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Iran: Amnesty international condemns the latest execution of a juvenile offender

Amnesty International condemns the Iranian authorities' execution of Gholamreza H. on the morning of 29 October 2008. Hanged in Esfahan, he was the seventh juvenile offender known to have been executed in Iran since the beginning of the year.

Such executions breach Iran's obligations as a state party to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 6 (5) of the ICCPR specifically requires states not to execute anyone for crimes committed when they were under the age of 18.

Gholamreza H., an Afghan national, was aged 19 at the time of his execution but he was only 17 years of age, and so a juvenile, at the time of the crime of which he was convicted. This was the stabbing to death of another Afghan boy, Shir-Agha Hoseini, on 29 November 2006. Gholamreza H. was tried before Branch 17 of Esfahan's Penal Court and sentenced to death. He is reported to have confessed to the killing, stating that the victim had been harassing his sister and insulting his honour, and that he had bought a knife, arranged to meet the boy and stabbed him. His sentence was upheld by Branch 33 of the Supreme Court and confirmed by Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, the Head of the Judiciary. In a news release posted on its website, Esfahan's Judiciary announced that Gholamreza H.'s execution was carried out on the morning of 29 October 2008.

Amnesty International continues to call for an end to all executions of juvenile offenders.

Background

On 16 October 2008, Hossein Zabhi, Assistant Attorney General for Judicial Affairs, suggested that the Iranian authorities would cease executions of juvenile offenders, stating that no one under 18 would be executed in future, but two days later issued a further statement severely qualifying his earlier assurance. In this new statement, issued on 18 October, he asserted that *qesas*, or retribution – the term used by the Iranian authorities to mean judicial execution for the crime of murder, a judicial process viewed by Iran's government as a matter between two private parties – "is not up to the government, rather it is up to the private plaintiff", implying that executions of juvenile offenders may still be carried out if the family of the victim demands it.

On 20 October Amnesty International called on Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Sayed 'Ali Khamenei to intervene as a matter of urgency. He has the power to rule on this issue and to stop juvenile offenders being put to death by the state once and for all, including those sentenced to *qesas* for murder.

Iran has carried out the death penalty on juveniles under the age of 18 as well as on juvenile offenders who are over the age of 18 at the time of execution. Iran has at least 130 juvenile offenders on death row. Amnesty International fears that the true number could be higher. Since 1990 the Iranian authorities have executed at least 40 juvenile offenders, eight of them in 2007 and at least seven to date in 2008. No other country is known to have executed a juvenile offender in 2008.

See *Iran: Juveniles still to face the noose: authorities' word games exposed*, published on 20 October 2008; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE13/154/2008/en/9c97eefa-9ecd-11dd-9a4f-d36d3e7b43f6/mde131542008en.html>

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org