

PRISONERS

Three Iranian Protesters Executed despite Popular Opposition

MAY 19, 2023

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📷 Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were executed in Dastgerd prison in the central city of Isfahan on May 19



Iranian authorities have executed **three men** accused of deadly violence during last year's anti-government protests, despite public opposition and appeals by human rights groups.

Mizan, the judiciary's website, announced that **Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi** were executed on May 19 in Dastgerd prison in the central city of Isfahan.

Authorities claim they were implicated in the deaths of two members of the Basij paramilitary force and a law enforcement officer during nationwide protests in Isfahan in November.

Human rights groups say the three were deprived of access to their chosen lawyers, **subjected to torture and**

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The US envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, had called the imminent execution of the three men “an affront to the human rights and basic dignity of all Iranians” that showed the government “has learned nothing from the protests.”

Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley  

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Iran's possible imminent execution of Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi, and Saeed Yaghoubi is an affront to the human rights and basic dignity of all Iranians and shows the regime has learned nothing from the protests. [#DoNotLetThemKillUs](#) 1/2

6:07 PM · May 18, 2023 

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Campaigners have denounced the Islamic Republic's escalation of executions in recent weeks and accused the authorities of using the death penalty as a means to intimidate Iranians.

Iranian authorities have cracked down hard on months-long nationwide protests sparked by the September death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in police custody.

More than 520 people were killed during demonstrations and over 20,000 others were unlawfully detained, activists say. Following biased trials, the judiciary has handed down stiff sentences, **including the death penalty**, to protesters.

The demonstrations have subsided in recent weeks, but there are still sporadic acts of defiance, including the refusal of a growing number of women to wear the mandatory head covering in public places.

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Iran condemned after executing three men over recent protests

By [Rob Picheta](#) and [Irene Nasser](#), CNN

Updated 7:07 AM EDT, Fri May 19, 2023



AFP/Getty Images

Protests rocked Iran last fall before being suppressed by the regime.

(CNN) — Iran has been condemned by international watchdogs after it executed three more men over recent protests that rocked the country.

Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaqoubi were executed in Isfahan, judiciary news outlet Mizan News said on Friday. The three were accused of carrying out an attack that killed three security officers in Isfahan in November 2022 during anti-government protests.

The US State Department on Thursday urged Iran to refrain from carrying out the executions, calling the proceedings “sham trials.”

And Amnesty International said the men were “fast-tracked through Iran’s judicial system” without due process being observed



Iran executes two people convicted of blasphemy



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It was the highest number of executions in the Islamic republic since 2015, according to a report released last month by the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) and the France-based Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM) groups.

More than half of the executions last year took place after the protests erupted in September.

The US State Department condemned the latest planned executions of Kazemi, Mirhashemi and Yaqoubi on Thursday.

“The execution of these men, after what have been widely regarded as sham trials, would be an affront to human rights and basic dignity in Iran and everywhere,” said State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel at a press briefing.

“It is clear from this episode that the Iranian regime has learned nothing from the protests that began with another death, the death of Mahsa Amini in September of last year,” Patel added.

The Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, another NGO that monitors human rights violations in Iran, said on [Twitter](#) that the three men “had the minimal defense rights of an accused.” The group decried what it called an “unfathomable wave of executions in Iran.”

Nationwide protests rocked Iran last fall, as decades of bitterness over the regime’s treatment of women and other issues boiled over after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in the custody of the country’s so-called morality police.

Authorities violently repressed the months-long movement, which had posed one of the biggest domestic threats to Iran’s ruling clerical regime in more than a decade.

CNN’s Kareem El Damanhoury and Joseph Ataman contributed reporting.

PAID CONTENT



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The Dubious "Confessions" of Three Iranians at Imminent Risk of Execution

MAY 15, 2023

SOLMAZ EIKDAR

2 MIN READ



On May 12, Amnesty International warned that Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi could be executed at any time after the Supreme Court upheld their "unjust" convictions and death sentences earlier this month



The recent broadcast of a video showing the forced "confessions" of three Iranian men sentenced to death on Iranian state TV has raised concerns about their imminent execution in the central city of Isfahan.

