

# Executed For ‘Waging War on Allah’

February 13, 2014 by [Majid Rafizadeh](#) [37 Comments](#)



An Iranian poet and human rights activist was hanged in an unidentified prison on January 27, according to [the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center](#).

According to local human rights groups and the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, the charges against the 32-year-old poet, Hashem Shabaani Nejad, were listed as “waging war on God,” being an “enemy of God,” spreading “corruption on earth,” and threatening “national security.” He was arrested in early 2011 and spent his time in prison until his order of execution came.

Freedom House issued a statement on February 5th, pointing out that Shabaani was subjected to severe torture and interrogation during the three years he spent in prison.

According to the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, Shabaani was not executed alone, and was killed along with his friend Hadi Rashedi.

Both Shabaani and Rashedi were members of the Dialogue Institute. The Islamic Revolutionary Tribunal of Iran found Shaabani and 13 other people guilty of “waging war on God” and promoting “corruption on earth” a few months ago. All these people were hanged in January.

According to BBC Persian news outlet, the executed men’s families were informed of the hangings by officials from the Ministry of Information. The families were also told that they would subsequently be notified of the location of Shabaani’s burial site. According to reports, the condemned poet was moved from his original prison to an unspecified location before his execution was done. This is a common tactic and practice by Iranian officials, Iran’s Elite Revolutionary Guards Corps and Iran’s secret police when they plan to execute someone.

The 32-year-old was popular throughout the nation because of his poetry, promotion of literature, and was the founder of the Dialogue Institute. In 2012, Shabaani appeared on Iran's state-owned Press TV, and was forced to confess to "separatist terrorism," according to human rights groups

It comes as a surprise that the so-called moderate president of the Islamic Republic of Iran presided over this execution spree and approved the executions of the poet and the human rights activist. Depicted by the West and liberal media as a civilized, different, educated, and conciliatory political figure, Hassan Rouhani is viewed as a person who is on the opposite spectrum of the hardliner former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Last Monday, Rouhani ordered the hanging of the poet and human rights activist. This occurred despite the fact that last month the United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, Ahmed Shaheed, as well as Christof Heyns (the UN's expert addressing the executions), urged Iran to halt the surge in executions.

So what did this 32-year-old man really do?

Why was he convicted of "waging war on God," being an "enemy of God," spreading "corruption on earth," and threatening "national security"? What was the crime that was horrendous enough to deserve a hanging? Did he go out and started throwing bombs at mosques or governmental infrastructure? Did he terrorize people or kill other citizens? Did he use any violent tactics?

No. His crime was using his pen. His crime was writing. Even in reading his poems, one would notice that there is nothing really controversial in them. There were poems depicting the beauty of his city and the lives in his community. In one of his poems he talks about "the blonde sun of Khuzestan." Though in some poems and writings, he does talk about social inequality, he never incites any movement against the government.

According to The Jerusalem Post, Shaabani wrote in a letter: "[I] never participated in any armed activity, whatever the motives. I disagree with armed activities if there are other peaceful channels to make demands and express our wishes and aspirations."

Shaabani continues in a letter he wrote to his family from prison on how he was not capable of ignoring the "hideous crimes against [minorities] Ahvazis, perpetrated by the Iranian authorities, particularly arbitrary and unjust executions," adding, "I have tried to defend the legitimate right that every people in this world should have, which is the right to live freely with full civil rights. With all these miseries and tragedies, I have never used a weapon to fight these atrocious crimes except the pen."

Under Sharia and Islamic Shiite laws, the punishment for writing is being convicted of "waging war against God," punishable by hanging. It is crucial to point out that this 32-year-old man is not the first poet to be hanged for using his pen. According to Taheri, an

Iranian journalist who reported in Asharq al-Awsat, “Shaabani is not the first Iranian poet to be murdered by the mullahs. The left-wing poet Sa’id Sultanpur was abducted on the day of his wedding on Khomeini’s orders and shot dead in a Tehran prison. Rahman Hafezi, writing under the pen-name of Heydar Mehregan, had his veins cut and was left to bleed to death in the Evin prison.”

In addition, hangings based on perceived religious deviation have ratcheted up under the presidency of this “moderate” Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani. In fact, numbers show that human rights abuses are not only the same on the entire Iranian political spectrum, from “reformists, hardliner, or moderate Iranian presidents,” but in fact the atrocities have surged under reformist or moderate presidents such as Khatami, Rouhani, Rafsanjani, etc.

When the law of the land is based on Sharia and Shiite Islamic law of the ruling cleric like in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the crime for writing a poem becomes punishable by hanging and execution. While the international community is focusing on getting nuclear deals with Iran, it seems that any hope for condemnation for such actions has fallen to the wayside.

#### **Addendum:**

The Iranian journalist Amir Taheri, who has written of Shabaani’s poetry (which is mostly non-political) quoted Shabaani’s verse a few days after the poet’s killing by Iran’s presidential and judicial order.

#### **“Seven Reasons Why I Should Die**

By Hashem Shaabani

*For seven days they shouted at me:  
You are waging war on Allah!  
Saturday, because you are an Arab!  
Sunday, well, you are from Ahvaz  
Monday, remember you are Iranian  
Tuesday: You mock the sacred Revolution  
Wednesday, didn’t you raise your voice for others?  
Thursday, you are a poet and a bard  
Friday: You’re a man, isn’t that enough to die?”*

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