

# Iran's Secret Hangings

Mass Unannounced Executions  
in Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison

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INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

Iran's Secret Hangings: Mass Unannounced Executions in Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison

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[www.iranhumanrights.org](http://www.iranhumanrights.org)

## **ABOUT US**

The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization founded in The Netherlands in 2008 by a group of international human rights activists working in Europe and the United States. The Campaign's headquarters are in New York City.

The mission of the Campaign is to mobilize international support for Iranian human rights defenders who are advocating for their civil, political, social, and economic rights on the basis of international standards and treaties. The Campaign is founded on these principles: that human rights in Iran, and in every country, are a matter of legitimate international concern and essential to establishing international peace and security; that human rights in Iran can only be implemented with the assistance of civil society, whose role must be protected and sustained; that human rights compliance in Iran should be approached from a non-partisan perspective, and detached from political objectives; and that solidarity with any and all peoples prevented from enjoying their human rights is a moral imperative of our time.

The Campaign documents human rights violations in Iran via first hand and original sources within the country, and publishes statements, appeals, blogs, multimedia productions and comprehensive reports in both English and Persian ([www.iranhumanrights.org](http://www.iranhumanrights.org)). The Campaign advocates with national governments and intergovernmental institutions, and cooperates with a broad range of civil society organizations on behalf of strategies aimed at protecting civil society and improving human rights in Iran.

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# IRAN'S SECRET HANGINGS

## MASS UNANNOUNCED EXECUTIONS AT MASHHAD'S VAKILABAD PRISON

Since January 2010, the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran has published dozens of reports of unannounced secret group executions at Vakilabad Prison in the northeast city of Mashhad. These executions were largely in violation of international human rights law and domestic procedures. Judicial authorities have continuously evaded questions about these executions and the names of those executed have never been officially announced.

On 21 December 2011, Ayatollah Sadegh Amoli Larijani, head of the judiciary, said "I categorically deny any secret mass executions...All executions are announced to my office...if anyone has information about executions anywhere that have been secret and without knowledge of families, let us know and we will investigate it."

Now, reliable sources close to government agencies associated with these executions have disclosed the names of one hundred and one of the people put to death in the past two years to the Campaign. The victims of secret executions at Vakilabad were largely charged with drug trafficking offenses, and their families and lawyers were absent at the time of their executions.

This briefing paper features the first list of victims of secret executions in Vakilabad and other execution statistics, as well as witness testimony and official accounts of the executions. This briefing paper also details the major characteristics and illegality of these executions.

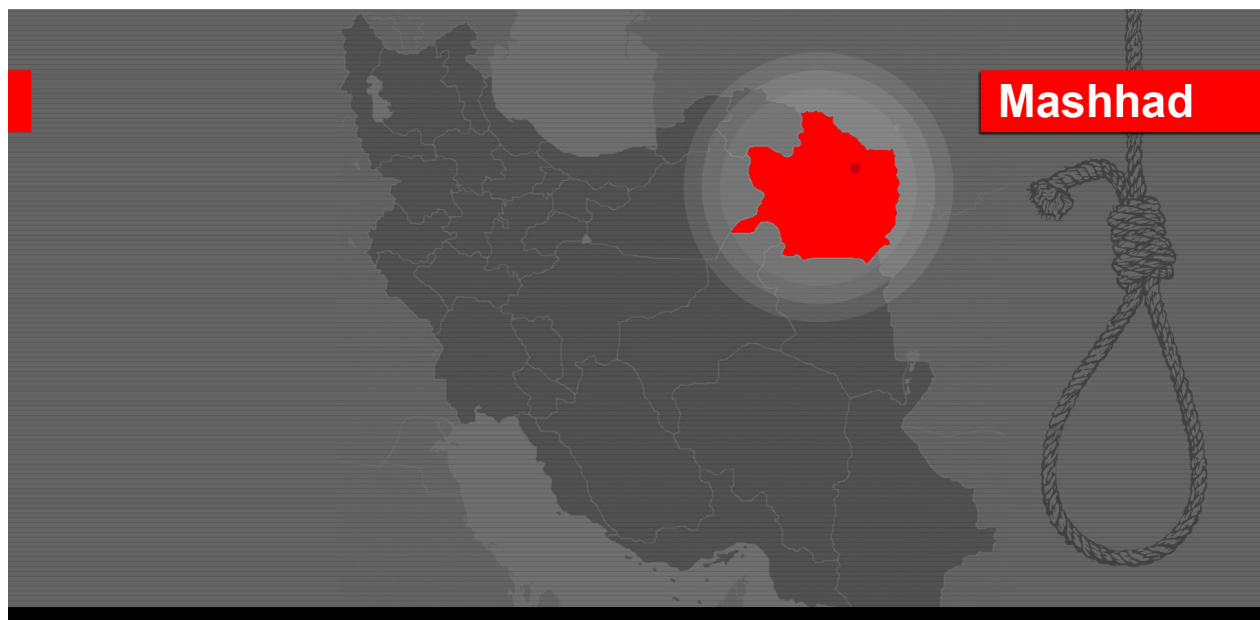
The end of the report also offers evidence of secret executions in the prisons of Birjand, Ghazal Hessar in Karaj, Karoun Prison in Ahvaz, Taybad, Orumiyeh and Qom.

