



Gays Deserve Torture, Death Penalty, Iranian Minister Says

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Homosexuals deserve to be executed or tortured and possibly both, an Iranian leader told British MPs during a private meeting at a peace conference, The Times has learned.

Mohsen Yahyavi is the highest-ranked politician to admit that Iran believes in the death penalty for homosexuality after a spate of reports that gay youths were being hanged.

President Ahmadinejad, questioned by students in New York two months ago about the executions, dodged the issue by suggesting that there were no gays in his country.

Britain regularly challenges Iran about its gay hangings, stonings and executions of adulterers and perceived moral criminals, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) papers show.

The latest row involves a woman hanged this June in the town of Gorgan after becoming pregnant by her brother. He was absolved after expressing his remorse. Britain said that this demonstrated the unequal treatment of men and women in law and breached Iran's pledge to restrict the death penalty to the most serious crimes.

A series of reported executions of gays, including two underage boys whose public hanging was posted on the internet, has alarmed human rights campaigners.

The Pet Shop Boys dedicated Fundamental, their Grammy-nominated album, to Mahmoud Asqari and Ayad Marhouni, who were hanged in Justice Square in Mashhad in 2005. Graphic photographs of the execution of the youths, who were under 18 when arrested, were released by the Iranian Students News Agency.

Gay rights groups in Britain, such as Outrage!, accuse Iran of cloaking executions for homosexuality with bogus charges for more serious crimes.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the FCO released papers to The Times about the death penalty being used in Iran for homosexuality, adultery and sex outside marriage.

Minutes taken by an official describe a meeting between British and Iranian MPs at the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a peace body, in May. When the Britons raised the hangings of Asqari and Marhouni, the leader of the Iranian delegation, Mr Yahyavi, a member of his parliament's energy committee, was unflinching. He "explained that according to Islam gays and lesbianism were not permitted," the record states. "He said that if homosexual activity is in private there is no problem, but those in overt activity should be executed [he initially said tortured but changed it to executed]. He argued that homosexuality is against human nature and that humans are here to reproduce. Homosexuals do not reproduce."

Nicole Pichet, a researcher who also took notes of the gathering, told The Times that the discussion began with British MPs discussing the underage gay hangings. Mr Yahyavi responded by saying homosexuality was to blame for a lot of diseases such as Aids

Ann Clwyd, the Labor MP and head of Britain's delegation, said yesterday: "It is of great concern that these attitudes persist and we made it clear what we felt."

Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Nigeria apply the death penalty for homosexuality, according to the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Sharia's Victims

2005

 Homosexuals Farbod Mostaar 	and Ahmad	Chooka sentence	d to death	Iran said	Chooka had	kidnapped,	knifed and	raped a
student								

- A woman called Soghra was sentenced to stoning for adultery and being an accomplice to her husband's murder
- Two men executed in public after being found guilty of a homosexual relationship. A newspaper said they were convicted of sodomy, rape and kidnapping
- Zhila Izadi, 13, sentenced to stoning after becoming pregnant with her brother's child

2006

- Malek Ghorbany sentenced to stoning for adultery
- Leila Qomi sentenced to stoning for adultery and assisting a man who killed her husband. He received 100 lashes

2007

— Jafar Kiana stoned for adultery. His female lover Mokarrameh Ebrahimi sentenced to the same fate

Source: Foreign and Commonwealth Office documents released under Freedom of Information Act



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