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## Gays should be tortured and hanged, says Iranian minister meeting British MPs

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Homosexuals deserve to be tortured and executed an Iranian leader told British MPs during a private meeting at a peace conference, it emerged today.

Mohsen Yahyavi is the highest-ranked politician to admit that Iran believes in the death penalty for homosexuality following recent 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.

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The apparent executions, including those of two underage boys whose public hanging was posted on the internet, has alarmed human rights campaigners.

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 Labour 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.

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