



EUROPEAN UNION

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## **Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton, on the arrests and death sentences against journalists and bloggers in Iran**

The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made today the following statement:

*"I am extremely worried about the growing harassment and persecution of journalists and internet bloggers in Iran. The right to free speech is an internationally enshrined fundamental human right, which Iran itself has freely signed up to respect and protect.*

*In the past few weeks, security forces have reportedly arrested many journalists, including Sahameddin Bourghani, Parastoo Dokouhaki, Hassan Fathi, Farshad Ghorbanpour, Ehsan Houshmand, Fatemeh Kheradmand, Saeed Madani, Shahram Manouchehri, Marzieh Rasouli, Arash Sadeghi and Mohammad Soleimani Nia. I call on the Iranian authorities to release these journalists and restore their rights to freely communicate their views.*

*I am equally concerned about the continued interference with and censoring of the internet. Iran has gone far beyond filtering access and content: three bloggers - Saeed Malekpour, Ahmadreza Hashempour and Vahid Ashghari as well as web developer Mehdi Alizadeh Fakhrabad- have recently been sentenced to death on charges of "spreading corruption on earth" and "mohareb" (enmity against God). Civil society organisations have raised serious concerns over the fairness, transparency and speed of the court proceedings. The EU holds a strong and principled position against the death penalty. I repeat my call on Iran to review these sentences, to halt all pending executions and to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty."*

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**P R E S S**

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