THE HON STEPHEN SMITH MP

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA   ACT   2600

2 7 MAY 2009

Dear Madam Chair

Thank you for your letter dated 8 May 2009 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning a petition against the death penalty in Iran and the possible execution of a Kurdish Iranian teacher, Mr Farzad Kamangar.

The Government is committed to promoting international human rights standards in Iran, including equal treatment for all Iran's citizens. The Australian Government is deeply concerned by reports of persecution of political and social activists and the ongoing suppression of freedom of expression.

Australian officials, in Canberra and Tehran, have made clear repeatedly to the Iranian authorities Australia's strong concerns about human rights in Iran. In addition, Australia has joined with the European Union in representations to the Iranian Government, calling on Iran to fulfil its international human rights obligations, including with respect to Mr Kamangar's Kurdish community.

On the specific case of Mr Kamangar, we joined with the European Union in 2008 in expressing our concerns to the Government of Iran. As far as we are aware, Mr Kamangar's sentence of execution has not been carried out. Our Embassy in Tehran will continue to monitor his case.

The Government also has a policy of global opposition to the death penalty, and is working with the international community to achieve its universal abolition. Australia was an original co-sponsor of this year's United Nations General Assembly's resolution on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and is working actively with likeminded countries in New York to ensure that this issue remains on the General Assembly's agenda.

The Australian Government will continue to raise its concerns about human rights in Iran with the Iranian authorities.

Thank you for referring this petition to me.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Smith