for theft on the fourth occasion and Articles 220-288 define *hudud* offences as: incest and adultery, *lavat*, *tafkhez*, *mosahegheh*, pimping, *sabol-nabi*, theft, alcohol consumption, *qadf* (false accusations of *lavat* or adultery), *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

OFFENCES AGAINST THE STATE AND RELIGION

MOHAREBEH

Article 279 of the IPC defines *moharebeh* (enmity against God) as: “drawing a weapon on the life, property or honour of the public or causing them terror, in a way that creates an environment of insecurity.” When a person draws a weapon on one or several specific individuals with personal motives, but their action does not have a public element, or a person draws a weapon on the public but does not create an atmosphere of insecurity due to their incompetence, they shall not be considered a *mohareb* (person who commits *moharebeh*).

Article 281 of the IPC stipulates that “bandits, robbers and smugglers who resort to arms and disrupt the security of the public and roads, shall be considered *mohareb*.”

Article 282 of the IPC provides for the death penalty in cases of *moharebeh* but allows judges discretion to impose the alternative punishments of crucifixion, amputation of the right hand and left foot, or domestic exile away from the defendant’s hometown.

Under the previous IPC, which was in force until 2013, the charge of *moharebeh* was frequently used against political dissidents and people with connections to opposition groups abroad, regardless of

²⁴ See, for example, Monash University, “State-Sanctioned Killing of Sexual Minorities: Looking Beyond the Death Penalty”, 4 March 2021, https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/State-Sanctioned_Killing_of_Sexual_Minorities_Looking_Beyond_the_Death_Penalty/14069318.

whether they had personally used violence. The current IPC provides for their punishment under *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy*.

EFSAD-FIL-ARZ

Article 286 of the IPC defines *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) as a crime committed by a person who, “on an extensive level against the physical integrity of others, domestic or external security, spreads lies, disrupts the national economic system, undertakes arson and destruction, disseminates poisonous, microbiological and dangerous substances, establishes corruption and prostitution centres or assists in establishing them.”

However, this article does not provide definitions of the term “crime” or the scope of “extensive” for the purposes of this provision, granting judges broad discretion in interpreting the law.

BAGHY

Article 287 of the IPC defines members of any group that stage armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic of Iran as “*baghy*” (one who carries out *baghy* or armed rebellion), and states that its members shall be sentenced to death on charges of *baghy* if they have used weapons. Due to this definition, *baghy* charges are predominantly used against members of dissident groups.

ESPIONAGE AND COOPERATION WITH THE ZIONIST REGIME AND HOSTILE STATES AGAINST NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERESTS

This legislation expands the scope of the death penalty in three main ways. Firstly, it creates new categories of capital offences, extending the risk of execution to broadly defined “operational” and “intelligence” acts, various forms of cooperation with hostile entities, cyber and infrastructure-related offences, and, in some cases, activities involving satellite communication devices. Secondly, it lowers the threshold for capital liability by allowing the death penalty where conduct is merely deemed capable of harming security, creating fear, or strengthening a hostile actor, even if the act is not completed or the assistance is indirect. Finally, it increases the likelihood of executions by fast-tracking cases in designated Revolutionary Courts, shortening procedural deadlines, permitting courts to fill investigative gaps themselves, and mandating pre-trial detention where “sufficient evidence” is alleged, thereby weakening fair-trial safeguards and the defence’s ability to challenge the case.²⁵

25 IHRNGO, “Ali Ardestani First Person to be Hanged for Israel Espionage in 2026”, 7 January 2026, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8516/>.

OTHER RELIGIOUS “OFFENCES”

Article 262 of the IPC provides for the death penalty for cursing the Prophet of Islam or any of the other great prophets (blasphemy), and for accusing the infallible imams and the Prophet Mohammad’s daughter, Fatima Zahra, of sodomy or adultery. Apostasy, sorcery, witchcraft and other such issues are not explicitly addressed in the current IPC, although apostasy is referenced in Article 26. Under *sharia* law, the punishment for apostasy is death, which a judge can impose by invoking Article 167 of the Constitution.

QISAS

Qisas means retribution-in-kind for a physical harm caused, which includes both injuries and death (the concept of “an eye for an eye”).²⁶ A *qisas* death sentence takes away the offender’s life in retribution for having committed murder. However, the law provides immunity from *qisas* for the following individuals:

- The father and paternal grandfather of the victim (Article 301)
- A man who kills his wife and/or her lover in the act of adultery (Article 302)
- Muslims, followers of recognised religions, and “protected persons” who kill followers of unrecognised religions or “unprotected persons” (Article 310)
- Killing a person who has committed a *hadd* offence punishable by death (Article 302)
- Killing a rapist (Article 302).

The law indirectly encourages arbitrary killings by private individuals. For instance, experts argue that Articles 301 and 302 may be contributing to the increased number of honour killings in Iran. In practice, men who murder their wives are more frequently exempted from *qisas* than vice versa. In 2023, a man who had murdered his wife on suspicion of having an affair based on text messages, was granted immunity from *qisas* after presenting the evidence to a court in Tehran.²⁷ The law also discriminates against followers of “unrecognised” religions. Article 301 states: “*Qisas* shall be established [...] if the victim is sane and has the same religion as the culprit. Note: If the victim is Muslim, the non-Muslim status of the

26 For example, protester Mehdi Mousavian was sentenced to be blinded for allegedly throwing a stone that blinded a police officer. See IHRNGO, “IHRNGO Calls for International Action to Stop Eye for an Eye Sentence of Protester Mehdi Mousavian”, 22 January 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6519/>.

27 <https://www.hamshahrionline.ir/news/797753/> مرد-همسرکش-از-قصاص-ر-هایی-یافت-خون-ز-نم-جلال-بود-ارائه-مستندات

culprit shall not prevent *qisas*.” This includes in particular members of the Baha’i faith, which is not recognised as a religion according to Iranian law. If a Baha’i is murdered, the family does not receive *diya* (blood money), and the offender is exempted from *qisas*. This is illustrated by two Baha’i murder cases reported in 2013: Saeedollah Aqdasi was murdered in his house in Miandoab (Northwestern Iran) on 23 April, and Ataollah Rezvani was shot in Bandar Abbas (Southern Iran) on 24 August. In both cases, there was never any investigation and nobody was ever held accountable for their murders.

TA’ZIR

Article 18 of the IPC defines *ta’zir* as “a punishment that does not fall under the categories of *hadd*, *qisas* or *diya*.” Among the charges carrying the death penalty, drug-related offences are classified as *ta’zir* crimes. *Ta’zir* punishments apply to acts or breaches of state regulations. Their type, severity and rules for mitigation, suspension or waiver are determined by statute rather than by *Sharia* which means they can be reformed.

ANTI-NARCOTICS LAW

The death penalty was first introduced for drug-related offences in 1959 through an amendment to the 1955 Law on the Prohibition of Poppy Cultivation and Opium Consumption.²⁸ After the 1979 Revolution, the Islamic Republic adopted a markedly more punitive and expansive approach to criminalisation, embedding the death penalty within its emerging system of “revolutionary” justice. The “Legal Bill to Intensify Punishments for Perpetrators of Drug Crimes and Preventive and Medical Measures” was passed into law on 9 June 1980. The death penalty was introduced for a range of drug-related offences, including being in possession of or carrying as little as 5 grams, growing, producing, selling, attempted-sale and providing the premises for use of narcotics.²⁹ An Amendment passed on 25 October 1988 set out a more detailed breakdown of offences for each drug type and its Article 9 introduced public execution in the defendant’s place of residence if offences amounted to *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth).³⁰ Subsequent

28 Law Amending the Law on the Prohibition of Poppy Cultivation and Opium Use 1959, <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/94867>.

29 <https://qavanin.ir/Law/PrintText/118572>.

30 <https://qavanin.ir/Law/TreeText/84416>.

Amendments were added in 1997 and 2010, aimed at counteracting Iran's growing drug problem by expanding the scope of the law and introducing harsher sentences. The 2010 Amendment introduced the death penalty for the possession of as little as 30 grams of heroin and included new categories of drugs. Altogether, the Anti-Narcotics Law, including the 1997 and 2010 Amendments, imposed the death penalty for 17 drug-related offences, including: a fourth conviction for offences in several instances; planting opium poppies, coca plants or cannabis seeds with the intent to produce drugs; smuggling more than 5 kilograms of opium or cannabis into Iran; buying, possessing, carrying or hiding more than 5 kilograms of opium and the other aforementioned drugs (punishable upon a third conviction); smuggling into Iran, dealing, producing, distributing and exporting more than 30 grams of heroin, morphine, cocaine or their derivatives.

The 2017 Amendment (Article 45 of the Anti-Narcotics Law) narrowed eligibility for capital punishment. Even where the underlying offence is otherwise eligible for the death penalty, a defendant will be considered *mofsed-fil-arz* (corrupter on earth) and sentenced to death only if at least one aggravating factor is present: (a) use of weapon to confront law-enforcement officers (b) leadership, organisation or financing of a trafficking network or use of minors or persons with mental incapacity (c) a prior final conviction for a drug offence punishable by death, life imprisonment or more than fifteen years' imprisonment or (d) very large quantities exceeding 50 kg for substances under Article 4, or 2 kg for heroin and other Article 8 hard drugs, and 3 kg for some other Article 8 substances. In the absence of such factors, the maximum penalty is up to 30 years' imprisonment together with heavy fines and confiscation of crime-related assets. A complete analysis of the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law is available in the *2017 Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*.³¹

The 2017 Amendment created hope that it would eventually lead to a complete halt in drug-related executions, and while it did lead to a decline in executions of men and a complete drop in executions of women until 2021, the outcome was not guaranteed. Since 2021, the 2017 Amendment has been reversed in practice, with drug-related executions rising from an average of 26 per year between 2018-2020 to at least 795 in 2025.

31 IHRNGO and ECPM, Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran, 2017, <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/19/>.

On 21 October 2025, the Spokesperson of the Iranian Parliament's Judiciary and Legal Commission announced that a proposed bill to amend the Anti-Narcotics Law would remove the death penalty from eight drug-related offences, significantly narrowing the scope of capital punishment in narcotics cases.³² However, no text of the proposed amendments, timeline for adoption or details of the specific provisions to be changed have been made public, leaving the scope and practical impact of the announced reforms unclear.

32 <https://news.dchq.ir/3/?p=117223>.

PROCEDURES

Iran is a state party to the ICCPR, which promotes the rule of law, guarantees equal legal rights for all individuals regardless of sex, ethnicity, opinion or belief, and prohibits many forms of discrimination. Article 14 specifically underlines the importance of an impartial judicial system, access to a lawyer and a fair trial, and protection against being compelled to testify against oneself or to confess guilt. However, the lack of due process in Iran is probably the biggest obstacle to significant improvements in the human rights situation in general, and the situation of the death penalty in particular. The lack of an impartial judiciary and inequality before the law are the most important structural reasons for the lack of due process in Iran. The Head of Judiciary is directly selected by the country's highest political authority, the Supreme Leader, and must report to him. The Chief of the Supreme Court and all judges are selected by the Head of Judiciary based on their ideological affiliation and political background, making the judiciary a political wing that is neither impartial nor independent. Citizens are not equal before the law; men have more rights than women, Muslims have more rights than non-Muslims, and Shia Muslims have more rights than Sunni Muslims. This section briefly outlines the typical legal procedures from arrest to a death sentence. Due to the arbitrary nature of the judicial system, not all the procedures are followed in every death penalty case. A more detailed discussion of legal procedures and due process in Iran is beyond the scope of this report and can be found elsewhere.³³

FROM ARREST TO PROOF OF GUILT ACCESS TO A LAWYER

Article 35 of the Iranian Constitution guarantees defendants the right to legal representation. The 2013 Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) and its 2015 amendments provide for a suspect's right to access a lawyer in the pre-trial phase.³⁴ Article 48 of the CCP states: "When a suspect is arrested, they can request the presence of a lawyer. The lawyer, observing the secret nature of the investigation

33 See, for example, The Foreign Policy Centre, *Iran Human Rights Review: Due Process*, 2017, <https://fpc.org.uk/publications/ihrdueprocess/>.

34 Iran Human Rights Documentation Centre, "Amendments to the Islamic Republic of Iran's Code of Criminal Procedure, Part 1", 2015, <https://iranhrdc.org/amendments-to-the-islamic-republic-of-irans-code-of-criminal-procedure-part-1/>.

and the negotiations between the parties, should meet with the suspect. At the end of the meeting, which should not last more than one hour, the lawyer may submit their written notes to be included in the case file.”

However, a Note added to the final draft of this provision restricts the suspect's right to choose a lawyer. The amended Note states: “In cases of crimes against internal or external security, and in cases involving organised crime, where Article 302 of this Code is applicable, during the investigation phase, the parties to the dispute are to select their lawyers from a list approved by the Head of Judiciary. The names of the approved lawyers will be announced by the Head of Judiciary.”

In June 2018, the Judiciary announced a list of 20 lawyers approved to defend citizens facing security charges.³⁵ Forty-three lawyers were later added to the list.³⁶

Following objections from lawyers,³⁷ the Iranian Parliament's Judiciary and Legal Commission proposed amendments to the law. The proposed bill removes the phrase “to select their lawyers from a list approved by the Head of Judiciary.” However, it imposes new limitations, including the possibility of limiting the right to access legal counsel for 20 days (which can be extended by order of the judge for an indefinite period) for defendants subject to Article 302 of the CCP. Several lawyers expressed their concern regarding this limitation. Some of these concerns were published in interviews with the IHRNGO bi-weekly Farsi law journal, *Hoghooghe ma* (“Our Rights”).³⁸

In practice, regardless of the charges, none of the people sentenced to death about whom IHRNGO has acquired information had access to a lawyer in the initial (pre-trial) phase following their arrest.

All those on death row for protest-related charges about whom IHRNGO has obtained information were deprived of access to their lawyers during legal proceedings until public and international pressure was exerted on the case.

Furthermore, there has been a systematic judicial crackdown on lawyers representing clients with political charges. Lawyers remain exposed to arrests, summons, charges or convictions for carrying out their professional duties. Worryingly, lawyers are banned from

35 *Radio Free Europe*, “Lowering The Bar: Tehran ‘White List’ Excludes Most Lawyers From Politically Charged Cases”, 6 June 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/lowering-the-bar-tehran-white-list-excludes-most-lawyers-from-politically-charged-cases/29276192.html>.

36 <https://www.irna.ir/news/83066400/43> وکیل جدید به سوکلائی مورد اعتماد رئیس قوه قضائیه اضافه شد.

37 IHRNGO, *Hoghooghe ma* (in Farsi), Issue 79, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/HoghoheMa-No79.pdf>.

38 IHRNGO, *Hoghooghe ma* (in Farsi), Issue 101, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/101.pdf>; and Issue 160, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/160.pdf>.

speaking about their cases as an additional punishment even where custodial sentences are overturned.³⁹ Moreover, in June 2023, the Iranian Parliament approved the “Request to Investigate the Operations of Bar Associations and their Union Bill” which grants authority to “review the legal qualification” of lawyers who are already members of the bar. This effectively gives authorities the power to disbar lawyers for political purposes. In August 2023, lawyers protested against the Bill in several provinces and the Iranian Bar Association filed an appeal with the Guardian Council.⁴⁰ In her March 2025 report, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mai Sato, called on the government “[t]o ensure that all accused have the right to a fair trial and due process, in accordance with article 14 of the Covenant, including access to a lawyer of their choosing during all stages of the judicial process.”⁴¹

TORTURE IN DETENTION

Article 38 of the Iranian Constitution prohibits all forms of torture and forced confessions. However, reports gathered by IHRNGO and other human rights organisations over the years indicate that torture is widely used against suspects after their arrest and in the pre-trial phase in order to extract confessions. In the nationwide protests following the state killing of Jina (Mahsa) Amini, IHRNGO concluded that physical torture, sexual assault and rape were not merely isolated incidents but were systematically used against protesters to force false self-incriminating confessions.⁴² Furthermore, all those on death row with whom IHRNGO has had contact reported that they were subjected to torture to extract confessions to the charges against them. This is not limited to individuals facing political or security-related charges. Almost all those arrested for drug-related offences were kept in solitary

39 See IHRNGO, *Iran Human Rights Defenders 2023*, https://iranhr.net/media/files/HRD_2023_Eng_Final.pdf.

40 *Radio Free Europe*, “Iranian Bar Associations Protest Government Moves They Say Will Erode Their Power”, <https://www.rferl.org/a/iran-lawyers-bar-associations-protest/32565060.html>.

41 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 12 March 2025, A/HRC/58/62, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/62>, para. 71(e)(i); see also Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 9 February 2024, A/HRC/55/62, <https://docs.un.org/en/a/hrc/55/62>; Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 7 February 2023, A/HRC/52/67, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/52/67>.

42 IHRNGO, “List of 109 Protesters at Risk of Execution, Death Penalty Charges or Sentences; At Least 481 Protesters Killed”, 9 January 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5687/>.

confinement and subjected to physical and psychological torture in the investigation phase following their arrest, while being denied access to a lawyer. In many cases, confessions extracted in detention are the only evidence available for the judges to reach their verdicts. Torture is also used in other criminal cases involving rape or murder where there is insufficient evidence against the suspect. People on death row who have received lashing sentences, in addition to their death sentence, also face torture prior to being executed. IHRNGO dedicated an issue of its legal biweekly magazine, *Hoghooghe ma*, to the subject of torture.⁴³

The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran (FFMI), in its report to the Human Rights Council in March 2025, stated: “Victims, including children, were subjected to torture and ill-treatment, including beating, flogging and prolonged solitary confinement. Torture and ill-treatment were carried out in unofficial detention facilities operated by the [IRGC] and the Ministry of Intelligence, and in security wards 2-A and 209 of Evin prison, which are controlled by the same entities.”⁴⁴

In her March 2025 report, Mai Sato, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, called on the government “[t]o ensure that prisoners and detainees are protected from all forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, ensure that confessions obtained through torture or ill-treatment are never admitted as evidence in court and establish mechanisms for investigating claims of torture and deaths in detention, consistent with international standards in line with the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol) and the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death.”⁴⁵

The UN Secretary-General, in his June 2025 report on the situation of human rights in Iran, called on the Islamic Republic “[t]o ensure prompt, transparent, thorough and effective investigations by an independent and impartial body into allegations of deaths in custody, torture or other ill-treatment, and inadequate prison conditions.”⁴⁶

43 IHRNGO, *Hoghooghe ma* (in Farsi), Issue 140, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/140.pdf>.

44 Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran, A/HRC/58/63, 28 March 2025, para. 47.

45 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 12 March 2025, op. cit., para. 71(e)(ii).

46 UN Secretary-General, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, A/HRC/59/22, 18 June 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/59/22>, para. 56(e).

COURTS AND TRIALS

Of the death penalty charges most commonly leading to execution, the security-related charges of *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz*, *baghy* and drug-related offences fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts,⁴⁷ while other criminal charges, such as murder and rape are tried by the Criminal Courts. Appeals of judgements delivered by the Revolutionary Courts and the Criminal Courts are heard before the Supreme Court. Military courts also have jurisdiction over death penalty charges restricted to times of war, according to the Code of Criminal Procedure for Armed Forces Offences and Electronic Proceedings.⁴⁸ However, the death penalty cases related to military personnel and IRGC forces recorded by IHRNGO, were all heard before the Criminal and Revolutionary Courts.

REVOLUTIONARY COURTS

Established in 1979 on the orders of Ayatollah Khomeini, without any constitutional basis, to try former officials of the Pahlavi Government, Iran's Revolutionary Courts have continued to operate ever since. They are responsible for issuing heavy sentences to human rights defenders, journalists, dissidents, protesters and all those who criticise the authorities. Additionally, they are responsible for the vast majority of all death sentences issued in the last 47 years.⁴⁹ The Revolutionary Courts are not transparent, and their judges are known for greater abuse of their legal powers than any other judges.⁵⁰

Revolutionary Court judges routinely deny lawyers access to accused individuals, who are subjected to extensive interrogations under severe conditions. Former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, interviewed 133 people facing trial in the country for a 2014 report focused on Iran's judicial system.⁵¹ Key findings included:

- 45% of those interviewed reported that they were not permitted to present a defence.

47 Article 297 and Article 303 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

48 <https://rc.majlis.ir/fa/law/show/913396>.

49 *The Globe Post*, "Iran's Revolutionary Courts: 38 Years of Unfair Trials and Arbitrary Executions", 23 February 2018, <https://www.theglobepost.com/2018/02/22/iran-revolutionary-courts/>.

50 *The Guardian*, "Six judges accused of leading role in Iranian crackdown on free speech", 31 July 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/six-judges-iran-crackdown-journalists-activists>.

51 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 18 March 2014, A/HRC/25/61, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/25/61>. This was the only research of this kind by the Special Rapporteur on the Revolutionary Courts.

- In 43% of cases, trials lasted only a few minutes.
- 70% of interviewees reported that coerced information or confessions had been used by the judge or made up at least part of the evidence presented by the prosecution; some 65% of interviewees reported that the judge displayed signs of bias, such as by reproaching or interrogating defendants and limiting their ability to speak and present a defence.⁵²

In a series of interviews with *Hoghooghe ma*,⁵³ several prominent Iranian lawyers and jurists in the country questioned the constitutionality of Iran's Revolutionary Courts and called for their dissolution.⁵⁴ The Courts have also faced strong criticism⁵⁵ for conducting group show-trials of protesters.⁵⁶

All cases regarded as security-related, such as cases involving protesters and political prisoners and individuals accused of corruption, armed robbery and drug offences, are processed by the Revolutionary Courts.

