



Plenary sitting

B9-0112/2022

15.2.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the death penalty in Iran
(2022/2541(RSP))

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on behalf of the ECR Group

**European Parliament resolution on the death penalty in Iran
(2022/2541(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iran, in particular that of 8 July 2021 on the case of Ahmadreza Djalali in Iran and of 17 September 2019 on the situation of women's rights defenders and imprisoned EU dual nationals;
 - having regard to the statement by the HR/VP Spokesperson on the execution of a juvenile offender of 24 November 2021,
 - having regard to the statement by the UN Special Rapporteur Javaid Rehman of 25 October 2021,
 - having regard to the Council's Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/584 and Council Implementing Decision (CFSP) 2021/585 of 12 April 2021,
 - having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
 - having regards to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984,
 - having regard to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989,
 - having regard to the United Nations Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of those facing the Death Penalty,
 - having regard to the statement by UN human rights experts on Ahmadreza Djalali of 18 March 2021 and the UN experts call on Iran to halt the execution of Ahmadreza Djalali of 25 November 2020,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, a chilling rise in the use of the death penalty by Iranian authorities has been reported in recent years, as a tactic to spread fear and deter Iranian citizens to participate in anti-government protests; whereas thousands of Iranians have been arrested for participating in the November 2019 nationwide protests, when security forces shot and killed hundreds of protestors;
- B. whereas Iran has continuously been the top executioner in the Middle East and conducts

the most executions per capita globally; whereas Iran remains one of the few countries in the world to impose the death penalty on those who were minors at the age of the alleged crime; whereas prisoners in Iran are often subject to torture, leading to the concern over false confessions and a death penalty punishment handed to a prisoner for a crime he or she did not commit;

- C. whereas human rights organisations have reported that at least 246 people, including at least four child offenders, were executed in Iran in 2020; By October 2021, over 230 executions, including nine women and one child offender, were executed in secret by the Iranian authorities; whereas, according to the UN over 85 child offenders are on death row in Iran, with at least four at risk of imminent execution; whereas 54 executions took place in the first six weeks of 2022 alone;
- D. whereas there has reportedly been an increase in the execution of individuals from minority communities, with over 40 Baluchi and over 50 Kurdish individuals who were executed in 2021; whereas under President Raisi's election, a considerable rise in the number of women who have been executed has risen, with the latest case reported on 5 February 2022, with at least seven women who faced execution between 22 November 2021 and 21 December 2021 alone;
- E. whereas there has been a reported rise in the number of deaths of political prisoners in Iranian detention centres and jails, while circumstances are unclear and remain not investigated; whereas institutional impunity and the absence of a system for accountability for violations of human rights permeate the political and legal systems in Iran;
- F. whereas Iranian courts, and particularly revolutionary courts, regularly fall short of providing fair trials and use confessions obtained under torture as evidence in court; whereas authorities also routinely restrict detainees' access to legal counsel, particularly during the investigation period;
- G. whereas Ebrahim Raisi, who was elected as Iran's president in June 2021 and is on the United States sanction list, previously served as the Iranian judiciary chief despite having a well-documented record of grave human rights violations;
- H. whereas during Ebrahim Raisi's tenure as chief of the Iranian judiciary since early 2019, at least three political prisoners were executed, several were killed in prison or died of lack of medical attention and many in Tehran and Shiraz have received the death sentences and are on death row; whereas multiple cases of torture of political prisoners and those detained during protests have been reported; whereas Ebrahim Raisi also served as a member of a "death panel" that carried out summary executions of up to 5,000 political prisoners in 1988;
- I. whereas Ebrahim Raisi's victory was engineered by the Islamic Republic's institutions in elections which were not fully free nor fair; whereas only seven candidates out of 592 received green light from the Guardian Council to run for the presidency; whereas none of the candidates were women, persons from minority groups or those with opposing views to the regime;
- J. whereas Dr. Ahmadreza Djalali, a Swedish-Iranian lecturer and researcher at the Vrije

Universiteit in Brussels (VUB) Belgium and Università degli Studi del Piemonte Orientale in Italy, was arrested in October 2017 after he visited Iran to attend workshops on disaster medicine; whereas Dr. Djalali has been sentenced to death in Iran on false charges of espionage and faces imminent execution; whereas he was severely pressured into false confessions under torture; whereas medical issues have prevented him from eating properly, resulting in dramatic weight loss; whereas on 14 January 2022, he was forced to bring his 50th birthday alone in a cell in the notorious Evin prison; whereas his confinement has been used to pressure the international community and Belgian authorities in connection to a trial in Antwerp concerning an Iranian diplomat accused of taking part in a plot to blow up a meeting of Iranian dissidents near Paris, France;

