

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Serious Allegations of Torture to Force Confession

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(Beirut) - [Iran's](#) judiciary executed Mohammad Sallas, a Dervish minority member, on June 18, 2018, Human Rights Watch said today. He was convicted after a trial that raises serious concerns about its fairness, and despite serious allegations that the authorities tortured him in detention. Sallas family was allowed to bury his body in Boroujerd cemetery in Lorestan province, in western Iran, under a heavy security presence, though activists [reported](#) that his children were not allowed to view his body.

On March 18, after a rapid trial that concluded only a few weeks after his arrest, and allegations of police torture to elicit a forced confession, the court [sentenced Sallas](#), 46, to death. He was charged with killing three police officers by driving a bus into a crowd of security officers during the clashes that broke out after security forces violently repressed a demonstration of Dervish community members on February 19 and 20.

The Iranian judiciary's determination to execute Sallas after rushing his trial and sentence despite serious allegations of torture betrays the legal systems core function of upholding justice, said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. Instead of conducting an independent investigation into the security incidents during the February Dervish protests and granting all the accused a fair trial, authorities have once again shown their disdain for due process or defendants rights.

Based on the Supreme Courts verdict, [which Zeinab Taheri, Sallas lawyer, published](#), the sole piece of evidence used to determine in court that Sallas was driving the bus that killed three police officers was the confession that Sallas said he gave after police officers severely beat him. After the trial, on May 15, [Taheri told the Center for Human Rights in Iran](#) that authorities had beaten Sallas so hard that he almost lost his eyesight and afterward had serious hearing problems, and that it was under these conditions that he made the confession. He repeated this confession in his first court session, saying that he drove into the police officers, but did it out of anger over their actions and had not intended to kill anyone.

[Sallas said that police also had severely beaten him](#) before the bus driving incident, causing serious head injuries.

On June 17, Narges Sallas, Sallas daughter, told Human Rights Watch that authorities had broken Sallas finger after he told the judge during his second trial session that he did not remember driving the bus toward the police. There is no evidence that the courts considered the allegations of torture.

On May 23, Taheri told media that she had filed for an appeal at branch 35 of Tehrans Supreme Court, but the court rejected it. On June 12, Mahmoud Jafari Dolatabadi, the Tehran prosecutor, [told journalists at a news conference](#) that Sallas would be executed after Ramadan. During the holy month of Ramadan, which ended in Iran on June 15, the Iranian government rarely carries out executions.

Since the February demonstrations, about 400 Dervish community members facing vaguely defined security charges have remained in detention. On May 28, Jafari Dolatabadi told journalists that verdicts had been issued against 67 of them. On May 27, Faeze Abadipour, a member of the Dervish community, [tweeted](#) that authorities had sentenced 23 members to a total of 119 years in prison, plus time in exile and flogging.

Attacks on police forces are criminal acts, but Iranian authorities should ensure that all convictions are based on individual determinations of guilt after fair trials and not extend criminal responsibility to an entire group of protesters, Human Rights Watch said. Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all circumstances because it is an inherently irreversible, inhumane punishment.

Under international law, torture, as well as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, is banned at all times, in all places. No national emergency, however dire, ever justifies its use, or the use of evidence obtained by torture.

Under international law, everyone is allowed to participate in lawful and peaceful assemblies, based on the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Iran is a party. The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials require them to avoid the use of force when dispersing assemblies that are unlawful but nonviolent or, if that is not practicable, to restrict such force to the minimum extent necessary.

Article 14 of the ICCPR also requires Iran to ensure the right to a fair trial for anyone brought before the criminal courts. This includes the right to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defense and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing. The Iranian authorities should charge detainees only with a recognizable crime and ensure the right to a fair trial for anyone charged, Human Rights Watch said.

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