

Iraqi admits killing German girl, 14, denies rape

Author:

Tue, 2019-03-12 23:20

WIESBADEN: An Iraqi man confessed in a German court Tuesday to the murder of a teenage girl which last year inflamed anti-immigrant tensions.

He denied raping her.

“My vision went black and then it happened,” Ali Bashar, 22, told the court through an interpreter. “I don’t know how it could have happened.”

Bashar left Germany for northern Iraq shortly after the May 2018 crime but was arrested and brought back in a mission joined personally by Germany’s federal police chief.

His trial for the rape and murder of 14-year-old schoolgirl Susanna Maria Feldman started Monday under tight security in Wiesbaden, the city where the killing took place.

Around a dozen people held a vigil for the victim outside the courthouse.

For the murder alone, Bashar faces a likely life prison term, which in Germany usually translates to 15 years behind bars.

He denied rape and claimed in court that the two had consensual sex before she fell, got angry and threatened to call the police.

To Germany’s far right, Bashar, who is also accused of twice raping an 11-year-old girl in a separate case, has become a symbol of the threat allegedly posed by a wave of mostly Middle Eastern newcomers.

Before the trial, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party again blamed Chancellor Angela Merkel’s grand coalition or “GroKo” government for Susanna’s death.

The AfD became the biggest opposition party when it entered Parliament in 2017, riding a wave of public anger over sexual assaults and other violent crimes committed by some recent migrants.

In another case last year, the fatal stabbing of a German man in the eastern city of Chemnitz, allegedly by immigrants, sparked outbursts of mob violence in which far-right extremists hunted people of foreign appearance through the streets.

Bashar, along with his parents and five siblings, first arrived in Germany in 2015, the peak year of the influx which would bring more than one million people to Europe’s biggest economy. His request for asylum was rejected in December 2016, but – in a case critics label as symptomatic of an overwhelmed

and dysfunctional system – he obtained a temporary residence permit pending his appeal.

Merkel later conceded in a TV interview that “the case shows how important it is that people who don’t have residency rights quickly face a court and can be speedily sent back home.”

In May last year, Bashar allegedly beat, raped and strangled Susanna to death in a wooded area near his refugee shelter.

Her body was then buried in a shallow grave covered with leaves, twigs and soil, near railway tracks.

When her remains were found two weeks later, Bashar and his family had left Germany for Irbil, northern Iraq.

However, he was arrested by Kurdish security forces and, despite the absence of a formal extradition treaty between Baghdad and Berlin, taken back to Germany.

In a controversial operation personally joined by federal police chief Dieter Romann, Bashar was put on a flight back to Germany, with pictures of him disembarking under heavy police guard making front pages.

Bashar also faces charges for a park robbery in which he allegedly beat, strangled and threatened a man with a knife to steal his watch, bag, phone and bank card. He faces a separate trial from March 19, accused of having twice raped an 11-year-old girl – once in April 2018 after locking her in his room, and again near a supermarket carpark the following month.

Prosecutors have also laid charges against an Afghan youth, Mansoor Q., who was believed to be aged at least 14 at the time, also for the rape of the 11-year-old girl. Prosecutors have said Bashar’s younger brother – who is believed to be in Iraq, according to media reports – also took part in a sexual assault against the younger girl.



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Hundreds of Iraqi Daesh child suspects arrested: human rights group
Iraq says it can help return Daesh fighters to their countries

[Iran rights lawyer Sotoudeh to face additional 10 years in jail](#)

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Tue, 2019-03-12 16:13

TEHRAN: Iranian human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh has been sentenced to an extra 10 years in jail on top of the five-year term she is already serving, her husband said Tuesday.

Sotoudeh is an award-winning rights activist who was arrested last June and told she had been found guilty in absentia of espionage charges and sentenced to five years.

The new 10-year sentence was the longest of seven different verdicts totalling 33 years bundled together in a case and communicated to Sotoudeh in prison, according to her husband Reza Khandan.

