

Head of the Judiciary Ebrahim Raisi
C/o Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN
Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 28
1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Mr Raisi,

Iranian teenager Danial Zeinolabedini is at risk of execution in Mahabad prison for a crime that took place when he was 17 years old. International law prohibits without exception the use of the death penalty against persons who were below 18 years of age at the time of the crime. Iran would be in violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which it is a state party, if it executes him.

Danial Zeinolabedini, now aged 18, was sentenced to death on 3 June 2018 after a juvenile criminal court in the city of Mahabad, West Azerbaijan province, found him guilty of participating, along with four other young men, in the murder of a man. The court rejected his lawyer's request that Danial Zeinolabedini should be issued an alternative sentence to the death penalty on grounds that he had not yet attained full maturity. The court reasoned that even though "he is younger than the other defendants [all of whom were aged between 18 and 20 and years old at the time of the crime], the way he speaks, argues and defends himself shows that his level of mental maturity is higher than them." The death sentence was upheld on 27 October 2018 by the Supreme Court and the request for a judicial review has been rejected. The legal proceedings that led to Danial Zeinolabedini's conviction were unfair and flagrantly violated the principles of juvenile justice; he was not allowed access to a lawyer during the entire period of his pre-trial detention and statements he had made without a lawyer present were used against him in court.

While I accept that the Iranian authorities have a duty to bring to justice the perpetrators of violent crimes such as the murder in this case, I urge you to immediately halt any plans to execute Danial Zeinolabedini, quash his conviction and death sentence and grant him a fair retrial in accordance with the principles of juvenile justice, without resort to the death penalty and excluding statements obtained in the absence of a lawyer. Please ensure that he has access to a lawyer of his choosing. More broadly, I call on you to immediately establish an official moratorium on executions and stop the use of the death penalty against all juvenile offenders and commute their death sentences without delay. I further call on you to initiate a legislative effort to amend Article 91 of the 2013 Islamic Penal Code to completely abolish, without any discretion by the courts or other exceptions, the use of the death penalty for crimes committed by people below the age of 18, in line with Iran's obligations under international law.

Yours sincerely,