On May 12, Amnesty International warned that Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi could be executed at any time after the Supreme Court upheld their "unjust" convictions and death sentences earlier this month. The London-based human rights watchdog urged Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to immediately halt any plans to execute the trio and quash their convictions and death sentences.

Mirhashemi was twice sentenced to death, while Kazemi and Yaghoubi were handed capital punishment and a 10-year prison sentence in relation to the death of three members of the paramilitary Basij force during protests in Tehran on November 15, 2022.

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He said that the broadcast of the forced "confessions" after the court upheld the verdicts terrified the trio's families.

After the case was referred to the Supreme Court, he also said, the families received information that Asadullah Jafari, the chief prosecutor of Isfahan province, sent two busloads of people to Tehran to gather in front of the court with the aim of exerting pressure to get the death sentences confirmed and quickly executed.

It is evident that Kazemi, Mirhashemi and Yaghoubi were coerced into making "confessions" for crimes they did not commit.

In the video broadcast on state TV, the defendants claimed to have had "access to weapons" and that they did "a lot of shooting." Although they mentioned the presence of other individuals who were also "shooting," they did not mention any violence directed toward security forces.

Besides, the Supreme Court acknowledged that Mirhashemi denied carrying any weapons, and the weapon allegedly belonging to him has not been recovered.

The video of the "confessions" is only 4 minutes and 16 seconds long, but it has been edited 53 times to include images from the night of the incident, the defendants' accusations against each other, the moment of their arrest and the reconstruction of the crime scene.

The clip contains several errors. For instance, it claims to show the moment when one of the defendants was arrested by agents of Isfahan's Sahib Al-Zaman Corps. However, the images clearly show that the defendant's hands are tied behind his back.

This calls into question the credibility of the entire video. If its creators are capable of making such a basic mistake, it is possible that they have also fabricated other parts of the video.

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UPDATED May 18, 2023

By [RFE/RL's Radio Farda](#)

Three Jailed Iranian Protesters Send Plea For Help Fearing Their Executions Are Imminent



Names from left to right: Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Saeid Yaqoubi were implicated in an incident on November 16, 2022, during which two Basij paramilitary force members and a law enforcement officer were fatally shot in Isfahan.

Three jailed Iranian protesters who fear their execution is imminent have appealed to the public for support in a handwritten note saying, "Don't let them kill us."

The opposition activist collective 1500tasvir, known for its coverage of Iranian protest developments, released the note on May 17 after receiving it through intermediaries for the condemned men: Majid Kazemi, Saeid Yaqoubi, and Saleh Mirhashemi.

"Don't let them kill us. We need your help," read the [note](#), which was released amid reports the men were given a final meeting with their families and has heightened fears that their executions could occur at any moment.

Adding to the apprehension, state-run TV aired a video of the three defendants' "confessions" -- which the families and human rights organizations say were likely made under duress -- a night earlier, a move many saw as an attempt to justify carrying out the death penalty for the three, who were implicated in an incident on November 16, 2022, during which two Basij paramilitary force members and a law enforcement officer were fatally shot in Isfahan.

Amnesty International has said the three protesters have been deprived access to their chosen lawyers and were pushed into forced confessions. Some groups have said the three were tortured while in detention.



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[Amnesty Says Executions, Led By Iran, Skyrocketed Last Year](#)

The United States on May 18 urged Iran not to carry out the executions.

"We join the people of Iran and the international community in calling on Iran to not carry out these executions," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said.

"The execution of these men after what have widely been regarded as sham trials would be an affront to human rights and basic dignity in Iran and everywhere," Patel told reporters.

Kazemi's case has caused concern in Australia, where some of his family live, with his cousin saying that he had only been involved in "peaceful protests" for change.

Other family members and and supporters of the three have held nightly vigils around a prison in the central Iranian city of Isfahan where they are being held. The **message** of their note has gone viral on Iranian social media platforms, with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us" becoming a rallying cry for their cause.

Ali Karimi, a former star of Iranian soccer, joined the campaign, posting on Instagram with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us":

"No soil has buried life within itself like the soil of Iran," he wrote.