In his 2024 report, former Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javaid Rehman, expressed extreme concern at the “continuing operation of the revolutionary courts”, and called on the Iranian authorities to “[u]ndertake reforms to ensure the complete independence of the judiciary, including through the dissolution of the revolutionary courts.”⁵⁷

METHODS OF PROVING GUILT

Confessions are the most common way of proving guilt in death penalty cases. As noted, confessions are often extracted under torture and coercion. In cases involving security-related charges – predominantly used against political dissidents – confessions are often televised prior to any legal proceedings taking place. As well as being tortured to make self-incriminating confessions, defendants are forced to testify against each other. This practice has been particularly prevalent in the current cases of individuals sentenced to death on protest-related charges.

Eyewitness testimony is another way of proving guilt, but the witnesses may only be two men, as a woman's testimony is valued at half that of a man's testimony.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Our Rights magazine, 15 January 2019, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/93.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Our Rights magazine, 15 April 2017, <https://iranhr.net/fa/journals/57/>.

⁵⁵ Our Rights magazine, 15 November 2022, <https://iranhr.net/fa/journals/191/>.

⁵⁶ IHRNGO, “Iran Protests: at Least 342 People Including 43 Children Killed/5 Protesters Sentenced to Death”, 16 November 2022, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5589/>.

⁵⁷ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 9 February 2024, op. cit., paras 69 and 92(x).

In addition, according to the IPC, when there is no confession or witness testimony in a case, the judge can make a decision based on his exclusive opinion, without any reference to laws and codes.⁵⁸ This is known as *elm-e-qazi* or “knowledge of the judge.”⁵⁹ While the law requires that rulings based on a judge’s “knowledge” derive from evidence, including circumstantial evidence, rather than merely a personal belief that the defendant is guilty of the offence,⁶⁰ there have been cases where *elm-e-qazi* has been arbitrarily applied. For instance, in December 2007, Makwan Moloudzadeh was executed for sodomy charges based on the “knowledge of the judge.”⁶¹ In 2025, Mohammadreza Badavi, Reza Molayi and Mehdi Hosseini were sentenced to death on drug-related offences based on *elm-e-qazi*.⁶²

Qassameh, or a sworn oath, is another way to prove guilt of a crime (murder or injury) in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) practised in Iran.⁶³ Where there is insufficient evidence in cases of *qisas*, but the judge still has doubts, either because he believes the victim to be guilty or due to circumstantial evidence, he can declare *los*. In such an event, the victim or victim’s next of kin have the right to *qassameh*. *Qassameh* is based on swearing an oath on the Quran by a certain number of the victim’s family. In murder cases, 50 male members of the victim’s family are required to make a *qassameh*. It is important to note that those who swear an oath in *qassameh* ceremonies are not required to be, and are not usually, direct witnesses to the crime. In 2018 and 2021, IHRNGO dedicated two issues of its legal magazine, *Hoghooghe ma*, to *qassameh*, interviewing lawyers and religious scholars on the issue.⁶⁴ Since then, there has been increasing debate around the issue of *qassameh* inside Iran⁶⁵ and in the Farsi media outside the country.⁶⁶

58 The Foreign Policy Centre, *Iran Human Rights Review: Due Process*, 2017, op. cit.

59 A. Asghari, S.A. Ashgar Mosavi Rokni, “Changes in Personal Knowledge of the Judge with Emphasis on Islamic Punishment Law”, *International Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, Volume 5, Issue 2, 2015 <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fijssse.com%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fissues%2F2015%2Fv5i2%2FPaper-22.pdf>.

60 New Islamic Penal Code, Article 211.

61 IHRNGO, “Makwan Moloudzadeh, was executed yesterday for a ‘crime’ he allegedly committed when he was 13 years old”, 6 December 2007, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/57/>.

62 IHRNGO, “5 Men Hanged for Drug Offences in Urmia; 3 Convicted Based on ‘Knowledge of the Judge’”, 10 November 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8316/>.

63 New Islamic Penal Code, Articles 313 and 336.

64 IHRNGO, *Hoghooghe ma* (in Farsi), Issue 75, 15 March 2018, https://iranhr.net/media/files/No_75.pdf; and Issue 155, 15 September 2021, <https://iranhr.net/media/files/155.pdf>.

65 *Tabnak*, “Knowledge of the judge: What is *qassameh* and what are its conditions?”, (in Farsi), 15 September 2018, <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/833747/قسمت-چيست-و-شر-ايمان-چگونه-است>.

66 BBC News, “*Qassameh*: When the Oath of the Victim’s Relatives Leads to Execution” (in Farsi), February 2018, <http://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-43185108>.

FORCED TELEVISED CONFESSIONS

The Islamic Republic has used televised confessions as a propaganda tool aimed at instilling fear and justifying the heavy sentences handed down to its political opponents and activists since its inception in 1979. Such confessions are extracted after physical and/or psychological torture, lengthy solitary confinement, threats or promises of reduced sentences and threats against family members. The confessions are often aired after arrest, following public protests against a sentence, or immediately before or after an execution as a means of reducing backlash. Airing forced confessions before trial is a clear violation of the defendants' right to the presumption of innocence and other fair trial rights.



Forced televised confessions of some of those executed in 2025. Top left to right: Hamid Hosseinnejad Haydaranlu, Ali Mojadam, Mohammadreza Moghadam, Adnan Ghabishavi, Salem Mousavi, Moein Khanfari and Habib Deris. Middle left to right: Mehran Bahramian, Saman Mohammadi Khiareh and Mojahed Kourkour. Bottom left to right: Aghil Keshavarz, Mohsen Langarneshin and Rouzbeh Vadi.

In 2025, state media aired the forced confessions of protesters Mehran Bahramian and Mojahed Kourkour; Arab political prisoners Ali Mojadam, Mohammadreza Moghadam, Adnan Ghabishavi, Moein Khanfari, Habib Deris and Salem Mousavi; Kurdish political prisoners Hamid Hosseinnejad Haydaranlu and Saman Mohammadi Khiareh; espionage defendants Aghil Keshavarz, Mohsen Langarneshin and Rouzbeh Vadi.

At trial, not only are forced confessions used as evidence of guilt, but under threats and coercion, defendants are often forced to repeat the false accounts in court. Once the defendant has been found guilty, their forced confessions are again used as a propaganda tool to justify their death sentences and to instil fear among the population. Forced confessions are also aired post-execution to justify the inhumane punishment of death. This was the case for the defendants executed for espionage charges in 2025.

On 19 January 2023, the EU Parliament adopted a resolution in which it strongly condemned “the Islamic Republic’s policy of forcing confessions using torture, intimidation, threats against family members or other forms of duress, and the use of these forced confessions to convict and sentence protesters.”⁶⁷

DEATH PENALTY IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

After being sentenced to death, defendants are held on death row in prison. It might take years, months or sometimes weeks from receiving the final verdict to the implementation of the death sentence. All death sentences must be approved by the Supreme Court, whose Chief is appointed by the Head of Judiciary. In addition, the Head of Judiciary must *estizan* (authorise) all *qisas* executions prior to implementation.

According to Iranian law, the defendant’s lawyer must be informed of the scheduled execution 48 hours prior to its implementation.⁶⁸ However, this is not always the case in practice, especially in political and security-related cases. Prisoners are transferred to solitary confinement several days prior to their execution, where their hands are cuffed. Prisoners are normally granted a last visit with their family the day before the scheduled execution. In 2018, IHRNGO published a short report based on witness interviews about death-row conditions

67 European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2023 on the EU response to the protests and executions in Iran (2023/2511(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0016_EN.html.

68 Article 43 of the Regulatory Code on Sentences of Qisas, Stoning, Crucifixion, Execution, and Flogging.

and the prisoners' last hours.⁶⁹ Child offender Arman Abdolali, who was taken to the gallows seven times prior to his execution on 24 November 2021, provided an account of the torture of being transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for the gallows.⁷⁰

METHODS OF EXECUTION

The Islamic Penal Code (IPC) prescribes several execution methods including hanging, firing squads, crucifixion and stoning. Hanging has been the main method of execution and was the only method used from 2008 until 2020, when Hedayat Abdullahpour, a Kurdish political prisoner, was executed by firing squad in Oshnavieh Prison.⁷¹ Furthermore, a directive issued by the Head of Judiciary in June 2019 gives a detailed description of how death sentences by hanging, stoning and crucifixion should be implemented.⁷²

The majority of executions are carried out within prisons. In some facilities, there are dedicated rooms for executions, while in others, they take place in the prison yard.

In murder cases where the defendant is sentenced to *qisas*, the plaintiff (victim's family or next of kin) not only bears the responsibility of choosing execution but a representative of the next of kin (either the next of kin themselves, their lawyer or a nominated representative) must be present at the scene of the execution. Since Iranian law considers *qisas* to be the right of the victim's family, they are also encouraged to carry out the execution themselves. IHRNGO has received several reports where the victim's family members have physically carried out the execution. In 2025, Hassan Saei⁷³ and Alireza Gholibeigi⁷⁴ were both hanged by their uncles who were the plaintiffs in the respective cases.

In death penalty cases, the presiding judge is required to be present at the execution. In *qisas* cases, both the judge and the plaintiff (the victim's family or their representative) are required to attend.

69 IHRNGO, "World Day 2018. Death penalty: an Inhumane Punishment for Death Row Prisoners, their Families and Society as Whole", 10 October 2018, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/3512/>.

70 IHRNGO, "Iran Human Rights Calls for Fact-Finding Mission into Arman Abdolali's Case Amid Statements of Witnesses Being Ignored", 24 November 2021, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4987/>.

71 IHRNGO, "Urgent: Political Prisoner Hedayat Abdullahpour Executed 'by Firing Squad'", 24 June 2020, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4294/>.

72 Jamaran, <https://www.jamaran.news/-/اداره حقوقی-قوه قضاییه می-حسن-کردن-0783561/95-بخش-باز-نشر-مسارق-محارب-برای-مجازات-قطع-عضو-مجاز-است>.

73 IHRNGO, "Hassan Saei Hanged by Uncle in Tabriz", 10 May 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7539/>.

74 IHRNGO, "Alireza Gholibeigi Hanged by Uncle in Qom", 19 May 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7569/>.

Cranes are used in public executions. People executed are either pulled up or the object they are standing on is removed from beneath their feet. Death results from suffocation and strangulation and often takes several minutes to occur. As noted above, the Human Rights Committee has observed that public executions are contrary to the provisions of the ICCPR and that failure to respect Article 7 (prohibition on torture and cruel, degrading and inhumane punishments) inevitably renders the execution arbitrary in nature and thus also in violation of Article 6 of the ICCPR.⁷⁵

After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of public executions dropped dramatically due to enforced restrictions, with no public executions recorded in 2021. In subsequent years, two people were executed in public in 2021, seven in 2023, four in 2024 and eleven in 2025.

There have been no reports of implementation of stoning punishments since 2010. This is mainly due to the increasing international pressure in the preceding decade, which reached its peak following the campaign to save Sakineh Ashtiani in 2010.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36, op. cit., para. 40.

⁷⁶ *The Guardian*, “Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani”, 2010-2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/sakineh-mohammadi-ashtiani>.

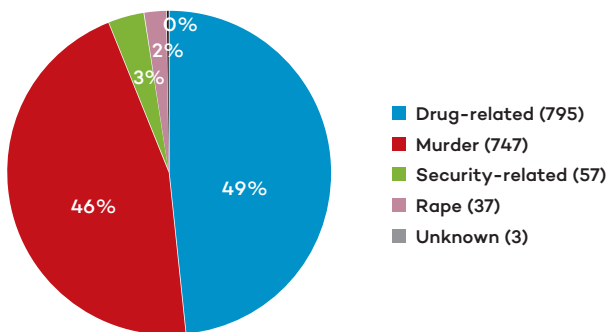
EXECUTIONS IN PRACTICE

This section provides an overview and analysis of the use of the death penalty in 2025, including its distribution by charges, courts, geography and implementation. It also presents a small sample of the 2025 execution cases for each type of charge.

CHARGES

While multiple offences are punishable by death, the charges leading to the most executions in recent years have been murder, drug-related offences, *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz*, *baghy* and rape/sexual assault. It is important to note the systematic denial of due process, unfair trials, use of torture and duress, forced confessions and the lack of a transparent and independent judiciary. The charges reported in each case are therefore those alleged by Iranian authorities, and have not been confirmed by independent sources.

EXECUTIONS IN 2025 BASED ON CHARGES



The above chart shows the distribution of executions by charge in 2025. As in the previous three years, drug-related charges accounted for the majority of executions.

Drug-related (48.5%) and murder (45.6%) charges accounted for 94% of the 1,639 executions in 2025. Security-related charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz* represented 3.5% of all executions. 2.3% of executions were for rape and sexual assault.

Of the charges leading to execution in 2025, murder and rape/sexual assault were heard before the Criminal Courts, while drug-related

charges and the security-related charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz* were tried by the Revolutionary Courts.

The following section provides a more detailed overview of executions by charge and includes a small selection of cases for each category.

EXECUTIONS FOR *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EF SAD-FIL-ARZ* IN 2025

The security-related charges of *moharebeh* (enmity against god), *efsad-fil-arz* (corruption on earth) and *baghy* (armed rebellion)⁷⁷ have been used to execute countless political and ordinary crime prisoners in the last 47 years. From the bloody decade of the 1980s to the present day, Revolutionary Courts around the country have handed down death sentences based on torture-tainted confessions after trials that have been described as kangaroo courts. From protesters to dissidents, armed robbers to spies, human traffickers to terrorists, security-related charges have been used for a wide range of so-called offences to intimidate and create societal fear for decades. In 2025, at least 57 people were executed for security-related charges compared to 31 in 2024, 39 in 2023, 16 in 2022, 13 in 2021, 15 in 2020 and 9 in 2019.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EF SAD-FIL-ARZ* EXECUTIONS IN 2025

- At least 57 men were executed on charges of *moharebeh*, *baghy* and *efsad-fil-arz*.
- 42 of the executions were announced by official sources.¹⁸ political prisoners including 6 Arabs, 4 Baluch and 2 Kurdish minorities, were among those executed.
- 13 of those executed were convicted for armed robbery.
- 13 people were executed for alleged espionage for Israel.
- One person was executed for financial corruption.

⁷⁷ See page 34-35.

EXECUTED ON CHARGES OF *MOHAREBEH*, *BAGHY* AND *EFSAD-FIL-ARZ*

FARHAD SHAKERI, ABDOLHAKIM AZIM GORGIJ, ABDOLRAHMAN GORGIJ,
TAJ MOHAMMAD KHORMALI AND MALEK ALI FADAYI NASAB



Left to right: Farhad Shakeri, Abdolhakim Azim Gorgij and Abdolrahman Gorgij.

Farhad Shakeri, Abdolhakim Azim Gorgij, Abdolrahman Gorgij, Taj Mohammad Khormali and Malek Ali Fadayi Nasab were arrested in 2015, with six others, by intelligence agents and were held in solitary confinement in the Intelligence Detention Centre in Mashhad for ten to twelve months. They were sentenced to death by Branch One of the Mashhad Revolutionary Court on charges of *baghy* through membership of *Al-Forghan* and the National Solidarity Front of Iranian Sunnis. Three of their co-defendants, Hamid Rastbala, Kabir Saadat-Jahani and Mohammad Ali Arayesh were executed in December 2021.⁷⁸ The five men were secretly hanged in Mashhad Central Prison on 8 April 2025. Their families were informed of their executions by telephone.⁷⁹

HAMID HOSSEINNEJAD HAYDARANLU

Hamid Hosseinnejad Haydaranlu was a 40-year-old Kurdish political prisoner arrested in 2023. According to the official account, he was arrested by border forces along with several Afghan nationals in Chaldaoran, his region of origin. However, his lawyer stated that he was arrested at his home. He was initially charged with goods smuggling, but his charges were later changed to involvement

78 IHRNGO, "Iran: Three Sunni Men Executed in Mashhad on New Year's Eve", 2 January 2021, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4562/>.

79 HRNGO, "5 Political Prisoners Executed in Mashhad Without Last Family Visits", 9 April 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7451/>.

in an armed clash at the border where eight border guards were killed. Despite having an alibi, Hamid was subjected to physical torture to make incriminating confessions. According to his lawyer,



“Hamid spent 12 months in the solitary confinement cells of the Ministry of Intelligence’s detention centre in Urmia, without access to a lawyer, phone or his family. Hamid is completely illiterate. The interrogation documents were handwritten by the interrogator, and he merely signed them.” He was sentenced to death by the

Urmia Revolutionary Court on charges of *baghy* through membership of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and the murder of eight border guards. His lawyer had filed an Article 474 appeal (judicial review) which remained pending when Hamid’s execution was carried out secretly at an undisclosed prison on 21 April 2025.⁸⁰

MEHDI HASSANI AND BEHROUZ EHSANI ESLAMILU



Behrouz Ehsani Eslamilu, a 70-year-old father of two, was arrested in Tehran in October 2022 and Mehdi Hassani, a 49-year-old father of three, was arrested in Zanzan in September 2022. They were held incommunicado and subjected to psychological and physical torture to extract self-incriminating confessions. In September 2024, Mehdi and Behrouz were sentenced to death on charges of *baghy* through membership of the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI/MEK) by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, presided over

80 IHRNGO, “Kurdish Political Prisoner Hamid Hosseinnejad Secretly Hanged”, 21 April 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7486/>.

by Judge Iman Afshari.⁸¹ Four appeals were rejected by the Supreme Court, and according to Mehdi's lawyer, they were executed while their fifth appeal was still pending. The lawyer reported that he was never granted access to the case file and the appeal arguments were never examined by the Supreme Court.⁸² Despite all efforts by Mehdi's daughter, Maryam, and the international community,⁸³ Behrouz and Mehdi were secretly hanged in Ghezelhesar prison on 27 July 2025. On Mehdi's transfer from Evin to Ghezelesar Prison in January 2025,⁸⁴ one of his former cellmates later told IHRNGO: "Because Mehdi knew they were trying to send him to Ghezelhesar for execution, he wasn't even going to family visits just in case. He was drugged by another prisoner a week prior and was intoxicated when he was transferred to Ghezelhesar Prison."

ALI MOJADAM, MOHAMMADREZA MOGHADAM, ADNAN GHABISHAVI, MOEIN KHANFARI, HABIB DERIS AND SALEM MOUSAVI



Ali Mojadam, 42, Mohammadreza Moghadam, 33, Adnan Ghabishavi, 28, Moein Khanfari, 32, Habib Deris, 42, and Salem Mousavi, 41,

81 IHRNGO, "Political Prisoners Behrouz Ehsani, Mehdi Hassani and Mohammad Javad Vafayi-Sani Sentenced to Death in Iran", 24 September 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6933/>.

82 Idem.

83 See for example, European Parliament resolution of 3 April 2025 on the execution spree in Iran and confirmation of the death sentences of activists Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani (2025/2628(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0062_EN.html; @UN_SPEExperts, UN Special Procedures, X, 25 February 2025, https://x.com/UN_SPEExperts/status/1894337492200947932?s=20.

84 IHRNGO, "Political Prisoners Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani at Imminent Risk of Execution", 26 January 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7303/>.

were Arab labourers and farmers. They were arrested in Ahvaz and were subjected to torture and ill-treatment to make self-incriminating confessions to participation in a terrorist attack. Their false confessions were aired by state media prior to the commencement of legal proceedings. Ali and Mohammadreza were introduced as “leaders of the group’s domestic branch” and all six men were sentenced to death by the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court on 24 February 2023 on charges of *baghy* through “membership of a *baghi* group, the armed branch of the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz (ASMLA) with the aim of armed rebellion against the Islamic Republic system”.⁸⁵ Their case was linked to that of Swedish-Iranian Arab dissident Habib Asyoud (Chaab), who was kidnapped from Turkey and executed on 6 May 2023.⁸⁶ After holding a ceremony for Habib, the six political prisoners were transferred to solitary confinement on 7 May 2023. On 16 October 2024, Ali, Moein, Mohammadreza and Adnan were transferred to the pre-execution solitary confinement cells of Ahvaz Sepidar Prison.⁸⁷ Ali, Moein and Mohammadreza were transferred to the cells again on 26 June 2025⁸⁸ and ultimately hanged in Ahvaz Sepidar Prison on 4 October 2025.⁸⁹

EXECUTIONS RELATED TO PROTESTS IN 2025

While the Islamic Republic has a bloody history of executing protesters, the execution of protesters in recent years began in 2020 after a series of nationwide protests in 2016–2019. Protesters Mostafa Salehi and Navid Afkari were both sentenced to death for fabricated charges of *moharebeh* and murder, but were executed for the latter as the Islamic Republic considers *qisas* or retribution-in-kind to be the right of the victim’s family and places the responsibility to choose retribution execution on them, making it easier to justify to the international community.⁹⁰ Following strong public backlash and international pressure, other known protesters on death row were

85 IHRNGO, “8 Afghan and Arab Prisoners Sentenced to Death”, 12 April 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5796/>.

86 IHRNGO, “Iran Human Rights Calls for Strong International Response To Execution of Swedish-Iranian Habib Asyoud”, 6 May 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5874/>.

87 IHRNGO, “4 Arab Political Prisoners at Imminent Risk of Execution in Ahvaz”, 16 October 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7012/>.

88 IHRNGO, “3 Arab Political Prisoners at Imminent Risk of Execution”, 11 July 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7735/>.

89 IHRNGO, “7 Arab and Kurdish Prisoners of Conscience Executed in Ahvaz and Karaj”, 4 October 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8123/>.

