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Iran: Execution of juvenile scheduled for Monday

The execution of Afghan national Abbas Hosseini in Iran on Monday for a murder he is accused of committing when he was only 17 must be stopped, Amnesty International warned today.

Amnesty International deplores the Iranian authorities' moves to violate its international obligations by setting a date for the execution of a juvenile offender.

"It is sickening that Iran continues to flout international law by arranging to kill those accused of committing crimes as children," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, Middle East Deputy Programme Director at Amnesty International. "We appeal to the Head of the Judiciary to issue immediately an order to stay this execution and ensure that Abbas Hosseini's death sentence is overturned."

Abbas Hosseini's was sentenced to death in June 2004 for the murder of a man who had tried to rape him in July 2003. He has since been re-tried but his death sentence has been upheld in spite of his age at the time of the alleged offence.

"Not only has Abbas Hosseini been sentenced to death for a crime he is accused of having committed as a child, but the protracted judicial uncertainty surrounding the review and retrial of his case, and the halting at the last minute of his scheduled execution, has also compounded his suffering," said Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui.

The victim's family are refusing to pardon him in exchange for monetary compensation in the form of diyeh.

Since 1990, at least 41 alleged juvenile offenders have been executed in Iran and over 140 are known to remain on death row. At least three have been executed so far in 2009, in breach of Iran's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child which unequivocally ban the execution of juvenile offenders.

Background Information

The Iranian authorities are planning to execute Abbas Hosseini in Mashhad, north-eastern Iran, on Monday.

Abbas Hosseini's was sentenced to death in June 2004 by Branch 43 of the General Court in Mashhad for the murder of a man who had tried to rape him in July 2003.

His sentence was upheld by Branch 41 of the Supreme Court on 30 September 2004. He claimed before the court to have committed the crime "in a moment of insanity," but this was rejected.

He was due to be executed on 1 May 2005, but at the last minute was granted a one-week stay of execution to give the victim's family another opportunity to accept payment of diyeh (blood money).

The Head of the Judiciary then ordered the local judiciary in Mashhad not to proceed with the execution and Abbas Hosseini's case was sent for review.

On 27 April 2008, Branch 13 of the Supreme Court sent the case for retrial on account of Abbas Hosseini's age at the time of the crime.

He was sentenced to death again on 5 August 2008 by Branch 103 of the General Juvenile Court in Mashhad. This sentence was upheld on 29 December 2008 by Branch 33 of the Supreme Court and has now been given final approval by the Head of the Judiciary, paving the way for his execution.