### Background

Local witnesses and human rights activists from Mashhad told the Campaign that from January 2010 until September 2011, authorities carried out secret group executions on 24 separate occasions in Vakilabad Prison, resulting in the deaths of over 365 people.<sup>1</sup> The prison administration and judiciary have never publicly

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<sup>1</sup> There are a number of other occasions in which executions have been carried out. The Campaign has not been able to specify the details of these executions; as such they are not included in the Campaign's official findings.



announced these executions nor the names and identities of the victims. The prisoners executed were mostly charged with drug trafficking offenses.

In the wake of increasing reports by human rights groups about secret executions taking place in Iran, and the Iranian government's abuse of the death penalty, the international community has become more concerned about the issue.

On 14 March 2011, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon issued a report on the situation of human rights in Iran which partly corroborated the Campaign's findings on secret group executions at Vakilabad. The report stated:

In July 2010, a large number of prisoners were reportedly executed at one time in Mashhad prison. When OHCHR staff sought further information from Iranian counterparts during a visit to Tehran in December 2010, they confirmed that 60 persons had been executed in Mashhad in pending cases mostly linked to drug trafficking.<sup>2</sup>

The secret killing spree has elicited other international concern and condemnation, and was cited as a rights violation in the October 2011 interim report by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Ahmad Shaheed.

According to international law, the death penalty is only available for "the most serious crimes." Several authoritative bodies including the UN Human Rights Committee have made clear that drug offenses do not meet the "most serious crimes" standard. Therefore, Iran's practice of executable offenses violates the government's international obligations. As the UN's Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, said about Iran's use of the death penalty on 2 February 2011, "Such a practice is unacceptable. ... Under international law, the death penalty is regarded as an extreme form of punishment

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<sup>2</sup> UN Human Rights Council, Interim Report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in Iran, 14 March 2011. Available at: [http://www.iranhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/A.HRC.16.75\\_AUV.pdf](http://www.iranhumanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/A.HRC.16.75_AUV.pdf)

which, if it is used at all, should only be imposed for the most serious crimes, after a fair trial.”<sup>3</sup>

## The Numbers of Secret Executions in Vakilabad

The Campaign has documented 365 individuals who were secretly executed at Vakilabad since January 2010.

Iranian officials have by and large remained silent on the issue, withholding nearly all statistics and details of these executions. Nonetheless, credible sources from within the judicial department of Razavi Khorasan province as well as Vakilabad Prison have disclosed to the Campaign the identities of 101 victims of secret executions. These persons were executed en masse on five separate occasions between 9 June and 20 December 2010. Among the victims was one woman; all other named persons were men. Sixteen foreign nationals were also executed: fourteen from Afghanistan, one from Ghana, and one from Nigeria.

These names were obtained from the confidential documents of government agencies directly connected to implementing executions.

This list of 101 individuals and the total of 365 executions in Vakilabad only refer to the secret executions, and does not include other executions (see Tables I and II). Other executions that do not occur in secret are mostly related to retributive crimes such as homicide that are implemented in the presence of the victim's family.

The executions are considered “secret” because they are implemented without the notification or presence of attorneys or family members, who only learn of the execution days after its occurrence. Even the prisoners themselves are not notified until a few hours before the implementation of the death sentence.

These executions are considered “unannounced” because judicial and government officials have not disclosed any information such as names or the numbers and dates of the executions. Effectively, the government does not take public responsibility for these executions.

### *Secret Executions Outside of Vakilabad*

The Campaign has documented 471 secret executions since January 2010 in Vakilabad and other prisons throughout Iran. However, the true number is believed to be much higher as Iranian authorities have failed to offer transparent accounts of executions in Iran (see: Executions in Other Iranian Prisons section).

Local witnesses report similar executions in Taybad Prison, Birjand Prison, Ghezel Hesar Prison in Karaj, Orumiyeh Prison, and Karoun Prison.

Since the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran has not been able to confirm the above-mentioned information through correspondence with witnesses or reliable sources, the number of executions in these prisons will not be released. The Campaign will continue to search to obtain more information on this matter.

## Inside Vakilabad: Trends and Violations in Secret Executions

Over the past two years, witnesses have come forward to speak out against the spree of mass executions in Vakilabad. These people include former prisoners, families of victims, prison personnel, individuals close to the

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<sup>3</sup> International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran (ICHRI), “UN experts call for a moratorium on death penalty in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2 February 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/02/uh-ohchr-moratorium-death-penalty/>

criminal justice system and even some government officials. Some witnesses spoke anonymously while others testified openly.

The collective testimony paints a full picture of these death sentences, moving from trial to implementation. Sources describe the common attributes of secret executions at Vakilabad, including their mass and group nature, lack of fair trials, as well as conditions leading up to the actual execution.