Other family members and and supporters of the three have held nightly vigils around a prison in the central Iranian city of Isfahan where they are being held. The message of their note has gone viral on Iranian social media platforms, with the hashtag "Don't let them kill us" becoming a **rallying cry** for their cause.

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"No soil has buried life within itself like the soil of Iran," he **wrote**.

Iran has seen a surge in executions in recent months, a trend that has drawn widespread domestic and international condemnation.

Human rights organizations have strongly objected to the wave of death sentences, saying they are being issued against protesters in Iran after "sham trials" that are often rushed through the courts.

Amnesty said in an annual report on May 16 that Iran saw executions soar to 576 in 2022 from 314 the previous year. The Norway-based Iran Human Rights group says that so far this year, at least 243 people have been executed in Iran.

Lawmakers have pushed the judiciary to render the death penalty in trials for those arrested during unrest sparked by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September while she was in police custody for allegedly wearing a head scarf improperly.

The protests have involved tens of thousands of Iranians and are seen as one of the biggest threats to the Islamic leadership since it took power in 1979.

So far at least four protesters have been executed.

Human rights activists say authorities in Iran are using the executions to try to instill fear in society rather than to combat crime.

Written by Ardeshir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda

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Names from left to right: Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, Saeed Yaghoubi © Private

May 17, 2023

Iran: International community must take bold action to prevent the execution of three tortured protesters

Responding to fears over the imminent execution in Iran of three protesters – Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi – from Esfahan after state media broadcast their forced “confessions” and the Supreme Court upheld their unjust conviction and death sentence despite torture and fair trial concerns, Diana Eltahawy, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said:

“The shocking manner in which the trial and sentencing of these protesters was fast-tracked through Iran’s judicial system amid the use of torture-tainted ‘confessions’, serious procedural flaws and a lack of evidence is another example of the Iranian authorities’ brazen disregard for the rights to life and fair trial. Majid Kazemi said in an audio recording from prison that he was forced to make false self-incriminating statements after interrogators beat him, gave him electric shocks, subjected him to mock executions, and threatened to rape him, execute his brothers and harass his parents.

“The use of the death penalty against these men is a blatant act of vengeance against a courageous generation of protesters for steadfastly demanding the rights of Iranian people during the past seven months. It is further evidence that the authorities are taking increasingly violent and extreme measures to torment and terrorize people in Iran to end the protests at any cost and impose silence and subservience through brute force.

“Amid the authorities’ horrific execution spree of scores of people since the end of April 2023, the international community must take urgent and bold action to stop the execution of these protesters before it is too late. Prison authorities told their families that today was their final visit. The international community must also press the Iranian authorities to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions. We urge all states to exercise universal jurisdiction over all Iranian officials reasonably suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law.”

BACKGROUND

Majid Kazemi, Saleh Mirhashemi and Saeed Yaghoubi were arrested in November 2022 following their participation in protests in Esfahan city amid the nationwide protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa (Zhina) Amini.

According to informed sources, the three men were subjected to torture while forcibly disappeared and forced to make incriminating statements, which formed the basis of the criminal case against them. Sources said that interrogators suspended Majid Kazemi upside down and showed him a video of them torturing his brother, whom they also detained. They also subjected Majid Kazemi to mock executions at least 15 times by standing him on a chair and putting a rope around his neck, only to pull him down at the last moment. In the days leading up to the trial, they threatened to kill his brothers if he did not accept his charges and “confess” to whatever they said.

In an [audio message](#) from inside Dastgerd Prison, where the men are held, Majid Kazemi said: “I swear to God I am innocent. I didn’t have any weapons on me. They [security forces] kept beating me and ordering me to say this weapon is mine. ... I told them I would say whatever they wanted, just please leave my family alone. I did whatever they wanted because of the torture.”

The men were put on trial in December 2022 and January 2023 and sentenced to death on the charge of “enmity against God” (*moharebeh*) for the alleged possession of a firearm. On 10 May, the authorities announced that the men’s sentences had been upheld by the Supreme Court despite due process violations, significant procedural flaws, lack of evidence, and torture allegations that were never investigated. According to informed sources, the authorities had told the men’s families on several occasions before the Supreme Court’s decision that they would be pardoned and released due to lack of evidence.

