

Human rights situation in Iran, particularly mass executions and the recent death of the blogger Sattar Beheshti

European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2012 on the human rights situation in Iran, particularly mass executions and the recent death of the blogger Sattar Beheshti (2012/2877(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iran, in particular those concerning human rights,
 - having regard to the statement of 23 October 2012 by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on ten recent executions in Iran,
 - having regard to the statement of 11 November 2012 by the spokesperson of the VP/HR on the death in custody of the Iranian blogger Sattar Beheshti,
 - having regard to the report of 13 September 2012 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Iran,
 - having regard to the release from prison of Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani in September 2012,
 - having regard to UN General Assembly resolutions 62/149 of 18 December 2007 and 63/168 of 18 December 2008 on a moratorium on the use of the death penalty,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to all of which Iran is a party,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) and to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the current human rights situation in Iran is characterised by an ongoing pattern of systematic violations of fundamental rights; whereas human rights defenders (in particular women's, children's and minority rights activists), journalists, bloggers, artists, student leaders, lawyers, trade unionists and environmentalists continue to live under severe pressure and the constant threat of arrest;
- B. whereas the blogger Sattar Beheshti, who criticised the Iranian regime on the internet, was arrested on 30 October 2012 by the specialised cyber police unit – known as Fata – for alleged cyber crimes, and died in custody; whereas the exact circumstances of his death are not yet established, and whereas several reports indicate that he died as a result of torture in an Iranian detention facility;
- C. whereas members of the family of Sattar Beheshti living in Iran have been threatened with arrest if they speak to the media about his death or file a lawsuit against the alleged torture culprits;

- D. whereas the death of Sattar Beheshti is another tragic example of the systematic and ongoing torture, ill-treatment and denial of basic rights to which prisoners of conscience in Iran are routinely subjected while security and intelligence agents operate in an atmosphere of complete impunity;
- E. whereas, after several days of silence on the death of Sattar Beheshti, the Iranian judiciary's Human Rights Council declared its commitment to review all aspects of the case and to prosecute with vigour all persons involved in the case;
- F. whereas Iranian Deputy Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Hasan Abutorabifard declared on 11 November 2012 that the Iranian Parliament's Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy would investigate the case;
- G. whereas the UN Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in Iran, on summary executions, on torture and on freedom of expression have welcomed the Iranian Parliament's and judiciary's decisions to investigate Mr Beheshti's death, while also noting that a number of cases have been reported in Iran in which detainees allegedly died in custody as a result of mistreatment or torture, lack of medical attention or neglect;
- H. whereas on 22 October 2012 Saeed Sedighi and nine other men were executed on charges of drug offences; whereas most of these men did not receive a fair trial and were subjected to torture during their detention;
- I. whereas, following Mr Sedighi's execution, the authorities warned his family members not to speak to the media and barred them from holding a public funeral ceremony after his burial;
- J. whereas a dramatic increase in executions, including of juveniles, has been recorded in Iran in recent years, with over 300 executions registered since the beginning of 2012; whereas the death penalty is regularly imposed in cases where the accused are denied their due-process rights and for crimes that do not fall into the category of 'most serious crimes' under international standards;
- K. whereas the Iranian authorities continue their efforts to build a 'halal internet', effectively denying Iranians access to the World Wide Web, and to use information and communication technologies to crack down on fundamental freedoms, such as the freedoms of expression and assembly; whereas Iran restricts internet freedom by putting limits on available bandwidth by developing state-run servers and specific internet protocols (IPs), internet service providers (ISPs) and search engines, and by blocking international and domestic social networking sites;
- L. whereas the 2012 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought has been awarded to two Iranian activists, the lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh and the film director Jafar Panahi; whereas Nasrin Sotoudeh is serving a jail sentence for her work to highlight human rights abuses in Iran and has embarked on a hunger strike after being refused family visits; whereas Jafar Panahi is appealing a six-year jail sentence, a 20-year ban on film-making and a travel ban imposed on him;
- 1. Expresses grave concern over the steadily deteriorating human rights situation in Iran, the growing number of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, the continuously high number of executions, including of juveniles, the widespread torture, unfair trials and

exorbitant sums demanded for bail, and the heavy restrictions on freedom of information, expression, assembly, religion, education and movement;

