

## Petition Against Stoning

We are writing to register the strongest possible protest against the stoning of women in Iran, an abhorrently repressive method of punishment that is without precedent in Iran's history. With the installation of Islamic Republic of Iran and its governing theocracy, many women of various ages have been stoned to death throughout Iran. This shocking practice has been incorporated into Iranian statutes, repeatedly been upheld by the Iranian judiciary, and has been defended at every turn by the Islamic Republic.

As a threshold matter, it should be noted that stoning is officially sanctioned within the statutes of the Iranian state. Under Article 83 of the penal code, called the Law of *Hodoud*, married adulterers may be stoned regardless of their gender. Under Article 102, the man who is being stoned must be buried up to his waist, while the woman who is being stoned must be buried up to her neck. Given that the law provides that a person who escapes will be allowed to go free, the differential treatment of women makes it more likely that they will be killed.

In any event, even if the woman miraculously manages to escape, contrary to the regime's own law, she is often recaptured and either stoned again or killed on the spot. In October 1989, in the city of Qom, a woman who was being stoned managed to pull herself out of the hole, only to be forced back into it and stoned to death. In justifying the murder, Qom's Chief Religious Judge, Mullah Karimi, elaborated to *Ressalat* newspaper on October 30, 1989: "Generally speaking, legal and religious decrees on someone condemned to stoning call for her stoning if her guilt was proven on the basis of witnesses' testimonies. Even if she were to escape in the middle of the administration of the sentence, she must be returned and stoned to death."

Stoning is an inherently barbaric practice, but an especially cruel version is practiced in Iran. Under Article 104 of Penal Code, the stones should not be so large that a person dies after being hit with two of them, nor so small as to be defined as pebbles, but must cause severe injury. This makes it clear that the purpose of stoning is to inflict grievous pain on the victim, in a process leading to his or her slow death. The regime's authorities usually force the victim's family members, including children, to watch the stoning of their loved one. On August 10, 1994, in the city of Arak, a woman was sentenced to death by stoning. According to the ruling of the religious judge, her husband and two children were forced to attend the execution. The woman urged her husband to take the children away, but to no avail. A truck full of stones was brought in to be used during the stoning. In the middle of the stoning, although her eyes had been gouged out, the victim was able to escape from the ditch and started running away, but the regime's guards recaptured her and shot her to death.

However, as "legal" stoning is in Iran, it is illegal under the international law. Under Article 6 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has ratified, death sentences may only be imposed for the most serious offenses as delineated at the time of their commission. Needless to say, there are far more serious crimes than adultery.

Incidents of stoning are on the rise. On October 26, 1997, six individuals were stoned in Sari, the provincial capital of Mazandaran. This was reported by *Salaam* daily and by international news agencies. The names of the victims were given as Fatemeh Danesh, Masoumeh Eini, Marzieh Fallah, Ali Mokhtarpour, Parviz Hasanzadeh and Kheirollah Javanmard. AFP, December 7, 1994, *Hamshahri* reported that a woman and a man were recently stoned to death in Ramhormouz on murder and adultery charges. AFP, November 16, 1994, *Abrar* reported that three Iranians including a woman were stoned in the city of Sari, after being found guilty of adultery and rape by the Islamic court. On July 14, 1995, Amnesty International reported that two women by the names of Saba Abdali, 30, and Zeinab Heidary, 38, were faced with stoning in the city of Ilam Gharb. On December 7, 1994, Reuters quoted a state-controlled newspaper report by *Hamshahri*, on a married woman who was stoned to death in the city of Ramhormouz, southwestern Iran. *Kayhan* of February 1, 1994, reported that a woman named Mina Kolvat was stoned to death in Tehran for having immoral relations with her cousin. The U.N. Special Representative on the human rights situation in Iran reported to the U.N. General Assembly in 1993: "On November 1, 1992, a woman named Fatima Bani was stoned to death in Isfahan." According to *Kayhan*, August 21, 1991, a woman charged with adultery by the name of Kobra was sentenced to 70 lashes and stoning. The verdict was carried out in the presence of local people and district officials. *Jomhouri Islami* wrote on March 11, 1991, that in Rasht, "Bamani Fekri, child of Mohammad-Issa, guilty of complicity in first-degree murder, adultery and incineration of the

victim's body; was sentenced to stoning, retribution, blinding of both eyes and payment of 100 gold dinars. After the announcement of the verdict, she committed suicide in prison." *Kayhan* wrote on July 31, 1989: "Six women were stoned to death publicly in Kermanshah on charges of adultery and moral corruption." *Kayhan*, April 17, 1989, quoted the Religious judge and head of the Fars and Bushehr Justice Department as sentencing 10 women to stoning to death on prostitution charges which were immediately carried out. *Kayhan*, October 4, 1986, reported that a 25-year-old woman named Nosrat was stoned to death in the city of Qom. She died after an hour of continuous stoning. On April 17, 1986 a woman was stoned to death in the city of Qom. Prior to being stoned, she was whipped in public. In July 1980, four women were simultaneously stoned to death in the city of Kerman. **It must be noted that the cases of stoning in small towns and cities were not included here.**

Despite the great fanfare given to stoning in Iran, some Iranian officials deny outright that stoning occurs. In an interview with *Le Figaro* on September 10, 1994, former President Mohamed Rafsanjani was asked, "Are women accused of adultery stoned in Iran?" He replied: "No, no such thing exists in Iran. This has been fabricated to damage us."

Other Iranian officials are evasive about stoning. In his April 1998 trip to France and Sweden, Ayatollah Mohajerani, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance and Khatami's government spokesman, was asked about his views about stoning. Mohajerani refrained from making an unequivocal statement of support for this inhuman practice. Upon returning to Iran, however, he said explicitly that he does not oppose stoning but believes that efforts should be made to stop the dissemination of the news of stoning and filming the scenes.

Similarly evasive was President Khatami's Vice President, Massoumeh Ebtekar. In a recent interview, she tried to avoid stating her views on stoning. Only later in an interview did she admit to its occurrence in general terms, but qualified her remark by saying it occurs only in remote places. Indeed, stoning is indispensable to the clerics efforts to intimidate and terrorize the Iranian public.

But inside Iran, there is no equivocation about stoning. During Friday prayers, in May of 1998, in the provincial capital of Kermanshah (the largest city in western Iran), **Mullah Zarandi** had the following to say about the need to carry out stoning: "The security forces have to show more presence in the society. In order to set an example for others, the judiciary should also bring some of those eligible to one of the city squares and amputate their hands. They should also have a series of stoning. I promise that the society will be rectified."

In July 2002, Zahra Shojaei, Iran's presidential adviser on women's issues, in a meeting with Laurette Onkelinx, Belgium's deputy prime minister, defended the practice of stoning women to death by asserting the the punishment protects the institution of the family. As much as it is unbelievable to imagine that such a brutal punishment is taking place in Iran, it is even more inconceivable that international bodies are apathetic about this atrocity.

We urge the United Nations, European Union, and other international bodies to take strong actions against Islamic Republic of Iran for inhumane and illegal treatment of the Iranian people.

We urge all Human Rights and Women's Rights organizations to support Iranian people in their fight against the violation of human rights by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Please send/fax/e-mail your letter of protest to the European Union and United Nations.

European Union:  
Mr. Romano Prodi  
President, European Commission  
Email: [civis@europarl.eu.int](mailto:civis@europarl.eu.int)

United Nation: