**British Woman May Face Execution in Iran for Insulting Islam**

April 16, 2014

By Shadi Paveh

Gatestone Institute

http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4272/iran-expatriates-persecuted

Roya Nobakht, 47, presently being detained as a political prisoner in Iran, may face execution for insulting Islam. She has lived in Stockport, England with her husband for the last six years and holds dual British-Iranian citizenship.

Her husband, Daryoush Taghipoor, has stated that his wife was arrested while visiting a friend at Iran's Shiraz airport last October for comments she had made on a Facebook group calling the government of Iran "too Islamic." [According](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/british-woman-jailed-in-tehran-for-insulting-islam-and-iranian-government-on-facebook-fears-execution-9233732.html) to a copy of her charge sheet seen by the UK's *Independent*; she was transferred to Tehran and charged with "gathering and participation with intent to commit crimes against national security and insulting Islamic sanctities"-- crimes punishable by death.

In an interview, Mr. Taghipoor told the *Manchester Evening News* that "his wife is not well at all...she has lost three stones [42 lbs]… and is scared that the government will kill her." He also said that a confession had been extracted from his wife "under duress." As is well documented, torture is systematically used by Iranian authorities to obtain confessions from political dissidents and even from some common prisoners.

Ms. Nobakht's fears are not unfounded. Iran's persecution of expatriates is nothing new. The first known case was that of Ms. Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian-Iranian photojournalist who died under torture in 2003 while in custody. Ms. Zahara Bahrami, a Dutch-Iranian, was hanged in 2011. Two Canadian-Iranians; Saeed Malekpour and Hamid Ghassemi-Shall, along with American Amir Hekmati, were all arbitrarily arrested while visiting relatives in Iran on vague anti-government charges. With the exception of Mr. Ghassemi-Shall, who was recently released, each one presently languishes inside Iran as political prisoners under dire conditions.

Ms Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian-Iranian photojournalist who had left Iran in 1974, returned in 2003 to cover a story about Iran. She was soon arrested and detained in Evin prison on charges of espionage. As Iran does not recognize dual citizenships, Ms. Kazemi was not allowed representation by Canadian authorities. She later died in custody. The Iranian officials claimed she had died as a result of a stroke but refused to return her body to Canada. In 2005, however, Dr. Shahram Azam, a doctor with the Iranian security forces who had examined Ms. Kazemi's half-dead body, fled Iran. He testified that the victim's body showed extensive signs of torture administered over a few days. The notes from his medical journal include a crushed toe, broken fingers, missing finger nails, broken ribs, a skull fracture, severe abdominal bruising, marks of flogging on her back and feet, extensive damage to the genitals and peculiar deep scratches on her neck. She was 52 years old and the first victim of the Islamic regime's war of terror on Iranians holding dual citizenship. Her body has never been returned to her son in Canada. After her murder, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, diplomatic relations between Iran and Canada deteriorated significantly.

Ms Zahra Bahrami, 45, who held dual Dutch-Iranian citizenship, had travelled to Iran to visit her ailing daughter. She was arrested in 2009 for participating in anti-regime protests and taken to the dreaded Evin prison. According to eyewitnesses, Ms Bahrami was tortured so severely she could not sit or stand easily and was denied medical care for serious lung complications. On Jan 29, 2011, she was suddenly hanged at 5:00 a.m. without anyone's knowledge. She was then hastily buried by the authorities in the absence of her children. Dutch authorities expressed shock and sadness over her execution and cut off diplomatic relations with Iran for approximately 20 days.

Mr. Amir Hekmati 31, an American born in Arizona to Iranian parents and who was visiting Iran for the first time, was arrested in 2011 and charged with "spying for the CIA." He was tortured until he finally gave a televised confession. As a result he was sentenced to death but thanks to heavy international pressure, in 2014 his sentence was finally changed to 10 years in prison. Two Canadians -- Mr. Saeed Malekpour, 39 and Mr. Hamid Ghassemi-Shall, 45 -- were arrested while visiting relatives in Iran in 2008, on various charges. Malekpour was charged with designing software that was used in an "un-Islamic" way by third parties, whereas Ghassemi-Shall was accused of the customary espionage. Both were tortured while kept in solitary confinement for over a year and sentenced to death. Malekpour wrote from prison that his jaw had been broken while his interrogators were trying to extract his teeth with pliers, and that he had only confessed to crimes dictated to him by his interrogators under torture and threats to his family. Malekpour's death sentence was eventually commuted to life in prison, while Mr. Ghassemi-Shall, was released in September 2013 -- both due to successful campaigns by various international human rights organizations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran does not recognize dual citizenships and considers all those who were born in Iran or to Iranian parents as Iranian citizens subject to its deadly Islamic penal code. One hundred and thirty-one offenses are punishable by death including theft, adultery, homosexuality, political dissidence, drug possession and blasphemy. It would be fair to conclude that travelling to Iran with any citizenship carries a risk. One enters a lawless and unaccountable country that lacks any degree of human rights, and where torture and hangings are an integral part of its government's rule and survival.