

2024

**CAPITAL  
PUNISHMENT  
OF  
AZERBAIJANI  
TURKS IN  
IRAN**

Annual Report

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## Summary

CAPITAL punishment remains a widespread instrument of state control in Iran, with executions conducted on a significant scale.

In 2024 alone, Iran carried out 909 documented executions, including 30 women, placing the country among those with the highest execution rates globally. Of those executed, 73 were Azerbaijani Turks. Notably, 9 of the 30 women executed were Azerbaijani Turks, representing 30% of all female executions. Additionally, 63 Azerbaijani Turk men were executed, accounting for 7% of total male executions.

These figures suggest that Azerbaijani Turk women, in particular, face a disproportionately higher risk of execution. It is important to note that the actual number of executions is likely higher, as this report only includes cases that have been verified and documented.

In this report, we raise concerns about specific cases that require immediate attention as they reflect the broader pattern of repression against ethnic minorities in Iran. Beyond the high number of executions, other alarming incidents point to the persecution faced by Azerbaijani Turks and other marginalized groups. Sharifeh Mohammadi, a labor activist, remains in Lakan Prison, Rasht, facing a capital punishment verdict, further illustrating the use of harsh judicial measures against activists and minority voices. The case highlights the urgent need for international scrutiny and intervention.

The execution data presented in this report demonstrates the disproportionate impact of capital punishment on the Azerbaijani Turk community, reinforcing long-standing patterns of systemic discrimination and state repression. Minority groups such as Azerbaijanis, Kurds, and Balochs have historically faced political marginalization, cultural suppression, and judicial bias, with executions frequently employed as

a tool to instill fear and maintain control. The execution data underscores the systematic repression of the Azerbaijani Turk community and other marginalized groups, including Kurds and Balochs, who have long faced political marginalization, cultural suppression, and judicial bias. The final quarter of 2024 saw a sharp escalation, with 45 Azerbaijanis, including five women, executed between October and November, one of the deadliest periods for Azerbaijani Turks in recent years. This wave of executions has drawn condemnation from human rights organizations, yet accountability remains elusive.

The targeted executions and broader policies of repression signal an escalating human rights crisis. Without international pressure and legal accountability, Azerbaijani Turks and other minorities will remain at risk of state violence and systemic persecution. Immediate action is needed to prevent further injustices.

# INTRODUCTION

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

IRAN consistently ranks among the world's top executioners. The Iranian regime employs capital punishment not only as a judicial tool but also as a means of political repression, social control, and intimidation, particularly targeting marginalized communities, political dissidents, and national minorities. The disproportionate targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, including Azerbaijani Turks, Kurds, Balochs, and Ahwazi Arabs, depicts the systemic discrimination deeply rooted in Iran's judicial and political systems.

In many societies, while legal barriers to women's rights have been removed, deeply rooted social institutions, customs, and norms continue to reinforce gender inequalities. However, in Iran, both formal and informal structures actively sustain discrimination against women. The country's political and legal framework is shaped by Persian linguistic dominance, male authority, and Shia religious ideology, creating an environment where systemic exclusion is deeply entrenched.

Iran is also highly stratified along ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines, with marginalized communities—particularly in border provinces—facing disproportionate repression. These regions, home to non-Persian and non-Shia populations, have seen a higher number of arrests and fatalities during protests, reflecting the state's intensified political and security-driven targeting of minorities. Within this broader landscape of discrimination, women from ethnic and religious minorities experience compounded marginalization, making them particularly vulnerable to state violence and legal injustices.

Marginalized minority women in Iran face compounded vulnerabilities due to the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, and religion, which amplifies their exposure to discrimination and repression. Intersectionality, a concept coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, explains how different forms of oppression—such as patriarchy, ethnic discrimination, and religious bias—interact to create unique and intensified disadvantages for those who belong to multiple marginalized groups. Through this lens, it becomes evident that the

patriarchal and exclusionary legal framework of Iran's constitution does not affect all women equally; rather, it places minority women at a heightened risk due to their restricted rights to inheritance, testimony, travel, and employment, combined with ethnic and religious discrimination.