90 See IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, 2020, https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2021-gb-290321-BD.pdf, p. 41.

released. At least two November 2019 protesters, Abbas Deris and Mohammad Javad Vafayi Sani, remain at risk of execution.⁹¹

The execution of “Woman, Life, Freedom” protesters began in December 2022, when two protesters were hastily executed. They continued into 2023 when eight more protesters were executed for security-related and murder charges.⁹² In 2024, two protesters were executed for murder charges.⁹³ At least 16 “Woman, Life, Freedom” protesters remain on death row and are at risk of execution.⁹⁴

Following the nationwide protests of December 2025 January 2026, and the bloody massacre of protesters, tens of thousands were arrested. The stark difference with previous protests is that, in every case about which IHRNGO has obtained information, accusations have included collusion with Israel. At the time of writing, hundreds of people are facing charges carrying the death penalty in relation to the protests and at least 27 people have already been sentenced to death.

PROTESTERS EXECUTED IN 2025

MOJAHED KOURKOUR



Mojahed Kourkour (Abbas Kourkouri), a 43-year-old Bakhtiari protester, was arrested on 20 December 2022 after being shot in the leg during an armed clash with security forces. He was forced to confess at the scene and was denied medical treatment beyond the removal of the bullet. Mojahed was denied

the right to be represented by a lawyer of his choice at trial, and additional torture-tainted confessions were aired by state media. On 7 April 2023, he was sentenced to death by the Ahvaz Revolutionary Court on charges of “*moharebeh* through drawing a weapon with the intention to kill people and create fear, *efsad-fil-arz* committed through firing a war weapon, disrupting public order, causing harm to the physical integrity of seven people including Kian Pirfalak,

91 Protester on death row: <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/#/102/all/1>.

92 IHRNGO, “Executions Related to Protests in 2023”, 11 March 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6614/>.

93 IHRNGO, “Executions Related to Protests in 2024”, 23 February 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7366/>.

94 Protester on death row: <https://iranhr.net/en/indanger/#/102/all/1>.

causing major damage to public and private property, forming a *baghy* group and its membership through armed rebellion against the government.”⁹⁵ His sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court in December 2023, but was later overturned after a judicial review application. He was resentenced to death in December 2024. Mojahed was also indicted by the Criminal Court on murder (*qisas*) charges but nothing further was reported on the case after Kian Pirlalak’s parents, uncle and lawyer stated his murder was carried out by security forces and they had no complaints against Mojahed. He was ultimately hanged in Ahvaz Sepidar Prison on 11 June 2025.⁹⁶

MEHRAN BAHRAMIAN



Mehran Bahramian was a protester arrested for participating in the 40th day commemoration ceremony for slain protesters Morad Bahramian and Ali Abbasi in Semirom on 29 December 2022. Videos published by state media show his torture-tainted confessions and the reconstruction of the alleged

crime scene without presenting any evidence, including CCTV footage. Mehran was sentenced to death by the Isfahan Revolutionary Court on 27 January 2024 on the charge of “*moharebeh* (enmity against god) through the use of an AK47 and assault rifle”. His family were coerced into silence about the case. According to the official report, the Supreme Court overturned the sentence and referred the case back for retrial, “citing investigative deficiencies.” Ultimately, Mehran was resentenced to death at retrial and the sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court, which also rejected a further appeal. He was hanged in Isfahan (Dastgerd) Central Prison on 6 September 2025.⁹⁷

95 IHRNGO, “Protester Mojahed Kourkour Sentenced to Death as Cover-up for Kian Pirlalak’s State Killing”, 7 April 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5807/>.

96 IHRNGO, “Protester Mojahed Kourkour Hanged in Ahvaz”, 11 June 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7656/>.

97 IHRNGO, “Mehran Bahramian 12th “Woman, Life, Freedom” Protester Executed”, 6 September 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7971/>.

EXECUTIONS FOR ESPIONAGE/TREASON IN 2025

While the Islamic Republic had carried out executions on charges related to espionage for Israel in previous years,⁹⁸ the recent wave of such executions began in 2022. Four people were executed in 2022, six people including one woman in 2023, and five people in 2024 on charges of espionage and collusion with Israel.

In 2025, at least 13 people were executed on espionage-related charges. The surge began in the lead-up to the 12-day war; two people were executed prior to the war, three during the war and the remainder were executed after the war. It is important to note that in some cases, those executed were not originally arrested for espionage charges. Instead, they were tortured and coerced into making self-incriminating confessions that were later used as the basis for their convictions and sentences.

ESPIONAGE DEFENDANTS EXECUTED IN 2025

MOHAMMAD AMIN MAHDAVI SHAYESTEH



Mohammad Amin Mahdavi Shayesteh, 26, was arrested in autumn 2023. Under torture, he confessed to collaborating with Israel and this was used as the basis to charge him with multiple offences including “insulting Islamic sanctities.” He was sentenced to death after a hasty trial by Branch 15 of the Tehran Revolutionary

Court, presided over by “death judge” Abolqasem Salavati. An “empty handgun magazine” and “a pepper spray can” were used as evidence of illegal possession of weapons to prove “collaboration with the enemy.”⁹⁹ He was hanged in Ghezelhesar Prison on 23 June 2025.¹⁰⁰

98 IHRNGO, “A prisoner Charged with Espionage for Israel and Killing an Iranian Nuclear Scientist, was Hanged this Morning”, 15 May 2012, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/828/>.

99 IHRNGO, “Mohammad Amin Mahdavi Shayesteh at Imminent Risk of Execution in Iran for Blasphemy and Israel Collaboration”, 13 December 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7196/>.

100 IHRNGO, “Mohammad Amin Mahdavi Shayesteh 3rd Man Hanged for Israel Collaboration in a Week”, 23 June 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7680/>.

EDRIS ALI, AZAD SHOJAEI AND RASOUL AHMAD RASOUL



Edris Ali, a 33-year-old Kurdish *kolbar* (people who carry goods on their backs across the border), Azad Shojai, a 46-year-old Kurdish *kolbar*, and Rasoul Ahmad Rasoul, a Kurdish-Iraqi, were initially arrested for smuggling alcoholic beverages. They were subsequently subjected to torture to extract confessions of collaborating with Israel. An informed source told IHRNGO: “In Urmia [Ministry of Intelligence] detention, Edris was told that he was carrying alcohol and would be released but he’d have to repeat what they said first. Edris repeated everything they said in front of the camera, he said he was carrying documents in his alcohol load that he was to give to Israel.” Edris was held in the political ward, while Azad and Rasoul were held in the ordinary crimes ward. They were denied access to lawyers and sentenced to death on charges of *efsad-fil-arz* and *moharebeh* through espionage for Israel by Branch 3 of the Urmia Revolutionary Court, presided over by Judge Reza Najafzadeh.¹⁰¹ Edris, Azad and Rasoul were hanged in Urmia (Darya) Central Prison on 25 June 2025.

EXECUTIONS FOR RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN 2025

Rape and sexual assault are among charges which are punishable by the death penalty under the IPC, in violation of international human rights law.¹⁰² In 2025, at least 37 men were executed for rape charges, compared to 22 in 2024, 20 in 2023, 23 in 2022 and 10 in 2021. As with other charges, there are reports of torture and forced confessions being used against defendants. Due to the lack of transparency and social taboos, only official information is available about death penalty cases involving charges of rape.

101 IHRNGO, “Kurdish Kolbar Edris Ali Sentenced to Death Based on Torture-Tainted Confession”, 9 June 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6753/28>

102 See page 29.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EXECUTIONS FOR RAPE IN 2025:

- At least 37 people were executed on rape charges
- 16 of the executions were announced by official sources
- 3 Kurdish and 2 Baluch minorities were amongst those executed
- 8 of those executed on charges of rape were Afghan nationals
- A man described as a “foreign national” by state media was also executed
- 2 of the executions were carried out in public

EXECUTED FOR RAPE CHARGES

NEMAT MAJIDZADEH

Nemat Majidzadeh was arrested for rape charges in 2023 and subjected to torture to confess to the charges. An informed source told IHRNGO: “Nemat’s left eardrum was ruptured under torture, leaving him deaf in that ear. He was taking psychiatric medication throughout his incarceration.” Nemat was hanged in Semnan Central Prison on 20 November 2025.¹⁰³

YASER GHOREISHI AND MOHAMMADREZA NIKJOUYAN



Yaser Ghoreishi and Mohammadreza Nikjouyan were arrested in relation to a rape complaint. Informed sources told IHRNGO: “Yaser and Mohammadreza had gone to a girl’s house with a friend during the holy month of *moharram*. The third man was the one who raped the girl but he was later released and Yaser and Mohammadreza were executed instead.” According to the official report, the victim

had filed a complaint. Yaser and Mohammadreza were sentenced to death by Branch 2 of the Mazandaran First Criminal Court in Sari and hanged in Ghaemshahr Prison on 23 December 2025.¹⁰⁴

103 IHRNGO, “Nemat Majidzadeh and Mehran Darabian Hanged in Semnan”, 22 November 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8369/>.

104 IHRNGO, “Yaser Ghoreishi and Mohammadreza Nikjouyan Hanged for Rape in Ghaemshahr”, 23 December 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8482/>.

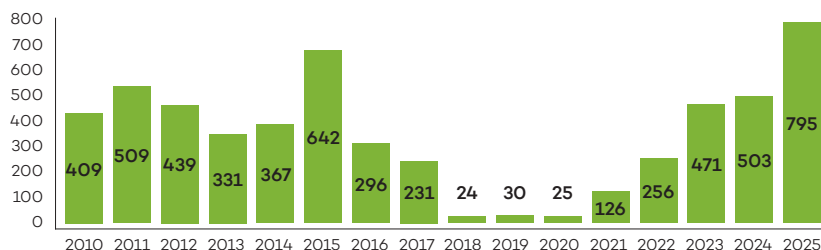
EXECUTIONS FOR DRUG-RELATED CHARGES IN 2025

Drug-related executions have been steadily rising since 2021 and accounted for the highest percentage of executions since 2023. Those executed for drug-related charges are from marginalised and deprived communities and amongst the most voiceless victims of the death penalty in Iran. Along with security-related charges, drug-related charges fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts which systematically deny defendants their rights to due process and a fair trial. According to data gathered by IHRNGO, at least 795 people were executed for drug-related offences in 2025.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2025

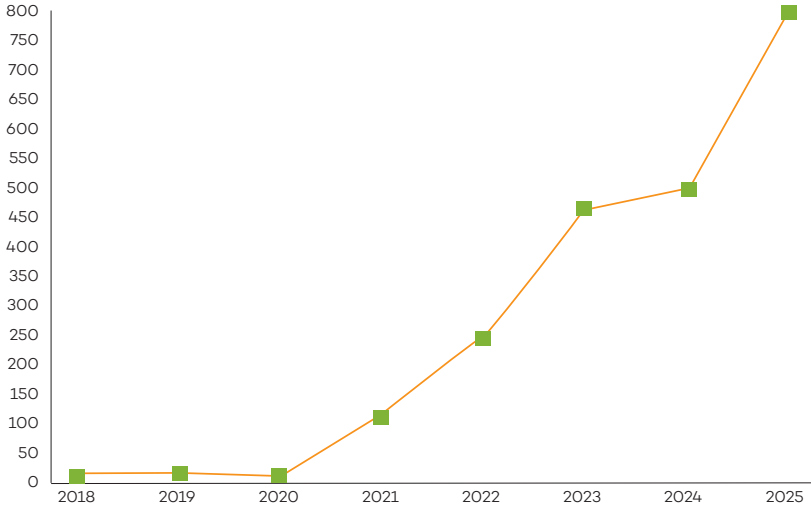
- At least 795 people were executed, representing a 58% increase compared to 2024 (503) and about 32 times the number of the drug-related executions recorded in 2020 (25)
- Only 3 (0.4%) of the drug-related executions were announced by official sources
- Executions took place in 27 different provinces
- Baluch minorities, who make up 2-6% of Iran's population, are overrepresented, with 106 executions (13.3%) compared to 17% (85) in 2024, 31% (138) in 2023 and 47% (121) in 2022
- 16 women were amongst those executed

DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS 2010-2025



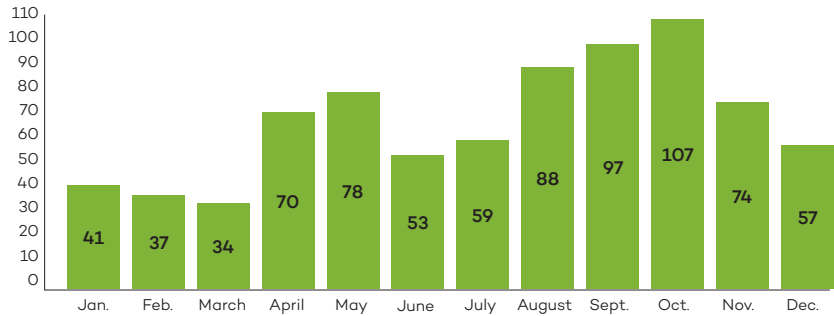
According to IHRNGO reports, an annual average of at least 403 people were executed for drug-related offences between 2010 and 2017. The diagram above shows the reduction in the number of drug-related executions observed in the three years following the Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law at the end of 2017. However, this trend was reversed in subsequent years. In 2025, drug-related executions were 30 times higher than the annual average of 2018-2020 (the three years following the Amendment) and 97% higher than the annual average of the drug-related executions in the 8 years prior to the Amendment.

DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS 2018-2025



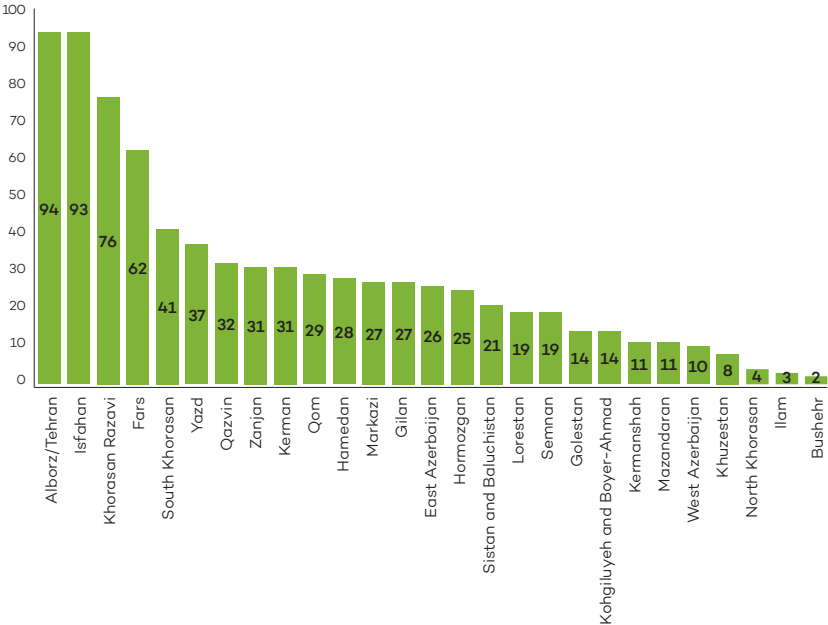
Drug-related executions increased dramatically after 2020. The number of drug-related executions in 2023 and 2024 was respectively 18 and 19 times higher than the annual average recorded between 2018 and 2020. This dramatic rise continued in 2025, with a further increase of 58% compared to 2024.

MONTHLY BREAKDOWN OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2025



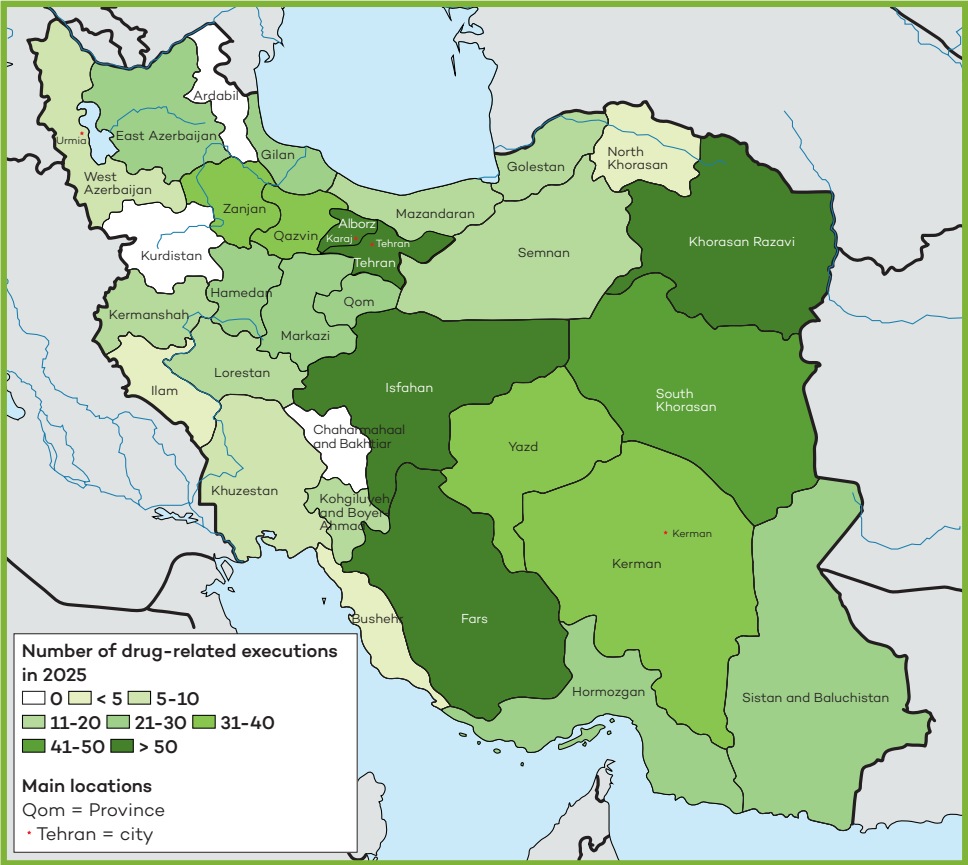
Executions for drug-related offences were carried out every month of the year in 2025. The highest number of drug executions were carried out prior to, and after the Israel-Iran War in June, reaching its peak in October.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2025



In 2025, drug-related executions were carried out in 27 different provinces, the same number recorded in 2024. The highest number of drug-related executions were carried out in Alborz/Tehran provinces, followed closely by Isfahan province. The decline in the number of executions in Alborz/Tehran provinces was due to the six-day mass hunger strikes by people on death row for drug-related offences in Ghezelhesar Prison in October 2025, which led to the halt in drug-related executions at the prison (see page 108).

MAP 1: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS IN 2025



In 2025, IHRNGO recorded drug-related executions in 27 provinces compared to 27 in 2024, 26 in 2023, 21 in 2022, 15 in 2021, 12 in 2019 and 2020 and 7 provinces in 2018.

EXECUTED FOR DRUG-RELATED CHARGES

The following are a very small sample of the people executed for drug-related charges in 2025.

GOLMOHAMMAD GORGIJ

Golmohammad Gorgi was a 34-year-old Baluch man arrested for drug-related offences in 2020. He was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment by the Revolutionary Court. However, the sentence was later changed to the death penalty for unknown reasons. He was hanged in Gorgan Central Prison on 5 January 2025.¹⁰⁵

GHOLAMHOSSEIN AND EBRAHIM KHALILIFAR



Gholamhossein and Ebrahim Khalilifar were two brothers from the village of Cheshmeh Gol in Torbat Jam who were arrested in a joint case. Despite Ebrahim taking full responsibility for the drugs, both brothers were sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court. Gholamhossein and Ebrahim were hanged in Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison on 1 March 2025.¹⁰⁶

MORTEZA KAZEMZADEH



Morteza Kazemzadeh was a 30-year-old father of two who worked as a labourer prior to his arrest. Despite all his efforts, he could not make ends meet with his low wage. He told informed sources: "I worked so I wouldn't feel ashamed in front of my wife and children, I wanted

105 IHRNGO, "Abdolhamid Kouhkan and Golmohammad Gorgij Executed in Gorgan", 9 February 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7327/>.

106 IHRNGO, "Brothers Gholamhossein and Ebrahim Khalilifar Hanged in Mashhad", 3 March 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7392/>.

to earn money so I could buy a bicycle for my son.” The first time Morteza tried to sell drugs as extra income, he was arrested and sentenced to death. Morteza was hanged in Semnan Central Prison on 13 March 2025.¹⁰⁷

DAVOUD LEJEI



Davoud Lejei was a 37-year-old Baluch man who was arrested in Mashhad on 14 August 2022. He was sentenced to death by the Mashhad Revolutionary Court which was later overturned and referred to a court of equal standing for retrial on 5 January 2025. According to information from the judiciary's public

information system, his retrial was scheduled for 18 November 2025. However, Davoud's execution was secretly carried out in Mashhad (Vakil Abad) Central Prison on 4 August 2025. His family were only informed after the execution had taken place.¹⁰⁸

HASSAN AMOUSHI



Hassan Amousi (Ejbari) was a 45-year-old Baluch man from Zahedan who lived in Saleh Abad in Torbat Jam. He was arrested in 2022. According to an informed IHRNGO source: “He vehemently denied the charges and insisted they had found no drugs on him.” Yet he was sentenced to death and secretly hanged in Mashhad

(Vakil Abad) Central Prison on 6 August 2025 without his family being notified or a last family visit.¹⁰⁹

107 IHRNGO, “Morteza Kazemzadeh and Mohammadreza Basiri Hanged in Semnan”, 19 March 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7429/>.

108 IHRNGO, “3 Men Hanged for Drug Offences in Mashhad”, 11 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7869/>.

109 IHRNGO, “Baluch Hassan Amousi Secretly Hanged in Mashhad”, 7 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7856/>.

