

## SAMPLE LETTER TARGETING THE LEGISLATURE

**Please find below the sample text for a letter targeting Members of Parliament. It is best to mail the letters collected to Iran after April 2016, when the parliamentary election for the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, scheduled for 26 February 2016, has concluded and the Iranian New Year holiday period in March has ended.**

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Dear Member of Parliament,

I am writing to express concern regarding the continued use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders – individuals convicted of crimes committed when they were under the age of 18 – in Iran.

Between 2005 and 2015, Amnesty International recorded at least 73 executions of juvenile offenders in Iran. A UN report issued in August 2014 stated that more than 160 juvenile offenders were on death row in Iranian prisons. This appalling record has cemented Iran's shameful status as the top official executioner of juvenile offenders in the world. Such executions constitute an egregious violation of Iran's obligations under international law, including under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), both of which are binding on Iran, and strictly prohibit the use of the death penalty against juvenile offenders.

I am deeply concerned that the Islamic Penal Code (IPC) adopted in May 2013 gives judges discretion to decide between the death penalty and an alternative punishment based on their judgement of whether the juvenile offender comprehended the nature of the crime or whether there are doubts about the juvenile offender's "mental growth and maturity" at the time of the crime. This is in stark violation of international law under which judges or courts must not under any circumstances have the authority to sentence juvenile offenders to death.

I am further concerned that in Iranian criminal law, in so far as the death penalty is concerned, girls as young as nine and boys as young as 15 who are convicted of *qesas* and *hodud* capital offences may be held culpable as adults and sentenced to the death penalty.

I respectfully remind you that as a state party to the CRC, Iran is obliged to treat everyone under the age of 18 as a child and ensure that the penalty for those under 18 who commit offences takes into account the child's age. This is a different concept from the minimum age of criminal responsibility, which is the age after which children are deemed to have the capacity to incur criminal responsibility for their actions. This age varies around the world, but it must not be below 12, according to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In your capacity as a Member of Parliament, therefore, I urge you to make all possible efforts to:

- Urgently amend the 2013 IPC to explicitly prohibit the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people below 18 years of age;
- Urgently revise Article 147 of the 2013 IPC to distinguish between the minimum age of criminal responsibility and the age – which must be no lower than 18 years – at which an individual accused of committing a crime can be held culpable as an adult, in line with Article 1 of the CRC;
- Make the minimum age of criminal responsibility for girls the same as that for boys, [which is currently set at 15].

Yours sincerely,

[Name]