These intersecting barriers leave minority women with fewer resources, weaker legal protections, and limited access to advocacy, making them more vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and judicial injustices. Their dual oppression is further reflected in disproportionate sentencing, where they often face harsher legal penalties and systematic repression within an already deeply discriminatory system. By examining their experiences through an intersectional lens, it becomes clear that gender discrimination cannot be fully understood without considering the broader structures of ethnic and religious marginalization that shape their daily realities.

The legal foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, established after the 1979 Revolution, is rooted in patriarchal, traditional, and misogynistic principles

rights. A brief examination of Iran's constitution and civil laws reveals the extent of institutionalized gender discrimination, particularly in matters of inheritance, employment, and personal autonomy. For instance, Article 907<sup>1</sup> of The Civil Code grants sons twice the inheritance share of daughters, reinforcing the legal and economic subordination of women. Similarly, Article 1117<sup>2</sup> allows a husband to prevent his wife from working if he deems it incompatible with the "dignity and practicality" of the family unit, restricting women's financial independence and career opportunities. These laws, rooted in male guardianship and legal control, are not just discriminatory based on gender but become even more oppressive for women from marginalized ethnic and religious communities, who already face additional layers of sociopolitical exclusion.

Similarly, Iran's legal system devalues women's rights in testimony and compensation laws, further entrenching gender inequality. Under Iranian judicial law, a woman's testimony is worth half that of a man's, undermining her credibility in legal proceedings. Likewise, Article 560<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Civil Law

<sup>2</sup>Civil Law

<sup>3</sup>Islamic Penal Laws



money (diya), reinforcing the perception of women as legally and socially inferior. These discriminatory laws not only strip women of equal legal protection but also create a system where their rights are consistently subordinated. For minority women, these legal barriers are even more pronounced, as ethnic and religious discrimination further limits their access to justice and protection. According to Article 1108<sup>4</sup> of the Iranian Civil Law, "If a woman refuses to fulfill the duties of marriage, she will not be entitled to alimony." This legal provision has been used as a tool of coercion, enabling men to exert control over women. In many cases, non-compliance with marital duties results in economic deprivation or, in extreme cases, the imposition of violence against women.

Women in Iran are legally barred from holding key political and judicial positions. Article 115<sup>5</sup> of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran explicitly states that "The president must be elected among religious and political men." This provision effectively excludes women from running for the presidency. Further-

more, women are not permitted to serve as judges, further limiting their role in decision-making and governance.

Women in Iran face severe restrictions on their right to travel. Under Iranian law, a married woman cannot obtain a passport without the written and notarized consent of her husband. This requirement significantly limits women's autonomy and their ability to travel freely, reinforcing gender-based dependency and control. Iran's legal system not only systematically devalues women's rights but also disproportionately affects those from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds. Women from these communities face heightened legal and social discrimination, with fewer protections against state-sanctioned violence and more severe restrictions on their civil liberties. By analyzing Iran's legal framework through an intersectional approach, it becomes evident that gender inequality is deeply intertwined with broader structures of ethnic and religious exclusion, shaping the lived realities of minority women under the Islamic Republic.

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<sup>4</sup>Civil Law

<sup>5</sup>Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran



## 2. MINORITIES AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN IRAN

### 2.1. MINORITIES AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN IRAN

CAPITAL punishment remains one of the most severe and widely condemned forms of punishment in Iran, drawing persistent international criticism for its harshness and the risk of wrongful executions. Despite global campaigns advocating for its abolition and repeated calls for reform, Iran continues to rank among the world's leading executioners. The Iranian state not only employs the death penalty as a legal punishment for crimes such as drug offenses and murder but also wields it as a tool of political repression, particularly targeting minorities and dissenting voices.

The Iranian judicial system has been widely criticized for failing to uphold fair trial standards, with reports of coerced confessions, inadequate legal representation, and trials conducted behind closed doors. Numerous executions are carried out following proceedings that do not meet international legal standards, raising serious concerns about the integrity of Iran's justice system. Human rights orga-

nizations have documented cases where individuals, particularly from marginalized communities, were sentenced to death based on confessions obtained under torture or other forms of duress.

Ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by Iran's use of the death penalty, reflecting a pattern of systemic discrimination and repression. In 2023, at least 171 Baloch prisoners were executed, accounting for 21% of all executions despite Balochs constituting a small percentage of the national population. Similarly, Azerbaijani Turks, Kurds, and Ahwazi Arabs frequently face capital punishment, often under politically motivated charges such as "enmity against God" (*moharebeh*) or "corruption on earth" (*efsad-e fel-arz*). The execution of nine Azerbaijani Turk women in the same year—representing one-third (1/3) of all female executions—further highlights the intersection of ethnic and gender-based oppression in Iran's judicial system.

The Iranian government systematically uses capital punishment as a means to silence dissent, instill fear, and maintain control over populations that challenge its

authority. Activists, political dissidents, targeting ethnic and religious minorities, and individuals advocating for social justice or minority rights are particularly vulnerable to execution under broad and ambiguous charges. By disproportionately

the state reinforces long-standing patterns of marginalization and exclusion, ensuring that these communities remain under constant threat.

The execution of nine Azerbaijani Turk women in the same year—representing one-third (1/3) of all female executions—further highlights the intersection of ethnic and gender-based oppression in Iran’s judicial system.

As international pressure mounts for Iran to curtail its use of the death penalty, it is crucial to recognize the structural injustices that underpin this practice. Beyond the immediate loss of life, the widespread application of capital punishment against minorities serves as a stark reminder of

the broader political and judicial repression in Iran. Addressing these human rights violations requires sustained advocacy, diplomatic engagement, and accountability measures to challenge the systemic use of state violence against marginalized communities.

# CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

## 3. SENTENCED TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

### 3.1. SENTENCED TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

**S**HARIFEH Mohammadi, a labor rights activist currently detained at Lakan Prison in Rasht, has been sentenced to death by the First Branch of the Revolutionary Court in Rasht. The verdict was issued by Judge Ahmad Darwish Gofar, who convicted her on charges of “armed rebellion against the state” (Baghi) due to alleged links with a banned organization.

Prior to her sentencing, Mohammadi was formally charged at Branch 4 of the Rasht Prosecutor’s Office under the supervision of Judge Rajabi.



The charges against her included propaganda against the regime, actions against national security, and baghi.

### 3.2. Females Subjected to Capital Punishment

ON January 20, **Hajar Atabaki's** death sentence was carried out in Qazvin Central Prison. She had been convicted on drug-related charges.

On December 7, **Ameneh Alipour** was executed at the Central Prison of Zanjan. She had been convicted of premeditated murder.

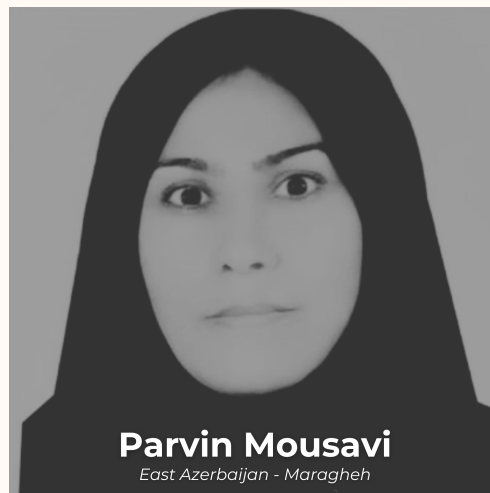
On November 10, **Mahrokh Khani** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison. She had been convicted of drug-related offenses.

On October 20, **Nastaran Firoozi**, who was sentenced to death for premeditated murder, was executed at Tabriz Central Prison.

On October 1, **Akhtar Ghorbanlou** was executed at Ahar Prison after being sentenced to death for the premeditated murder of her husband. A victim of child marriage, she was forced into a life that ultimately contributed to the circumstances surrounding her conviction.

On March 18, a couple convicted of drug-related crimes was executed at Tabriz Prison. The woman was arrested alongside her husband, Yasin Zolfaghari, in a

remain unknown. Both individuals were from East Azerbaijan, Jolfa.



