

UN urges Iran not to impose death penalty on juveniles



2 September 2008 –The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has urged Iran not to impose the death penalty on juvenile offenders, following reports that two minors were recently put to death, in violation of the country's obligations under international law.

Reza Hedjazi is believed to have been executed on 19 August and Behnam Zaare on 26 August. They are reported to have been 15 and 16, respectively, when they committed their crimes.

“These executions appear to be in clear violation of international law which contains an absolute prohibition of the death penalty for juvenile offenders,” OHCHR spokesperson Rupert Colville told a news conference in Geneva.

Mr. Colville pointed out that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which Iran has ratified, prohibit the death penalty for crimes committed by people below the age of 18.

OHCHR is also concerned that two other juvenile offenders, Mohammad Fadaaee and Amir Amrollahi, also face an imminent risk of execution.

“We urge the Government of Iran to stay the executions of both of them in strict compliance with its international human rights obligations, and not to impose the death penalty for juvenile offenders in the future,” said Mr. Colville.

OHCHR is also concerned over reports of a recent increase in the number of executions in Iran, noting that more than 220 people, including six juvenile offenders, are believed to have been executed this year.