HASSAN ALI ZEINZADEH



Hassan Ali Zeinzadeh was a 43-year-old man from Tabriz. He owned a tailoring workshop where drugs were discovered in 2021. Despite vehemently denying possession or any knowledge of the drugs at every stage of the legal proceedings, Hassan was sentenced to death. He was hanged in Tabriz Central Prison on 6 August 2025.¹¹⁰

AHMAD ALI MEHRIPOUR



Ahmad Ali Mehripour was a father and labourer who was arrested in 2020. That day, he had driven his sister to Tehran and decided to stay the night at a friend's house to return home the next day. However, the house was raided in the morning, with all three occupants arrested. According to his family, Ahmad's name

was not on the arrest warrant or any related documents. Despite his family's efforts to plead his innocence, he was sentenced to death in relation to the drugs found at the house he was staying at. Ahmad Ali was hanged in Ghezelhesar Prison on 30 August 2025.¹¹¹

DRAMATIC INCREASE IN DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS: THE UNODC MAINTAINS SILENCE ON EXECUTIONS AND CONTINUES ITS COOPERATION

The last amendment to Iran's Anti-Narcotics Law came into force on 14 November 2017, leading to a significant drop in the number of drug-related executions, from an annual average of 403 to an average of 26 executions in the three years that

110 IHRNGO, "Hassan Ali Zeinzadeh Hanged for Drug Offences in Tabriz", 9 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7862/>.

111 IHRNGO, "4 Men Hanged in Ghezelhesar Prison; 6 Others at Imminent Risk of Execution", 1 September 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7932/>.

followed. The number of death sentences commuted as a result of this Amendment could be as high as 6,000, according to Islamic Republic lawmaker Hassan Norouzi.¹¹² However, this trend was reversed in 2021, and the number of drug-related executions have dramatically increased since then (see diagram on page 63). The number of drug-related executions in 2025 was about 32 times higher than the number in 2020.

Iranian authorities introduced the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law mainly due to international pressure. Crucially, European states funding projects run by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to combat illegal drugs in Iran were unwilling to fund any further projects due to the high number of drug-related executions.¹¹³

In the last four editions of the *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, IHRNGO and ECPM have expressed grave concern about the alarming rise in the number of drug-related executions and called on the UNODC to react.¹¹⁴ The UNODC's silence on the execution of hundreds annually, in addition to its support of Iran's law enforcement and the political legitimacy such cooperation confers, makes it complicit in the executions. Yet the UNODC continues its cooperation with the Islamic Republic without regard to the high number of drug-related executions.

In a meeting in Iran on 17 February 2025, the UNODC Country Representative described "the ongoing cooperation and joint initiatives between the UNODC and Drug Control Headquarters as highly positive and commendable. He affirmed his and the UNODC's commitment to expanding collaboration and securing additional financial resources to support Iran's programs."¹¹⁵

According to the *Tehran Times*' report of the meeting, "[t]o enhance the operational capacity of the Iranian Anti-Narcotics Police, the UNODC provided four drug trace detector devices to the Customs Organization and Anti-Narcotics Police of Iran under the Japanese government's funding on February 5. Through the generous donation of the Government of Japan, the UNODC Iran in 2023 and 2024, procured key devices including drug identification devices,

112 Rokna, 23 March 2025, <https://www.rokna.net/نوروزی-رئیس-با-365759/47-بخش-اخبار-سیاسی>
مخالفان به پرونده رفتن و قتل‌های گزینشی از اعدام هزار جوان به مجرم مواد مخدر جلوگیری کردیم

113 RTE, "Government ceased anti-drug programme funding over Iran death penalty fears", 8 November 2013, <https://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1108/485366-ireland-anti-drug-iran/>.

114 See, for example, IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, 2022, https://iranhr.net/media/files/Rapport_iran_2022_PirQr2V.pdf.

115 UNODC, "UNODC Country Representative Met With The Secretary General of Drug Control Headquarters", 17 February 2025, <https://www.unodc.org/islamicrepublicofiran/en/unodc-country-representative-met-with-the-secretary-general-of-drug-control-headquarters.html>.

drug-detecting dogs, Canine Trailers and other accessories for drug-detecting dog centers.”¹¹⁶

In line with the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP, 2015)¹¹⁷ and the UN Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty,¹¹⁸ the UN must ensure that its support to national law enforcement, prosecutorial, judicial or correctional authorities in Iran’s drug-control sector does not contribute to or facilitate executions carried out in breach of international human rights standards. Consistent with the purposes of the UN Charter, which include the promotion of respect for human rights, UNODC is required to carry out thorough risk assessments before providing assistance, focusing on the possibility that such support may be used in prosecutions or convictions leading to death sentences imposed without full observance of the required procedural safeguards. Where such risks exist, the UN should condition its engagement on the strict application of those safeguards, including fair trial guarantees, protection against coerced confessions, access to counsel, the right to appeal and the requirement of proportionality, and should prioritise assistance aimed at prevention, treatment, judicial reform and non-capital alternatives. Under the HRDDP, the UNODC must also monitor the conduct of supported partners and be prepared to suspend or withdraw assistance where grave violations persist despite mitigation efforts. These measures are essential to uphold the Organisation’s Charter-based duty to respect and promote human rights, including the right to life and fair trial guarantees under the ICCPR, and to ensure that UN activities do not directly or indirectly contribute to the application of the death penalty contrary to international law.

DRUG-RELATED EXECUTIONS: COSTLESS VICTIMS OF THE DEATH PENALTY FOR POLITICAL REPRESSION

Iranian authorities use the death penalty as a political tool of oppression and repression. Analysis by IHRNGO demonstrates a meaningful correlation between the number of executions and

116 *Tehran Times*, “UNODC fully prepared to continue close cooperation with Iran”, 24 February 2025, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/510161/UNODC-fully-prepared-to-continue-close-cooperation-with-Iran>.

117 United Nations, Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces, Guidance note and text of the policy, 2015, <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Inter-Agency-HRDDP-Guidance-Note-2015.pdf>.

118 ECOSOC, Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, approved by Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50 of 25 May 1984, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/safeguards-guaranteeing-protection-rights-those-facing-death>.

political events.¹¹⁹ Following the outbreak of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests, officials publicly threatened protesters with the death penalty. However, the strong international backlash made the execution of protesters politically costly for the Islamic Republic. Since then, the number of drug-related executions has increased dramatically, despite the Islamic Republic’s own repeated admission that the death penalty does not deter drug crimes.¹²⁰ Thus, the authorities’ need to instil fear in society in order to prevent further protests is the most likely reason for the sharp increase in the number of drug-related executions. Those convicted of drug offences are predominantly from the most marginalised groups in society, and ethnic minorities – the Baluch in particular – are grossly overrepresented among those executed. This, together with the international community’s silence, and, in part, UNODC’s continued cooperation, makes the political cost of their execution very low. All drug-related offences are processed by the Revolutionary Courts. Reports collected by IHRNGO demonstrate that those arrested for drug-related offences are systematically subjected to torture in the weeks following their arrest. They often do not have access to a lawyer while in detention, and by the time a lawyer gains access to their case, they have already “confessed” to the crime.¹²¹ Revolutionary Court trials are also typically very short, with lawyers often not even given a chance to present a defence for their clients. As such, the authorities can accuse anyone of drug-related offences and sentence them to death anytime they desire to do so. In its report *A Village of Graves: Widespread and Systematic Drug Executions in Iran*, IHRNGO documented the case of Sartarhan Chah Kheyr village in Lorestan province, where 70 drug-related executions and 100 death row cases have been reported. According to the 2016 census, the village has a population of 388. In the village cemetery, IHRNGO verified the graves of 27 men and a woman who were executed for drug-related charges and two people on death row who died due to the denial of medical treatment, one after a heart attack and the other by suicide upon being informed of their impending executions.¹²²

119 IHRNGO, “Relationship between Political Events and the Death Penalty Trends in Iran”, 11 July 2013, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/982/>.

120 IHRNGO, “Mohammad Javad Larijani: Death Penalty Does Not Deter Drug Crimes”, 31 December 2015, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/2408/>.

121 See also, Human Rights Watch, “Iran: Bid to End Drug-Offense Executions”, 16 December 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/16/iran-bid-end-drug-offence-executions>.

122 IHRNGO, *A Village of Graves: Widespread and Systematic Drug Executions in Iran*, 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/43/>.



Gravestones of people executed for drug-related offences in Sartarhan Chah Kheyr village in Lorestan province.

EXECUTIONS FOR MURDER CHARGES (*QISAS*) IN 2025

As murder is specifically punished under *qisas* laws, the IPC does not explicitly state that convicted murderers are subject to the death penalty but rather to *qisas*, or “retribution-in-kind”. In cases of murder, the law effectively puts the responsibility for executions in the hands of the victim’s family or next of kin. *Qisas* death sentences are also imposed on child offenders since, according to *Sharia*, the age of criminal responsibility for girls is 9 and for boys 15 lunar years. Furthermore, the death penalty is generally subject to discriminatory application based on gender, ethnicity and religion.¹²³ In addition to the inequality of citizens before the law, there are countless reports of violations of due process in *qisas* cases. Examples include the use of torture to extract confessions, summary trials without sufficient time to conduct independent investigation of the evidence and ineffective counsel.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT *QISAS* EXECUTIONS IN 2025

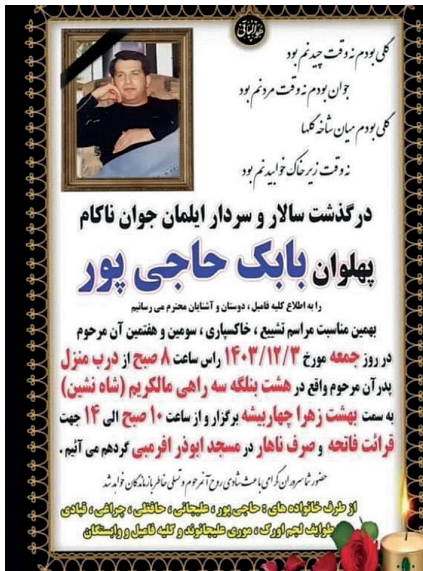
- At least 747 executions were carried out for murder charges based on *qisas* laws compared to 419 in 2024, 282 in 2023, 288 in 2022 and 183 in 2021
- This is the highest number of annual *qisas* executions since 2010
- 52 (under 7%) of the *qisas* executions were announced by official sources
- 32 of those executed for murder charges were women (67% of all women executions)
- 110 *qisas* executions were carried out in Alborz prisons

EXECUTED FOR MURDER CHARGES IN 2025

The 747 *qisas* executions in 2025 include a variety of cases. In all cases, defendants were denied their rights to due process and a fair trial. More information on the execution of women can be found in “Execution Categories” (see page 90).

¹²³ IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, 2013, <https://www.ecpm.org/app/uploads/2022/08/Rapport-Iran-2013.pdf>, p. 11. See further page 92 and page 96 of this report.

BABAK HAJIPOUR



Babak Hajipour was a 49-year-old man from Masjed Soleiman. He was arrested for murder 31 years prior to his execution in 2025, but was initially exonerated after spending four years behind bars. However, he was retried in absentia and sentenced to *qisas* (retribution-in-kind) for murder and rearrested in 2015. After spending another ten years on death row, Babak was hanged in Ahvaz Sepidar Prison on 20 February 2025.¹²⁴

ALI DEHANI



Ali Dehani was a Baluch conscript soldier from the village of Gend in the Sib and Soran county. He was serving at the Kaskin outpost in Bampur county during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests in 2022. According to informed IHRNGO sources, “On 6 November 2022, a week after Bloody Friday,¹²⁵ some policemen were mocking

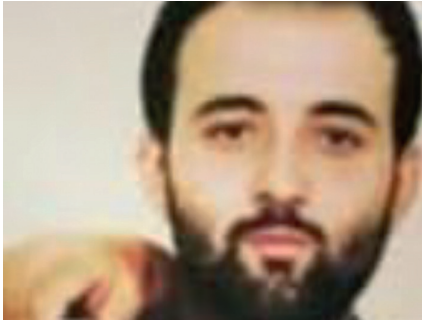
and insulting Molana Abdolhamid (the Zahedan Friday prayer Imam). Ali got into an altercation with them in defence of Molana Abdolhamid, during which four people were killed.” Ali was sentenced to *qisas* and hanged in Zahedan Central Prison on 14 April 2025.¹²⁶

124 IHRNGO, “Babak Hajipour and Ebrahim Khouseh Hanged in Ahvaz”, 24 February 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7369/>.

125 IHRNGO, “Zahedan’s Bloody Friday Must be Investigated as Crimes Against Humanity”, 30 September 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6212/>.

126 IHRNGO, “Baluch Conscript Soldier Ali Dehani Hanged in Zahedan”, 14 April 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7470/>.

SHAMSEDDIN FAZLI



Shamseddin Fazli was a 27-year-old man who was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Three years prior to his execution in 2025, he was on Meraj Boulevard in Tabriz when a fight broke out in front of a greengrocer's stand. According to informed IHRNGO sources, "He was trying to separate the two people fighting when

one of them was killed by stabbing. Everyone else ran away but Shamseddin refused to leave the injured man. That's why he was the one arrested when police arrived on the scene. He took an oath twice in court that he was innocent but the witnesses testified that he was the one that had stabbed the victim." Shamseddin was sentenced to *qisas* and hanged in Tabriz Central Prison on 9 April 2025.¹²⁷

AHMAD HASHAMI

Ahmad Hashami, a 28-year-old man from Miandoab, was arrested for murdering his brother-in-law during a fight in Chaharborj in 2023. He was sentenced to *qisas* and hanged in Miandoab Prison on 17 September 2025. After his execution, Ahmad's brother went to the victim's family supermarket and killed two of the victim's relatives in revenge for the execution.¹²⁸

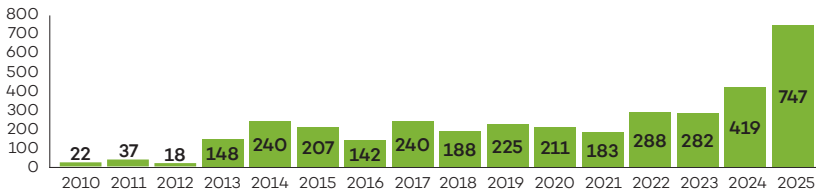
QISAS EXECUTIONS SINCE 2010

According to data gathered by IHRNGO, at least 3,597 *qisas* executions were carried out between 2010 and 2025. The diagram below shows the trend of *qisas* executions during this period.

127 IHRNGO, "Shamseddin Fazli Hanged in Tabriz", 18 April 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7482/>.

128 IHRNGO, "Ahmad Hashami's Execution Leads to Revenge Killings in Miandoab", 21 September 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8055/>.

QISAS EXECUTIONS 2010-2025



The number of *qisas* executions, which was relatively low between 2010 and 2012, increased dramatically in 2013 coinciding with growing international criticism of Iran's drug-related executions. In 2025, at least 747 people were subjected to *qisas* executions, the highest recorded number of annual *qisas* executions in at least 16 years.

BLOOD MONEY (*DIYA*) OR FORGIVENESS INSTEAD OF DEATH PENALTY IN *QISAS* CASES

According to the IPC, murder is punishable by *qisas*, which grants the victim's next of kin the right to demand execution as retribution. However, they may alternatively demand *diya* (blood money) or simply grant forgiveness to the convicted person. The Head of Judiciary sets an annual indicative amount for *diya*, based on inflation and other considerations, but the victim's family can choose their own amount. They can demand a lower or higher amount than the judiciary's indicative number, but crucially no upper limit is set. The *diya* indicative amounts, which are determined every March, were set at 2.1 billion tomans (€10,700) for a Muslim man and 1.05 billion tomans (€5,350) for a Muslim woman in March 2026, a 75% increase compared to the previous year.¹²⁹ The amount set by families is usually higher than the indicative amount and even the indicative amount is higher than what most families can afford. Davoud Alinejad¹³⁰ and Ali Shokat¹³¹ were amongst those executed in 2025 because they could not afford to pay the blood money.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Mai Sato, in her March 2025 report, called on the government "[t]o review the abolition of *diya*, in line with article 6(2) of the Covenant and, pending abolition, set an upper limit for *diya*."¹³²

129 Mizan, <https://t.me/mizanplus/221664>.

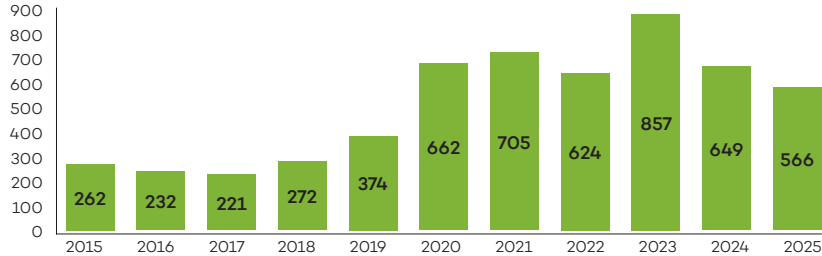
130 IHRNGO, "Davoud Alinejad and Ali Rezaei Hanged in Arak", 19 June 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7673/>.

131 IHRNGO, "Ali Shokat Hanged for Murder in Saveh", 6 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7848/>.

132 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 12 March 2025, op. cit., para. 71(c)(iv).

IHRNGO has collected forgiveness reports since 2015. In 2025, for the first time in eleven years, documented *qisas* cases outnumbered those in which families of murder victims chose forgiveness. For the sake of simplicity, the term “forgiveness” is used in the following section, regardless of whether there was a demand for *diya*.

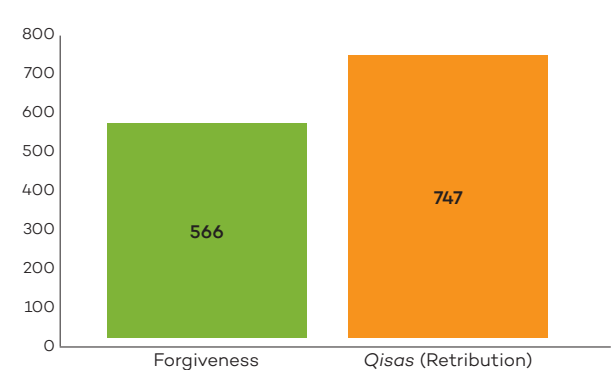
FORGIVENESS 2015-2025



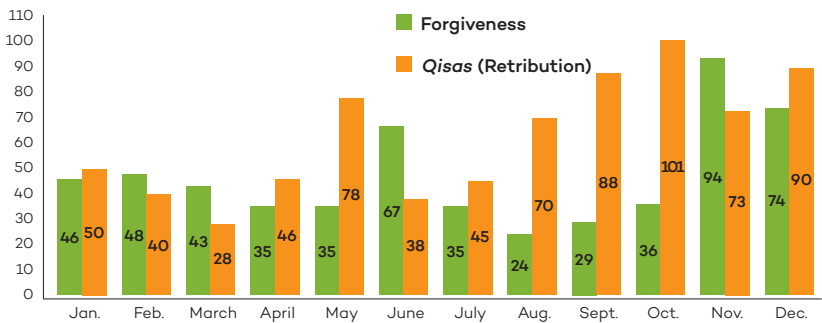
As with executions, not all forgiveness cases are reported by the Iranian media. Based on reports by the Iranian media and, to a lesser extent, through its own network inside Iran, IHRNGO identified 566 forgiveness cases in 2025, compared to 649 cases in 2024, 857 cases in 2023, 624 cases in 2022 and 705 cases in 2021.

In 2025, for the first time since IHRNGO began documenting forgiveness cases, *qisas* executions outnumbered forgiveness cases. The actual numbers for both forgiveness and *qisas* death sentences are believed to be higher. IHRNGO estimates that the number of forgiveness cases might be several times higher than the numbers presented in this report. The decline in the 2025 numbers may be partially due to underreporting in the shadow of the war and the declining economic conditions.

TOTAL FORGIVENESS CASES VS IMPLEMENTED Q/ISAS DEATH SENTENCES IN 2025



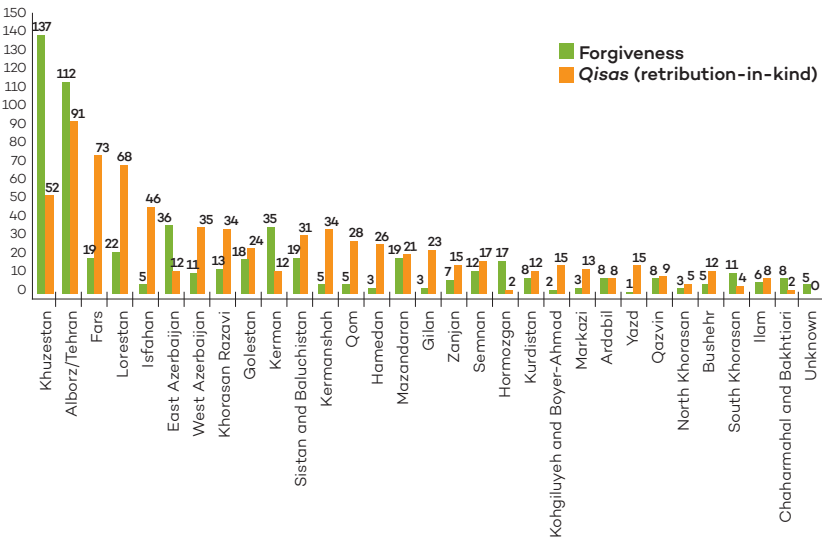
QISAS (RETRIBUTION) AND FORGIVENESS: MONTHLY BREAKDOWN



The diagram above shows the monthly breakdown of implemented *qisas* death sentences compared to forgiveness cases. Forgiveness cases outnumbered *qisas* executions in 4 months of the year.

