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Teenager accused of killing “Iran’s strongest man” set to be hanged

The Iranian authorities must halt the execution of a 17-year old accused of killing an athlete known as “Iran’s strongest man”, Amnesty International said today.

Alireza Molla-Soltani is to be hanged in public on Wednesday in the city of Karaj, near Tehran.

“The fact that Iran has decided to execute a 17-year old shows how little respect the authorities have for international human rights standards,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“What’s more, executing juvenile offenders is strictly forbidden under international treaties that Iran has signed up to. The Iranian authorities must uphold their international obligations, overturn this death sentence and review Alireza Molla-Soltani’s case,” she said.

The boy was arrested a day after Ruhollah Dadashi, a popular athlete was stabbed three times during a driving dispute on 17 July. Alireza Molla-Soltani says he panicked and stabbed Ruhollah Dadashi in self-defence after the athlete attacked him in the dark, according to local media reports.

Ruhollah Dadashi reportedly punched Alireza Molla-Soltani in the mouth and slammed him against the car while the two were arguing.

Shortly after Alireza Molla-Soltani was arrested, a state prosecutor called for “a speedy resolution” of the case. A court in Karaj convicted the boy of “intentional murder” and on 20 August sentenced him to hanging in public. Iran’s Supreme Court upheld the death sentence on 11 September.

Alireza Molla-Soltani is to be hanged in Karaj’s Golshiri Square, where the incident happened, according to media reports quoting the victim’s brother who, by law, must be present at the execution.

Two of the boy’s friends who were with him on the night of the incident are reportedly to receive 80 lashings each in public at the same time.

“While we acknowledge the seriousness of the crime for which Alireza Molla-Soltani has been convicted, hanging a minor for acting in what appears to be self-defence is wrong and legally dubious,” said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

“Furthermore, the Iranian authorities must immediately order a halt to these floggings, and to review the conviction and sentence of all three. Floggings are cruel punishments amounting to torture which are also forbidden under international law,” she added.

According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the

Rights of the Child, international treaties to which Iran is a state party, sentencing someone under the age of 18 at the time of their offence to death is unlawful.

Iran is one of the very few countries still to execute juvenile offenders. Two were executed in the southern port of Bandar Abbas in April this year. Amnesty International also received reports that a third, 16-year-old Hashem Hamidi, was executed near Hamidiya, Khuzestan province in April. The authorities did not announce his execution.