On May 18, **Parvin Mousavi** was executed at Urmia Central Prison on drug smuggling charges. While incarcerated, she developed cancer, and her health had been reported as deteriorating prior to her execution.

On April 11, **Marjan Hajizadeh** and her husband, Esmaeil Hassaniani, were executed at Zanjan Central Prison after being sentenced to death in a joint case on drug-related charges. Hajizadeh was only 16 years and 4 months old at the time of her arrest, making her an underage victim to be executed for drug-related crimes in Iran.

On October 1, **Zahra Feizi** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison after being sentenced to death for premeditated murder.

### 3.3. MALE SUBJECTED TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

ON October 27, **Taher Ganjkhanlou** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death in separate trials for premeditated murder.

On March 25, **Abbas Aghaie** was executed at Tabriz Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On March 18, a couple convicted of drug-related crimes was executed at Tabriz Prison. The man, Yasin Zolfaghari, was arrested alongside his wife in a joint case, but her identity remains undisclosed. Both were from East Azerbaijan, Jolfa.

On April 11, **Esmail Hassaniani** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death in a joint case on drug-related charges alongside his wife, Marjan Hajizadeh.

On May 2, **Yaghoub Amiri** was executed at Ardabil Central Prison. He had been arrested four years earlier on drug-related charges and subsequently sentenced to death by the Iranian judicial system.

On May 18, **Fardin Mousazadeh** and **Mehdi Khadem** were executed at Ardabil Central Prison. Mousazadeh had been arrested five years earlier, and Khadem four years earlier, both on drug-related charges before being sentenced to death by the Iranian judicial system.

On June 22, 2024, **Nategh Hosseini** was executed after being sentenced to death for murder. Three years earlier, he had

been involved in an altercation in a house transaction, where he accidentally caused the victim's death by striking their head against a wall. Disturbingly, the victim's family requested that Hosseini's 7-year-old son be present at the execution, believing his presence might increase the chances of securing forgiveness from the execution. Despite this, the execution proceeded, and Hosseini was put to death in front of his young child.

On June 12, **Homayoun Salami** was executed at Hamadan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related crimes.

On June 15, **Farhad Masoudian** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been arrested three years earlier on drug-related charges and subsequently sentenced to death.

On September 10, **Keyumars Alaei** was executed at Qazvin Prison. He had been sentenced to death three years earlier for murder.

On August 31, **Mohammad Reza Abbaszadeh** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related charges.

On August 24, **Abbas Rashidi** was executed at Qazvin Central Prison following his conviction for drug smuggling.

On August 19, **Mazaher Eivazi** was executed by hanging at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been arrested three years earlier on murder charges and later sentenced to death by the Iranian judicial

system.

On August 3, 2024, **Hossein Salehi** and **Morteza Seifzadeh** were executed at Tabriz Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death on drug-related charges.

On August 4, **Mehdi Hosseini** and **Amir Tasbihi** were executed at Arak Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death by the Iranian judicial system on drug-related charges.

On July 25, **Hamed Naderi** and **Ali Moharramkhani** were executed at Qazvin Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death on drug-related charges.

On July 25, **Hasan Yousefiazar** was executed at Urmia Central Prison after being convicted and sentenced to death for murder.

On July 6, **Ali Ezzati** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death on drug-related charges.

On July 2, **Reza Ahmadzadeh**, **Bahram Moharrami**, and an individual identified only as "Mansour" (last name unknown) were executed in Tabriz Prison on charges of murder.

On December 25, **Habib Pournaghi** and **Sadegh Jouhari** were executed in Tabriz prisons. Sadegh Jouhari had been sentenced to death by the Iranian judiciary on drug trafficking charges, while Habib Pournaghi was executed for premeditated murder.

On December 11, **Sajjad Azizi** and **Ebrahim Valizadeh** were executed at the Central Prison of West Azerbaijan-

Miandoab. They had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder following a conviction by the Miandoab Criminal Court.

