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U.S. Calls on Iran to Respect Human Rights. as Journalists Who First Reported Zhina Amini's Death Face Trial

The two women who face trial were among the first journalists to report on the death of the young Kurdish woman, Zhina Amini, last September, after she had been detained by Tehran's so-called "morality police" for not properly wearing a headscarf.



Laurie Mylroie (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/profile/1155-Laurie%20%20Mylroie>) 5 Hours

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Journalists (Photo: Twitter)

WASHINGTON DC, United States (Kurdistan 24) – For the second time in a week, the United States has expressed its opposition to judicial executions in Iran and called on the regime to respect the basic human rights of Iranian citizens.

On Tuesday, Tehran announced that two imprisoned journalists, Elaheh Mohammadi and Niloufar Hamed, would face trial on May 29 and May 30 before Branch 15 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court.

Iran's Revolutionary Court system was established in 1979, shortly after the overthrow of the Shah, at the direction of the newly installed Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The courts targeted ideological opponents of the regime and have become notorious for their exceptionally harsh punishments.

The two women who face trial before Branch 15 were among the first journalists to report on the death of the young Kurdish woman, Zhina (Mahsa) Amini, last September, while she was held in the custody of Tehran's so-called "morality police" for not properly wearing a headscarf.

The journalists were arrested last fall, shortly after their stories appeared. They were charged with collaborating with the United States; acting against national security; and manufacturing "propaganda against the system."

Subsequently, they received several international journalism awards, including UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. Yet the awards have done little to save them. They may well be sentenced to death following brief trials next week.

Asked about Tehran's announcement charging the two journalists, including the claim that they had collaborated with the United States, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller vehemently denied it.

"We reject those charges," Miller said. "They are obviously not true. Over the course of the protests," he continued, "Iranian authorities have repeatedly violated Iranians' human rights, and punished them for executing their essential freedoms."

"Sham trials and executions have been key components of the regime's attempt to suppress any form of dissent," he added. "We once again, as we have on a number of occasions, call on Iranian authorities to stop their arbitrary detentions, stop their sham trials, and stop denying the Iranian people the fundamental freedoms that they deserve."

Indeed, just last Thursday, State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel, denounced the imminent execution of three young men involved in the protests that followed Amini's death.

However, the U.S. position—as well as that of Amnesty International, which had called on the international community to "take urgent and bold action to stop the execution of these protestors"—was ignored, and the three men were executed the following day.

Read More: U.S. Calls on Iran not to Execute Protestors—but is ignored (<https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/story/31479-U.S.-Calls-on-Iran-not-to-Execute-Protestors%E2%80%94but-is-ignored#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20execution%20of%20these%20men,and%20everywhere%2C%22%20Patel%20said.>)

Last month, the Norwegian-based Iran Human Rights organization and France's Together Against the Death Penalty issued a joint report on the death penalty in Iran, explaining that the regime had executed at least 582 people in 2022.

The report characterized that as "an alarming surge in recorded executions," as it was "the highest toll since 2015" and represented a 75% increase from 2021.

"Weeks into the nationwide 'Woman-Life-Freedom' protests, triggered by the state killing of Zhina (Mahsa) Amini," the report said, "hundreds of protesters were facing show trials at the Revolutionary Courts, many with charges punishable by death."

The explosion in death penalty cases, it continued, "demonstrated how crucial the death penalty is to instill societal fear" in Iran in order for authorities "to hold onto power."