"But only the longest sentence will be served, which is 'encouraging corruption and debauchery and providing the means'," he told AFP by telephone.

He said Sotoudeh had also been sentenced to a total of 148 lashes for appearing in court without the hijab Islamic head covering and for another offense.

She had been found guilty of "colluding against the system, propaganda against the system... disrupting public order" and several other counts.

On Monday, a judge at Tehran's Revolutionary Court said she had been sentenced in her latest conviction to five years for colluding against the system and two years for insulting Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

But Khandan said that to the best of his knowledge his wife had not been charged with insulting the leader.

The United Nations' top expert on human rights in Iran, Javaid Rehman, said the reported conviction was "a crystal-clear illustration of an increasingly severe state response."

"There is an increasing concern that the civil space for human rights lawyers and defenders is being reduced," he told journalists in Geneva.

Amnesty International condemned the latest case against Sotoudeh as an "outrageous injustice" and called for her immediate and unconditional release.

"Nasrin Sotoudeh has dedicated her life to defending women's rights and speaking out against the death penalty – it is utterly outrageous that Iran's authorities are punishing her for her human rights work," it said.

Before her arrest, Sotoudeh, 55, had taken on the cases of several women arrested for appearing in public without headscarves in protest at the mandatory dress code in force in Iran.

Sotoudeh won the European Parliament's prestigious Sakharov Prize in 2012 for her work on high-profile cases, including those of convicts on death row for offenses committed as minors.

She spent three years in prison after representing dissidents arrested during mass protests in 2009 against the disputed re-election of ultra-conservative president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

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[Israel shuts Jerusalem Al-Aqsa mosque compound after unrest](#)

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Tue, 2019-03-12 16:35

JERUSALEM: Unrest at a highly sensitive Jerusalem holy site led Israeli police to shut off access to it on Tuesday after several weeks of tension at the location.

Police said they evacuated the Al-Aqsa mosque compound after a Molotov cocktail damaged a police post.

Video spread online of scuffles between police and Palestinians before the site was cleared.

More than 10 people were arrested, police said, while the Palestinian Red Crescent reported two people hurt.

A police officer suffered from smoke inhalation, police said.

Police said they found a number of firecrackers and Molotov cocktails in searches of the site.

Residents said police were also restricting Palestinian access to Jerusalem's Old City, where the site is located.

Worshippers later prayed outside the locked gates of the site in protest.

Jordan, the custodian of the site, condemned its closure as "unacceptable."

Abdul Nasser Abul Al-Basal, Jordanian minister of Islamic affairs, told state-run Al-Mamlaka TV that the closure was an "attack on religious freedom."

The compound is the third-holiest site in Islam and a focus of Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

It is also the location of Judaism's most sacred spot, revered as the site of the two biblical-era Jewish temples.

Jews are allowed to visit but cannot pray there and it is a frequent scene of tension.

It is located in east Jerusalem, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. Recent weeks have seen scuffles over a side building at the site known as the Golden Gate.

Palestinian worshippers have been entering the site despite an Israeli order that it should stay closed.

Access to the Golden Gate was closed in 2003 during the second Palestinian intifada over alleged militant activity there, police say.

Palestinian officials argue that the organization that prompted the ban no longer exists and there is no reason for it to remain closed.

Israel and Jordan are believed to be holding discussions to resolve the issue.

Police have filed a request with Israeli courts for an order to re-close the building, but the court has reportedly delayed any decision to allow for more negotiations.

There are concerns in Israel that tensions at the site could boil over and become a political issue ahead of April 9 Israeli elections.



Main category:

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Israel arrests Muslim cleric at Al-Aqsa Muslims pray in banned area of Al-Aqsa for first time since 2003

[Palestinian who attempted knife attack shot dead by Israeli soldiers](#)

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Tue, 2019-03-12 12:03

RAMALLAH, GAZA: A Palestinian who ran at Israeli troops with a knife in the flashpoint city of Hebron in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday was shot dead by soldiers, Israel's army said.