The families were called for a visit with the men today, during which prison authorities told them that this was their final visitation, leading to serious concerns that they may be executed as early as tomorrow morning. The families have called for a protest outside Dastgerd prison at 10pm Tehran time tonight.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception, regardless of the nature or circumstances of the crime; guilt, innocence or other characteristics of the individual; or the method used by the state to carry out the execution; because the death penalty violates the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The death penalty is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

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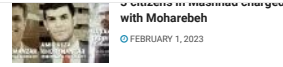
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Saleh Mirhashemi, accused in the "Khane Isfahan" case under the shadow false accusations

January 16, 2023



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The Iranian Supreme Court upheld the #deathpenalty for 3 defendants in the case of "Isfahan House," and rejected the appeals by #MajidKazemi, #SaeedYaghoubi, and #SalehMirHashemi. Their charges are based on false confessions extracted under torture and are not acceptable.

Saleh Mirhashemi Baltaghi, a 36-year-old karate champion and bodybuilding instructor from Isfahan, was arrested during nationwide protests on November 16, 2022. The Iranian Judiciary sentenced him to Moharebeh (War on God) and death.

Saleh Mirhashemi was born in 1986 and has a 4th Degree Black Belt in Karate. Saleh Mirhashemi had just begun his joint life with his wife for three months. According to those close to him, Saleh was a calm, kind, and caring person. Contrary to the accusations made against him on state-run media, Saleh was not in contact with any particular group, including the Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organization (PMOI/MEK). Saleh Mirhashemi spent 45 days in solitary confinement. During this time his family had no information of his whereabouts. The Karate champion was not allowed to contact his family either. Iran's officials severely tortured Saleh and by threatening his wife and father, they obtained forced confession from him.

The indictment

Saleh Mirhashemi is the first defendant in the case known as "Khane Isfahan" (House of Isfahan), which government officials claim three Basijis were killed during an armed attack on November 16, 2022. The attack took place at the Negahbani (Guard) Square in the Khane Isfahan neighborhood, where Basij members Mohsen Cheraghy, Mohsen Hamidi, and Mohammad Karimi were killed.

According to the sentences issued, Saleh Mirhashemi Baltaqi, the son of Seyed Kazem, is recognized as the first-row defendant in the case. Saleh was sentenced to death on the charge of Moharebeh for using a belt Colt weapon, establishing and managing a criminal group with the intention of disrupting state security, and causing security offenses through assembly and collusion. Saleh was also sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on charges of membership and cooperation with the PMOI.

Six defendants in this case are charged with Moharebeh and death. Three of the defendants are Saleh Mirhashemi Baltaghi, Majid Kazemi Sheikh Shabani, and Saeed Yaghoubi Kordsfali.

Uncertainties and contradictions remain about this case. The state-run Fars news agency, affiliated to the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), stated that "two motorcyclists" had opened "volley fire" on government forces. The semi-official Tasnim news agency, also affiliated to the IRGC, claimed that "six individuals were on three motorcycles" who targeted the Basij base.

On the other hand, the Public Relations of the Revolutionary Guards in Isfahan has "denied any terrorist attack on the Basij center in Isfahan".

Court order

Four trials for the six defendants in this case, including Saleh Mirhashemi, were held on 28th, 29th, and 31st of December 2022, at the Isfahan Courthouse, headed by Mr. Torabi. Isfahan's top Judicial official says the case has 10 defendants, one of whom was recently arrested. The charges against six of the arrested protesters were tried at the Revolutionary Court and the cases of three others were sent to the Criminal Court.

Saleh Mirhashemi, sentenced to death in this case, told his mother on a phone call from prison, "I asked the mullah where the gun was, I did not even have a firecracker with me."

An informed source said, by using brute force during torture in prison to obtain forced confessions, Saleh's eardrum was damaged, and his teeth broken. The torture marks were still seen on Mr. Mirhashemi's head and face on the trial day. Reports also indicate that security forces searched his residence several times, but were unable to find any evidence against him.

