

STATEMENT

Paris, 29 April 2024

**URGENT APPEAL TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
RAPPER TOOMAJ SALEHI SENTENCED TO DEATH**

UIA-IROL calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to overturn the death sentence on rapper Toomaj Salehi, and encourages lawyers worldwide to mobilise against the execution.

On 24 April 2024, the Revolutionary Court of Isfahan sentenced 33-year-old rapper Toomaj Salehi to death for supporting in his songs and on social networks the protest movement sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, who had been detained by the morality police for violating the strict dress code imposed on Iranian women.

The rapper was previously arrested in September 2021 for “*propaganda against the regime*,” and he was sentenced to six months’ imprisonment and a fine.

After Mahsa Amini’s death on 16 September 2022, the rapper joined the “*Women. Life. Freedom*” movement and informed activists of the locations of demonstrations via social networks.

In October 2022, Toomaj Salehi was arrested for his support of the movement and placed in detention, where he was allegedly subjected to practices constituting torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

On 10 July 2023, Toomaj Salehi was sentenced by the First Branch of the Isfahan Revolutionary Court to six years and three months’ imprisonment under Article 286 of the Islamic Penal Code, which punishes certain crimes related to national security or public order.

On 18 November 2023, the Iranian Supreme Court overturned this sentence and sent the case back to the court of first instance, ordering the rapper’s release on bail.

Upon his release, Toomaj Salehi posted a video online in which he accused the police of mistreating him while in detention, which led to his arrest on 30 November 2023.

On 18 April 2024, the Isfahan Revolutionary Court opened a new trial against him under the charges of “*incitement to sedition*”, “*assembly*”, “*conspiracy*” and “*inciting riots*”, among others. Toomaj Salehi was found guilty of “*corruption on earth*” and sentenced to death.

His lawyer, Amir Raeesian, declared that he will appeal this decision. He considers that it contains significant error in law, notably in view of the Supreme Court’s judgment of November 2023.

According to [Human Rights Watch](#), since the beginning of the repression of the demonstrations, the Iranian judicial authorities have drastically increased the use of charges linked to national security, following manifestly unfair trials. 25 death sentences have been handed down in connection with the demonstrations. Since the beginning of April 2024, the government has executed eight people sentenced to death in connection with demonstrations, while the Supreme Court has overturned

eleven. Among those arrested during the protests was another Iranian rapper of Kurdish origin, Saman Seyedi, known as 'Yasin', who was sentenced to death for "*hostility against the State*" and "*possession of weapons and plotting to threaten national security*". The Supreme Court overturned the sentence, and on 21 April 2024, the 15th Chamber of Tehran's Revolutionary Court sentenced the rapper to five years' imprisonment.

In 2023, [Amnesty international](#) recorded the execution of 853 prisoners, more than half of whom had been convicted of drug-related offences. The number of executions in 2023 is the highest since 2015 and marks an increase of 48% compared to 2022 and 172% compared to 2021. Since the beginning of 2024, 95 executions have been recorded in Iran.

Amnesty International has further [revealed](#) that the Iranian authorities are resorting to the death penalty on a massive scale in order to spread fear among the population and tighten their grip on power, following the 'Women. Life. Freedom' uprising, which ran from September to December 2022.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs "*strongly condemned this decision, which comes on top of the many other unjustifiable death sentences and executions linked to the demonstrations in Iran in the autumn of 2022*".

UIA-IROL strongly condemns the decision against Toomaj Salehi and calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to reverse this death sentence. It calls on lawyers throughout the world to mobilise against this execution, to fight for respect for freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial, and to fight for the universal abolition of the death penalty.

UIA-IROL recalls the non-deterrent nature of the death penalty and the fact that, because of the death-row syndrome suffered by condemned prisoners while awaiting execution, this punishment constitutes "irreversible torture". The fight for the universal abolition of the death penalty is a priority objective for the defense of human rights, and the UIA will continue to engage actively in efforts to abolish the death penalty in Iran and across the globe.

More about UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the International Association of Lawyers (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

For more information go to: www.uanet.org - uiacentre@uanet.org
Contact person: Julie ROSA, Communications Manager jrosa@uanet.org