The section below covers some of the common features described in interviews with credible witnesses to the Campaign.

### *Lack of Fair Trials and Drug Convictions*

Some witnesses testified to the lack of due process in the trials and death sentences of victims of secret executions at Vakilabad. Trials were conducted in a hasty manner, often without legal or diplomatic representation, and nearly always for drug offenses.

One source told the Campaign that some of the trials lasted only a few minutes.

A local source who talked to several families and lawyers of executed persons in Mashhad told the Campaign:

Several branches of the Revolutionary Court of Mashhad, without observing fair judicial procedures or national laws, review several drug offense cases an hour.

In the majority of cases, [these convictions and] death sentences are based primarily on the reports of the Intelligence Office or information provided by the Revolutionary Guards, false information, or confessions by the prisoners attained under severe physical torture. This torture was usually implemented in the detention centers.

The vast majority of these death sentences issued by Mashhad's Revolutionary Court are for prisoners with drug related offenses. The verdicts are reached during a brief court session, usually without the presence of the court-appointed lawyer.

Within just a few months the sentence gets approved and implemented.<sup>4</sup>

Several witnesses of Mashhad describe the issuance and confirmation of these trials as hasty and unjust and consider the judicial process of these cases unfair and inequitable. Earlier, on 18 August 2010, the nephew of one of the executed prisoners told the Campaign: "It took only two months from the time of the arrest to the implementation of his uncle's sentence and he was not granted the right to a fair trial."

The nephew added that, "discovering 300 grams of drugs in my uncle's house was the basis for issuing his death sentence, despite his claim that the drugs belonged to someone else who had run away; in a rushed and illegal procedure the death sentence was issued and the truth or inaccuracy of his claim was never investigated."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> ICHRI, "Secret, Unannounced Group Executions Continue Inside Iranian Prisons: At Least 14 More Executed Inside Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison," 23 October 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/10/executions-14/>

<sup>5</sup> ICHRI, "Secret Group Executions Continue at Vakilabad; Dozens More Executed In April and May," 27 May 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/05/executions-vakilabad-april-may/>

Many of the Vakilabad victims were reportedly foreign nationals. Authorities allegedly failed to observe diplomatic protocol and inform the relevant embassies of these arrests, trials and death sentences. Thus, in almost all these cases, the defendants did not have access to diplomatic representation, as required by international law. This requirement, in part, is designed to ensure foreign governments can protect the due process rights of their citizens accused of crimes abroad. Moreover, according to the Campaign's source, these individuals, as a result of their unfamiliarity with Persian, were unable to understand the judicial procedure or the questions asked of them by the court.

Nearly all sources from Mashhad, told the Campaign that the vast majority of executions were implemented for drug related crimes. However, under Iran's international legal obligations, authorities are barred from executing individuals for drug offenses. Officials have thus refused to respond to international criticism that their pattern of execution violates human rights law with regards to capital punishment.

### *Mass Executions and Group Killings*

Besides testifying to due process violations, other witnesses detailed the rate of executions and atmosphere of Vakilabad's death row. These witnesses emphasized the mass and group nature of the executions.

Prominent religious scholar and political prisoner Ahmad Ghabel, who was first convicted on 20 December 2009 and imprisoned for 170 days, published an essay detailing the atrocities at Vakilabad Prison.

According to Ghabel, at least ten people were executed every two weeks during his time in Vakilabad. Ghabel describes his experience:



Religious scholar Ahmad Ghabel, pictured above, described the harrowing conditions in Vakilabad.

During my three months imprisonment, in ward 6/1 of Vakilabad Prison, according to the statistics provided by the prison's officials and guards, more than fifty people were transferred to Ward 6/1 and shortly thereafter were executed. In just one instance thirty-one people were executed.

Why, if these executions were supposedly justified and legal from the point of view of officials, were they carried out in secret for sentences such as drug trafficking, retribution and rape? If they are not defensible then why are they implemented at all?

Why doesn't the Islamic Penal Code heed the instructions of the Quran which say, 'do not indulge in killing'? Isn't the killing of several people in a month or a year excessive? Why is no one looking for a solution to this problem?

According to unofficial estimates there were hundreds of inmates on death row [in Vakilabad] in the short time I was

there. I got to know many of these people personally.<sup>6</sup>

In a letter dated 10 August 2010, imprisoned labor activist Hashem Khastar testified to the execution of 63 prisoners in secret group executions at Vakilabad Prison.



Hashem Khastar, pictured handcuffed while on his way to court, is a labor activist who testified regarding mass executions in Vakilabad.

A relative of a Vakilabad victim executed on 18 August 2010 characterized the secret and group nature of the executions.<sup>7</sup> He told the Campaign that he received the body of his family member in Behesht Reza cemetery in Mashhad and only learned then that his family member had been executed simultaneously with 66 other people. The relative added that when he went to retrieve the body, he saw the bodies of many others who had been executed.