QISAS AND FORGIVENESS: GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

In 2025, IHRNGO recorded forgiveness and *qisas* cases in all provinces in Iran. While *qisas* executions outnumbered forgiveness cases overall, forgiveness cases outnumbered *qisas* cases in seven provinces.



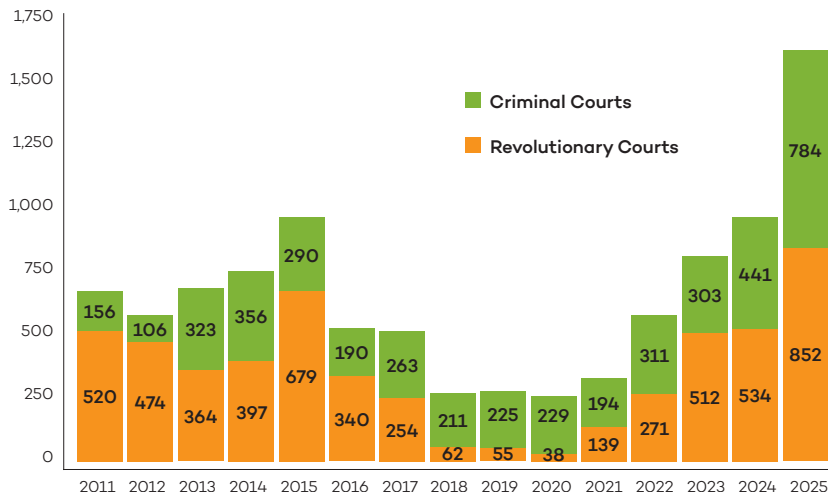
The number of *qisas* executions were higher than forgiveness cases in twenty-one provinces, while the forgiveness numbers were higher than *qisas* executions in the remaining provinces.

SHARE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY AND CRIMINAL COURTS IN 2025 EXECUTIONS

As noted in the previous section, rape and murder (*qisas*) cases fall within the jurisdiction of the Criminal Courts, while *moharebeh*, *efsad-fil-arz* and *baghy* cases, as well as drug-related cases, fall under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Courts.

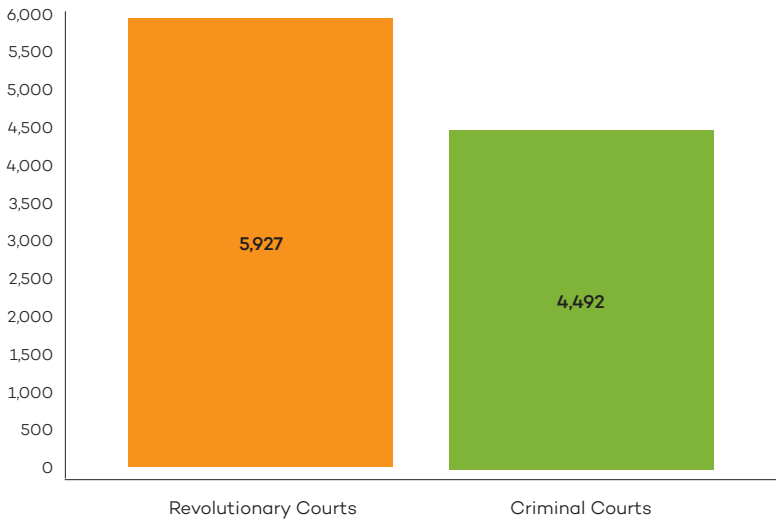
After the enforcement of the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law, the number of implemented death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts saw a significant decrease. However, in 2021 this trend was reversed due to the rise in drug-related executions and numbers have continued to climb since then. The diagrams below show the share of sentences pronounced by the Revolutionary Courts and the Criminal Courts in implemented executions over the last 15 years.

IMPLEMENTED EXECUTIONS ISSUED BY REVOLUTIONARY COURTS VS CRIMINAL COURTS



In 2025, 852 of the 1,636 executions (52%) were based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts. Numbers for the previous 14 years are presented in the diagram above. The charges against three of the people executed in 2025 are unknown.

TOTAL IMPLEMENTED EXECUTIONS FOLLOWING SENTENCES ISSUED BY REVOLUTIONARY VS CRIMINAL COURTS



The diagram above is based on IHRNGO reports since 2010 and shows that 5,927 of the 10,419 executions (57%) in the last 16 years were based on death sentences issued by the Revolutionary Courts.

The Revolutionary Courts are infamous for the summary execution of the political opposition during the first decade of establishment of the Islamic Republic in the 1980s.¹³³ However, data collected by IHRNGO shows that the Revolutionary Courts have also been responsible for the majority of death sentences leading to executions throughout the ensuing decades.

133 BBC News, "Inside Iran's Revolutionary Courts", 17 October 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34550377>.

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

For 46 years, Iran has been one of the few countries in the world to carry out executions in public spaces. Public executions have been repeatedly criticised by the international community and domestic civil society in Iran. Both the UN Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran have expressed concern about the continued practice of public executions. During Iran's second UPR in 2015,¹³⁴ the government rejected recommendations aimed at ending public executions.¹³⁵ Criticism of the Islamic Republic's practice of public executions has also been emphasised in previous Special Rapporteur reports.¹³⁶ Following massive media attention and international pressure in 2007-2008, then Head of Judiciary, Mahmoud Shahroudi issued an order calling for limitation of the use of public executions. Consequently, the number of public executions in 2008-2010 was relatively lower than in previous years. However, following the 2009 post-election protests, the number of public executions increased dramatically after 2010, reaching an annual average of 50 to 60 between 2011-2015. Increased international focus again led to a decrease, with 33 public executions in 2016, 31 in 2017 and 13 in 2018 and 2019. Public executions dropped significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, with one execution reported in 2020 and none in 2021. In 2022, two people were publicly hanged and the number more than tripled in 2023, with seven public executions. In 2024, there was a slight decrease, with four public executions. Public hangings more than tripled to eleven in 2025.

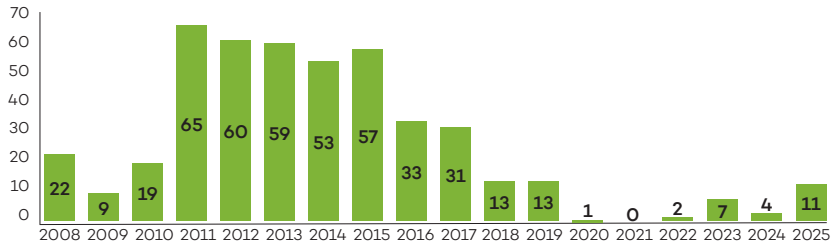
Public executions are also a way to instil fear among the population and have consequences on the mental health of people who attend. Public executions are always officially reported, though defendants are often not named or are only identified by their initials. In cases that are reported by official sources, in addition to their names, photos and videos are also published.

134 Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Islamic Republic of Iran*, 22 December 2014, A/HRC/28/12, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g14/248/22/pdf/g1424822.pdf>, Recommendations 138.153, 138.159, 138.176.

135 Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Islamic Republic of Iran, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 2 March 2015, A/HRC/28/12/Add.1, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g15/040/69/pdf/g1504069.pdf>, para. 7(c).

136 See for example, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 7 February 2023, op. cit. para. 60.

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS 2008-2025



The diagram above shows public executions since 2008. The number of public executions in 2020 was significantly lower due to COVID-19 pandemics restrictions, and no public executions were recorded in 2021. Since 2022, public executions have been rising again. In 2025, at least 11 people were hanged in public spaces, almost triple the number in 2024.

EXECUTED IN PUBLIC IN 2025

In 2025, at least 11 men were hanged in public spaces across the country. Of those, ten were announced by official media. The public hanging of Mohammad Zakeri was not announced by official sources.¹³⁷

ILIA KHALIFEHZADEH



Ilia Khalifehzadeh, a 20-year-old man, was arrested in 2024. He was sentenced to death on charges of rape that led to the death of a 7-year-old girl. He was publicly hanged in Bukan on 12 July 2025. Videos of the public hanging showed the presence of children at the scene.¹³⁸

137 IHRNGO, "Mohammad Zakeri 11th Man Publicly Hanged in Iran/VIDEO", 22 December 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8474/>.

138 IHRNGO, "2nd Public Hanging in a Week; Ilia Khalifehzadeh Executed for Rape", 12 July 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7738/>.



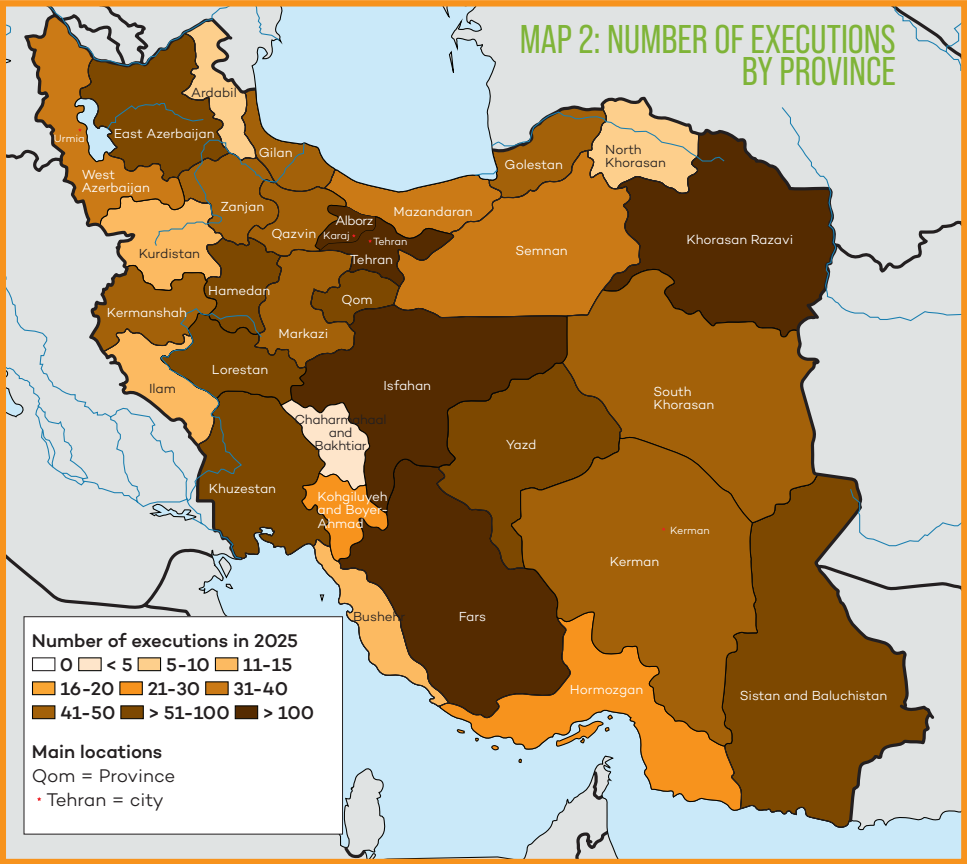
Sajad Molayi Hakani was arrested with his wife for the murder of a mother and her three children in the course of a robbery in October 2024. They were both sentenced to *qisas* by Branch 1 of the Fars Criminal Court. On 19 August 2025, he was publicly hanged in Beyrom, a town with fewer than 8,000 inhabitants. Video footage published by state media showed the presence of many children at the scene.¹³⁹ His wife, Mahsa Akbari, who was a child bride, was hanged in Shiraz Central Prison in the presence of the victim's next of kin on 20 August 2025.¹⁴⁰

139 IHRNGO, "IHRNGO Condemns Sajad Molayi Hakani's Public Hanging with Children Present", 19 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7884/>.

140 IHRNGO, "Child Bride Mahsa Akbari 21st Woman Executed in 2025", 20 August 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7887/>.

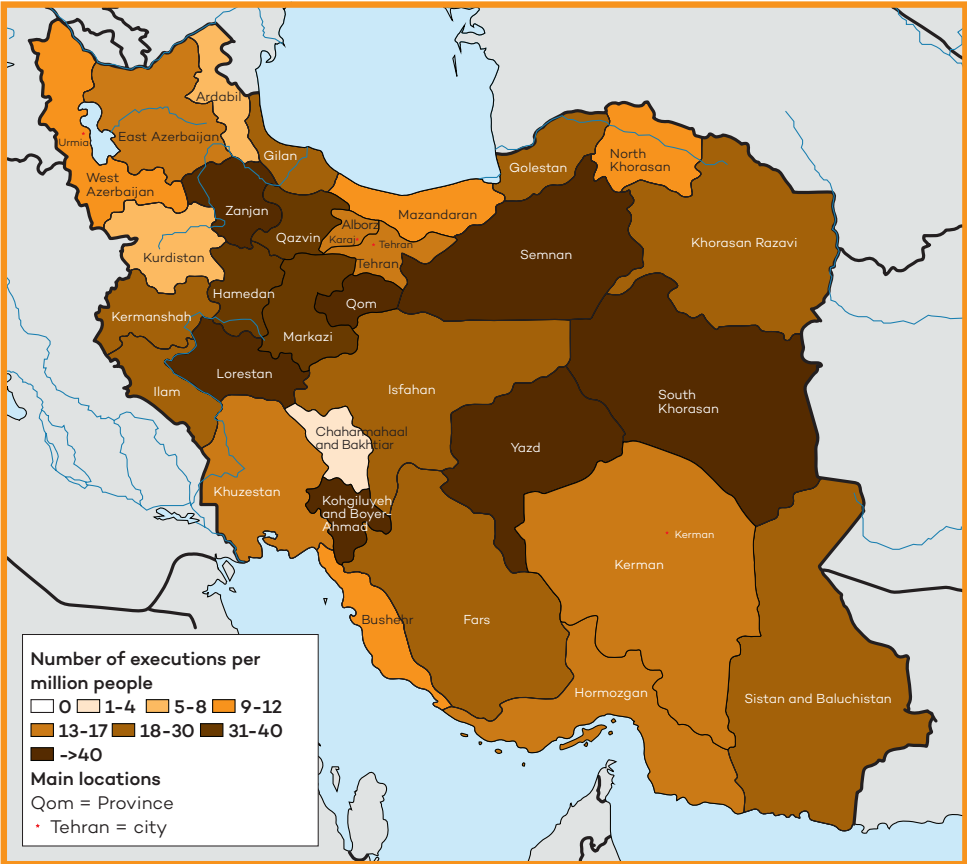
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIONS

Executions were carried out in 31 Iranian provinces in 2025. The following maps show the geographic distribution of executions. Map 2 shows the total number of executions, while Map 3 shows the number of executions per capita for each province.



In 2025, Tehran/Alborz provinces had the highest number of executions, with 210 (compared to 210 in 2024), followed by 145 in Isfahan province (67 in 2024), 139 in Fars province (97 in 2024) and 116 in Khorasan Razavi (58 in 2024). More than 93% of the executions included in the 2025 report were not announced by official sources. The next section provides more details about unannounced and secret executions.

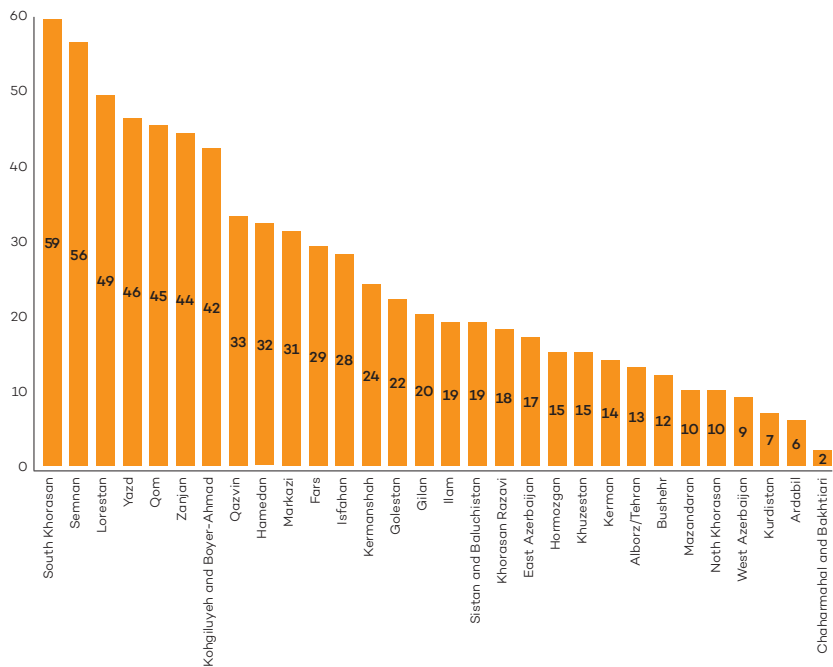
MAP 3: NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER CAPITA



In 2025, Iran carried out 18 executions per million people.¹⁴¹ South Khorasan province had the highest execution rate, with 59 executions per million inhabitants, followed by Semnan with 56 executions per million, and Lorestan with 49 executions per million inhabitants. Numbers for each province are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

¹⁴¹ Population based on last official count of 2016, amar.org.ir.

NUMBER OF EXECUTIONS PER CAPITA FOR EACH PROVINCE



SECRET AND UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS

More than 93% of all executions recorded by IHRNGO in 2025 (1,526 executions) were not announced by the authorities. Some of the executions were carried out secretly, without the family or the lawyer being informed, and some were simply not announced by the official media. This is despite the fact that, according to the Islamic Republic's own laws, the defendant's representative must be notified of the planned execution. The actual number of executions is certainly much higher. This lack of transparency has been increasing in recent years. In 2025, less than 7% of the recorded executions were officially reported, compared to 10% in 2024, 15% in 2023, 12% in 2022, 16.5% in 2021 and an average of 33% in 2018-2020.

FACTS ABOUT SECRET AND UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS IN 2025

- At least 1,526 executions (over 93% of the total) were not announced by official Iranian sources
- Only 3 of the 795 drug-related executions (less than 0.4%) were announced by official sources
- Drug-related offences accounted for 52% of unannounced executions
- Murder charges accounted for 45.6% of unannounced executions
- Tehran/Alborz province had the highest number (165) of unannounced executions, followed by Isfahan (139) and Fars (136)

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Mai Sato, in her March 2025 report, stated: “To meet [their obligations of transparency and accountability], the Islamic Republic of Iran should enable the reporting of all capital cases, make individual judgments publicly available, regularly release statistics of death sentences handed down at trial or on appeal and provide execution figures specifying the offence and accompanied by demographic information.”¹⁴²

DOCUMENTATION OF UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS

Only unofficial reports with sufficient information have been included in this report. IHRNGO's network inside the country receives information about many executions which are not announced by domestic media or officials. Confirming these reports is a challenging task, as the media is either directly controlled or under strong scrutiny by the authorities. Reporting human rights violations to human rights organisations is also regarded as a crime, and those involved risk criminal prosecution. Notwithstanding, every year IHRNGO manages to confirm several hundred cases of executions that are not announced by the authorities. In many of these cases, information on executions is verified by two or more independent sources. In some cases, IHRNGO receives photographs that can document the execution. In many cases, photographs with information about the executed person are sent to IHRNGO.

Death or funeral notices are also used as documentation to support reports of unannounced executions received by IHRNGO. 553 executions reported to IHRNGO were not included in the 2025 figures due to lack of sufficient documentation or confirmation by two independent sources.

¹⁴² Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 12 March 2025, op. cit., para. 11.



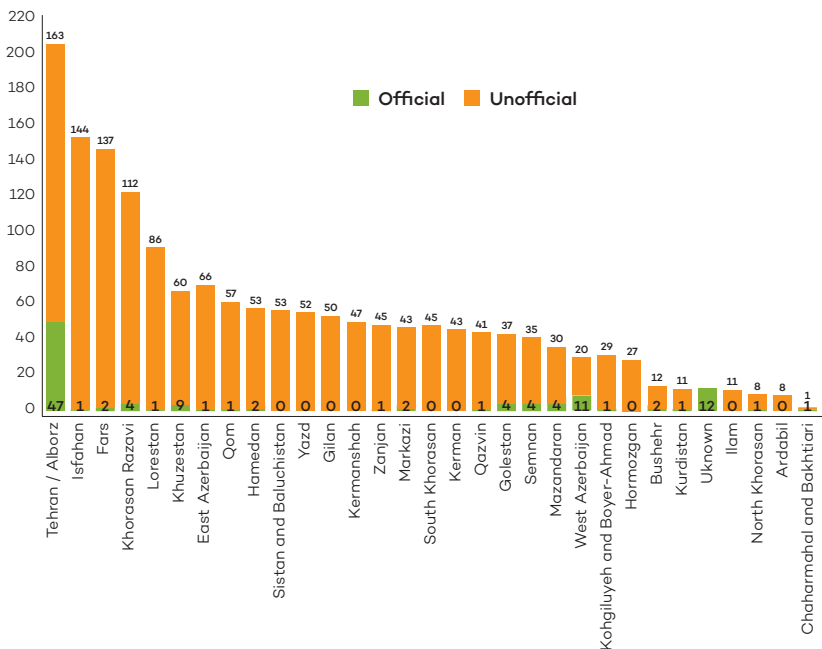
Photographs of some of the people whose executions were not announced by official sources, but whose execution was documented by IHRNGO in 2025.



Death notices showing some of the people whose executions were not announced by official sources but were documented by IHRNGO.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF ANNOUNCED AND UNANNOUNCED/SECRET EXECUTIONS

In 2025, the highest numbers of unannounced executions took place in Ghezel Hesar Karaj, Isfahan Central Prison and Shiraz Central Prison.¹⁴³



The diagram above shows the geographical distribution of the official (in green) and unofficial/unannounced (in orange) executions in Iran. The prisons in the provinces of Tehran/Alborz, Isfahan and Fars had the highest number of recorded executions. This was followed by Khorasan Razavi, Lorestan and Khuzestan. The exact location of twelve officially announced executions were not disclosed.

