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Implementation of Inhumane Sentence: Kurdish Activist Roya Heshmati Subjected to 74 Lashes in Tehran

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The inhumane sentence of 74 lashes for Roya Heshmati, a Kurdish female activist from Sanandaj residing in Tehran, was carried out at the District 7 Prosecutor's Office in Tehran. Violence was employed by officers against Roya Heshmati before administering the flogging due to her removal of the scarf.

According to a report received by Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, on Wednesday, January 3, 2024, the 74 lashes sentence of 33-year-old Roya Heshmati was executed after she was summoned to the first branch of the District 7 Prosecutor's Office in Tehran. Earlier this year, she was sentenced by the judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran to one year of suspended prison, 74 lashes, and a three-year ban from leaving the country. This sentence was imposed due to her act of publishing a photo without the mandatory hijab on Keshavarz Boulevard in Tehran.

In her account of the incident, Roya Heshmati revealed that an employee of the sentence execution branch threatened to intensify the flogging and open a new case against her for removing the scarf. She likened the execution site to a "medieval torture chamber."

The activist, who opposes compulsory hijab, detailed how a female officer forcibly placed a scarf on her head and described being flogged on her shoulder, back, buttock, and leg.

Roya Heshmati shared her experience, stating: "I didn't count the blows; I was chanting in the name of the woman, in the name of life. The clothes of slavery were torn; our black night dawned; all the whips were axed."

The right to choose one's type of clothing is emphasized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The use of flogging by the judicial system of the Islamic Republic of Iran contradicts international human rights principles, as flogging is considered an inhumane, cruel, and degrading act. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights explicitly prohibits the implementation of such punishments.

Hengaw has translated Roya Heshmati's article, shared on her Facebook page with the hashtag “Jin, Jiayn, Azadi”, into English, which is presented below:

This morning, I received a call from the sentencing execution office to carry out the 74-lash sentence. I promptly contacted my lawyer, and together we proceeded to the 7th district court. Upon entering, I chose to remove my hijab. Inside the hall, the echoes of a woman's distress emanated from the staircase, possibly indicating her imminent sentence execution.

My lawyer advised me, "Roya, reconsider. The repercussions of the lashes will endure for a long time."

We proceeded to the first branch of the sentence execution office. An employee there suggested I put on my headscarf to avoid trouble. Calmly and respectfully, I conveyed that I came specifically for the lashes, and I would not yield.

The execution officer was summoned and instructed me to wear the hijab and follow him. Firmly, I stated that I would not wear my hijab. He threatened to whip me severely and open a new case, adding another seventy-four lashes. I maintained my stance and did not wear the hijab.

We descended, and they had brought some young men for alcohol-related charges. The man in authority repeated sternly, "Didn't I say wear your hijab?" I did not comply. Two chador-wearing women came and pulled a scarf over my head. I resisted, repeatedly removing it, but they persisted. Handcuffing me from behind, they continued pulling the scarf over my head.

We proceeded to the ground floor, using the same stairs where the woman had been taken. A room awaited us at the bottom of the parking lot. The judge, the execution officer, and the chador-wearing woman stood beside me. The woman seemed visibly affected, sighing several times and expressing understanding, saying, "I know. I know."

The judge smiled at me, reminiscent of a character from "Boofe Kur." I averted my gaze from him.

The iron door creaked open, revealing a room with cement walls. At the bottom of the room, there was a bed equipped with handcuffs and iron bands welded to both sides. An iron device resembling a large easel, complete with places for handcuffs and a rusty iron binding in the center, stood in the middle of the room. Additionally, a chair and a small table, hosting an array of flogs, were positioned behind the door. It resembled a fully-equipped medieval torture chamber.

The judge inquired, "Are you okay? Do you not have any problems?" As he wasn't talking to me, I remained silent. He then stated, "I am with you, madam!" Once again, I chose not to respond. The executioner instructed me to remove my coat and lie on the bed. I hung my coat and scarf from the base of the torture canvas. He insisted, "Put on your scarf!" I firmly replied that I wouldn't. Put the Quran under your arm and do what you have to do. The woman urged, "Please don't be stubborn." She brought the scarf and pulled it over my head.

The man retrieved a black leather whip from the collection behind the door, wrapping it around his hand twice as he approached the bed. The judge cautioned not to strike too hard. The man commenced hitting my shoulders, back, hips, and legs. I refrained from counting the number of hits. I quietly chanted, "In the name of woman, in the name of life, the clothes of slavery are torn, our black night will dawn, and all the whips will be axed..."

The ordeal concluded. I ensured they didn't perceive any pain on my part. We ascended to the judge for sentence execution. A female officer trailed behind, cautious of my scarf. I discarded my scarf at the branch door. She implored me to wear it, but I resisted. Inside the judge's chamber, he acknowledged discomfort with the case but insisted on its implementation. I chose silence. He suggested living abroad for a different life; I affirmed our commitment to resistance, emphasizing the universality of this country. He insisted on legal adherence, and I urged the law to fulfill its role while we persist in our resistance.

We exited the room, and I removed my scarf. Gratitude, dear Mr. Tatai, for your companionship, which makes these challenging days more bearable. I extend my apologies for not being an ideal client; I'm confident you'll comprehend. Thank you for everything.

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