CHILD EXECUTION IN ISLAMIC CRIMINAL LAW APPROVED IN 2013 BASED ON INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS OF IRANIAN GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

Since the foundation of United Nations (UN), the necessity to establish juvenile court and administering the reform, educational or remedial methods has always been a matter of concern for UN General Assembly. Out of 25 international treaties for human rights, Iran has signed only two, and approved ten others. Despite joining to children rights convention, Iran courts sentence under-18 children who commit capital crime to death. This difficulty arises from the conflict between Iran domestic law, which is responsible to supervise and determine the age of puberty, and convention contents, since the Islamic criminal law validates the age of puberty as the minimum age for criminal responsibility. Although the convention permits the member governments to consider ages under 18 for recognizing children from adults based on their domestic criminal law, but this age should not be that young to neglect the child’s puberty and growth facts. Chapter 10 of Islamic criminal law approved in 2013 is titled “punishments and security and educational affairs for children and adolescents”. Article 90 in this chapter defines the quality of pronouncing verdict for the retribution and limits. Criminal law for juvenile delinquency is considered one of the important and most debated issues in criminal justice, and one of the sensitive concerns of international society for the ones interested in the children’s destination, specially the delinquent ones. This matter is of double significance when we observe that the current approved regulations on criminal law not only conflicts with the contents of international
documents and previous laws and policies, but also is incompatible with scientific, legal and in some cases, Islamic jurisprudence principles. Although the uncontrollable increase of disorders and behavioral perversions in children and adolescents, and the growth of criminal population of the society in recent years has made authorities neglect the stereotypic standards and consider new conditions and criminal principles, but the major lines of criminal law for minors such as criminal growth, minimum age of criminal responsibility and criminal indicate numerous shortages and problems when the needs of our society and the acceptable international laws for our country is observed.

Keywords: Children execution, Convention of the Rights of the Child, Islamic criminal law approved in 2013, human rights

INTRODUCTION

Human right is an authority which any human being gains due to humanity, even prior to birth. This is an inherent right for mankind and is valid and irrevocable regardless of time, place and any particular situation. Therefore, a child as a human being, not only deprives of the mentioned rights, but considering his/her age and spiritual, emotional and psychological situation, and other various features of children, leads to a more special and meticulous approach globally and makes responsible and authoritative organizations such as UN General Assembly and its subordinate organizations pass new laws in this regard.[1] It should be noted that childhood is the period when the foundation of an individual character is being formed and the person’s mental and physical health depends on this time period and how to go through with it. Child’s uncompleted physical and mental growth will require special support of legislators for this society group. To achieve this, the supportive associations and also regulations play a vital and effective role to make up for children’s inability for maintaining their rights. Although other vulnerable society groups such as women, the homeless and the fugitive also need this kind of supports, but as mentioned previously, the formation of a human’s personality in childhood period makes this kind of protection much more mandatory.[2] Although in primitive communities there were not any regulated laws, but some strict laws had been approved in order to keep
discipline and security. The violator of social rights was considered a vicious, malignant and unforgivable person and the governors had to punish him in order to keep safe from God’s wrath. Forgiveness was considered a fault. Vengeance was not a personal act and contained no boundaries, even included the criminal’s relatives. The children and youth had a tragic fate in vengeance. It has been quoted that in ancient Iran sometimes the children were being tortured at the presence of their parents to make them confess to their sins. [3]The leader of various religions invited people to forgiveness, affection and generosity regardless of their tribe and race. By their influence, the vengeance manner was moderated. Boundary was set for revenge and vengeance was replaced by retribution. [4]

Retribution has been considered in Articles 95 and 197 in Code of Hammurabi, as well as the criminal laws of Rome Emperor, Greece, Egypt, and Jewish religion. It has been confirmed in the Islamic laws as the codes named “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” and so on [5]. Thus, the children were released from vengeance verdicts.