In a rare instance of corroboration by state officials, on 22 June 2011 Mashhad's chief prosecutor Mahmoud Zoghi verified that there were a "high number of unannounced executions" at Vakilabad carried out in March, April and May of 2011.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Surprise Implementation and Manner of Execution*

Several witnesses told the Campaign that authorities implemented secret executions in an unexpected manner. They also offered detailed accounts of the execution process.

The majority of the victims were not informed of their sentence until a few hours before the execution was carried out. Moreover, most executions occurred without prior notice to the families. In some cases, family members were coincidentally visiting inmates in Vakilabad the day of their execution.

A source who was formerly imprisoned in Ward 5 of Vakilabad Prison, where the majority of death row inmates are kept, previously told the Campaign: "In many cases, a few hours before the execution, the prisoners were visited by their families and were then taken directly from the visiting rooms to the gallows."

Another source described how since prisoners were not told when their execution would take place, they waited for their names to be called every time prison officials came to the cell blocks to announce that day's scheduled executions. In effect, death-row inmates were forced to imagine their execution over and over again the source said.

During the announcement of scheduled executions, especially in Ward 5, some prisoners, from the fear of

<sup>6</sup> Letter by Ahmad Ghabel, published 9 August 2011. Available at: <http://antitaleban.wordpress.com/2010/08/09/%D9%BE%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%87%D8%B4%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%87-%D9%82%D8%B3%D9%85%D8%AA%DB%B3-%D8%9B-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D9-%82%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%9B-18-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF/>

<sup>7</sup> ICHRI, "Inmate's Letter Exposes Inhumane Conditions and Secret Executioesn in Mashhad Prison," 8 April 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/04/letter-exposes-vakilabad/>

<sup>8</sup> ISNA News, "Dadsetaan-e amoumi va enqelab-e Mashhad goft: Resaanha-ye bikaaneh dar moored-e edam-e ghachoghchiyaan-e mavaad-e mokhader dar zendan-e Vakilabad-e Mashad bozorgnamayee mikonand," 22 June 2011. Available at: <http://khorasan.isna.ir/Default.aspx?NSID=5&SSLID=46&NID=12644>

hearing their own names, reportedly lost control of their bodily functions and screamed and cried.

One former prisoner said, "You can smell death in rooms 101, 102 and 104 of Ward 5 of Vakilabad prison. Everyone is awaiting the unknown day of their execution."<sup>9</sup>

Ahmad Ghabel also spoke about the uncertain and frightening circumstances leading up to the executions:

Prisoners of this ward know that once the execution is decided, they are prevented from moving within the ward while the prisoners facing death are escorted by prison guards and transferred to their cells. Late at night or at dawn everything goes back to normal, meaning the prisoners were sent to their creator, and the executioners are free from this exhausting and painful task.<sup>10</sup>

According to judicial procedure in Iran, the defendant's lawyer has to be served with the notice of implementation of the sentence by the Supreme Court.<sup>11</sup> In the cases of these secret executions, the notice was only sent to Mashhad's prosecutor, while the families and lawyers were left in the dark. In the cases of foreign nationals, there is evidence to suggest that their respective embassies were also unaware of the pending executions.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the lack of prior warning to the family and representatives of the victims, in many cases the medical examiner's office actually issued many of the corresponding death certificates up to a day before the execution, exemplifying the bureaucratic efficiency of these executions. The death certificates listed the cause of death as *ghatl-e ghanooni*, or "legal murder."

The method of execution was hanging. Many of the executions occurred at dusk.

Contributing to the shroud of secrecy surrounding the executions, the phones within Vakilabad were disconnected a few hours before, preventing calls in and out of the prison.

Most of the executions took place in open-air corridors within the prison that lead to the visiting rooms. Just a few hours prior to the executions, the prisoners gathered and were transferred to Ward 6/1 to perform ritual cleansing and write their wills. They were then taken to the execution corridors. In a few cases, the prisoners were reportedly executed in the basement of the Revolutionary Court of Mashhad.

Officials from several government agencies are the only witnesses of the actual hangings. A representative of Mashhad's prosecutor, a representative of the police station based in the prison, a representative from the police for west Mashhad or the town of Naja, the prison's judge, a representative of the medical examiner's offices, the prison warden, and prison security unit are all present during executions. The officials then sign an internal confirmation of the execution, which is one of the documents given to the medical examiner to produce the death certificate.

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<sup>9</sup> Gooya News, "Afshagari yek zendaani az vaziyat-e dehshatnak-e زندان-e Vakilabad-e Mashad: زندانهای مخفی، فاریب نهادهای-بایونلمللی و ادامهای ناهانی و داستهجامی، میزان," 9 September 2010. Available at: <http://news.gooya.com/politics/archives/2010/09/110332.php>

<sup>10</sup> Ghabel (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Iran's Law of Criminal Procedure, Article 293, adopted August 1999.

