

URGENT ACTION

IMMINENT EXECUTION OF 22-YEAR-OLD IRANIAN WOMAN

Zeinab Sekaanvand Lokran, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman, is at risk of execution following an unfair trial in which she was convicted of the murder of her husband. She was 17 years old at the time of the crime. She could be executed as early as 13 October.

Iranian Kurdish woman **Zeinab Sekaanvand Lokran**, now aged 22, was sentenced to death under *qesas* (“retribution in kind”) in October 2014 after an unfair trial before a criminal court in West Azerbaijan Province, which convicted her of killing her husband. She was arrested in February 2012 at a police station where she “confessed” to the murder of her husband, whom she had married at the age of 15. She was held in the police station for the next 20 days where she has said she was tortured through beatings all over her body by male police officers. She “confessed” that she stabbed her husband after he had subjected her to months of physical and verbal abuse and had refused her requests for divorce. She was only provided with a (state-appointed) lawyer at her final trial session, at which point she retracted her “confession” telling the judge that her husband’s brother, who she said had raped her several times, had committed the murder. She said he told her that, if she accepted responsibility, he would pardon her (under Islamic law, murder victims’ relatives have the power to pardon the offender and accept financial compensation instead). The court failed to investigate Zeinab Sekaanvand’s statements and, instead, relied on “confessions” she had made without a lawyer present to issue a verdict. Although she was under 18 years old at the time of the crime, the court failed to apply juvenile sentencing provisions in Iran’s 2013 Islamic Penal Code and order a forensic report to assess her “mental growth and maturity” at the time of the crime.

In 2015, Zeinab Sekaanvand married a prisoner, also held in Oroumieh Central Prison, West Azerbaijan Province, and became pregnant. Subsequently, the authorities informed her that they would delay her execution until after the birth. On 30 September, she was transferred to a hospital outside the prison where she gave birth to a still-born baby. Doctors said her baby had died in her womb two days earlier due to shock, around the same time as the execution of her cell mate and friend on 28 September. She was returned from the hospital to the prison the day after the birth, and has not been allowed to see a doctor since for postnatal care or psycho-social support.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the Iranian authorities to immediately halt any plans to execute Zeinab Sekaanvand and ensure that her conviction and death sentence are quashed and that she is granted a fair retrial without recourse to the death penalty and in accordance with principles of juvenile justice;
- Calling on them to conduct a prompt, independent, and thorough investigation into Zeinab Sekaanvand’s allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that any statements obtained from her under torture and other ill-treatment, coercion or without a lawyer present, are not used as evidence against her in court;
- Reminding them that there is an absolute prohibition on the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by persons below 18 years of age under both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which Iran has ratified;
- Immediately establishing an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Contact below official by 18 November, 2016:

Office of the Supreme Leader

Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations

622 Third Avenue, 34th Floor

New York, NY 10017

Ayatollah Sayed ‘Ali Khamenei

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

Here’s why it is so important to report your actions: we record the number of actions taken on each case and use that information in our advocacy. **Either email uan@aiusa.org with “UA 228/16” in the subject line or [click this link](#).**

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

An official medical examination following Zeinab Sekaanvand's arrest found her to have a depressive disorder (a clinical condition characterized by symptoms such as insomnia, fatigue, feelings of hopelessness, difficulty making decisions, low self-esteem, and poor appetite), for which she is not known to have been given any medical care while in prison. Three weeks following her arrest, she was moved from the holding cells in the local police station to Khoy Prison, where she was detained for a year, and then to Oroumieh Central Prison, where she is currently detained. She was denied access to adequate regular prenatal care while pregnant, including essential regular examinations and testing, and was only allowed one ultrasound scan during her entire pregnancy.

Zeinab Sekaanvand, who comes from an impoverished and culturally conservative family, ran away from home when she was 15 years old to marry Hossein Sarmadi, who was around four years older than her. She has said that she saw her marriage to Hossein Sarmadi as the only opportunity she had for a better life. However, not long after the couple were married, she has said her husband started abusing her verbally and physically, swearing at her and beating her regularly. She requested a divorce from him on numerous occasions but he refused. She registered several complaints with the police about the abuse but the police consistently failed to conduct any investigation into her complaints. She also tried to return to her family but her parents disowned her after she ran away.

Under Iranian law, those convicted of murder and sentenced to *qesas* ("retribution in kind") have no right to seek pardon or commutation of their death sentence from the state, as is required by Article 6(4) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Instead, the victim's blood relatives decide whether to insist on execution or to accept compensation.

Zeinab Sekaanvand's death sentence breaches Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which strictly prohibit the imposition of death sentences on people under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. The minimum age of criminal responsibility in Iran has been set at nine lunar years for girls and 15 lunar years for boys. From this age, a child who is convicted of crimes that fall into the category of *hodud* (offences against God carrying inalterable punishments prescribed by Shari'a law) or *qesas* (retribution in kind connected with a criminal act) is generally convicted and sentenced in the same way as an adult. However, since the adoption of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code, judges have been given discretion not to sentence juvenile offenders to death if they determine that juvenile offenders did not understand the nature of the crime or its consequences, or their "mental growth and maturity" are in doubt. The criteria for assessing "mental growth and maturity" are unclear and arbitrary. Judges may seek expert opinion from the Legal Medicine Organization of Iran (a state forensic institution under the supervision of the judiciary) or rely on their own assessment, even though they may lack adequate knowledge and expertise on issues of child psychology.

Amnesty International has recorded at least 74 executions of juvenile offenders between 2005 and 2016. According to the UN, at least 160 juvenile offenders are now on death row (See *Growing up on death row: The death penalty and juvenile offenders in Iran*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/3112/2016/en/>). Amnesty International, opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime, the guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the offender or the method used by the state to carry out the execution. The death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Amnesty International calls on the Iranian authorities to establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Name: Zeinab Sekaanvand Lokran

Gender m/f: f

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