

“A women’s revolution can save us.”

TRIER. (hpd) **Rayhaneh Jabbari was the victim of an attempted rape. She stabbed her attacker in the shoulder with a pocket knife in self-defence; the rapist died of his wounds. After seven years in prison, she is now to be hanged. The Germany-based humanist press organization ‘hpd’ spoke with Mina Ahadi about the case.**

hpd: Hello, Frau Ahadi. Can you describe briefly why Rayhaneh Jabbari is to be executed?

Mina Ahadi: Rayhaneh Jabbari, who is 26, is to be hanged because she is alleged to have killed Morteza Abdolali Sarbandi, a doctor and former member of the Iranian secret service, in self-defence. She stabbed her attacker in the right shoulder with a pocket knife, to protect herself against an attempted rape. Although the Iranian legal system has never properly investigated just what happened and lots of questions still remain unresolved, Rayhaneh Jabbari was condemned to death for premeditated murder. After seven years in prison, Rayhaneh is due to be executed shortly.

There have been similar cases in the past. If a woman is raped in Iran, it can lead to her being stoned to death for extramarital sex. Women can also be sentenced to death if, like, Rayhaneh Jabbari, they resist being raped.

How has public perception of this case developed so far?

On Facebook and in other media there are numerous discussions about women’s rights and the procedures followed of the Iranian legal system. Women, in particular, are taking a keen interest in Rayhaneh’s case and many of them are writing articles about it. There is also an increased amount of attention being paid to the death penalty at present. Unfortunately, German political parties and the German government have failed to address this case.

What steps have been undertaken so far against the planned execution?

Together with three other women who are active in the Iranian opposition, I have launched a campaign against Rayhaneh’s execution. We have started an [online petition](https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Catherine_Ashton_Ban_Ki_Moon_Ahmad_Shaheed_Save_26_year_old_woman_from_being_hanged_in_Iran/) [https://secure.avaaz.org/en/petition/Catherine_Ashton_Ban_Ki_Moon_Ahmad_Shaheed_Save_26_year_old_woman_from_being_hanged_in_Iran/] that has so far attracted over 125,000 signatures from all over the world. Since Rayhaneh’s mother is a famous artist and director, many famous Iranian artists have joined the campaign. In addition to open letters there was also a meeting with the relatives of the man who was killed, who ultimately have the power to decide whether Rayhaneh lives or dies. At this meeting many well-known people asked that she be spared the death penalty.

There have also been very many demonstrations - for example in Stockholm, Kiel, Hamburg and Iran today as well. So people will be fighting for Rayhaneh Jabbari’s release to the very end. Previous cases have shown that public pressure can definitely have an effect and can make a major contribution to saving the women whose lives are at stake.

What needs to happen to improve the situation of women in Iran in general?

I think that a women's revolution can save us. The Islamists have been conducting a very brutal policy against women. But in Iran there is a very active movement of self-assertive women who are working against this oppression and these breaches of human rights, and earning public acclaim as a result.

Since Islam cannot be reformed or democratized, it is necessary to take an avant-garde position. That means that Islamic governments need to be sharply criticized and eventually overthrown. Europe has already experienced a relentless struggle for emancipation from politically active religion and its human rights violations, in the form of the struggle against Christianity, in which of course the women's rights movement was also involved.

Mina Ahadi, thank you very much for the interview and all your efforts to advance the cause of human rights.

The interview was conducted by Florian Chefai