1) Societies in which the cities were expanding rapidly, made their governors pass regulations and laws in their authorization territory, and pronounced the harshest punishment for criminals and infringers to maintain security and peace and terrorize other misdemeanants. Magistrates had great authority for interpreting the laws and regulations and pronounce contrastive verdicts on one single kind of crime in order to execute commands of the King or governor. The method of punishment execution might differ according to the criminal’s social class, often involved pain and torture. The executors believed that capital punishments would keep their region safe from God’s wrath. The important and notable point is that the verdict for children was as tragic and sorrowful as it was for adults. [6]The purpose of this research is to study the execution of children in Iran in Islamic Criminal Law approved in 2013, based on international commitments of Iran government.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In a research conducted in 2004, Hassan Ali Moazenzadegan studied the criminal procedure for children in Iran law. It was mentioned in the research that the criminal procedure for children, which begins from the child’s very first contact with police force and juridical authorities, and ends with observing his/her accusation is of high
important due to the necessity of meeting the significant purpose of reforming and educating children, and prevention them from committing crime. The criminal procedure of children and adolescents differs from the one of adults in many aspects. One of these aspects is the police authorities and judges who should deal with children cases. As they are exclusively involved in the criminal procedure of minors, they should attend special training courses to get complete acquaintance with fields such as child psychology, social working, and criminology. The procedure should be conducted completely private, with considering children’s privacy. In addition to the criminal case, preparing a Personality case which includes comments of experts in medical science, sociology, social working and criminology, is of much necessity due to taking proper reaction according to the child’s character and manner. In this research, the major lines of criminal procedure for children in common law and international documents were compared to the regulated laws of Iran.

In 2005, TavakolHabibzadeh studied the reservation of Islamic Republic of Iran on international treaties for human rights. It was mentioned that Islamic Republic Government has approved 10 international treaties on human rights and only undersigned two, out of total 25. Among the approved treaties two were approved using reservation and the others were accepted absolutely and unconditionally. The others convention members and UN Human Right Committee has considered Iran’s reservation to the second type of conventions (such as Convention of Rights of The Child) too general and vague, and therefore in contrast with the matter and objective of the convention.

Mohammad Reza GoudarziBorojerdi in 2005 conducted a research to study the children criminal system and its conflicts with Human Rights. He indicated that criminal procedure of children, which begins from the child’s first contact with police force and juridical authorities according to commit actions against the criminal law, and ends with observing his/her accusation is of high importance due to the necessity of meeting the significant purpose of reforming and educating children, and prevention them from committing crime. The criminal procedure of children and adolescents differs from the one of adults in many aspects. One of these aspects is the police authorities and judges who should deal with children cases.
As they are exclusively involved in the criminal procedure of minors, they should attend special training courses to get complete acquaintance with fields such as child psychology, social working, and criminology. The procedure should be conducted completely private, with considering children’s privacy. In addition to the criminal case, preparing a “personality case” which includes comments of experts in medical science, sociology, social working and criminology, is of much necessity due to taking proper reaction according to the child’s character and manner. In this research, the major lines of criminal procedure for children in common law and international documents were compared to the regulated laws of Iran. Also, the offered bill for establishing juvenile court was studied.

“Child” concept in judicial system of Iran
Since the base of physical, mental and social growth start from the very first ages of life, children require special support and protection due to their particular situation, both physically and spiritually. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the authorities to keep the sanctity and value of childhood period, regardless of their political approach. The legislators play a vital part in this regard. His duty is passing laws to secure and protect the rights of people in order to maximize the executive power for “dos and don’ts”. Thus, examining Iranian legislator’s function in penal support of delinquent children reveals the challenges the executive administration will face with to make the parliaments approved laws operative.[7]

In law terms, “child” is defined “one who has not reached the required mental and physical growth to enter the social life” [8]. Therefore, it is generally accepted that children go through a complete transition of intelligence and natural forces when they reach a specific age, and then they will be prepared to participate in domestic and social life spiritually and physically. [9]

With the protection and taking care of them, children develop and grow eventually until they experience some changes in their body organs, signaling their puberty. Of course, reaching the age of puberty is not enough for children to achieve capability to achieve their rights, but they have to develop mentally to the extent that they would be able to make the right decisions with their discretion. Following the mentioned two stages, the child can be considered a grown-up and is capable for vindication. As mentioned previously, passing these two stages does not
follow a similar pattern in all children and depends on various factors. Therefore, to prevent actual problems and settle the disputes which cause confusion in the matter of children’s right support, a specific age has been determined the statistical child growth, and otherwise should be proved.[10] The age for criminal responsibility should be determined in a way that the child would be able to be counted responsible for his/her deeds. Generally, minimum age under which the person is not considered responsible, and the age of responsibility over which the person is perceived as an adult and holding complete criminal responsibility is determined.

Children’s rights in international documents

In 1959, The Declaration on the Rights of the Child [11] was approved by UN General Assembly. This approval was the first pillar for constitution of Conventions of the Rights of the Child, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1965 [12]. Also, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol Thereto in 1966 [13] and Convention on the Minimum Age for Employment in 1973 [14] have been declared regarding children’s situation. Two optional protocols have come into existence as well: the first is about participating children in war, and the other is an optional protocol on Conventions on the Rights of the Child, regarding children’s trade, prostitution and pornography.