2. Is deeply concerned about the death in prison of Sattar Beheshti; urges the Iranian authorities to conduct a thorough enquiry into the case, in order to establish the exact circumstances of his death;
3. Is deeply concerned by the reports indicating that Sattar Beheshti was tortured in prison; urges the Iranian authorities to ensure that an inquiry is held in each case of alleged torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in detention facilities, and that perpetrators are held accountable for their acts; recalls that the use of corporal punishment – which amounts to torture – is incompatible with Article 7 of the ICCPR;
4. Strongly condemns the use of the death penalty in Iran and calls on the Iranian authorities to institute a moratorium on executions pending the abolition of the death penalty, in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolutions 62/149 and 63/168; urges the Iranian Government to prohibit the execution of juveniles and to consider commuting all capital sentences for juveniles currently facing a death sentence; urges the Iranian Government to publicise statistics on the death penalty and facts on the administration of justice in death penalty cases;
5. Deeply deplores the lack of fairness and transparency of the judicial process and the denial of due-process rights in Iran; calls on the Iranian authorities to guarantee a stringent respect of fair trial and due process to all detainees, as stipulated in the ICCPR;
6. Urges the Iranian authorities to release all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, including Nasrin Sotoudeh, co-Sakharov Prize winner together with Jafar Panahi, and to allow them to come to the European Parliament in December 2012 to collect their prizes; expresses its concern about the deteriorating health condition of Nasrin Sotoudeh; calls on Iran's judiciary and prison authorities to end the mistreatment of Nasrin Sotoudeh; expresses its sympathy and full solidarity with the requests of Nasrin Sotoudeh; calls on Iran's authorities to allow all prisoners access to lawyers of their choice, necessary medical care and family visits, to which they are entitled under international human rights law, and to treat them with dignity and respect;
7. Calls on the Iranian authorities to accept peaceful protest and to address the numerous problems facing the Iranian people;
8. Calls on the Iranian authorities to guarantee religious freedom in accordance with the Iranian constitution and the ICCPR;
9. Urges the Iranian authorities to demonstrate that they are fully committed to cooperating with the international community in improving the human rights situation in Iran, and calls on the Iranian Government to fulfil all its obligations, both under international law and under the international conventions it has signed;
10. Believes that a visit by a special UN Rapporteur may help to establish an overview of the human rights situation in Iran; notes with concern that Iran has not accepted any visits by UN special rapporteurs or by the High Commissioner for Human Rights since 2005; calls on Iran to honour its stated intention to allow a visit during 2012 by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Iran, Dr Ahmed Shaheed;

11. Calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with Parliament, to make effective use of the new Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in order to support democracy and respect for human rights in Iran, including freedom of expression online;
12. Calls on EU Representatives and the VP/HR to encourage the Iranian authorities to re-engage in a human rights dialogue; reaffirms its readiness to engage in a human rights dialogue with Iran at all levels on the basis of the universal values enshrined in the UN Charter and in international conventions;
13. Supports the EU's dual-track approach to Iran (combining sanctions with diplomacy) but, at the same time, is concerned about the negative effects of wide-reaching sanctions against Iran on the Iranian people, including a rise in inflation and a shortage of necessary items, in particular medicine;
14. Calls on the Council to reinforce targeted measures against Iranian individuals and entities, including state institutions, that are responsible for or involved in grave human rights violations and restrictions of fundamental freedoms, particularly through the misuse of ICTs, the internet and media censorship; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that all assets in the EU, including real estate, belonging to Iranians targeted by the restrictive measures are seized and frozen;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the Government and Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to have this resolution translated into Farsi.