

UA 271/07 Death penalty/ Fear of imminent execution

IRAN Soghra Najafpour (f), aged 30

Soghra Najafpour is currently believed to be in hiding. If she is taken into custody, it is believed she could face imminent execution. She was sentenced to *qesas* (retribution) 18 years ago for a murder committed when she may have been only 13 years old. Soghra Najafpour was released on bail on 1 October. However, when the family of the victim found out about her release, they reportedly asked for her to be re-arrested and for the execution to take place.

At the age of nine, Soghra Najafpour was sent by her family to work as a servant in a doctor's home in the northern city of Rasht. Four years later she was accused of the murder of the eight-year-old son of the family. Soghra Najafpour reportedly confessed to the murder during interrogation; soon afterwards, however, she denied that she was involved. Nevertheless she was sentenced to death, as the judge did not believe her to be innocent. At the age of 17, Soghra Najafpour was taken to be executed, but the family of the victim changed their mind at the last minute.

With the help of her new lawyer and human rights defender, Nasrin Sotoudeh, Soghra Najafpour's case went before the courts again and a new judge authorized her release on bail. However, her bail stipulated that she would have to return to prison on order of the Judiciary. Soghra Najafpour was reportedly summoned to return to prison on 22 October 2007, following the complaint made by the family of the victim, but it appears that she has gone into hiding. According to reports, the father of the victim had recently agreed to pardon Soghra, however, his wife insisted that she be executed. Failing to reach an agreement between all the blood relatives of the victim, in this case the parents, Soghra Najafpour is at risk of imminent execution should she be detained by the authorities.

On 23 October, Nasrin Sotoudeh submitted an appeal to the Supreme Court calling for a review of the case of Soghra Najafpour, but it is not known whether it will be considered acceptable for submission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

International law strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty against people convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18. As a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the CRC, Iran has undertaken not to execute child offenders. However, since 1990, Iran has executed at least 24 child offenders. There are fears that at least two other executions may have taken place on 17 October 2007. At least 77 child offenders are currently on death row in Iran. This number may be even higher as according to yet unconfirmed reports at least a further 15 Afghan child offenders may be under death sentence.

For more information about Amnesty International's concerns regarding executions of child offenders in Iran, please see: *Iran: The last executioner of children* (MDE 13/059/2007, June 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde130592007>

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Persian, Arabic, English or your own language:

- calling on the Head of the Judiciary to urge the Supreme Court to review the procedures in the case of Soghra Najafpour, including the manner of the interrogation, which led to her initial conviction;
- expressing concern that, if she were to be taken into custody, Soghra Najafpour would be at risk of execution for a crime committed when she was under 18;

- calling on the Iranian authorities to immediately halt any efforts to proceed with the execution of Soghra Najafpour;
- calling for the death sentence against Soghra Najafpour to be commuted;
- reminding the authorities that Iran is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibit the use of the death penalty against people convicted of crimes committed when they were under 18, and that the execution of Soghra Najafpour would therefore be a violation of international law;
- urging the authorities to pass legislation to abolish the death penalty for offences committed by anyone under the age of 18, so as to bring Iran's domestic law into line with its obligations under international law;
- stating that Amnesty International acknowledges the right and responsibility of governments to bring to justice those suspected of criminal offences, but unconditionally opposes the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Islamic Republic

His Excellency Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei
The Office of the Supreme Leader
Islamic Republic Street - Shahid Keshvar Doust Street
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@leader.ir

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Head of the Judiciary

Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi
Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice Building, Panzdah-Khordad Square,
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: info@dadgostary-tehran.ir (In the subject line write: **FAO Ayatollah**

Shahroudi)

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

COPIES TO:

Speaker of Parliament

His Excellency Gholamali Haddad Adel
Majles-e Shoura-ye Eslami
Baharestan Square
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

Email: hadadadel@majlis.ir

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

and to diplomatic representatives of Iran accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 December 2007