<sup>12</sup> ICHRI, "Citizens of Nigeria and Ghana Reportedly Put to Death in Secret Group Executions Inside Iran," 11 November 2010. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2010/11/nigeria-ghana-citizens-executed/>

## International Legal Context

The secret executions at Vakilabad violate Iran's obligations under international human rights law. Iran's actions contravene international laws on issuing death sentences for drug offenses, using coerced confessions as evidence, depriving defendants of the right to legal council and access to embassy representatives, and conducting judicial proceedings in a hasty manner.

### *Right to Life*

Article 6(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Iran ratified in 1975, mandates that, "[i]n countries which have not abolished the death penalty, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes ... this penalty can only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court."<sup>13</sup>

The UN Human Rights Committee, the leading international authority on the ICCPR, and the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, have made clear that drug offenses do not meet the "most serious crimes" standard and therefore Iran's practice of sentencing drug offenders to death violates the government's international obligations.<sup>14</sup>

Articles 6 adds that, "[n]othing in this article shall be invoked to delay or to prevent the abolition of capital punishment by any State Party to the present Covenant."

Ninety-six countries including Brazil, Turkey, and Rwanda, have formally abolished the death penalty, while another 34 countries, such as Kenya, Morocco, and Russia, have ended its use in practice.<sup>15</sup>

### *Right to Fair Trial*

Article 14 of the ICCPR guarantees all criminal suspects the right to a fair trial. Defendants at Vakilabad and family members testify to lack of counsel with lawyers, trials lasting only a few minutes and coerced confessions.<sup>16</sup>

Article 14 mandates further that "in the determination of any criminal charge against him ... everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law."

Article 14 adds that "everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees," including adequate time for preparation of a defence and communication with legal counsel; right to a lawyer; right to a language interpreter if he [or she] cannot understand or speak the language used in court; and the right not to be compelled to confess guilt.

The UN Human Rights Committee has noted that "statements or confessions obtained through torture" or ill

<sup>13</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Civil and Political Rights, Including the Questions of Disappearances and Summary Executions, Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston, 29 January 2007, UN Doc. A/HRC/4/20, para. 53, Accessed 3 January 2012. Available at: [http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/application/media/A\\_HRC\\_4\\_20.pdf](http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/application/media/A_HRC_4_20.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Death Penalty Information Center, "Abolitionist and Retentionist Countries," Accessed 3 January 2012. Available at: <http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/abolitionist-and-retentionist-countries>

<sup>16</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

treatment are inadmissible in judicial proceedings under article 7 of the ICCPR.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, the UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of those Facing the Death Penalty make clear that “[c]apital punishment may only be carried out pursuant to a final judgement rendered by a competent court after legal process which gives all possible safeguards to ensure a fair trial,” and that defendants must have access to multiple appeals.<sup>18</sup>

### *Right to Diplomatic Representation*

Under article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which Iran ratified in 1965, the Iranian government is required to report the arrest of foreign nationals to their respective embassies “without delay” and give the suspects the right to seek assistance from their governments.<sup>19</sup> Iran has executed foreign nationals from Afghanistan, Nigeria and Ghana reportedly without notifying embassy representatives.

## **Executions in Other Iranian Prisons**

### *Birjand Prison*

Executions in Birjand Prison are similar to those in Vakilabad in that they are unannounced. Local sources say that hundreds of prisoners have been secretly executed since March 2009. In June 2011, Mohammad Bagher Bagheri, the Southern Khorasan Deputy Director of Social and Preventive Crimes of the Judiciary, announced the executions of 140 individuals for drug trafficking in the province from March 2010 to March 2011. Bagheri said that the Revolutionary Court would deal assertively with corrupters and drug traffickers.<sup>20</sup> However, Bagheri did not provide any details of these or other executions, nor did any other provincial official.

### *Ghezel Hessar Prison in Karaj*

The Campaign reported 25 secret executions at Ghezel Hessar Prison on 3 July 2011. Sources told the Campaign that dozens of prisoners have been secretly executed in this prison without their names being announced or details being released by judicial officials. Given the limitations in disseminating information from inside prison, there is no specific information about the aforementioned executions.<sup>21</sup>

On 16 March 2011, a violent conflict took place in Ghezel Hessar Prison, after which officials of the Prisons Organization of Iran said that 14 prisoners were killed. Other sources told the Campaign that the number of those killed is higher than what government officials claimed. One political prisoner said that the actual

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<sup>17</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 20, Article 7, Para 12: Prohibition of torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, Accessed 3 January 2012. Available at: [http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/6924291970754969c12563ed004c8ae5?Opendocument](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/6924291970754969c12563ed004c8ae5?Opendocument)

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Economic and Security Council. Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty. 25 May 1984. Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/protection.htm>

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 24 April 1963. Available at: [http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9\\_2\\_1963.pdf](http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_2_1963.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Mehr News, “140 Ghachoghchi-e mavod-e mokhader dar Khorasan-e Janoobi edam shodand,” 25 June 2011. Available at: <http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?pr=s&query=%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF%20%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B1%DB%8C%20&NewsID=1343604>

<sup>21</sup> ICHRI, “Secret Group Executions Continue at Ghezel Hessar Prison: 25 More Hanged on 3 July,” 8 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/07/secret-group-executions-continue-at-ghezel-hessar-prison-25-more-hanged-on-3-july/>

number of those killed was 86, most of whom were shot directly in the head. This clash took place in Ward 2 of the prison, where thousands of inmates are being held on death row, and none of the prisoners are armed. The Campaign is unable to independently confirm these statistics, provided by unofficial sources, and an independent investigation into the events that transpired and the secret executions is necessary.