In an audio file released by Saleh Mirhashemi, the death-row defendant says he was forced to confess under torture. "They broke my tooth; they put me on a stool. They said we have brought your cousin (female) and your wife and we're getting confessions from them. I said let them go and I will say anything you need."

According to people close to Saleh Mirhashemi, he did not harm anyone during the protests and did not even have a gun to fire at anyone. In all the footage obtained from the night of the incident, the same theory is confirmed.

Iran's Judiciary has made a false case against Saleh and sentenced the newly married man to death based on confessions of having a weapon and firing it, obtained under torture.

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Saleh Mirhashemi, 36

High Execution Risk



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هر روز صدای شهروندان زیر تیغ هستیم تا آزادی

Recently married, 36-year-old Saleh is a national champion and karate coach in Isfahan who got arrested more than a month ago. The Islamic republic forces threatened his family to keep quiet and not publicize his arrest.

Swipe right to read more about Saleh.

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Iran

UPDATED January 10, 2023

By RFE/RL's Radio Farda

Iran Sentences Three More To Death Over Protests, Drawing Condemnation From Western Governments



Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Yaghub Kordsofla were sentenced for "waging war against God" in their alleged role in the deaths of three Basij militia members during protests in the central Iranian city of Isfahan.

Three more Iranian protesters have been sentenced to death, bringing to 17 the number of people condemned to such a penalty in connection with protests triggered by the death in custody of Mahsa Amini following her arrest by Tehran's morality police for allegedly violating the hijab law.

Saleh Mirhashemi, Majid Kazemi, and Yaghub Kordsofla were sentenced for "waging war against God" in their alleged role in the deaths of three Basij militia members during protests in the central Iranian city of Isfahan, the judiciary's Mizan Online website said on January 9.

Iranian professional soccer player Amir Nasr-Azadani, another of the accused in the case, has been sentenced to 16 years in prison on the charge of "assisting in waging war against God."

Nasr-Azadani had faced the possibility of a death sentence. His case has provoked a strong reaction from the international soccer community, including an announcement from the global professional soccer players union FIFPRO that it was "shocked and sickened" by the the player facing such a punishment for campaigning for women's rights and basic freedoms in his own country.

In the face of mass protests around the country since Amini's death in mid-September, Iranian authorities have warned of harsher penalties to participants in the unrest.

Four of those convicted have been executed -- including two over the weekend -- while two others, Mohammad Ghobadlou and Mohamad Broghani, had their sentences upheld by the country's Supreme Court.

In the early hours of January 9, following a report of the imminent execution of Ghobadlou and Broghani, hundreds gathered in front of the Rajaei-Shahr prison in Karaj chanting anti-government slogans.

The protests, highlighted by women and schoolgirls making unprecedented shows of support, are seen as the biggest threat to the Islamic government since the 1979 revolution.

The German, French, Norwegian, and Danish governments lodged protests with Iran after the executions over the weekend.

The executions of Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini and Mohammad Mahdi Karam by hanging was a use of the death penalty as a tool of oppression, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said.

"This is appalling. We call on Iran to cease carrying out death sentences and release those who have been unlawfully detained immediately," Scholz said [on Twitter](#).

After the executions on January 7, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock summoned the Iranian ambassador to the Foreign Ministry. The French, Danish, and Norwegian foreign ministries also summoned Tehran's ambassadors, as did the European Union. The EU's External Action Service (EEAS) said the EU and its member states were united in their reaction against Tehran's actions.

White House national-security adviser Jake Sullivan condemned the latest executions and death sentences and said the United States stands with other countries demanding an "immediate cessation" of the death sentences.

Sullivan said the U.S. condemned the executions of Karami and Hosseini and the additional executions announced on January 9.

"We join with partners around the world calling for an immediate cessation of these abuses. Iran will be held accountable," Sullivan [said on Twitter](#).

The regime has blamed Western governments for the unrest and has responded to the protests with a bloody crackdown that human rights groups say has left almost 500 dead and hundreds more injured. Thousands more have been arrested, including many protesters, as well as journalists, lawyers, activists, and others, amid concerns about the charges against them.

Written by Ardeshir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda



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