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## Amnesty International New Zealand urges Iranian embassy, Wellington, to prevent executions of three child offenders in Iran

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at reports that three child offenders face imminent execution in Iran, in clear contravention of international law. The organization is urging the Iranian authorities to prevent these executions, to cease all executions of child offenders and to join the worldwide trend towards abolition of the death penalty.

Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand through its Children's Rights Network has been campaigning against the juvenile death penalty in Iran since August this year. It has conveyed to the Iranian embassy in Wellington Amnesty's deep international concern at the continuation of this practice in violation of international law and Iran's commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both these instruments, ratified by Iran, forbid the execution of offenders for crimes committed before they reach the age of eighteen years, says Children's Rights Network co-ordinator, Peter Sutton.

"Executions of child offenders also contravenes the spirit of a United Nations General Assembly resolution, co-sponsored by New Zealand, calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions, and which the United Nations is expected to adopt today," (December 18, 2007).

"This is a clear expression of the world-wide trend towards abolition of the death penalty and we urge Iran to make a start by ending juvenile executions", said Peter Sutton.

The death sentence for murder imposed on Ali Mahin Torabi, for a crime he allegedly committed at the age of 16, has been approved by the Head of the Judiciary and he may be executed within days. Similar sentences imposed on two other child offenders are reportedly before the Head of the Judiciary for approval. More than 70 other child offenders remain on death row in Iran.

The execution on 4 December of Makwan Moloudzadeh, following a grossly flawed trial, brought the total number of child offenders executed in Iran in 2007 to at least six. At least one of these was under the age of 18 at the time of execution. To date, the Iranian authorities have executed more than 300 people in 2007 – a marked increase over the 177 known to have been executed in 2006.

The Iranian authorities regularly execute more child offenders than any other country – they have executed at least 28 since 1990. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are the only other countries believed to have executed a child offender this year.

### Background

A UN resolution calling for a moratorium on executions, and which the NZ government co-sponsored, was adopted by the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly at its 62nd session on 15 November. The General Assembly, sitting in plenary, is expected to endorse the resolution today, 18 December 2007.

The resolution calls upon all states that still maintain the death penalty "to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty." It urges these states "to respect international standards that provide safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty" and to "progressively restrict the use of the death penalty and reduce the number of offences for which it may be imposed". The UN Secretary-General will report to the General Assembly in 2008 on how the resolution is being implemented.

Widespread student demonstrations in Iran in November and December 2007 featured protests against the death penalty.

For more information about Amnesty International's concerns regarding executions of child offenders in Iran, please see: *Iran: The last executioner of children* (MDE 13/059/2007, June 2007)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde130592007>

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and *Execution of child offender Makwan Moloudazdeh is a mockery of justice*, MDE 13/141/2007, 6 December 2007: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE131412007?open&of=ENG-IRN> and **Iran: Further Information on death penalty/ fear of imminent execution / unfair trial concern: Ali Mahin Torabi (m)** AI Index: MDE 13/146/2007, 11 December 2007

For more information on New Zealand's role in co-sponsoring a death-penalty moratorium visit this link <http://www.amnesty.org.nz/web/pages/home.nsf/dd5cab6801f1723585256474005327c8/a344bebb5d7ced27cc257370000df909!OpenDocument>

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