The Palestinian health ministry confirmed the death but provided no details

on the incident, saying only the "Israeli occupation opened fire on him."

The incident started near an Israeli military post, the army said.

"Soldiers identified a terrorist armed with a knife running toward them," a spokeswoman said.

A physical confrontation followed, "then he ran toward a nearby building while still armed with a knife," she said.

"The soldiers then fired toward him, thwarted the attack and he was killed."

No soldiers were wounded, the spokeswoman said.

Palestinians have launched sporadic attacks against Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank.

Israeli forces have been accused of responding with excessive force in some instances.

Tensions run particularly high in Hebron, where several hundred Israeli settlers live in the city center under heavy army protection among around 200,000 Palestinians.

It is also the location of a key holy site known to Muslims as the Ibrahimi Mosque and to Jews as the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

In Gaza, a Palestinian shot by Israeli forces in clashes on the border nearly two weeks ago has succumbed to his wounds, the enclave's health ministry said Tuesday.

Mousa Mohammed Mousa, 23, was injured on March 1 in clashes along the border, ministry spokesman Ashraf Al-Qudra said in a statement.

He told AFP Mousa had been shot in the back east of Al-Bureij in central Gaza.

For nearly a year, protesters have been gathering along the frontier in often violent protests calling for Palestinian refugees and their descendants to be allowed to return to former homes now inside Israel.

Israeli officials say that amounts to calling for the Jewish state's destruction, and accuse the Gaza Strip's rulers Hamas of orchestrating the protests.

At least 255 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the movement began in March 2018, the majority shot during weekly border demonstrations and clashes.

Others have been hit by tank fire or air strikes in response to violence from Gaza, including projectiles fired at Israeli towns and incendiary kites targeting farmland across the frontier.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.

Israel and Hamas, which has controlled the blockaded Gaza Strip for over a decade, have fought three wars since 2008.



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Palestinian wounded in Israel border clashes dies: Gaza ministry
Suspected Palestinian thief shot dead by Israel police

[Dope-dealing ring on messaging app busted in Israel](#)

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Tue, 2019-03-12 11:10

JERUSALEM: Israeli police said Tuesday that undercover officers had broken up a drug-dealing network that used a popular messaging app and had connections in the United States, Ukraine and Germany.

"After several months of covert investigation 42 suspects were this morning detained in Israel and abroad for questioning under caution on suspicions of trafficking various types of drugs," a police statement said.

It said the transactions amounted to "hundreds of millions" of Israeli shekels (tens of millions of dollars/euros).

The suspects, the statement added, traded through the encrypted messaging app Telegram.

Police designated the ring "Crime Organization 420" and published its organizational chart, with one person at its head and a hierarchy of executives for finance, infrastructure, security and development, among others.

The statement did not give any names and did not link the suspects to the Israeli drug marketplace Telegrass, which uses Telegram.

Israeli public radio, however, said that Telegrass founder Amos Dov Silver was among those arrested.

The radio said that the suspects allegedly dealt not only in marijuana but also ecstasy and cocaine.

It said that Silver, a dual Israel-US citizen resident in the United States, was arrested in Ukraine and Israel would request his extradition.

The Telegrass website carried a message in Hebrew on Tuesday describing it as a "black day."

"Hope you never know how much it hurts to get up in the morning to find out that your friends have been arrested," it said.

"That their homes were turned upside down, that they were treated worse than animals, that their little children were frightened in the middle of the night with dogs and violent shouts."

A police spokesman could not immediately be reached for comment.

"Wages for staff and managers of the organization were transferred in cash, in bitcoins, or drugs, while concealing the source of the funds," the police statement said.

Officers of the Israeli police cyber-crime unit worked with Ukrainian, US and German law enforcement, it added.



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French drug suspect faces death penalty in Indonesia Saudi official vows to help fight drug abuse in Sri Lanka