



## **the end of the death penalty for juveniles ?**

**Geneva, October 17th, 2008 - The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) welcomes a significant step towards the abolition of the death penalty for juvenile offenders and urges Iran to take legal action to make it a reality.**

OMCT has been informed of the announcement by the Iranian Judiciary of the end of death sentences for juveniles who were under the age of 18 at the time the crime was committed. The directive of the Judiciary addressed to Iranian judges states that death sentences for juvenile offenders must be replaced with prison terms ranging from 15 years to life imprisonment. This reportedly applies to all crimes punishable by death under Iranian law. OMCT welcomes this announcement as a crucial step in the fight against the death penalty applied to juvenile offenders in Iran.

Despite this important advance, OMCT remains concerned by the fact that the directive has no legal binding force and judges could ignore it until the prohibition of the death penalty against juveniles is expressly enshrined in the law by an act of Parliament. Allegedly six juveniles have been executed in 2008 and between 130 and 140 juvenile offenders are currently on death row in Iran.

Therefore, OMCT urges the relevant Iranian authorities to:

- immediately stop all pending executions of juvenile offenders and commute death sentences;
- immediately apply this directive to all trials where a juvenile is accused of a crime punishable by death;
- start the legislative process leading to the adoption of a law by the Iranian Parliament stating the absolute prohibition of the death penalty for all persons that were under 18 at the time the crime was committed, whatever the type of crime;
- replace in the law death sentences by penalties that comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Iran is a State party; in this regard also prohibit life imprisonment without the possibility of release;
- fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly as regards the administration of juvenile justice.

Since its creation in 1986, OMCT has been a strong opponent of the death penalty. In July 2008, in reaction to the imminent execution of four juveniles in Iran, OMCT joined 23 other international, regional and national non-governmental organisations in a press statement initiated by Amnesty International and co-sponsored a press conference in Geneva with Terre des hommes, the International Institute for the Rights of the Child and Defence for Children International. In addition, OMCT and several member of its SOS-Torture Network have recently signed an international petition calling on the UN General Assembly to take urgent action to end executions for crimes committed by children in Iran,

Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan and Sudan. This petition (jointly initiated by Human Rights Watch and the Child Rights Information Network-CRIN), signed by more than 300 non-governmental organizations from 82 countries, was presented earlier this week on the occasion of the debate on the rights of the child at the UN General Assembly.

Finally, and in the light of this new directive, OMCT wishes to recognise the important efforts of the Iranian human rights community in support of the abolition of the death penalty.

Contact:

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

Child Rights activities (Coordinator): Cécile Trochu Grasso, [ctg@omct.org](mailto:ctg@omct.org)

Operations Unit (Director): Rolin Wavre, [rw@omct.org](mailto:rw@omct.org)

8 rue du Vieux Billard

P.O. Box 21

1221 Geneva 8

Tel : +41 22 809 49 39

Fax : +41 22 809 49 29

Internet : [www.omct.org](http://www.omct.org)