#### *Karoun Prison in Ahvaz*

Local witnesses and sources also testified to secret executions in Karoun Prison in Ahvaz. In Karoun Prison, aside from the inmates who are charged with drug-related crimes, political prisoners, many of whom are members of the Arab People's Party, are also secretly executed. Recently, nine Arab activists were executed in a group, the news of which was never announced by government media. The group execution was reported by Amnesty International.<sup>22</sup> The Campaign also reported on secret executions of drug trafficking convicts inside prisons throughout Khuzestan province.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Taybad Prison*

Afghan civil organizations have given accounts of the secret execution of dozens of Afghan citizens in Taybad Prison. In April 2010, 45 Afghan prisoners were executed at this prison over the course of only two days. Those executed were arrested in Iran for transporting and smuggling drugs. Local sources reported that executions in Taybad Prison are not only limited to Afghans and many Iranian citizens have been executed as well.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Orumiyeh Prison*

According to reports by human rights sources, unannounced executions of drug trafficking convicts have also taken place in Orumiyeh Prison. The Iran Human Rights Organization and Mukrian News Agency announced the execution of ten people in the past year: two on 7 July 2011, three on 22 May 2011, and five on 20 April 2011 according to local sources.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Qom Prison*

Secret, unannounced executions also take place in Qom Prison, where those executed are also mostly charged with drug-related crimes. On 30 June 2011, the Iran Human Rights Organization reported of four unannounced secret executions at this facility.<sup>26</sup> Kalame website also reported of the dire conditions at Qom Prison (known as Langrud Prison of Qom), and the secret executions of fifteen individuals and dozens of others on death row there.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International, "Iran: Arbitrary Arrests, Torture and Executions Continue," 20 May 2011. Available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/051/2011/en/ad9b1ffd-7c9f-475c-9ace-c1e712a29f60/mde130512011en.html>

<sup>23</sup> ICHRI, "Secret and Unannounced Executions in Khuzestan," 22 May 2011. Available at: <http://www.iranhumanrights.org/2011/05/khusistan-executions/>

<sup>24</sup> Deutsche Welle, "Namayendegan-e Parlemaan: 45 Afghan dar Iran edam shodand," 12 April 2010. Available at: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5458837,00.html>

<sup>25</sup> Iran Human Rights Organization, "Edam-e do nafar dar زندان-e markazi Orumiyeh be eteham-e ghachagh-e mavad-e mokhader," 7 July 2011. Available at: <http://hra-news.org/1389-01-28-00-30-11/8791-1.html> : Iran Human Rights Organization, "Edam-e seh nafar dar زندان-e Orumiyeh," 22 May 2011. Available at: <http://iranhr.net/spip.php?article2099>

<sup>26</sup> Iran Human Rights, "Edam-e dastekam chahaar nafar dar do hafteh gozashte dar Qom bedoon-e elam dar resaaneha," 12 June 2011. Available at: <http://iranhr.net/spip.php?article2170>

<sup>27</sup> Kalame, "Eenha زندان-e markazi-e shahr-e moghaddas-e Qom ast; Guantanamo dar markaz-e Iran," 28 November 2011. Available at: <http://www.kalame.com/1390/09/07/klm-81177/>



**Table I: 101 Named Individuals Secretly Executed in Vakilabad Prison**

Number	First Name	Last Name	Father's Name	Date of Execution	Nationality	Gender	Age	Charges
1	Ebrahim	Asadian	Yar Mohammad	9 June 2010		Male	...	Drug-related
2	Hossein	Zare	Rahmato Allah	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
3	Hamid	Ghasemi	Hossein	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
4	Ramin	Amiri	Mohammad	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
5	Shahmorad	Hemmati	Abbas Ali	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
6	Safar Ali	Masoudian	Mohammad Hossein	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
7	Abdo Allah	Saeedi	Amano Allah	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
8	Abdo Allah	Gorgij	Mohammad	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
9	Ali Asghar	Khaleghdadi	Mohammad Ali	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
10	Ali Akbar	Khaleghdadi	Mohammad Ali	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
11	Gholam Hossein	Behamdi	Mohammad	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
12	Gholam Reza	Ebrahimi	Nour Mohammad	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
13	Mehdi	Zourmande Ghavi	Hossein	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
14	Milad	Zamanian	Ali	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
15	Shokat Ali	Araamesh	Ahmad	9 June 2010		Male	...	...
16	Ahmad Shah	Nader	Mohammad Nader	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
17	Besmellah	Alizehi	Mohammad Ali	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
18	Beido Allah	Reza Maleki	Abdol Samad	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
19	Jalil	Ahmadi	Lameh	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
20	Seyedo Allah	Afghan	Seyed Gol	10 August 2010	Afghan (maybe)	Male	...	...
21	Safar	Kashani	Mohammad	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
22	Abdol Ghafour	Vahedi	Abdol Rahman	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
23	Aziz	Beydi Firouz	Ali Khan	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
24	Gholam	Nour Zehi	Bahram	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
25	Gholam Hossein	Zamani	Abdol Rahman	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
26	Nezam	Samani	Safdar	10 August 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
27	Akwasi	Akouboua		10 August 2010	Ghana	Male	...	...
28	Zahra	Davoudi	Agha Gol	10 August 2010		Female	...	...

