



## INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

### Iran: IGLHRC Welcomes Moratorium on the Death Penalty for Juveniles

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(New York, October 17, 2008) - The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) welcomed the announcement this week by the Deputy Attorney General of Iran that judicial authorities would put a moratorium on the death penalty for juveniles. The moratorium will take effect immediately, with plans to seek final parliamentary approval.

"The ban on juvenile execution is an important human rights development for sexual minorities, particularly those perceived to be gay," said IGLHRC executive director Paula Ettelbrick. "All too frequently, young Iranian men have been executed as juveniles after being charged with sodomy and other sexual crimes. This is a positive step toward improving human rights in Iran."

Over the past several years, IGLHRC has documented cases in which juveniles were executed based on allegations including sodomy charges. In July 2005, two teenage boys, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, were hanged in public, allegedly for sodomy and rape. Both teenagers were juveniles at the time when the events happened, and one was believed to have been a juvenile at the time of his execution. In December 2007, Iran executed Makvan Moulloodzadeh, a 21-year-old who was accused of committing anal rape (ighab) with other young boys when he was 13 years old.

Historically, Iranian Courts have interpreted Article 49 of the Islamic Penal Code in a way that allows them to impose the death penalty on children. Although Article 49 states that children are not criminally liable, judges often use existing laws to define the age of adulthood as 15 for boys and just 9 for girls. Last June, prominent Iranian lawyer Mr. Mohammad Mostfaii reported that there were close to 100 young people in Iranian jails waiting to be executed for crimes they committed as juveniles.

But this week's announcement by judicial authorities defines juveniles as those under age 18, and says that the maximum penalty for all crimes committed by juveniles is life in prison, which can be reduced to 15 years in jail with parole.

The change comes after significant opposition to the death penalty for minors was voiced in Iran itself. Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirin Ebadi has been an outspoken critic of child executions, speaking up against this inhumane practice at national and international forums and representing juvenile defendants in court. Another Iranian group, the Stop Child Execution Campaign, developed an Internet campaign with the goal of ending juvenile execution. In addition, many

Iranian women's groups have been active in the campaign against the death penalty because most of those who have been executed for alleged sexual crimes are women.

"This decision is a great victory for human rights activists-both inside and outside Iran-who have spoken out against the state-sanctioned murders of minors," said Hossein Alizadeh, IGLHRC's Middle East Specialist, "We hope that Iranian authorities will put an end to all forms of capital punishment, especially for same-sex relations and other sexual crimes."

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The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) is a leading human rights organization solely devoted to improving the rights of people around the world who are targeted for imprisonment, abuse or death because of their sexuality, gender identity or HIV/AIDS status. IGLHRC addresses human rights violations by partnering with and supporting activists in countries around the world, monitoring and documenting human rights abuses, engaging offending governments, and educating international human rights officials. A non-profit, non-governmental organization, IGLHRC is based in New York, with offices in Cape Town and Buenos Aires. Visit <http://www.iglhrc.org> for more information

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The Mission of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission is to secure the full enjoyment of human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression and/or HIV status.