143 Further details are provided in the following section.

EXECUTION CATEGORIES

CHILD OFFENDERS

CHILD OFFENDERS EXECUTIONS: TRENDS AND LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

The 2013 IPC retained the death penalty for children convicted of crimes. Although Articles 89-95 suggest corrective measures and alternative punishments for children, Article 91 is very clear that the offences punishable by *hudud* or *qisas* are exceptions to this rule. It is important to note that almost all child offenders executed in the past 11 years were sentenced to death based on *qisas* and *hudud* laws.

Article 91 states: “For offences punishable by *hadd* or *qisas*, mature persons younger than 18 shall be sentenced to the punishments stipulated in this chapter (Articles 89-95) if they do not understand the nature of the offence committed or its prohibition or if there are doubts about their maturity or development of their reasoning.”

This article grants discretion to the judge to decide whether a child offender understood the nature of the offences, whether they were mature at the time of committing the offence and whether they should be sentenced to death. The Note to Article 91 authorises but does not require the court to seek the opinion of the Forensic Medical Organisation or to use any other means to reach a verdict. Moreover, while Article 146 states that immature persons lack criminal responsibility, Article 147 repeats the provisions of the previous law and the Civil Code regarding maturity and the age of criminal responsibility. Girls are considered mature at the age of 9 lunar years and boys at the age of 15 lunar years. A girl older than 8.7 years and a boy older than 14.6 years can therefore be sentenced to death.

In the framework of Iran’s fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2025, Iranian authorities wrote in their reply to the recommendations: “capital punishment is exclusively reserved for the most serious crimes. Pursuant to recent legislative amendments, the maximum penalty applicable to child offenders is five years of detention in a child correctional and rehabilitation center. Furthermore, capital punishment shall neither be imposed nor executed in cases where the offender, despite having reached the age of criminal responsibility, has failed to comprehend the nature of the offense and, based on

expert assessment and judicial determination, has not attained full intellectual and mental maturity.”¹⁴⁴

Iran is one of the last remaining countries to sentence children to death and executes more child offenders than any other country in the world. In violation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which Iran has ratified, Iranian authorities continue to carry out the execution of children. According to IHRNGO reports, at least 71 child offenders were executed between 2010 and 2025 in Iran. Due to lack of transparency in the Iranian Judiciary, there is no information about the number of child offenders on death row in Iranian prisons.

International pressure on Iran regarding executions of child offenders increased during the first decade of the 2000s. As a consequence of the criticism from the international community and domestic civil society, Iran made changes concerning child offenders in the 2013 Islamic Penal Code (IPC). However, these changes have not led to a decrease in the number of executions of children. The 2013 IPC explicitly defines the “age of criminal responsibility” as the age of maturity under *Sharia* law, meaning that girls over 9 lunar years of age and boys over 15 lunar years of age are eligible for execution if convicted of “crimes against god” (such as apostasy) or “retribution crimes” (such as murder). Article 91 of the IPC states that offenders under the age of 18 who commit *hudud* or *qisas* offences may not be sentenced to death if the judge determines the offender lacked “maturity or development of their reasoning” based on forensic evidence.¹⁴⁵ The article allows judges to assess a child offender’s mental maturity at the time of the offence and, potentially, to impose an alternative punishment to the death penalty on the basis of the outcome. In 2014, Iran’s Supreme Court confirmed that all child offenders on death row could apply for retrial.

However, Article 91 is vaguely worded and inconsistently and arbitrarily applied. Between 2016 and 2025, IHRNGO identified 22 cases where the death sentences of child offenders were commuted based on Article 91. In the same period, at least 32 child offenders were executed according to reports received by IHRNGO and several remain at risk of execution. It seems that Article 91 has not led to a decrease in the number of child offender executions. The Iranian authorities must change the law, unconditionally removing all death sentences for all offences committed under 18 years of age.

144 Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Islamic Republic of Iran, Addendum, Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*, 11 June 2025, op. cit., para. 6.

145 UN Secretary-General, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, A/68/377, 10 September 2013, <https://undocs.org/A/68/377>. See also IPC (2013), Art. 91.

The former UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Javād Rehmān, in his 2024 report, expressed alarm about “the sentencing of children to death and regret[ted] that no progress has been observed towards the implementation of the recommendations made by him and his predecessors, other special procedure mandate holders and international human rights mechanisms that the death penalty for children be abolished, regardless of the circumstances and nature of the crime committed.” He called on the Islamic Republic to “urgently amend legislation to prohibit the execution of persons who have committed a crime while under the age of 18 and urgently amend legislation to commute all death sentences for child offenders.”¹⁴⁶ Likewise, the UN Secretary-General, in his June 2024 report to the 56th session of the Human Rights Council, called on Iran’s government to “prohibit the execution of all offenders who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime, in all circumstances, and commute their sentences.”¹⁴⁷ In 2025, IHRNGO did not record any child offender executions. It confirmed that Karim Farokhvand, Mahmoud Ostad-Mamzaei¹⁴⁸ and Behnam Bargpush¹⁴⁹ who were previously reported to have been possible child offenders were not under the age of 18 at the time of their alleged offences.

WOMEN

Iran carries out the highest number of recorded executions of women worldwide while enforcing a system of gender apartheid. Women are affected by the use of the death penalty in two ways. First, they may be sentenced to death and executed themselves. Secondly, they are also impacted as relatives of men sentenced to death and executed. In December 2024, IHRNGO published a gendered perspective of women executions in Iran which provides a thorough analysis of the discriminatory laws and societal factors that impact women on death row in Iran.¹⁵⁰ According to the report, between 2010 and November 2024, at least 241 women were executed, with the

146 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 9 February 2024, op. cit., paras 15 and 92(d).

147 UN Secretary-General, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, A/HRC/56/22, 19 June 2024, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/56/22>, para. 71(b).

148 IHRNGO, “Probable Child Offenders Karim Farokhvand and Mahmoud Ostad-Mamzaei Hanged in Dezful”, 2 May 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7514/>.

149 IHRNGO, “Possible Child Offender Behnam Bargpush and Mohammad Ahmadzadeh Hanged for Drug Offences in Iran”, 23 April 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7489/>.

150 IHRNGO, *Women and the Death Penalty in Iran: A Gendered Perspective*, 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/41/>.

majority convicted of murder and drug-related offences. Many of the women were victims of domestic violence, child brides, or from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds. The report underscores key challenges such as lack of fair trial rights, gender biases in legal processes, and the absence of support structures for women on death row. IHRNGO also published a report on the inhumane conditions of Qarchak (Gharchak) Prison, where many women on death row are held.¹⁵¹

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the world's top executioner of women, with at least 48 executed in Iran in 2025, the highest number of women executions since the execution of women began being systematically recorded more than 20 years ago. As previously noted, there was a sharp drop in the execution of women on drug-related charges after the 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law, which was reversed in practice in 2021, consistent with the rise in overall drug-related executions.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2025

- At least 48 women were executed in 2025, a 55% increase compared to 2024
- 32 were sentenced to *qisas* for murder
- 16 women were executed for drug-related charges
- The identities of 4 of the women are unknown and one woman was only partially identified
- One of the women was an Afghan national
- 21 women were executed for the murder of their husbands/fiancés
- At least 2 women were child brides
- Only 4 of the executions (8%) were announced by official sources
- At least 289 women were executed between 2010 and 2025

WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2025

NASRIN BARANI

Nasrin Barani was a 29-year-old woman from Isfahan who was arrested in 2021. She had previously been married for six years and divorced, but after remarrying, her ex-husband continued to stalk and harass her. She was sentenced to *qisas* for his murder and hanged in Isfahan (Dastgerd) Central Prison on 1 March 2025.¹⁵²

151 IHRNGO, *Qarchak Prison: Hell for Women and Children*, 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/39/>.

152 IHRNGO, "Nasrin Barani 5th Woman Hanged in Iran in 2025", 13 March 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7419/>.

SETAREH TAHERLU

Setareh Taherlu was arrested for drug-related offences in 2022. According to informed sources, she owned a pick-up truck in which drugs were discovered. No further information is available about her case. Setareh was sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Court and hanged in Damghan Prison on 19 May 2025.¹⁵³

LIST OF WOMEN EXECUTED IN 2025

	DATE	NAME	AGE*	CHARGE	LOCATION	SOURCE	OFFICIAL/ UNOFFICIAL
1	1 Feb. 2025	Maryam Kaviani	40	Murder	Khorramabad Central Prison, Lorestan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
2	6 Feb. 2025	Mahtab Ghazizadeh	47	Murder	Sari Central Prison, Mazandaran	IHRNGO	Unofficial
3	18 Feb. 2025	Ms Bagherinejad	45	Murder	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
4	1 March 2025	Asieh Ghavicheshm	45	Drug-related	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
5	1 March 2025	Nasrin Barani	29	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
6	16 March 2025	Mojgan Azarpisheh	29	Murder	Urmia Central Prison, W. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
7	16 March 2025	Kosar Bagherzadeh	Unknown	Murder	Urmia Central Prison, W. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
8	29 March 2025	Mahnaz Kakaei	24	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
9	8 April 2025	Unidentified	Unknown	Drug-related	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
10	8 April 2025	Unidentified	Unknown	Drug-related	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
11	15 April 2025	Marzieh Esmaili	40	Drug-related	Qazvin Central Prison, Qazvin	IHRNGO	Unofficial
12	28 April 2025	Marjan Sabzi	Unknown	Drug-related	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
13	1 May 2025	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Unknown, Tehran/Alborz	IHRNGO	Official
14	7 May 2025	Mahtab Amiri	Unknown	Murder	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
15	12 May 2025	Mahboubeh Khosronejad	Unknown	Murder	Gorgan Central Prison, Golestan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
16	19 May 2025	Setareh Taherlu	Unknown	Drug-related	Damghan Prison, Semnan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
17	1 June 2025	Massoumeh Karbaksh	39	Drug-related	Kerman Central Prison, Kerman	BCA	Unofficial
18	24 June 2025	Talat Sabzi	47	Murder	Qom Central Prison, Qom	IHRNGO	Unofficial
19	21 July 2025	Atefeh Amini	35	Murder	Arak Central Prison, Markazi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
20	30 July 2025	Mahtab Bayati	Unknown	Drug-related	Mashhad Central Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial

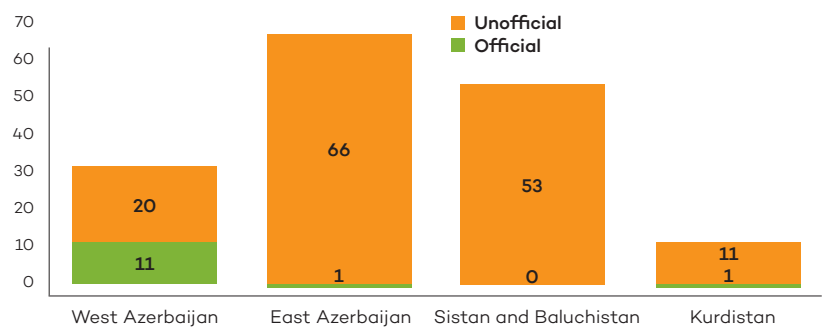
153 IHRNGO, "Setareh Taherlu and Ali Asghar Alami Hanged in Damghan", 25 May 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/7596/>.

21	11 Aug. 2025	Soudabeh Ghassemzadeh	45	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
22	20 Aug. 2025	Mahsa Akbari	Unknown	Murder	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
23	26 Aug. 2025	Maliheh Haghi	34	Murder	Tabriz Central Prison, E. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
24	27 Aug. 2025	Mitra Yasini	Unknown	Murder	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
25	28 Aug. 2025	Banu Moghaddam	60	Murder	Abhar Prison, Zanjan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
26	2 Sept. 2025	Gohar Taheri Aghdam	52	Murder	Zanjan Central Prison, Zanjan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
27	11 Sept. 2025	Hadigheh Abadi	Unknown	Drug-related	Qazvin Central Prison, Qazvin	IHRNGO	Unofficial
28	17 Sept. 2025	Zahra Fotouhi	52	Murder	Tabriz Central Prison, E. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
29	17 Sept. 2025	Unidentified	Unknown	Murder	Sabzevar Prison, Khorasan Razavi	IHRNGO	Unofficial
30	24 Sept. 2025	Roya Abbaszadeh	25	Murder	Zanjan Central Prison, Zanjan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
31	29 Sept. 2025	Jeiran Zaheri	Unknown	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
32	13 Oct. 2025	Zeinab Khodabandeh	Unknown	Drug-related	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
33	15 Oct. 2025	Kafieh Ghibadzadeh	20	Murder	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
34	15 Oct. 2025	Nahid Hemati	Unknown	Drug-related	Nahavand Prison, Hamedan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
35	22 Oct. 2025	Saeedeh Khodadadi	40	Murder	Isfahan Central Prison, Isfahan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
36	25 Oct. 2025	Narges Ahmadi	Unknown	Murder	Qom Central Prison, Qom	IHRNGO	Unofficial
37	26 Oct. 2025	Mahboubeh Jalali	38	Drug-related	Rasht Central Prison, Gilan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
38	1 Nov. 2025	Mitra Zamani	Unknown	Murder	Khorramabad Central Prison, Lorestan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
39	4 Nov. 2025	Kobra Rezayi	Unknown	Drug-related	Yazd Central Prison, Yazd	IHRNGO	Unofficial
40	8 Nov. 2025	Zahra Mirghafari	43	Drug-related	Tabriz Central Prison, E. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
41	13 Nov. 2025	Ghomri Abbaszadeh	29	Murder	Sari Central Prison, Mazandaran	IHRNGO	Unofficial
42	26 Nov. 2025	Mina Sadoughi	41	Drug-related	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
43	3 Dec. 2025	Rana Faraj Oghli	24	Murder	Tabriz Central Prison, E. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Unofficial
44	13 Dec. 2025	Sedigheh Ghorbani	Unknown	Muder	Urmia Central Prison, W. Azerbaijan	IHRNGO	Official
45	13 Dec. 2025	Hamideh Jabbari	41	Murder	Qom Central Prison, Qom	IHRNGO	Unofficial
46	17 Dec. 2025	Razieh Abbasi	Unknown	Murder	Ghezelhesar Prison, Alborz	IHRNGO	Official
47	17 Dec. 2025	Mahin Rashidi	39	Drug-related	Shiraz Central Prison, Fars	IHRNGO	Unofficial
48	21 Dec. 2025	Mehdieh Keyhani	41	Murder	Hamedan Prison, Hamedan	IHRNGO	Unofficial

* Age at the time of execution

ETHNIC MINORITIES

As previous annual reports have shown, ethnic minorities in Iran are overrepresented in death penalty statistics. This report documents the cases of 163 people executed in the 4 ethnic provinces of West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan, Sistan and Baluchistan, and Kurdistan in 2025, accounting for 10% of all recorded executions in 2025. This number was 145 in 2024 (15%), 150 in 2023 (18%), and 130 in 2022 (22%). The proportion of executions in ethnic regions compared to the total number of executions was lower in 2025 than in previous years. This appears to be due to the most dramatic increase in executions being recorded in central provinces such as Isfahan and Fars, possibly reflecting the Islamic Republic's growing fear of protests in central parts of the country and in large cities. As executions of ethnic minorities are not implemented exclusively in their home provinces, it is difficult to identify the exact number of executions of each ethnic minority group. In 2025, execution of Baluch and Kurdish prisoners were carried out in 15 and 17 different provinces, respectively. Furthermore, information about those executed does not always include their ethnicity. Executions of Baluch prisoners are in many cases carried out in prisons outside the Baluchistan region.



In 2025, more than 92% of the executions recorded by IHRNGO in East and West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchistan were not announced by the authorities. None of the executions in Baluchistan were announced by official media.

Furthermore, the absolute majority of those executed for their political affiliation belong to ethnic groups, Kurdish in particular. An overview of IHRNGO reports between 2010-2025 shows that at least 182 people were executed for affiliation to banned political

and armed groups. Of those, 87 (48%) were Kurdish, 49 (27%) were Baluch and 30 (16%) were Arab, with a majority being Sunni Muslims.

There are several possible reasons for the overrepresentation of ethnic groups in execution figures. One explanation might be that the authorities use more violence to create fear due to higher opposition amongst the population in those regions. During the nationwide protests following Jina (Mahsa) Amini's state killing, Kurdish regions and Baluchistan were the areas with the longest-lasting protests, and almost half of all protesters killed on the streets were from Baluchistan, Kurdistan and other Kurdish towns in other provinces. The authorities' targeted propaganda labelling its critics in the ethnic regions as separatists, as well as the presence of armed groups in those regions makes it easier for authorities to justify death sentences under the pretext of fighting terrorism and separatism. This has led to less domestic and international sensitivity to executions of people from ethnic regions, and thus, a lower political cost for the atrocities. Finally, with these regions already suffering from poor socio-economic conditions, local judicial offices also act more lawlessly and arbitrarily in the four ethnic provinces.

EXECUTION OF BALUCH MINORITIES

There are no official figures for the population of Baluch minorities in Iran, but different sources estimate the number to be between 1.5¹⁵⁴ and 4.8 million,¹⁵⁵ accounting for 2-6% of Iran's total population. Research and monitoring by IHRNGO shows that at least 149 Baluch individuals were executed in 2025, accounting for 9% of all recorded executions in Iran. The gross overrepresentation of Baluch people in the execution figures in previous years (11% in 2024, 20% in 2023 and 30% in 2022) has elicited reactions from rights groups and the international community.¹⁵⁶ This increased scrutiny may have contributed to the relative reduction in Baluch executions in 2025.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EXECUTIONS OF BALUCH MINORITIES IN 2025

- At least 149 Baluch minorities were executed, accounting for 9% of all executions in 2025

154 The Iran Primer, "Iran Minorities 2: Ethnic Diversity", 3 September 2013, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/sep/03/iran-minorities-2-ethnic-diversity>.

155 Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation, "West Balochistan", n.d., <https://unpo.org/members/7922>.

156 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 9 February 2024, op. cit.

- 106 were executed for drug-related offences, accounting for over 13% of all drug-related executions in 2025, compared to 17% in 2024 and 30% in 2023
- Only 3 of the executions (2%) were officially announced
- Sistan and Baluchistan, South Khorasan and Khorasan Razavi were the provinces with the highest number of executed Baluch individuals, with 49, 22, and 19 people, respectively.

EXECUTION OF KURDISH MINORITIES

As noted above, Kurdish prisoners are grossly overrepresented among security-related executions, accounting for more than 50% of those executed for affiliation to banned opposition groups in the last 15 years.

According to different NGO sources, Kurds constitute around 10-13% of Iran's population.¹⁵⁷ Estimating the exact number of Kurdish individuals executed for ordinary crimes in Iran presents significant challenges due to several factors. Unlike ethnic groups like the Baluch, Kurdish people's surnames do not always clearly reflect their ethnicity, making it difficult to identify and verify cases based solely on their names or official records. Additionally, Kurdish communities are spread across multiple provinces, including Kurdistan, West Azerbaijan, Kermanshah, and Ilam, as well as other regions, further complicating efforts to provide precise figures. Thus, the figures presented here may be grossly underestimated.

In recent years, IHRNGO has documented Kurdish minority cases being arbitrarily linked to espionage, whereas in the past similar cases would have been linked to Kurdish opposition groups. An example is the case of the three *kolbars* mentioned on page 59, compared to that of Mohiyedin Ebrahimi who was also a Kurdish *kolbar* arrested for possession of alcoholic beverages,¹⁵⁸ like Edris Ali, Azad Shojaei and Rasoul Ahmad Rasoul.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EXECUTIONS OF KURDISH MINORITIES IN 2025

- At least 82 Kurdish minorities were executed, accounting for nearly 5% of all executions in 2025
- 93% of the recorded executions were for murder and drug-related offences

157 See, for example, Minority Rights Group, "Kurds in Iran", 2017, <https://minorityrights.org/communities/kurds-4/>; and Institut Kurde, "The Kurdish Population", n.d., <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>.

158 IHRNGO, "Kurdish Political Prisoner Mohiyedin Ebrahimi Executed in Urmia", 17 March 2023, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/5782/>.

- One protester and one political prisoner were amongst those executed
- Only 6 of the executions were officially announced
- Executions took place in 18 different provinces
- Alborz/Tehran, Kermanshah, and West Azerbaijan were the provinces with the highest number of executed Kurdish individuals, with 27, 24, and 14 people, respectively.

FOREIGN CITIZENS

Afghans constitute the largest group of non-Iranian nationals executed and death row cases in Iranian prisons. In 2021, no executions of Afghan nationals were recorded until September, when five men were executed in the space of 35 days. On 10 October 2021, IHRNGO expressed its concern that the Taliban takeover in August had facilitated the execution of Afghan nationals.¹⁵⁹ That number more than tripled in 2022, with 16 Afghan nationals executed, including a child offender and a woman. In 2023, the number of Afghan nationals executed rose to 25, and more than tripled again in 2024, with 80 executions recorded. In 2025, at least 84 Afghan nationals were executed.

There is no publicly available information about the number of Afghan nationals currently on death row in Iranian prisons, but the numbers are believed to be high, particularly in prisons in the eastern part of the country. It is important to note that executions of Afghan nationals are not normally announced by authorities, and these people generally do not have a family network or lawyers who can raise awareness about their situation. As such, the true number of executions is likely higher than those IHRNGO has been able to verify. In addition to the 84 Afghan nationals, three Iraqi nationals and a man referred to as a “foreign national” by authorities were executed in 2025.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EXECUTIONS OF AFGHAN NATIONALS IN 2025

- At least 84 Afghans were executed in 2025
- Only 6 executions of Afghan nationals were reported by official sources
- 58 were executed for drug-related offences
- 19 were executed for murder charges
- 6 were executed for rape charges

¹⁵⁹ IHRNGO, “10 October 2021: 226 Executions Recorded in 2021: Sharp Rise in Drug Executions”, 10 October 2021, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4917/>.