On 8 December, at the Central Prison of Tabriz, the death sentences of **Rasoul Ebrahimi**, **Khalil Hassanzadeh**, and **Abdollah Panahi** were carried out. Rasoul Ebrahimi had been convicted of drug-related offenses, while Khalil Hassanzadeh and Abdollah Panahi were found guilty of premeditated murder in separate cases. The Iranian judiciary sentenced Ebrahimi to death after four years of detention, Panahi after six years, and Hassanzadeh after nearly three years in custody. On December 4, Sina Shamselahi, a prisoner from East Azerbaijan Province, was executed at the Central Prison of Miandoab. He had been convicted of premeditated murder.

On November 27, **Morteza Pashaei** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On November 20, **Majid Talebian** and **Morteza Daneshvand** were executed at Tabriz Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On November 17, **Alireza Yarmohammadi**, a resident of Hamadan Province, was executed at Hamadan Central Prison. He had been convicted of premeditated murder.

On November 17, **Faraj Sarmadi** was executed at Zanjan Central Prison. He had been convicted of rape.

On November 13, **Ali Abedini** and **Salar Shamipour Zardkhaneh** were executed



at Tabriz Central Prison. Both had been convicted of premeditated murder in separate cases by the Iranian judiciary.

On November 10, **Kazem Babaei** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison. He had been convicted of drug-related offenses.

On November 7, **Soleiman Abbaspour** was executed at Zanzan Central Prison after being convicted of premeditated murder. Reports suggest that he was under 18 at the time of the alleged crime, raising serious concerns about the violation of international human rights standards.

On November 8, **Ezzat Seyyedi** was also executed at Zanzan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder.

On November 6, **Yousef Ramazani** was executed at Ahar Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On November 4, **Ali Momeni** and **Ramin Kazemalilou** were executed at Urmia Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder.

On October 31, **Abolfazl Shahbazi** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death by the Iranian judiciary for premeditated murder. On October 27, Mohammadreza Nemati was executed at Zanzan Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death in separate trials for premeditated murder.

On October 22, **Mohammadreza Hajikhani** and **Mehran Soltani** were exe-

cuted at Zanzan Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder.

On October 19, **Javad Ebrahimi** and **Behzad Ghafari** were executed at Tabriz Central Prison. They had been detained three years earlier on drug-related charges in a joint case.

On October 20, four individuals sentenced to death for premeditated murder were executed at Tabriz Central Prison. Among them were **Hassan Yousefi**, **Siamak Molaei**, and **Mohammad** (last name unspecified).

On October 16, **Yousef Shirvani** and **Jafar Samaei** were executed at Zanzan Central Prison. Shirvani had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder, while Samaei was convicted of rape.

On October 10, **Hamed Jafari** and **Ali Maroofkhani** were executed at Qazvin Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On October 9, **Hadi Fallah** was executed at Tabriz Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

On October 6, **Younes Pirouzi**, a resident of Ardabil, was executed at Ardabil Central Prison. He had been sentenced to death for premeditated murder.

On October 1, **Mostafa Kavandi** and **Ali Bahrami** were executed at Zanzan Central Prison. Both had been sentenced to death for drug-related offenses.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Urgent and concerted action is required to solve the serious problem of the death penalty against Azerbaijani Turks and other marginalized communities in Iran. International human rights groups, such as the United Nations and Amnesty International, should step up their lobbying and diplomatic efforts to put pressure on Iran to stop carrying out executions, especially those that are motivated by politically charged offenses. More responsibilities and transparency would be guaranteed by the creation of an independent foreign organization to oversee and look into executions in Iran. Records of executions, prisoner care, and judicial procedures should all be freely accessible to this body. Prioritizing legal changes is also necessary to align Iran's judicial system with international human rights norms. These changes ought to end the use of torture to compel confessions, abolish the death sentence for non-violent crimes, and ensure that everyone, regardless of race or political affiliation, has a fair trial.

Furthermore, immediate criticism is required for the disproportionate targeting of ethnic groups, especially Azerbaijani Turks and Balochi people. Legal and social protections for these marginalized populations must be the main focus of advocacy.

Ultimately, Iran must be urged to adopt international norms by moving toward the complete abolition of capital punishment, replacing it with humane and rehabilitative forms of justice. The immediate implementation of these measures is crucial to safeguard human rights and protect marginalized groups from further state-sanctioned violence.

