Iran Opposition Figure Faces Death Sentence

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By AFP

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An Iranian opposition figure who had been living in exile before being arrested faces the death sentence, the opening day of his trial heard Monday, according to the judiciary's website.

Ruhollah Zam, 41, went on trial "behind closed doors and in the absence of the media," Fars news agency said.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the arrest of Zam in October last year, describing him as a "counter-revolutionary" who was "directed by France's intelligence service."

It did not specify where he was arrested.

Zam, who reportedly lived in Paris, ran a channel on the Telegram messaging app called Amadnews.

At the time, he was accused by authorities of playing an active role in anti-government protests sparked by economic hardship during the winter of 2017-18.

Telegram shut down Amadnews in 2018 after Iran demanded it remove the account for inciting an "armed uprising."

At Monday's court hearing, the prosecution read Zam's indictment containing 15 counts, said Fars, which is close to ultra-conservatives.

Zam's indictment, published later on the judiciary's Mizan Online website, said he was accused of "corruption on earth" -- a crime punishable by death.

Among the other charges, he was suspected of having "committed offences against the country's internal and external security" and "espionage for the French intelligence service."

He was also accused of having insulted "the sanctity of Islam."