- One of those executed was a woman
- 36 of those executed were either not identified or only identified by their first names

AFGHAN NATIONALS EXECUTED IN 2025

HADIGHEH ABADI AND YOUNES MAZARSHAMS

Hadigheh Abadi and her 46-year-old husband, Younes Mazarshams were originally from Harat, Afghanistan. They had been living in Iran for twenty years, working as building caretakers in Taleghan, Karaj. In 2021, the couple were arrested with their three children and sentenced to death for drug-related offences. Hadigheh and Younes were hanged in Qazvin (Choobindar) Central Prison on 11 September 2025. Following their executions, their three young children were deported to Afghanistan. No information is available about the fate of their children.¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ IHRNGO, "Afghan Couple Hadigheh Abadi and Younes Mazarshams Hanged for Drug Offences", 13 September 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8005/>.

WAYS TO RESTRICT USE OF THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN

SUSTAINED DOMESTIC CAMPAIGNING AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

Efforts to restrict the use of the death penalty in Iran will depend largely on whether the Islamic Republic remains in power or whether the country undergoes a political transition. Based on the experience of the past two decades, the limited positive changes in law and practice have largely come about as a result of civil society campaigns, supported by sustained international pressure.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that if the Islamic Republic survives the current crisis, its reliance on fear and repression will most certainly increase. In such a scenario, Iran could face an even more dramatic surge in executions than in recent years. Nevertheless, the authorities are likely to remain dependent on improving relations with the international community. Conditioning the normalisation of diplomatic and economic relations on concrete steps toward restricting or abolishing the death penalty could therefore prove to be an effective strategy. If the system changes in Iran, the abolition of the death penalty, adherence to international human rights law and Iran's international treaty obligations must become immediate priorities during the transition period. In times of political upheaval, public anger may create strong support for the execution of officials associated with the ousted government. However, Iran's own experience after the 1979 Revolution illustrates the dangers of such an approach. The Revolutionary Courts that initially issued death sentences against generals of the former government later became instruments for executing political opponents and continue to account for the largest share of death sentences in Iran today.

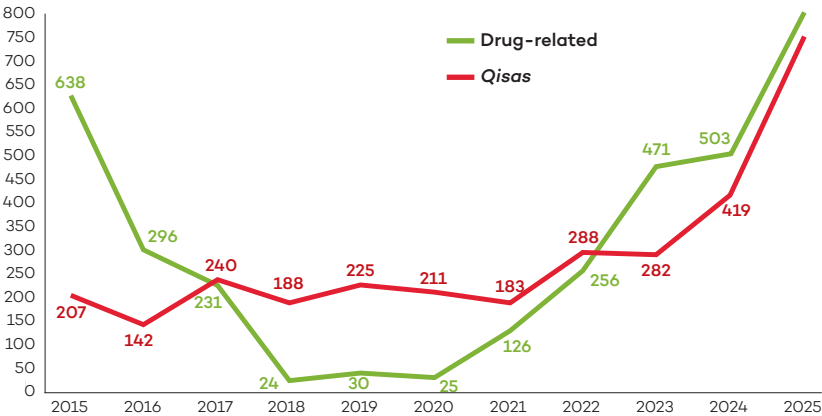
It is therefore critical that the abolition of the death penalty should be a central demand directed at any future transitional government. The use of the death penalty during a transition risks paving the way for new cycles of repression and may ultimately contribute to the emergence of another authoritarian system.

The following sections therefore focus on possible ways to restrict the use of the death penalty under the Islamic Republic.

The 2017 Amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law, introduced in response to international pressure on the Islamic Republic to decrease drug-related executions, led to the most significant

reduction in the number of implemented death sentences in the Islamic Republic's history. From an average of about 403 annual executions between 2010-2017, the numbers dropped to fewer than 30 drug-related executions per year. At the time of adoption of the 2017 Amendment, IHRNGO warned that this change would not lead to a sustained reduction in the use of the death penalty as it did not address the issue of lack of due process and unfair trials. As feared, the impact of the Amendment only lasted for three years. In 2021, the number of drug-related executions increased fivefold, ten-fold in 2022, eighteen-fold in 2023, and nineteen-fold in 2024, compared to the annual average in the three years following enforcement of the Amendment (2018-2020). Given that this hike has not been met with adequate international condemnation, this trend is likely to continue. Between 2018 and 2020, when the number of drug-related executions were relatively low, *qisas* executions (death penalty as retribution-in-kind) accounted for the majority of all executions. These two charges together have accounted for more than 90% of all executions in the last 10 years. Reducing the use of the death penalty in Iran is therefore dependent on a change in *qisas* laws and practices, in addition to an abolition of the death penalty for drug-related offences.

DRUG-RELATED AND *QISAS* EXECUTIONS (2015-2025)



While the number of drug-related executions decreased significantly after its peak in 2015, the number of *qisas* executions fluctuated slightly in both directions. Since the Woman-Life-Freedom protests at the end of 2022, both execution categories have increased dramatically, reaching their highest levels since the end of 1989.

Experience over the past two decades has shown that the international community and Iranian civil society are the main driving forces behind any reform aimed at limiting the use of the death penalty in Iran. Halting the implementation of stoning punishments, which were carried out for adultery, and reducing the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences from 2018 to 2020 were two significant steps taken by the Iranian authorities to restrict the death penalty's scope.

Both changes occurred as a result of simultaneous domestic campaigns and international pressure. The EU made the ban on stoning a condition for improved economic relations with Iran.¹⁶¹ While the reduction in the number of drug-related executions was the result of a change in law and anticipated to be long-lasting, the recent rise in drug-related executions has demonstrated that the 2017 Amendment was not sustainable in restricting the use of the death penalty. Death sentences for drug-related offences can be issued through the Revolutionary Courts as long as capital punishment remains enshrined in law and due process and fair trial guarantees are absent.

Likewise, the halt in implementing stoning punishments should be regarded as temporary, since the punishment remains enshrined in law. A directive issued by the Head of Judiciary in June 2019 on the implementation of punishments describes in detail how stoning sentences should be carried out. Stoning punishments could be implemented again if international human rights mechanisms reduce scrutiny on the human rights situation in Iran.

Thus, sustained international pressure and domestic campaigns must call for a total abolition of these sentences in the law. A more detailed description of the events leading to changes in law and practice in the case of drug-related executions and stoning punishments can be found in the 2018 *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*.¹⁶²

161 BBC News, "Improve human rights, EU urges Iran", 4 February 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2726009.stm.

162 IHRNGO and ECPM, *Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran*, 2018, <https://iranhr.net/en/reports/21/>.

CATEGORIES OF THE DEATH PENALTY WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVEMENT

CHILD OFFENDER EXECUTIONS

Iran has amassed the highest number of child offender executions in the last 20 years. According to reports by IHRNGO and Amnesty International, between 1999 and 2022, Iranian authorities implemented 105 (77%) of at least 136 child executions worldwide. Iran is also the only country to have carried out executions of child offenders every single year for the last 10 years. Both Iranian civil society and the international community are highly sensitive to this issue. Due to sustained international pressure between 2007 and 2013, the Iranian authorities introduced some changes to the IPC regarding the death penalty for child offenders. However, these changes did not lead to a decrease in the number of executions. Stronger, co-ordinated pressure by the international community could lead to the end of child offender executions in Iran. The Islamic Republic authorities refer to Islamic jurisprudence, which states that the age of “maturity” and thus the age of criminal responsibility is 9 lunar years for girls and 15 lunar years for boys. This is despite the fact that 18 is the age at which a person is considered to have reached “maturity” in other circumstances. For instance, passports are issued to citizens above 18 upon presentation of their birth certificate and national ID card. But children below 18 and unmarried women above 18 must obtain the permission of their father or closest male relative, and married women must present their husband’s permission in order to be issued with a passport. Changing the age of criminal responsibility to 18 would therefore not represent a complex deviation from Islamic law.

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS

Iran is one of the very few countries that still carries out public executions. The issue has been raised repeatedly by the international community. There has also been debate amongst Iranian civil society

and even in the Iranian Parliament on the topic.¹⁶³ Several senior Iranian clerics (*ayatollahs*) have even stated that implementing punishments in public is not a religious necessity and should not be carried out if the negative side effects outweigh the benefits.¹⁶⁴ One of the biggest negative side effects is international condemnation. Although the government (led by the president) does not have the authority to issue and implement death sentences according to the Iranian Constitution, public executions seem to be the exception to this rule. At the local level, the governor representing the government has the power to decide whether an execution should be carried out in public or not.¹⁶⁵ Since the government is the counterpart of Iran's dialogue partners, pressure can be more directly applied to government representatives to halt the practice of public executions. Stopping this practice demands focused and sustained pressure from the international community. Moreover, the pause in the implementation of public executions due to COVID-19 restrictions lowered the public's tolerance of public executions. Since 2022, the authorities have gradually resumed public executions, with two in 2022, seven in 2023 and four in 2024. International pressure, especially from countries with closer diplomatic dialogue with the Islamic Republic, can raise the political cost of public executions.

QISAS

Unlike public executions, *qisas* for murder is specified by *Sharia* law, and as long as the Penal Code is based on *Sharia*, Iranian authorities consider its removal a red line that cannot be crossed. They claim *qisas* to be a private right of the victim's family which they cannot deny or control. According to the IPC, murder is punishable by *qisas*, allowing the victim's family to demand death as retribution. However, they can also demand blood money (*diya*) instead, or can simply grant forgiveness. Although opposing *qisas* is considered a serious crime according to Iranian law, promoting forgiveness is regarded as a good deed according to Islam. This offers several possibilities for reducing the number of *qisas* executions, which is the second highest execution category. A brief description of actions which might contribute to reducing the number of such executions are presented below.

- **Distinction between murder and manslaughter:** Those charged with the umbrella term of "intentional murder" are sentenced to *qisas*

163 Radio Farda, <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran-execution-whipping-law/29314017.html>.

164 Tabnak, <https://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/380428/قوای-جرخی-مراجع-درباره-اجرای-حدود-در-سال-۱۴۰۴>.

165 https://www.parliran.ir/majles/fa/Content/_/5004 قانون-راجع-به-موظفیت-و-اختیارات-استانداران-۵۰۰۴.

regardless of intent (*mens rea*) or circumstances, due to a lack of grading in law. Many are executed each year for murders committed unintentionally or in self-defence. Making this distinction would reduce the number of executions.

- **Long prison terms for murder convicts forgiven by the plaintiff:** One of the arguments used by those defending *qisas* death sentences is that once forgiven (by paying *diya* for instance), someone who has committed a serious crime and who could be dangerous will be released into society after a short prison term. This notion makes the plaintiff hesitate in choosing *diya* or forgiveness instead of *qisas*. This issue can be resolved by the introduction of a compulsory minimum prison term for all murder convicts who have been forgiven by the plaintiff. The prison term should be long enough so that the plaintiff feels a sense of justice that the convict is being punished.
- **One rate for *diya* and state support to cover it if necessary:** The minimum rate of *diya* is set by the authorities. However, because there are no caps on *diya* amounts, the victim's family can demand a sum much higher than the minimum rate. Besides adding to the discriminatory nature of *qisas* (the poor are executed while the rich can afford to pay their way out), it also makes it difficult for the state to at least partially subsidise *diya*.
- **Promoting forgiveness through civil society:** In the past few years, an increasing number of civil society groups have been working to promote forgiveness instead of *qisas*. Disturbingly, the Imam Ali Popular Student Relief Society (IAPSRs) which was at the forefront of the forgiveness movement,¹⁶⁶ particularly for child offenders, was disbanded as a result of a motion by the Ministry of Interior. Both the Iranian authorities and the international community must support, not hinder, efforts and groups advocating for forgiveness instead of *qisas*.

166 IHRNGO, "Iran: Joint Statement on Court-Ordered Dissolution of Prominent Charity Group", 11 March 2021, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/4663/>.

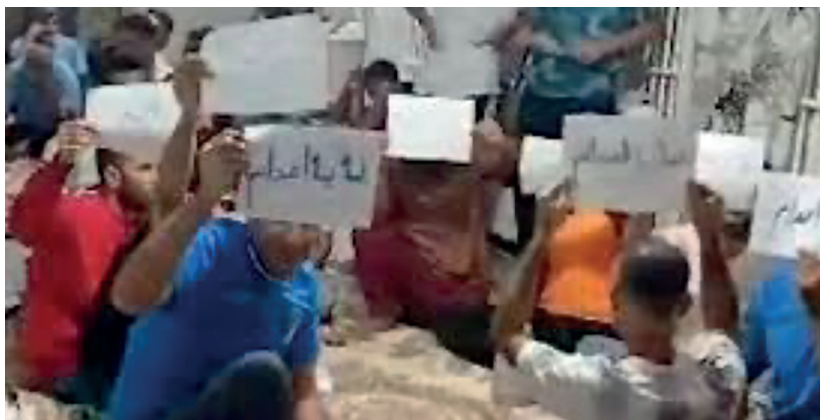
MOVEMENTS PROMOTING ABOLITION AND MOBILISING CIVIL SOCIETY INSIDE IRAN

Over the last five years, there has been a growing trend of Iranians expressing their opposition to the death penalty: from the 2020 online campaign **#اعدام_نکنید** (“don’t execute”), to **#StopExecutionsInIran** during the “Woman, Life, Freedom” nationwide protests, which saved the lives of many protesters, to **#نه_به_اعدام** (“no death penalty”), to the **#NoDeathPenaltyTuesdays** abolitionist movement initiated by prisoners themselves in 2024.

As the number of executions dramatically increased in 2025, the authorities attempted to crackdown on campaigns to save people on death row. To do so, those sentenced on drug-related charges were warned that they would face expedited executions if news of their cases leaked outside prison walls. Yet, when six further prisoners were transferred to the pre-execution cells of Ghezelhesar Prison, people on death row there for drug-related crimes chose to risk death for a chance to live. On 13 October 2025, more than 1,500 people in Ward 2 of Ghezelhesar Prison, sentenced to death on drug-related charges, went on a mass strike. They sewed their lips together and sat defiantly in the ward’s common hall. For six days, they held their ground, refusing to back down despite many reaching dangerous levels.



Left: Prisoners sitting in the common hall with “no death penalty” written on their empty tablecloth and signs, and small gallows to represent their protest. Right: too weak to sit, a prisoner with signs that read: “no death penalty” and “have mercy on our children.”



Top: Prisoners holding up signs that read “no death penalty.” Bottom: Prisoners with their lips sewn shut in protest.

NO DEATH PENALTY TUESDAYS

After bearing witness to months of weekly group executions in Karaj, executions of several political prisoners in January 2024, and a crackdown on protests by people sentenced for ordinary crimes, a group of brave political prisoners¹⁶⁷ in Ghezelhesar Prison staged a protest which was also violently suppressed. The diverse group of

167 The “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” hunger strikes were started by Ghezelhesar political prisoners Zartosht Ahmadi Ragheb, Loghman Aminpour, Meisam Dahbanzadeh, Jafar Ebrahimi, Sepehr Emam Jomeh, Ahmadreza Haeri, Reza Mohammad Hosseini, Saeed Masouri, Reza Salmanzadeh and Hamzeh Savari (listed in alphabetical order).

political prisoners from different backgrounds and beliefs thus began a weekly hunger strike on 30 January 2024 that became known as “Black Tuesdays”¹⁶⁸ and later as “No Death Penalty Tuesdays.”¹⁶⁹ They chose Tuesday for that is the day death row inmates are typically transferred to solitary confinement in preparation for the gallows in Ghezelhesar Prison. Despite crackdowns and punitive measures, the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” movement persevered and soon spread to other prisons across the country. At the time of writing, 56 prisons are taking part in the weekly mass hunger strikes. In 2025, 143 of the 174 executions carried out in Ghezelhesar Prison and 538 executions (32%) of all executions were carried out on Wednesdays.

PROMOTION OF ABOLITION IN THE FUTURE IRAN



In recent years, IHRNGO has made sustained efforts to bring the issue of the death penalty into the broader debate among Iranian opposition groups, with the aim of promoting abolition in a future democratic Iran. Recognising that the death penalty has long been used by the Islamic Republic as a tool of repression, IHRNGO has sought to encourage public discussion among political actors and civil society about the necessity of abolishing the death penalty in any future political system.

168 IHRNGO, “‘Black Tuesdays’ Prison Hunger Strikes Against the Death Penalty”, 20 March 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6625/>.

169 IHRNGO, “85+ Executions in 20 Days; IHRNGO Urges International Solidarity With ‘No Death Penalty Tuesdays’ Movement”, 20 August 2024, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/6870/>.

As part of this effort, in 2025, IHRNGO launched a campaign, inviting well-known figures from across the Iranian opposition spectrum to record short 60-second statements against the death penalty. Several hundred personalities participated, including activists, intellectuals, artists and political figures, many of them based inside Iran despite the risks involved.¹⁷⁰ This initiative was followed by a series of interviews with leaders and official representatives of major Iranian opposition groups, in which they were asked to present their organisations' official positions on the death penalty and its place in a future Iranian legal system.

These initiatives culminated in a two-day conference organised by IHRNGO in Oslo on 18–19 October 2025, titled *“Human Rights in Post-Islamic Republic Iran.”* The conference was the fifth in a series dedicated to developing a human rights-based discourse for the future of Iran and aimed at fostering dialogue among representatives of different political groups.

Participants included: Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and human rights lawyer; Fouad Pashaei, Secretary-General of the Constitutionalist Party of Iran – Liberal Democrat; Abdullah Mohtadi, Secretary-General of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan; Yazdan Shohadaei, member of the Secretariat and spokesperson of the Iran Transition Council; Asso Hassan-Zadeh, representative of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan; Hamid Taqvaei, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Worker-Communist Party of Iran; Mahdiah Golroo, member of the Political Executive Board of the United Republicans of Iran; Nasser Boladai, Secretary-General of the Balochistan People's Party; Homayoun Mehmaneh, member of the Executive Board of the Iran National Front–Organizations Abroad; Mona Silavi, Secretary-General of the Democratic Solidarity Party of Al-Ahwaz (DSPA); Younes Shameli, member of the Executive Committee of the Azerbaijan Democratic Party; Ebrahim Alizadeh, First Secretary of Komala – the Kurdistan Organization of the Communist Party of Iran; and Esmail Abdi, former Secretary-General of the Iranian Teachers' Trade Association.

At the conclusion of the conference, all participants signed a joint statement expressing strong opposition to the death penalty and support for the growing abolitionist movement inside Iran, particularly the “No Death Penalty Tuesdays” campaign led by prisoners across the country. The statement condemned the ongoing wave of executions, emphasised that the death penalty disproportionately targets marginalised communities, and called for an immediate halt to all

170 IHRNGO, YouTube.com, https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIC6jzkl_FiXfX9NfBb9yJX4JJjHl92F2&si=cAY6htx6HOHnKBbS.

executions. It also urged civil society, the media and the international community to amplify the voices of those opposing the death penalty and to support the expanding movement for abolition in Iran.

Through these initiatives, IHRNGO seeks to contribute to shaping a consensus among Iranian opposition that the abolition of the death penalty must be a fundamental principle in the future legal and political system of Iran.

FORGIVENESS MOVEMENT

As mentioned in the section on *qisas* executions, according to the IPC, murder is punished by *qisas*, which grants the family of the victim the right to demand a death sentence as retribution. However, they can also demand blood money (*diya*) in lieu of retribution or can simply grant forgiveness. This opens an opportunity for citizens to counter the death penalty by promoting forgiveness, without being subjected to persecution by the authorities. In the past six years, the forgiveness movement has grown significantly. Ordinary citizens, celebrities, civil society and other local and national campaigns have been active in promoting forgiveness instead of the death penalty.

GOLI KOUHKAN



Goli Kouhkan, a 25-year-old undocumented Baluch child bride, was abandoned by her family after being arrested for the murder of her physically and psychologically abusive husband and cousin. She was sentenced to *qisas* but her husband's family offered to accept 10 billion tomans (approximately 100,000 euros)

as *diya*, a sum impossible for her to pay. Following reporting of Goli's case by her former cellmate, an international campaign began to save her life. On 6 October 2025, IHRNGO reported her case¹⁷¹ and called for action to save her life.¹⁷² With the help of the abolitionist

171 IHRNGO, "Goli Kouhkan; Undocumented Baluch Child Bride to be Hanged Due to Inability to Pay Blood Money", 6 October 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8144/>.

172 IHRNGO, "IHRNGO Calls for Action to Save Baluch Child Bride Goli Kouhkan from Hanging", 4 November 2025, <https://iranhr.net/en/articles/8293/>.

community, reports by international media,¹⁷³ and calls by UN experts,¹⁷⁴ enough pressure was asserted on the Islamic Republic to act. At the same time, charities and fundraisers helped raise money for the *diya*. On 9 December, just weeks from her execution, the judiciary's Mizan News Agency announced that the plaintiffs in Goli's case had agreed to forgo their right to execution and her lawyer reported that the sum had been reduced to around 80,000 euros. Days later, state media reported Goli's release from prison.

173 *The Guardian*, "Child bride faces execution in Iran unless she pays £80,000 in 'blood money'", 3 November 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/nov/03/child-bride-faces-execution-in-iran-unless-she-pays-80000-in-blood-money>.