Number	First Name	Last Name	Father's Name	Date of Execution	Nationality	Gender	Age	Charges
29	Ebrahim	Rahneshin	Ghasem	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
30	Ebrahim	Rahmani	Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
31	Ahmad	Karimi Jahangiri	Mohammad Ebrahim	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
32	Ahmad	Maghool	Mohammad Hassan	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
33	Ahmad	Nik Mohammadi	Nik Mohammad	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
34	Emambordi	Davari	Abdol Rahman	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
35	Amin	Gorgij		10 August 2010		Male	...	...
36	Jaan Mohammad	Laalzade Barahoui	Ghaderi Khan	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
37	Jafar	Rezai	Baraat Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
38	Jahangir	Kaboudani	Emaado Deen	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
39	Hassan	Sajadi	Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
40	Hassan	Farajzade	Ali Akbar	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
41	Hossein	Azarian	Sakhi	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
42	Hossein	Khadem	Gholamreza	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
43	Hamid	Zardaari	Gholamhossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
44	Hamid	Shojaee	Mohammad Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
45	Daryoush	Fatahi	Hassan	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
46	Reza	Bafande	Ali Akbar	10 August 2010 10 August 2010		Male	...	...
47	Reza	Hakimzadeh	Mohammad Sadegh	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
48	Reza	Alizade Noghani	Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
49	Ramezan	Kazemi	Gholam Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
50	Saeed	Khazaee Moghadam	Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
51	Saeed	Asgari	Saaber	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
52	Seyed Hassan	Ahmadi	Seyed Jafar	10 August 2010		Male	...	...

Number	First Name	Last Name	Father's Name	Date of Execution	Nationality	Gender	Age	Charges
53	Seyed Mohammad	Akhlamdi	Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
54	Ali Akbar	Yazdan Doust	Mohammad	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
55	Ali	Shahbazi	Hassan	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
56	Ali	Youssefi	Vahid	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
57	Alireza	Doughabadi	Mohammad	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
58	Alireza	Salmani	Esmael	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
59	Farajo Allah	Shokouri	Allah Gholi	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
60	Ghasem	Vatan Parast	Mousa	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
61	Kazem	Hamzeh	Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
62	Mohammad Azam	Marjouee	Nabi	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
63	Mohammad Hossein	Karami	Ali Akbar	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
64	Mohammad	Khademi Moghadam		10 August 2010		Male	...	...
65	Mohammad	Ghanbari	Mohammad Hossein	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
66	Mohammad	Mokeabi Jahangiri	Gol Mohammad	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
67	Mohammad Reza	Haji Zade	Abaas Goli	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
68	Mahmoud	Mohseni	Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
69	Mahmoud	Memar Narkhi	Heydar	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
70	Morteza	Dagh Karzan	Mohammad Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
71	Mostafa	Masoumi	Taghi	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
72	Mehdi	Arayesh Khorshidi	Isa	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
73	Mehdi	Mohammadi	Faramarz	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
74	Hadi	Ghods	Mohammad	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
75	Hashem	Nowrouz Zadeh	Hemmat Ali	10 August 2010		Male	...	...
76	Ramin	Rastin	Abbas Ali	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	...
77	Rahmat	Harati	Hassan	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	...
78	Ali	Sahebi	Gholam Nabi	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	...

Number	First Name	Last Name	Father's Name	Date of Execution	Nationality	Gender	Age	Charges
79	Kamal	Faraji	Abdol Ali	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	
80	Majid	Khandan	Mohammad Hossein	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	
81	Morteza	Taghi Nia	Hossein	14 Sept 2010		Male	...	...
82	Alireza	Rostami	Abdol Khalegh	27 Oct 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
83	Basir	Ahmad	Gol Ahmad	27 Oct 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
84	Paul	Chindo		27 Oct 2010	Nigerian	Male	...	...
85	Hassan	Pendashteh	Feyz Mohammad	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
86	Abbas	Pendashteh	Feyz Mohammad	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
87	Ali	Ghadam Gaahi	Javad	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
88	Ahmad	Motaghi Moghadam	Mehdi	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
89	Fareed	Narenji	Rasheed	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
90	Mehdi	Ghavaee	Rajab Ali	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
91	Mehdi	Ataee	Mohammad Ali	27 Oct 2010		Male	...	...
92	Ahmad	Zoury	Siah Khan	20 Dec 2010	Afghan	Male	...	...
93	Abbas	Baba	Ghorban Ali	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
94	Abdol Ghafour	Eshagh	Abdol Shekar	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
95	Mohammad	Farhadi	Shah Mohammad	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
96	Hamid	Kazemi	Gholam Reza	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
97	Reza	Ghorbani	Mohammad	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
98	Sadegh	Bakhshi	Ali	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
99	Abbas	Abyari	Parviz	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
100	Reza	Heydari	Ahmad	20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...
101	Mojtaba	Nategh		20 Dec 2010		Male	...	...

