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Iran continues to execute minors and juvenile offenders

In the wake of the execution of three persons for crimes committed when they were children (under 18), including one who is still a child, in less than a week, Amnesty International today urges the Iranian government to put a final stop to these executions.

On 19 July 2005, an 18-year-old, identified only as A. M. and a minor, Mahmoud A, were publicly hanged in the north-eastern city of Mashhad. According to reports, they were convicted of sexual assault on a 13-year-old boy and had been detained 14 months ago. Prior to their execution, the two were also given 228 lashes each for drinking, disturbing the peace and theft.

Prior to this, on 13 July 2005, Ali Safarpour Rajabi, aged 20, was hanged for killing Hamid Enshadi, a police officer in Poldokhtar. Amnesty International recorded his death sentence as having been passed in February 2002, when he was 17 years old, and believes his crime may have been committed when he was only 16 years old.

As a state party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Iran has undertaken not to execute anyone for an offence committed when they were under the age of 18.

For the past four years, the Iranian authorities have been considering legislation that would prohibit the use of the death penalty for offences committed by persons under the age of 18. Under Article 1210(1) of Iran's Civil Code, the ages of 15 lunar years for boys and nine lunar years for girls are set out as the age of criminal responsibility.

In January 2005, following its consideration of Iran's second periodic report on its implementation of the provisions of the CRC, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), the body of independent experts established under this Convention to monitor states parties' compliance with the treaty, urged Iran:

"to take the necessary steps to immediately suspend the execution of all death penalties imposed on persons for having committed a crime before the age of 18, to take the appropriate legal measures to convert them to penalties in conformity with the provisions of the Convention and to abolish the death penalty as a sentence imposed on persons for having committed crimes before the age of 18, as required by article 37 of the Convention."

And, *inter alia*:

"to suspend immediately the imposition and execution of all forms of torture, cruel, inhuman or

degrading treatment, such as amputation, flogging or stoning, for crimes committed by persons under 18." (paragraphs 30 and 72.b of the Committee's Concluding Observations, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.254.)

So far this year, Iran has executed at least four persons for crimes committed when they were children including one who is still a child. Amnesty International has recorded 42 executions so far in 2005, but the true number could well be higher.

It is now imperative for Iran to stop sentencing children to death, to end the executions of children, and to halt all forms of violence against children.