174 OHCHR, "Iran must halt execution of Goli Kouhkan domestic violence survivor: UN experts", 2 December 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/iran-must-halt-execution-goli-kouhkan-domestic-violence-survivor-un-experts>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IHRNGO AND ECPM CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO:

- Ensure human rights violations, including the use of the death penalty and Iran's treaty obligations, are the top priority in all future talks, negotiations, and cooperation agreements with the Islamic Republic.
- Condition any bilateral and international funding and cooperation of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with the Islamic Republic of Iran on a complete halt to the death penalty for drug-related offences and measurable progress in compliance with human rights standards.
- Ensure that any investment, funding, trade and cooperation programme in Iran is not used to participate in, facilitate or support the commission of executions, or any other violation of international human rights law.
- Support the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- Ensure follow up of conclusions of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran (FFMI) on holding those responsible accountable for grave human rights violations in Iran.
- Encourage Iran to ratify the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (OP2-ICCPR), to support recommendations from states in the UPR process on the abolition of the death penalty and to seriously consider abstaining or voting in favour of the UNGA Resolution calling for a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty in 2026.
- Strongly encourage Iran to respect its international obligations, including the ICCPR and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by putting a permanent end to public executions, abolishing the death penalty for offences that do not qualify as "the most serious crimes", removing mandatory death sentences from the Penal Code, ending sentences and executions of persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of the alleged offence for which they were sentenced, and ensuring due process.
- Call on Iran to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to move towards abolition of the death penalty.

- Advocate major reforms within the country's judicial system, which does not currently meet minimum international standards, including ending the practice of forced confessions, torture and the existence of the Revolutionary Courts.
- Call for the protection, cessation of harassment and immediate release of all human rights defenders and anti-death penalty activists, including Narges Mohammadi and Golrokh Iraee, and drop the charges against Arash Sadeghi and Nasrin Sotoudeh, all of whom have endured long prison terms for peaceful activities against the death penalty.

IHRNGO AND ECPM CALL ON THE IRANIAN AUTHORITIES TO:

- Impose a moratorium on the use of the death penalty in order to work progressively towards abolition.
- Set 18 years as the age of majority and harmonise the age of criminal responsibility for boys and girls.
- Set a legal cap on *diya* pending further reforms.
- Remove the mandatory sentencing regimes so that judges may individualise sentencing and courts may properly consider mitigation evidence for every person charged with a capital offence, including evidence of trauma, domestic and gender-based violence, as well as psycho-social and intellectual disabilities.
- Ensure the right of anyone sentenced to death to seek pardon or commutation, in line with Iran's obligations under the ICCPR.
- Ratify the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
- Cooperate fully, permit access to visit the country, and provide all information necessary for the fulfilment of the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and implement the recommendations made by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran (FFMI) established by the UN Human Rights Council.
- Provide access to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on torture, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and to other Special Rapporteurs who have requested a visit to the country, in line with Iran's standing invitation to all Special Procedures extended on 24 July 2002.

- Respond constructively to individual communications by international human rights mechanisms.
- Implement fundamental, structural reforms to ensure the complete independence of the judiciary.
- Dismantle the Revolutionary Courts, and guarantee the right to a lawyer, due process and a fair trial in accordance with international law.
- Implement and fully respect its international human rights obligations.
- Demonstrate complete transparency on implemented death sentences and numbers of executions, including by publishing (or communicating to the UN) the list of all prisoners on death row, including child offenders and women.
- Put an end to public executions.
- Cease the criminalisation of human rights advocacy on the issue of the death penalty and allow and facilitate a public and open debate about the issue of the death penalty in Iran.
- Release all political prisoners, including imprisoned human rights defenders, lawyers and anti-death penalty activists.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: EXECUTIONS PER CAPITA IN EACH PROVINCE

Province	Executions per million inhabitants
South Khorasan	59
Semnan	56
Lorestan	49
Yazd	46
Qom	45
Zanjan	44
Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad	42
Qazvin	33
Hamedan	32
Markazi	31
Fars	29
Isfahan	28
Kermanshah	24
Golestan	22
Gilan	20
Ilam	19
Sistan and Baluchistan	19
Khorasan Razavi	18
East Azerbaijan	17
Hormozgan	15
Khuzestan	15
Kerman	14
Alborz/Tehran	13
Bushehr	12
Mazandaran	10
North Khorasan	10
West Azerbaijan	9
Kurdistan	7
Ardabil	6
Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari	2

ANNEX 2: LIST OF RESOLUTIONS AND REPORTS ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, MENTIONING THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS			
Office of the High Commissioner, Press Release → A group of independent human rights experts today expressed grave concern at the Iranian Supreme Court's decision to uphold the death sentence handed down to Ms. Pakhshan Azizi, a Kurdish woman activist and social worker. → "The use of torture to extract confessions and the denial of fair trial rights render the death sentence against Ms. Azizi arbitrary in nature," they said. → The experts urged Iranian authorities to immediately revoke the death sentence against Ms. Pakhshan Azizi [...].	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: UN experts alarmed as Supreme Court upholds death sentence of Kurdish woman activist</i>, 14 January 2025¹⁷⁵	United Nations Organisation	14 January 2025
Office of the High Commissioner, Press Briefing Notes → Iranian authorities have executed at least 841 people since the beginning of the year and up until 28 August 2025 [...] – ignoring multiple calls to join the worldwide movement towards abolition of the death penalty. → The high number of executions indicates a systematic pattern of using death penalty as a tool of State intimidation, with disproportionate targeting of ethnic minorities and migrants. → The death penalty is incompatible with the right to life and irreconcilable with human dignity. It creates an unacceptable risk of executing innocent people. It should never be imposed for conduct that is protected under international human rights law. → We call on the Government of Iran not to implement the death penalty against these and other individuals on death row. → Once again, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk calls on Iran to impose a moratorium on the application of the capital punishment, as a step towards its abolition.	United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <i>Iran: Call to halt increasing executions and impose moratorium on death penalty</i>, 29 August 2025¹⁷⁶	United Nations Organisation	29 August 2025

175 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/01/iran-un-experts-alarmed-supreme-court-upholds-death-sentence-kurdish-woman>

176 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2025/08/iran-call-halt-increasing-executions-and-impose-moratorium-death>

SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN			
A/HRC/58/62	United Nations, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/58/62: <i>Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , Mai Sato, 12 March 2025 ¹⁷⁷	United Nations Organisation	12 March 2025
A/80/349	United Nations, Human Rights Council, A/80/349: <i>Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran</i> , 26 August 2025 ¹⁷⁸	United Nations Organisation	26 August 2025
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT			
2025/2511(RSP)	European Parliament resolution of 23 January 2025 on the systematic repression of human rights in Iran, notably the cases of Pakhshan Azizi and Wriha Moradi, and the taking of EU citizens as hostages, 23 January 2025 ¹⁷⁹	European Parliament	23 January 2025
2025/2628(RSP)	European Parliament resolution of 3 April 2025 on the execution spree in Iran and confirmation of the death sentences of activists Behrouz Ehsani and Mehdi Hassani, 3 April 2025 ¹⁸⁰	European Parliament	3 April 2025
2025/2753(RSP)	European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2025 on the case of Dr Ahmadreza Djalali in Iran, 19 June 2025 ¹⁸¹	European Parliament	19 June 2025
2025/2987(RSP)	European Parliament resolution of 27 November 2025 on the escalating repression of the Baha'is in Iran, 27 November 2025 ¹⁸²	European Parliament	27 November 2025

177 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5862-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

178 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a80349-situation-human-rights-islamic-republic-iran-report-special>

179 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0004_EN.html

180 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0062_EN.html

181 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0133_EN.html

182 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0303_EN.html

INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN			
Independent investigation, Country Reports and executions, credible human rights organizations recorded an escalation of executions in the aftermath of the protests, with between at least 938 to 973 persons recorded as having been executed in 2024. This is a notable, three-fold increase from 2021, the year before the protests. → In the months preceding the second anniversary of the protests in September 2024, executions spiked, with 93 individuals executed in August 2024 alone, twice as many as the 45 executions reported in the previous month of July 2024. While the majority of those executed were convicted of drug related offenses, this marked upward trend in executions spiking after the 2022 protests appears to indicate a nexus with the overall repression of dissent in this period. This is in line with the authorities' longstanding use of the death penalty and executions to instil fear and as a tool of political repression against dissenting voices, including protesters and minorities. → On 16 May 2024, the mission requested information from the Government regarding the cases of rapper Toomaj Salehi, activist Mahmoud Mehrabi and protester Mojahed Kourkouri, following the death sentences imposed on them. [...] The mission welcomes the subsequent overturning of the death sentences of rapper Toomaj Salehi and activist Mahmoud Mehrabi by the Supreme Court on 22 July and 8 October 2024, respectively. It notes with concern, however, that while Toomaj Salehi was released on 1 December 2024, Mahmoud Mehrabi remains in prison to date two years after his arrest in 2023 for his activism [...]. Alarming, on 11 December 2024, following a re-trial, the Revolutionary Court in Ahwaz reimposed the death sentence against Mojahed Kourkouri, even though Iran's Supreme Court had overturned his sentence earlier that month. → The use of the death penalty against women activists and women human rights defenders also escalated, particularly following their convictions for national security offenses, including in relation to their activism. This disturbing development, noticeable in the aftermath of the protests, is indicative of growing retaliatory tactics against women for their unabated defiance against Iran's discriminatory laws and policies. → Iran remains one of the few countries that imposes the death penalty for consensual same-sex relationships while the criminalization of LGBTQ+ persons has long been considered discriminatory by UN human rights mechanisms.	United Nations, Human Rights Council, A/HRC/58/63: <i>Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Human Rights Council</i>, 14 March 2025 ¹⁸³	United Nations Organisation	14 March 2025

183 <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session58/advance-version/a-hrc-58-63-auv.pdf>

REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL, UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

→ The Secretary-General remains concerned at the increased application of the death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran for a wide range of offences under the country's Penal Code, including hudud crimes (such as homicide and adultery), qisas (retribution in kind) offences (including unintentional killing) and ta'zir crimes (such as drug-related offences). → While noting an overall decline in the execution of children since 2014, the Secretary General is deeply concerned that the execution of child offenders continues, and deplores the execution of at least one child offender in 2023, named Hamidreza Azari, who was 17 at the time of execution. [...] The Secretary-General continues to urge the Government to permanently end the sentencing of child offenders to death. → According to information received, it is estimated that in 2023, the Islamic Republic of Iran executed 167 members of the Baluch minority, accounting for 20 per cent of all reported executions for the year, five of whom were women. A majority of those executed for drug-related offences belonged to the Baluch minority, with Baluch accounting for nearly 30 per cent of all drug-related executions in 2023. At least 25 Afghan nationals were executed in 2023, marking a 56 per cent increase over 2022. → The Government confirmed that nine men had been executed in relation to the nationwide protests of 2022, with two of those executions having taken place during the reporting period. → The Secretary-General is also deeply alarmed by the Government's execution of individuals convicted for espionage. → The Secretary-General urges the Government: (a) To immediately halt the execution of all individuals, including those sentenced to death in the context of protests, and for drug-related offences, and to refrain from further application of the death penalty; (b) To abolish the death penalty and introduce an immediate moratorium on its use as a first step towards its prompt abolition, and to prohibit the execution of all offenders who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime, in all circumstances, and commute their sentences; [...] (c) To join [...] the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.	United Nations, General Assembly, A/HRC/56/22: <i>Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - Report of the Secretary-General</i>, 12 February 2025 ¹⁸⁴	United Nations Organisation	12 February 2025
---	---	------------------------------------	-------------------------

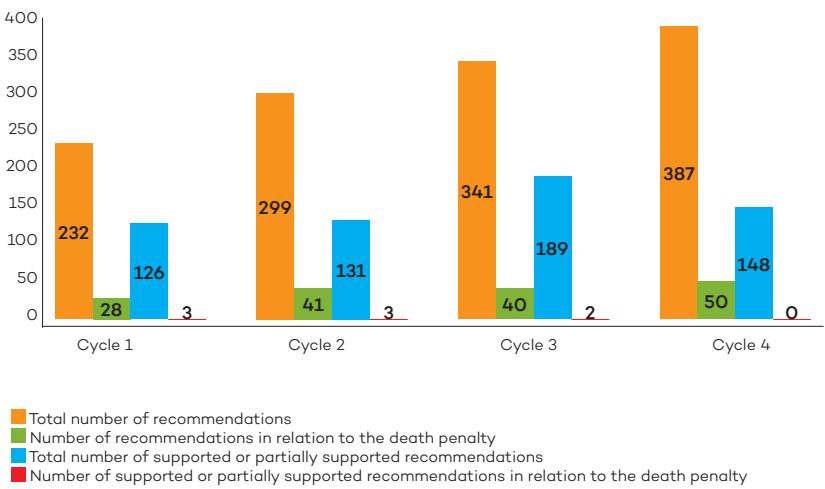
¹⁸⁴ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/56/22>

ANNEX 3: EXTRACT DETAILED FINDINGS OF THE INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION ON THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, A/HRC/55/CRP.1, 2024

LEGAL FINDINGS ON THE ISSUE OF THE DEATH PENALTY

964. The Mission finds that by executing individuals for crimes not amounting to “the most serious crimes” and/or following summary proceedings that severely violated international human rights law, authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran unlawfully and arbitrarily deprived at least Mohsen Shekari, Majidreza Rahnavaard, Mohammad Mehdi Karami, Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini, Majid Kazemi, Saeed Yaghoubi, Saleh Mir Hashemi, Milad Zohrevand and Mohammad Ghobadlou of their right to life and violated the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
965. The Mission established that proceedings leading to the pronouncement and implementation of death sentences were held in an extremely summary and hasty fashion and that judicial and prosecutorial authorities systematically violated the most elementary due process and fair trial guarantees including the right to presumption of innocence and to not be compelled to self-incriminate, the right to access a lawyer of their own choosing, the right to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defence, and the right to seek pardon, commutation of sentence or clemency. The Mission established that fair trial rights were so grossly violated and the proceedings leading to the issuance and implementation of death sentences were held in such summary and expedited fashion that they did not amount to meaningful judicial processes.
966. The Mission further established that Iran’s domestic laws, in violation of the non-derogable right to life under international human rights law, allow for arbitrary use of the death penalty including by imposing the death penalty for offences not amounting to “the most serious crimes” and for acts protected under international human rights law. They further contravene international law by allowing the use of the death penalty against children and providing for executions in public.
967. The Mission also has reasonable grounds to believe that the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran committed the crimes of torture in cases leading to the issuance and/or implementation of death sentences in a systematic manner.
968. Based on evidence, including statements by officials, the Mission finds that State authorities used the death penalty and a public execution and proceedings leading to the pronouncement of death sentences as a tool to punish protesters, to intimidate them and to instil fear in the population for purposes of deterring others from taking to the streets.

ANNEX 4: ANALYSIS OF THE UPR RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN THE LAST FOUR CYCLES





Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) is a non-profit, politically independent organisation with members and supporters inside and outside Iran. The organisation started its work in 2005 and is registered as an international non-governmental organisation based in Oslo, Norway.

Abolition of the death penalty in Iran as a step towards the universal abolition of the death penalty is the main goal of Iran Human Rights.

IHRNGO has a broad network among the abolitionist movement inside and outside Iran:

Besides supporters and collaborators among the civil society activists in the central parts of Iran, Iran Human Rights also has a wide network in the ethnic regions which are often not the focus of the mainstream media. In addition, Iran Human Rights has a network of reporters within many Iranian prisons, and among Iranian lawyers and the families of people on death row. This enables Iran Human Rights to be the primary source of many execution reports in different Iranian prisons, as well as of reliable reports on the atrocities committed by the Islamic Republic in the nationwide protests. Iran Human Rights has been a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP) since 2009 and a member of its Steering Committee since 2011. Iran Human Rights is also a member of Impact Iran, a coalition of more than 13 Iranian human rights NGOs. Iran Human Rights' close collaboration with abolitionist networks inside and outside Iran makes it a unique actor in the struggle against the death penalty in the country with the highest number of executions per capita.

IHRNGO's core activities include:

Fighting for abolition of the death penalty through monitoring, reporting, empowerment of the abolitionist Iranian civil society and international advocacy.

Promoting due process and rule of law by raising the legal debate in Iran and encouraging legal reforms. Iran Human Rights publishes a bi-weekly legal journal with contributions from Iranian lawyers, jurists, law students and religious scholars.

Defending human rights defenders by creating safer working conditions, giving voice to the imprisoned human rights defenders and supporting human rights defenders in danger.

IHRNGO's work over the past 18 years has contributed to:

Raising awareness about the situation of the death penalty in Iran:

Through careful research, monitoring and continuous reporting, IHRNGO has given a more realistic picture of execution trends and provided a gendered perspective of the death penalty in Iran.

IHRNGO is regarded as a credible source of information and its annual reports are points of reference for the international community,¹⁸⁵ the media,^{186, 187} and civil society.

Limiting the use of the death penalty in Iran through international campaigns and advocacy:

IHRNGO activities have contributed to saving the lives of people on death row through focused domestic and international campaigns.

Raising the national debate on the death penalty, empowering and educating the abolitionist movement inside Iran:

Iran Human Rights was the first NGO focusing on all death penalty cases in a sustainable manner. By publishing news, reports and interviews, and through its one-hour weekly TV program launched in 2015,¹⁸⁸ Iran Human Rights has contributed significantly to educating abolitionists and raising the national debate on the death penalty in Iran.

185 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, *Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 12 March 2025, A/HRC/58/62, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/62>

186 *The Guardian*, "Child bride faces execution in Iran unless she pays £80,000 in 'blood money'", 3 November 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/nov/03/child-bride-faces-execution-in-iran-unless-she-pays-80000-in-blood-money>.

187 *France 24*, "Iran executed at least 1,000 this year in prison 'mass killing': NGO", 23 September 2025, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250923-iran-executed-at-least-1-000-this-year-in-prison-mass-killing-ngo>

188 IHRNGO, <https://iranhr.net/fa/multimedia/#/all/all/1>.



ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty) works for a specific cause: universal abolition of the death penalty under all circumstances.

PROXIMITY TO INDIVIDUALS SENTENCED TO DEATH

ECPM carries out fact-finding missions and publishes reports on conditions on death row (Morocco, Tunisia, United States, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Mauritania, Indonesia, Malaysia and Lebanon). Our publication Investigation into Death Row in the DRC received the French Republic's top Human Rights Prize.

ECPM supports the victims of the death penalty, prisoners such as Serge Atlaoui and Hank Skinner, and their families.

ECPM supports correspondence with prisoners sentenced to death.

ADVOCACY WITH THE HIGHEST AUTHORITIES

ECPM is the first NGO specifically focused on the fight against the death penalty to have obtained ECOSOC status, which guarantees it a presence and an advocacy opportunity at the very heart of the UN system. Working with the various Special Procedures (Iran, Extrajudicial Killings, Human Rights Defenders, Torture, Poverty, etc.), **ECPM** initiated the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty in 2002, which today has more than 150 members throughout the world, including NGOs, bar associations, local authorities and unions. Along with the World Coalition, **ECPM** leads advocacy and public mobilisation campaigns with policy makers (European Union, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, governments, etc.).

ECPM co-organised the ABAN Tribunal on Iran's atrocities in November 2019.

UNITING ABOLITIONISTS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD

ECPM is the founder and organiser of the World Congresses Against the Death Penalty. These events gather more than 1,300 people representing the world abolitionist movement. Ministers, parliamentarians, diplomats, activists, civil society organisations, researchers and journalists come together every three years to strengthen their ties and draw up strategies for the future.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS ON ABOLITION

ECPM works in schools to encourage young people to support abolition through drawing competitions, introductions to journalism and free class visits, with the participation of specialists, individuals previously sentenced to death and the families of prisoners sentenced to death. More than 10,000 secondary school and sixth-form pupils have been involved since October 2009. **ECPM** raises awareness among the public on the situation of minorities and vulnerable groups by participating in international solidarity events such as Cities for Life, the World Day Against the Death Penalty, World Human Rights Day, etc.

STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF LOCAL ACTORS AND TAKING ACTION WITH THEM

ECPM fights against the isolation of activists wherever the death penalty remains, by supporting the formation of national and regional coalitions against the death penalty (in Morocco, Tunisia, Central Africa, Asia, etc.), as well as the creation of networks of abolitionist parliamentarians and lawyers. **ECPM** encourages efficiency among its local partners by organising training sessions and advocating at all political levels for their work to be supported.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN 2025

In 2025, at least 1,639 people were executed in Iran, a 68% increase compared to 2024, marking the highest number of recorded executions since 1989. This report is published as the Iranian people have endured the largest mass killing of protesters in the Islamic Republic's history and are living under the fear and anxiety caused by daily bombardments amid an ongoing war. If the Islamic Republic survives this crisis, there is a serious risk of mass executions as the authorities seek to reassert control. At the same time, if political change does occur, the abolition of the death penalty must be a central pillar of any transition to avoid repeating the cycle of violence and repression that followed the 1979 Revolution.

© IHRNGO, ECPM, 2026
ISBN: 978-2-491354-37-4
ISSN: 2966-8093



Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) and ECPM have been working together since 2011 for the international release and circulation of the Annual Report on the Death Penalty in Iran. IHRNGO and ECPM see the death penalty as a benchmark for the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran.



Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam
Director
Iran Human Rights
P.O.Box 2635 Solli
0204 Oslo, Norway
mail@iranhr.net

www.iranhr.net



Raphaël Chenuil-Hazan
Executive Director
ECPM
62 bis avenue Parmentier
75011 Paris, France
rchenuil@ecpm.org

www.ecpm.org