



Iranian rap artist Saman Seydi, better known as Saman Yasin

Dissident Iranian Rapper Severely Tortured - Exclusive

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Iran Human Rights



Iranian rap artist Saman Seydi, better known as Saman Yasin, has been "severely tortured" in prison, Iran International has learned.

Seydi was arrested in October 2022 during the anti-regime protests in Iran, and was handed a death sentence. However, his appeal against the sentence was accepted in December, and now he is expecting a retrial.

"During the interrogations, Saman was severely tortured to confess he was carrying weapons (when arrested). They threatened to arrest members of his family should he refuse to make the confession they demand," a source close to Seydi's family told Iran International.

The source said Saman had been "suspended in the air" in prison for three days so that he would be forced into confession.

Saman Yasin's retrial was supposed to be held on May 8, 2023. However, he has been left in limbo in Rajaeishahr Prison, west of Tehran, awaiting his court session without access to a lawyer.

The 25-year-old dissident rapper from the Kurdish-majority Kermanshah province in Western Iran, reportedly attempted suicide in prison by taking a large number of pills back in December.

While the Islamic Republic's Judiciary **accepted the appeal** against Saman Yasin's death sentence, he still faces the charge of acting against the country's national security and "waging war against God", which is punishable by capital punishment.

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Middle East

Iran top court accepts rapper Yasin's appeal against death sentence

Reuters

December 24, 2022 9:20 PM GMT+1 · Updated 5 months ago



[1/2] A woman walks after the morality police shut down a street in Tehran, Iran December 6, 2022. Majid Asgaripour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS



Dec 24 (Reuters) - Iran's Supreme Court has accepted an appeal by rapper Saman Seydi Yasin against his death sentence even as it confirmed the same sentence against another protester, the judiciary said on Saturday.

Yasin, a Kurd who raps about inequality, oppression and unemployment, had been accused of attempting to kill security forces, setting a rubbish bin on fire and shooting three times into the air during anti-government protests, charges which he denied.

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Yasin's mother last week pleaded in a video for help to save her son. "Where in the world have you seen a loved one's life is taken for a trash bin?" she said in the video posted on social media.

The court had initially said it had accepted the appeals of Yasin and another protester, but in a subsequent statement the judiciary's Mizan news agency said only Yasin's appeal had been accepted.

"The public relations of the Supreme Court of Iran has corrected its news: 'The appeal of Mohammad Qobadloo has not been accepted ... Saman Seydi's appeal has been accepted by the Supreme Court,'" the agency said.

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Explaining the decision in its original statement, it cited flaws in investigating the case and said it had been referred back to the court for re-examination.

Qobadloo had been charged with killing a police agent and injuring five others with his car during the protests.

Unrest erupted across Iran in mid-September after the death in custody of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, who was arrested by morality police enforcing the Islamic Republic's strict dress code for women.

Late on Saturday, the 100th day of the protests, videos posted on social media showed night demonstrations said to be in areas including the capital Tehran, the northeastern city of Mashhad, Karaj west of Tehran, and Sanandaj, the centre of Kurdistan province in the northwest.

Dozens of protesters were seen braving rain and snow to chant slogans including "Death to the dictator" and "Death to (Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali) Khamenei!" Reuters could not immediately verify the videos.

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DEATH PENALTY

Saturday's announcement follows the Supreme Court's suspension of protester Mahan Sadrat's death sentence 10 days ago. He had been charged with various alleged offences such as stabbing a security officer and setting fire to a motorcycle.

Iran hanged two protesters earlier this month: Mohsen Shekari, 23, who was accused of blocking a main road in September and wounding a member of the paramilitary Basij force with a knife, and Majid Reza Rahnavard, 23, who was accused of stabbing to death two Basij members, and publicly hanged from a construction crane.

Amnesty International called on the international community to pressure Iran to halt Qobadloo's execution and "not allow Iran's machinery of death to claim another victim while (the) world's attention is on celebrating the festive season".

Amnesty has said Iranian authorities are seeking the death penalty for at least 26 people in what it called "sham trials designed to intimidate those participating in the popular uprising that has rocked Iran".

It said all of those facing death sentences had been denied the right to adequate defence and access to lawyers of their choosing. Rights groups say defendants have instead to rely on state-appointed attorneys who do little to defend them.

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Rights group HRANA said that, as of Friday, 506 protesters had been killed, including 69 minors. It said 66 members of the security forces had also been killed. As many as 18,516 protesters are believed to have been arrested, it said.

