

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Iran: Execution of young man arrested as a child an abhorrent violation of right to life

The Iranian authorities' execution of a young man on 31 December 2020, following a grossly unfair trial for a crime that took place when he was just 16 years old, has once again demonstrated their unrelenting assault on children's rights and their utter disregard for the rules of juvenile justice and the right to life, said Amnesty International.

The shocking execution of **Mohammad Hassan Rezaiee**, which took place in Lakan prison in Rasht, Gilan province, lays bare, yet again, Iran's shameful record as one of the world's most prolific executioners and one of the last counties in the world that continues to use the death penalty against juvenile offenders. It further exposes the Iranian authorities' sheer contempt for their obligations under international human rights law, which strictly prohibits the use of the death penalty against people who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime.

After more than 12 years on death row, Mohammad Hassan Rezaiee was transferred to solitary confinement in Lakan Prison on 30 December in preparation for his execution and executed in the early hours of 31 December.

Mohammad Hassan Rezaiee was 16 years old when he was arrested in 2007 in connection with the fatal stabbing of a man during a group fight. His trial was grossly unfair. Despite his young age, the Investigation Unit of Iran's Police (agahi) in Bandar-e Anzali, Gilan province, held him in prolonged solitary confinement without access to his family or lawyer. They repeatedly tortured him to obtain "confessions", including by beating him with sticks, kicking and punching him, and flogging him with pipe hoses. During his trial before a criminal court in Gilan province in October 2008, the court relied on his forced "confessions" to convict and sentence him to death, even though he had retracted them at trial and said that they were given under torture. Despite these flagrant violations of his fair trial rights, Iran's Supreme Court later upheld the conviction and death sentence.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all circumstances and considers it to be the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The use of the death penalty against Mohammad Hassan Rezaiee is prohibited under international law as he was under the age of 18 when the crime took place and followed a grossly unfair trial that made a mockery of justice.

Amnesty International is calling on the Iranian authorities to urgently commute the death sentences of all juvenile offenders. The organization calls on Iran's parliament, as a first step toward complete abolition of the death penalty, to amend Article 91 of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code to abolish the death penalty for crimes committed by people under the age of 18, in line with Iran's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Amnesty International also calls on the international community to take urgent action to address the crisis of impunity in Iran and hold the authorities to account for their ongoing use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders in order to save the lives of young men and women who risk becoming victims of the authorities' killing machine in future.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, Amnesty International recorded the execution of at least two other young men arrested as children: Shayan Saeedpour and Majid Esmailzadeh.¹ This followed the 2019 executions of at least six individuals who were under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. Their names were Amin Sedaghat, Mehdi Sohrabifar, Amir Ali Shadabi, Alireza Khodaiee,

¹ Amnesty International, *Iran: Execution of young man 'vengeful and cruel'* (Press Release, 21 April 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/iran-execution-of-young-man-vengeful-and-cruel/>

Mehdi Chanani and Touraj Aziz (Azizdeh) Ghassemi. The organization is concerned that there are at least 90 other juvenile offenders on death row in Iran.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without exception regardless of the nature of the crime, the characteristics of the offender, or the method used by the state to execute the prisoner. The death penalty is a violation of the right to life and is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.