**Table II: Reported Secret Executions in Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number Executed</b>	<b>Details</b>
9 June 2010 19 Khordad 1389	15	All men and Iranian national. Drug related crimes. (Undated info: Dec 2011)
10 August 2010 19 Mordad 1389	63	11 of 63 executed individuals of Afghan nationality, one from Ghana. One female. All drug related crimes. (Undated info: Dec 2011)
18 August 2010 27 Mordad 1389	67	Reliable sources told the Campaign that there have been two other executions, where dozens were executed in this month (Mordad), but as we have not able to acquire the detail information it's not been mentioned in this table.
24 August 2010 2 Shahrivar 1389	3	All were convicted drug traffickers.
14 September 2010 23 Shahrivar 1389	6	These individuals were most likely all drug trafficking convicts. At first ten executions were planned for this day, 4 of whom were Afghan nationals. At the last moment, due to unknown reasons, executions of the 4 Afghan nationals is postponed to another time. All six executed inmates were Iranian men.
5 October 2010 13 Mehr 1389	13	All were convicted drug traffickers.
12 October 2010 20 Mehr 1389	10	All were convicted drug traffickers.
27 October 2010 5 Aban 1389	10	All were convicted of drug trafficking. Two were brothers whose father remains inside Vakilabad Prison. Two were Afghan nationals and one was a Nigerian national.
9 November 2010 18 Aban 1389	11	All individuals convicted of drug trafficking.
30 November 2010 9 Azar 1389	9	All executed individuals convicted of drug trafficking.
20 December 2010 29 Azar 1389	10	All executed individuals were male drug trafficking convicts. One of them was an Afghan national.
6 January 2011 16 Day 1389	0	On January 16, 2011, the Mashad Prosecutor's Office was served with execution orders of 10 individuals. Formal execution procedures are also carried out, but at the last moments, the executions are stopped.
7 February 2011 18 Bahman 1389	10	All executed individuals were male drug trafficking convicts. Five of them were Afghan nationals.
1 March 2011 11 Esfand 1389	10	No further information available.
6 April 2011 17 Farvardin 1390	10	All executed individuals were drug trafficking convicts.

Date	Number Executed	Details
13 April 2011 24 Farvardin 1390	12	All executed individuals were drug trafficking convicts.
16 May 2011 26 Ordibehesht 1390	10	All executed individuals were drug trafficking convicts.
23 May 2011 2 Khordad 1390	12	All executed individuals were drug trafficking convicts.
24 May 2011 3 Khordad 1390	4	One was a rape convict. The other three executed individuals were sisters. The three sisters may have been convicted of drug trafficking.
15 June 2011 25 Khordad 1390	26	All executed inmates were drug trafficking convicts.
29 June 2011 8 Tir 1390	12	All executed inmates were drug trafficking convicts.
3 July 2011 12 Tir 1390	18	All were drug trafficking convicts. On this day, there was another execution related to murder in prison, according to Khorassan Newspaper in Mashad. But there was no coverage about 12 of the executions.
11 August 2011 20 Mordad 1390	7	
20 September 2011 29 Shahrivar 1390	7	No further information available on these executions.



# Iran's Secret Hangings

## Mass Unannounced Executions in Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison

*The basic question is this: why does the Iranian government use this type of punishment with such enthusiasm? The issue is that these executions only create fear and intimidation and serve only a political purpose. All of the statistics show that while the number of executions have increased, the number of drug-related crimes have not decreased at all.*

— Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Iran is the world's leading per-capita executor, following only China in absolute numbers. In 2011, Iran put to death over 600 individuals, at least 161 of whom were killed in secret. The International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran has documented 471 secret, unannounced, mass executions in Mashhad and other cities since January 2010. The actual numbers are likely much higher.

The vast majority of secret executions have reportedly been for drug crimes, for which capital punishment is not permissible under international law. Many of the sentences are issued after unfair trials. The Iranian judiciary has effectively denied the existence of any secret mass executions.

"Iran's Secret Hangings: Mass Unannounced Executions in Mashhad's Vakilabad Prison" challenges the false narrative of the Iranian judiciary. An accompanying list reveals for the first time the identities of 101 individuals who were reportedly executed in Vakilabad Prison in 2010.

Other reports by the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran



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