According to Article 1 on Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989), the human beings under 18 years old are considered children. In this definition, the end of childhood period has been determined; but there is no reference to the beginning of it. It may be said the beginning of childhood is the birth, but some believe otherwise:

“This perception is not credible according to Islam; because based on Shiite jurisprudence, the beginning of childhood is the formation of embryo.”

In clause 1 of Article 1, providing children’s benefits in all conducted affairs by welfare institutions (governmental and non-governmental), courts, executive authorities or legal organizations have been insisted on. In clause 5, the member countries of Convention are obliged to observe and respect the rights and responsibilities of parents or legal guardians in order to bring up the child appropriately. In Article 11, child trafficking is made illegal and the
member countries must organize activities in order to fight against transferring and trafficking children, and help the resident children abroad return to their homeland.

It is mentioned in Article 12 that the children who are able to develop their own beliefs, should have the freedom to express their opinions on all topics, and their opinions should be respected. Moreover, they should have been granted the opportunity to express their own idea throughout legal and executive procedure through their agent, and within the framework of domestic law.

In Article 13, the restriction of freedom to speak has been mentioned. Article 14 insists on freedom of thought, belief, and religion and the child’s parents or guardians are bound to guide the child to gain his/her right in this regard.

In Article 32 of this Convention, child labor and its age limit and conditions is the matter of concern. The governments are asked to prevent economic exploitation of children, as well as any kind of harmful job which may end his/her education course, or be hazardous to his/her physical, mental, moral or social health. The governments are also requested to approve the law indicating the minimum age for children’s job and maximum daily hours of work, and other guarantees for it.

According to Article 33, child abuse for production, distribution or use of drugs or stimulants is banned, and the member countries are asked to conduct procedures in order to prevent such wrongdoings.

There are a few considerable items in Article 37 which all member countries are bound to respect them:

1) Torture, capital punishment (execution) and life sentence are banned for children under 18 years old. One of the major reasons of U.S.A reluctance to join the Convention is the aforementioned clause, because the execution verdict includes children under 18 years old in 25 states of America, and the execution has taken place in several cases.

2) Arrest, detention or prisoning the children illegally and autonomously is banned and is indicated as the very last solution. In case of prisoning, the children should be treated respectfully and humanistic.

3) Child should have quick access to legal consultation or any necessary assistance, and should be granted the right question the legitimacy of his/her detention before the court and competent authorities.

Clause 3 of Economic and Social Council of UN Human Rights Commission approval, titled “the precautionous policies for ensuring the support of people condemned to death
penalty”, mentions: “the people under 18 years old are not sentenced to death at the time of committing crime.”

The necessity for establishing juvenile court, and the relevant conditions

The criminal procedure for children differs significantly with the process for adults. The criminal procedure for children is defined as a set of firm regulations which should be observed in the fields of: uncovering the crime, chasing the criminals, primary investigation, method of criminal procedure and the way of executing the verdict, particularly considering the educational approach from the very first contact between the child and police and juridical authorities, in order to respect the humanistic goals for maintaining the children and adolescent’s rights to the utmost. Iranian legislators considered the special criminal procedure for children with approval of the law of establishing juvenile court in 1959. The mentioned law consisted of 33 articles and 10 notes and made some alterations in Iran criminal law including establishing a special court for children. Article 1 of this law mentioned that in any courthouse of any city, one or more courts should be established to deal with children cases exclusively, and according to Article 2 of that very law, the judges of juvenile courts should be selected from the ones whose capability of age, working history and other factors had been proved and confirmed. Although the equality of people before the law and courts in constitutions [15] guarantees the prevention of establishing courts for studying the crimes committed by particular social groups, but considering criminal science and criminology [16] achievements and advise of international documents, special courts with capability to investigate minor’s accusations have been established [17] in order to achieve the holy purpose of supporting delinquent minor’s rights and benefits. Part B of Clause 3 in Article 40 of Convention of the Right of the Child, has foresighted and ordered the formation of a juridical competent authority with independent and neutral approach to attend to minors’ accusations.

Prior to formation of juvenile court in 1959, Iran law had not foresighted any competent authority to attend to minors’ accusations. Following approval of then mentioned law, the juvenile court were established. With approval of the law for revising some articles of the criminal procedure approved in 1982, and establishing the criminal courts of 1 and 2 according to juridical precedent unity No.
6- 1985- 04-12, juvenile court was eliminated from legal system and the criminal courts 1 and 2 were bound to attend to minors’ accusation regarding the type and intensity of the committed crime. [18]

To make up for this problem, according to note 8 of executive regulation of formation of public and revolutionary court law approved in 1994, legislators order that the chief of judiciary branch can appoint any of the judges of public courts for juvenile courts with a particular declaration.