Officials have said that up to 300 people, including members of the security forces, had lost their lives in the unrest.

Reporting by Dubai newsroom; Editing by Philippa Fletcher, David Holmes and Nick Macfie



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Feedback

Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh, 26, a bodybuilding champion.



Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh.
via Human Rights in Iran

Sahand Nourmohammad-Zadeh was arrested on Sept. 23 in Tehran and accused of burning a trash can and tires and destroying highway rails in a protest. The court relied for evidence on grainy video footage that his lawyer said did not show him.

On the day he was arrested, he was told he would be executed, he said in a phone call with his family that was posted on BBC Persian.

Mr. Nourmohammad-Zadeh is a bodybuilder who, according to social media posts, has won medals in statewide competitions.

He worked at a small jewelry shop in a mall near where protests broke out in September. Mr. Nourmohammad-Zadeh has said all he did was kick a trash can outside the mall and move rails that were already broken, according to the tape published on BBC Persian. More than 100 employees and shop owners at the mall signed a petition vouching for his innocence.

Part of a religiously conservative family, he said he prayed three times a day, read the Quran in his cell and did not understand the charge of “moharebe,” a term he had been unfamiliar with until his arrest.

His two grandmothers made a video pleading for his exoneration. “Our child is innocent; we are two desperate old women begging you to forgive him,” one of the women said.

Saman Seydi, 24, a rapper and graphic artist.



Saman Seydi.
@samanyasinorg

Saman Seydi, known professionally as Yasin, was arrested on Oct. 2 in Tehran. He was accused of possessing a pistol and shooting three times in the air during protests. As evidence, the court relied on confessions that Amnesty International said were forced under torture.

Mr. Seydi, a rapper and graphic artist, is a member of Iran’s Kurdish minority and lived with his parents and two sisters. He posted his music videos on his Instagram page, often rapping in Kurdish about social injustice.

“You never know how strong you are until you become someone’s rock,” he wrote on his page alongside a selfie.

Mr. Seydi’s father, a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war, told the ILNA news agency that he worked in a wood factory and that he had lost one son in a car accident. He said that he and family members had dedicated their lives to defending the Islamic Republic and that many of them, including his brother, had been killed in the war and were its martyrs.

“My son is an artist, my son is not a rioter,” Mr. Seydi’s mother said in a video posted on social media.

Reza Arya, 43, father of two.

Reza Arya was accused of killing a Basij member during a large protest in Karaj. In a video published by Mizan a news agency overseen by the judiciary, Mr. Arya said that he only kicked the officer twice and then left the scene.

On Jan. 3, the Supreme Court announced that it had overturned the verdict, citing shortcomings in the investigation, and the case was returned to the original court for retrial. Mr. Arya is still at risk of being sentenced to death.

Three protesters in Isfahan

The men were found guilty of killing three security officers during a coordinated attack in the central city of Isfahan during a protest on Nov. 16, according to a report by Mizan. The men were charged with a series of offenses, including “moharebe.”

They will have a chance to appeal the verdict, but such severe charges are likely to be upheld. In each case, the court relied on coerced confessions without lawyers present, according to rights groups. This is what we know about them so far:

Saleh Mirhashemi Baltaghi, a 36-year-old karate champion and coach, was accused of wielding a weapon, “forming and managing a criminal group” and “collusion leading to crimes against internal security,” according to the judiciary.

In a video posted on BBC Persian on Tuesday, his elderly parents pleaded for intervention to stop their son’s execution. “God, he was our breadwinner,” his mother said. “He was the one who opened the doors for us.”

Hamideh Abbasali, an Olympian and the captain of the national women’s karate team, condemned the sentence on Instagram. “Another athlete, again from karate,” Ms. Abbasali wrote in a post under a photograph of Mr. Baltaghi in his karate uniform. She had condemned the execution of Mr. Karami, the karate champion who was executed on Jan. 7.

Majid Kazemi, 30, was charged with wielding a Kalashnikov, participating in “illegal gangs” and collusion.

A third man, **Saeed Yaqoubi Kordafli**, was accused of “drawing a weapon and using a belt clip” and colluding against the “internal security of the country,” according to the Mizan report.

Three protesters in Nowshahr

Iran’s judiciary has sentenced three men, including two 18-year-olds, for leading a violent protest on Sept. 21 in the northern city of Nowshahr.

This is what we know about them so far: