

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Iran:

Last executor of child offenders: Amnesty International condemns the first reported execution of a child offender in 2006

In the wake of the first reported execution of a child offender in 2006, Amnesty International expressed its dismay that Iran should be the only country that currently executes child offenders- those under the age of 18 at the time of their offence.

Amnesty International said that the world is in complete agreement that the execution of a person for a crime committed when they were under 18 years of age is unacceptable. During the last decade, the judicial killing of children has all but stopped. Only a handful of countries now threaten to carry out such executions and in 2005 Iran was the only country to do so after it lost its main ally on this issue: the United States of America.

By carrying out the execution of a child offender, Iran is in violation of international law and its obligations under the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The organization expressed its deep concern for the many other child offenders reported to be under sentence of death in Iran, and called on the Iranian government to take immediate steps to prohibit capital punishment for offences committed by persons below 18 years of age, and stop executing child offenders.

On 13 May 2006, an unnamed 17-year old male and an unnamed 20-year old male were executed by hanging in Khorramabad, the capital of Lorestan province. According to reports, they were sentenced to death for the rape and murder of a 12-year old boy, and were tried in an extraordinary session.

This is the first known execution of a child offender in 2006. In 2005 Amnesty International recorded eight executions of child offenders in Iran, including 2 who were under the age of 18 at the time of their execution. The execution is particularly alarming in light of reports that many other child offenders have been sentenced to death in Iran, and are awaiting execution.

- 18-year old Nazanin Mahabad Fatehi (f) was sentenced to death after she reportedly admitted stabbing to death one of three men who attempted to rape her and her niece in a park in Karaj in March 2005. She was 17 at the time. During her trial, she reportedly told the court *"I wanted to defend myself and my niece. I did not want to kill that boy. At the heat of the moment I did not know what to do because no one came to our help"*.
- Ne'mat, a 17-year-old boy, is facing imminent execution for murder. He was sentenced to death by a Criminal Court in Esfahan, after he confessed to killing his sister's husband in a fight. In April 2006 it was reported that his sentence had been upheld by the Supreme Court
- At the beginning of January 2006 the Supreme Court rejected the appeal of 19-year-old Delara Darabi (f), who was sentenced to death by a court in the city of Rasht for a murder committed when she was 17. Delara Darabi initially confessed to the murder, but subsequently retracted her confession. She stated that she had admitted responsibility for the murder at the request of her 19-year old co-accused, to help him escape execution, because he mistakenly believed that she could not be sentenced to death as she was under 18 at the time.

- In March 2006, 18-year-old Mehdi (m) was reportedly sentenced to death for killing a man in Robat Karim, Tehran Province, about two years previously, when he was aged either 16 or 17. His brother was imprisoned for his involvement in the killing.
- Mohammad Mousavi (m) aged 18, was sentenced to death for a murder allegedly committed when he was 16. The sentence has been upheld by the Supreme Court and it is feared that he is at risk of imminent execution.
- Hamid Reza (m) is reported to be at risk of execution for a murder allegedly committed when he was 14 years old.

Amnesty International recognizes the rights and responsibilities of governments to bring to justice those suspected of committing recognizably criminal offences, but the organization is unconditionally opposed to the use of the death penalty as the ultimate violation of the right to life.

For approximately four years, it has been reported that the Iranian authorities have been considering passing legislation to ban the imposition of the death penalty for offences committed by persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of their crime. However, comments by a judiciary spokesperson suggest that the new law would in any case only prohibit the death penalty for certain crimes when committed by children. He stated that “qisas” crimes (crimes which carry a sentence of ‘retribution’, for example murder) were a private, not a state matter.

In its Concluding Observations to Iran’s second periodic report to the Committee of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in January 2005, the Committee noted that the Iranian delegation had stated, in the course of the public consideration of Iran’s report, that Iran had suspended executions of persons who had committed crimes before the age of 18.

It is time for the Iranian government to live up to its promises. The first known execution of a child offender in 2006 underlines the urgent necessity that the government impose an immediate moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and pass without delay legislation that prohibits the execution of child offenders.