The method of attending to juvenile accusations

Police or juridical authorities in charge of and primary prosecution and investigation, should achieve competence through attending in special training courses which supervise how to treat juvenile. Considered that in the current legal system of Iran, the legislator has not obligated passing the mentioned courses for police or juridical authorities, the regulations have an obvious deficiency. Article 12 of UN standard regulation has advised to appoint competent and trained bailiffs for prosecution and investigation on the issues regarding the primary stage of juvenile court, due to the delicacy and importance of such cases. [19]

Article 12 indicates: “police officers, mostly or exclusively, are dealing with juvenile affairs or are attempting to prevent juvenile crime commitment. Therefore, they have to become trained and competent in a special method to fulfill their duty to the best. There should establish special police units in this regard.”

In the offered bill of formation of juvenile court law, Article 14 to 19 pinpoints the primary prosecution and investigation. According to the content of Article 19, primary prosecution and has been entrusted to the magistrates of juvenile court, and the particular branches of public prosecutor’s office which is acting in assistance with juvenile court. According the note in that very law, the bailiffs of ministry of justice are obliged to immediately introduce a delinquent minor to public prosecutor’s office or juvenile court according to the case, upon his/her arrest. The problem with this offered bill is that it has not foresighted passing special training courses for judges and bailiffs of the mentioned courts and prosecutor’s office, and even has denied the need for public prosecutor: “according to Article 14, the complete process of prosecution, investigation and attention to juvenile crime, provided that their legal
punishment is less than three-year sentence or the crime is considered repugnant to chastity, should be chiefly done by juvenile court, and it is obliged to fulfill the duty that, according to the law, is on bailiffs and public prosecutor’s office.” [20]

the major purpose of discovery, prosecution, primary investigation in attending to juvenile accusation is to train, reform, educate and rebuild their character to help them become more compatible with moral and social values and religious principles; Thus, in case of confirmation of their crime by juvenile court at the end of primary investigation and prosecution, the decision should be made according to the known regulations and criteria of prosecution principles for juvenile. [21]

According to these regulations, decision-making should be proportionate to the intensity of the committed crime and his/her special character and situation and be devoid of any suspension of harassment for vengeance. The judges should be cautious not to awaken the sense of aggression, vengeance and hostility in the law-challenging juvenile while executing the decisions.

**Revision in the verdicts of juvenile court**

According to Article 15 of formation of juvenile court, the decisions made by the court, and by the misdemeanor court which acts as the deputy of juvenile court, is considered final on clause 1 in Article 33 of Law of Public Punishment, and is only investigable from the accused according to clause 2 of Article 17. Therefore, the verdict about crime, either acquittal or guilt, was considered final about children older than 12 years old, but it could be investigated and appealed on misdemeanor cases. Also, the local decrees of incompetence and prevention or cancellation of prosecution on the children whose age was over 12 could be appealed. Meanwhile, according to regulation of Article 21 of formation of juvenile court law and note 2 of Article 33 of Law of Public Punishment approved in 1973, juvenile court or the issuing court may revise its decision once, according to the reports from Reform and Education Institute about children’s latest situation and education. This revision can be the reduction of determined periods by 25%, or can decide to submit the child to his/her legal guardian Instead of sending him/her to Reform and Education Institute. The verdict of court in this case is considered final. Also, according to the note in the mentioned law Article “about the children older than 12 years old, the change of decision is possible only if the child would
have spent at least one-third of the sentence indicated in the verdict in Reform and Education Institute.” Islamic legislator with compliance to the aforementioned regulations, briefly indicate in Article 230 of criminal procedure code: “the verdict of juvenile courts are revisable according to the law”, and insists: “juvenile court may revise its previous decisions once, according to the received reports from Reform and Education Institute on children’s latest education and situation. This revision can take placein the form of reduction of sentence by 25%.” Considering these laws, some items should be pinpointed:

1) Criminal children who have not reached religious pubertyshould only be chastised. If they commit murder, assault or battery, child’s parents or guardian has to bail, so it is not clear what remission may be taken place. The remission is possible if we accept that regulation of Article 229 of Criminal Procedure Code is executable in regard to regulations of note 2 in Article 49 of Islamic Punishment Law.

2) Although juvenile courts are bound to attend to the crimes committed by people under 18 years old, but attention to their cases will be performed based on public regulation of adults and they will be punished according to Islamic Punishment Law. Thus, since religious verdicts do not determine maximum and minimum limits, if children older than 9 and 15 years old are condemned toHodud, retribution or restitution, the execution of regulation in Article 229 of Criminal Procedure Code about revision about the previous final verdicts is considered cancelled except the cases requiringTa’zir or preventive crimes. In these cases, court can change or reduce the sentence considering the minor’s character, or can issue a decree to suspend the sentence. In case of confinement sentence in Reform and Education Institute, the children can benefit the conditional freedom.

3) According to the laws of Criminal Procedure Code about revision of verdict and decrees from the primary court, the revision authority will be province courts of revision or Iran Supreme Court. But on the issued verdict in juvenile courts, in case of being revisable, there is not any particular organization for province courts of revision. It is required to have particular branches determined by the Judiciary Branch with competence to revise the verdicts of juvenile court in any province (Shambiati, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION
The juvenile legal rights are mostly altered by conventions and generally international documents specially UN approvals. These documents which are prepared and arranged at the presence of governments authorities and considers their political, cultural, social and legal view, plays a major role in internationalizing the legal organizations and different policies for delinquent minors, and generally globalizing the criminal policy which is supervising juvenile delinquency.

The people under 18 are more vulnerable to delinquency due to the determined age of majority by International Convention of the Rights of the Child; their character is still in the course of development; situation for being abused by adult criminals are readier; they composed about one-third of many third world countries; the major victims of poverty, unemployment, physical, psychological and sexual harassment are children and so on. That is why the greatest concern in criminal justice is, human rights, criminology, penology, legalaffairs and so on is about delinquents and delinquency victims.

Regarding the critical topic of criminal responsibility of children and the secondary topics in Islamic jurisprudence and law, and the present innovation in criminal responsibility bill, the indispensability of this bill is promising to solve many of the deficiency of Islamic Punishment Law. The significant change which has taken place with approval of Islamic Punishment bill is that the children who are considered adult according to religion (age of religious puberty for girls is 9, and for boys is 15 years old) but are under 18 years old, are exempted from retribution and Islamic boundaries if any dubiety exists in their rationality. Based on this approval, Children do not hold any criminal responsibilities and Ta’zir punishment for people under 18 differs from the ones older than 18. There is no prison sentence for people under 18, but they will be sent to the educational centers such as Reform and Education Institute, and if their parents are recognized incapable for taking care of them, they will be under the care of a trustworthy natural or legal person. Founding a section for juvenile punishment and dividing under 18 criminals to under 9, 9 to 15 and 15 to 18 sections are one of the most important features of this law. Thus, a different kind of punishment can be considered for each of the aforementioned category, with exemption of under-9 criminals who do not hold criminal responsibility. All of these cases are supported by Islamic jurisprudence.
discussions and rational and traditional reasons. Legislator should approve the relevant complementary regulations with consideration of the aforementioned discussions and ideas and in accordance with legislation knowledge.

International Law is founding the bases of a system which is mostly concentrated on the child topic. Therefore, it has considered more support compared to what is foresighted in the domestic law of most countries. The unwillingness of governments to improve children criminal justice is because of prejudice and moral concerns of the society, which have been intensified by mass media about juvenile delinquency. Nevertheless, the recent progresses indicate that its worldwide application in international courts can result in a new source of support for the children whose rights are being neglected at the time of dealing with their crime.

Observing the affairs of international organization and the collected data in this study, it can be concluded that it is not enough to fight children’s commitment of crime to save them from falling into the crime world and the society should take legal responsibility of juvenile by passing special laws and regulations, and in emergency situations has to defend their rights against adults. Meanwhile, the criminal laws for children in Iran is vague, deficient, contradictive to domestic laws and in conflict with upcoming needs of society and also international regulations, such as Convention of the Rights of the Child. In this regard, strict and harsh kinds of punishment such as execution, retribution, life sentence, whipping and so on should be eliminated from children’s list of punishment with the aid of Islamic developing jurisprudence.

Moreover, it is mandatory for legislators to benefit of the scientific data and findings of relevant field of sciences, such as criminal psychology and criminology, instead of applying strict and unfair punishment and try to discover the roots and factors of juvenile delinquency, and adopt security and educational policies, provide the ground for reform, rehabilitation and decrease the rate of crime. If punishment is selected as the only solution instead of support, not only the delinquent child deprives of moral reform experience, but he/she will develop more various complexes. Therefore, the type of support should be appropriate with the child’s stimulating factors for committing crime. These programs should incline to diversity, social knowledge and cross-device.
Finally, it is suggested that the relation between sexual puberty and mental growth, and distinguishing sexual puberty from criminal growth to be considered by the legislators, as it has been observed in civil affairs and Iran Law has made a difference between civil competence in financial matters and sexual puberty.

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