

UN rights expert urge Iran to annul death sentence against prisoner

A group of United Nations human rights experts have called on Iran to annul the death sentence against a prisoner citing serious concerns that he was tortured in detention and did not receive a fair trial.

In a [news release](#) on Wednesday, the experts said that Iranian Kurdish prisoner Ramin Hossein Panahi, who was arrested last June for alleged membership of the Kurdish nationalist group Komala, was repeatedly beaten in detention, denied medical care and access to a lawyer, and held in solitary confinement until January.

They also expressed concern regarding his trial, which took place before the Revolutionary Court and lasted less than an hour.

“Executing Mr. Panahi, following his torture, and unfair trial and on the basis of charges that do not meet international standards for [the use of death penalty, would be unconscionable](#),” said the experts.

“We remind Iran that the only thing that distinguishes capital punishment from arbitrary execution is full respect for stringent due process guarantees.”

The experts also noted that despite marks of torture on Mr. Panahi body, the court did not order an investigation, and that he was allowed only one meeting with his lawyer between his arrest and the trial and no family visits. There are also ongoing concerns about Mr. Panahi, and he reportedly began a hunger strike early in 2018.

The experts also expressed concern that some members of Mr. Panahi’s family appeared to have been convicted in separate summary trials, and sentenced to long prison terms, in apparent reprisals for their efforts to obtain further information on his situation.

It is understood that the Supreme Court branch in Qom reaffirmed Mr. Panahi’s death sentence earlier in April, and his case was due to be passed to the Office of Implementation, said the experts, his lawyer has appealed for a judicial review.

The news release noted that the experts are in dialogue with Iranian authorities regarding Mr. Panahi’s situation.

The UN rights experts include Agnes Callamard, the [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#); Dainius Puras, the [Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health](#); and Nils Melzer, the [Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#).

UN Special Rapporteurs and independent experts are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.