Human Rights Watch

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

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Prison officials in Iran have repeatedly threatened to execute a sympathizer of an armed opposition group during the Persian New Year holidays that begin on March 21, Human Rights Watch said today.

Valiollah Feyz Mahdavi is a 28-year-old sympathizer of the Mojahedin Khalq Organization, which the government has outlawed. The authorities arrested him in 2001 and charged him with the crime of armed resistance against the state. Mahdavis trial did not meet international standards for fair trial because he was denied access to a lawyer. The court sentenced him to death, and he is now being held in Gohardasht prison in Karaj.

According to Iranian activists, the prison chief and his executive deputy over the past two weeks have repeatedly told Mahdavi that he will be executed during the Persian New Year holidays.

Human Rights Watch expressed grave concern for Mahdavis safety, particularly following the February 7 execution of a member of the Mojahedin Khalq Organization, Hojat Zamani, in Gohardasht prison in Karaj. The same prison officials reportedly issued similar threats against Zamani during the weeks leading to his execution.

Human Rights Watch called on the Iranian government to halt all executions of prisoners and to hold a fair and public trial for Mahdavi with access to legal counsel, or to release him from detention.

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