- K. whereas on 12 December 2020, journalist Ruhollah Zam was executed in Iran; whereas he had been living in exile in France and was lured to Iraq and illegally extradited to Iran by Iranian authorities to be executed;
- L. whereas on 12 September 2020, the Iranian authorities executed wrestling star Navid Afkari, after charging him on counts he fully denied; whereas his brothers remain in prison and received lengthy sentences for having participated in anti-government protests;
- M. whereas Arman Abdolali was arrested as a minor and executed on 24 November 2021, for charges he denied according to his family; whereas international appeals called on the Iranian regime to spare his life;
- N. whereas Sajad Sanjari was executed by the Iranian authorities on 2 August 2021, for a crime he allegedly committed when he was 15 years old; whereas his family was only informed afterwards and told to collect his remains;
- O. whereas Hossein Kheiri, a 32-year old political activist, was arrested in November 2019 for participating in the popular protests; whereas in July 2021 he was sentenced to death;
- P. whereas the family of Hedayat Abdollahpour, a Kurdish prisoner, are still deprived of knowing his burial site, two years since his unlawful secret execution;
- Q. whereas Behnam Mahjoubi, a member of the Sufi Gonabadi order and a prisoner of conscience, reportedly died in custody in February 2021 after he was subjected to torture and deliberately denied medical care;
- R. whereas Sasan Niknafs, a 36-year old pro-monarchy political prisoner, died in June 2021 while in prison because he was denied adequate medical care;
- S. whereas European-Iranian dual nationals continue to be arrested, receive unfair trials, are placed in solitary confinement and sentenced based on false and vague espionage charges;
- T. whereas according to reports, every year 400-500 women are brutally murdered in Iran, in so-called “honour killings”; whereas under the Iranian Penal Code, “honour killings” are permitted under certain circumstances without penalty; whereas women and men often face no justice in crimes committed against them in the name of “honour”; whereas on 5 February, Mona Heydari, was beheaded by her husband who then paraded the streets with her severed head in the south-western city of Ahvaz; whereas in May 2020, Romina

Ashrafi, aged 13, was beheaded by her own father with a sickle while she was asleep;

- U. whereas the US State Department outlined that Iran remains the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism in recent years, providing political, financial, operational and logistical support to a variety of groups listed in both the EU terror list and US list of foreign terrorist organizations;
1. Strongly condemns the rise in the use of the death penalty by Iranian authorities in recent years and Iran's abuse of the criminal justice system to repress peaceful activities that promote and defend human rights; calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately cease its use of the death penalty and move towards its abolition;
 2. Reiterates its strong condemnation of the steadily deteriorating human rights situation in Iran, including and especially for persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, due to systematic political, economic, social, and cultural discrimination; deplores the alarming escalation in the use of the death penalty against protesters, dissidents and members of minority groups;
 3. Firmly calls on the Iranian authorities to commute all death sentences and stresses that the use of the death penalty against minors contravenes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; reminds the Iranian authorities that respect for human rights is a core component in the development of EU-Iran relations; in this regard, strongly calls on the Iranian authorities to halt all acts of intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders, including for communicating with EU and UN officials and independent human rights organizations; calls on the HR/VP Borrell to stress that any improvement in economic relations with Iran need to be conditioned to an end to Iran's serious human rights abuses, including its arbitrary use of the death penalty;
 4. Underlines the need to ensure a safe and enabling environment where it is possible to defend and promote human rights without fear of reprisal, punishment or intimidation; stresses its support for the aspirations of the Iranian people who want to live in a free, inclusive and democratic country, which respects its national and international commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms;
 5. Calls on Iran to immediately and unconditionally release Ahmadreza Djalali, Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, Vahid and Habib Afkari, Ali Younesi, Amir Hossein Moradi, Hossein Kheiri, Shakila Monfared, Nasrin Sotoudeh, Farhad Meysami, Narges Mohammadi and Golrokh Iraee, and all others imprisoned on false charges or for solely exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and human rights activities;
 6. Expresses grave concern about the situation of Ahmadreza Djalali and all others unlawfully imprisoned in Iran; firmly calls on the Iranian authorities to ensure that the rights of prisoners are protected at all times, including their ability to receive adequate medical care and full access to their families and lawyers of their own choice; calls on the Iranian authorities to stop threatening Ahmadreza Djalali's family in Iran and Sweden;
 7. Welcomes the adoption of the Magnitsky Act by the Council as an important EU instrument to sanction violators of human rights; calls for the preparation of restrictive measures

against Iranian officials involved in the unfair trial, detention and executions of Ruhollah Zam, Navid Afkari and imminent execution of Swedish national Mr. Ahmadreza Djalali, and all other Iranian, dual and foreign nationals unfairly held in Iran; considers further sanctions against Iran necessary if authorities do not free Mr. Djalali;

8. Expresses grave concern over the use of torture, coerced confessions and detainees' inability to access legal representation during interrogations, and the serious allegations of abuse during pre-charge and pre-trial detention, and the trial of civilians before revolutionary courts;
9. Calls for the EU, including the VP/HR, to continue raising human rights, particularly the death penalty, with the Iranian authorities in bilateral and multilateral forums, in particular in the context of EU-Iran high-level political dialogue; regrets the EU's timid approach to public diplomacy on human rights, and the death penalty in particular, vis-à-vis Iran; calls for an independent investigation into the role of Ebrahim Raisi for crimes against humanity of murder, enforced disappearance and torture;
10. Calls on the Iranian authorities to eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, officially recognised or otherwise; demands that all persons belonging to minorities be allowed to exercise all the rights enshrined in the Iranian constitution and in international law, including the guarantees stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which Iran is a party;
11. Stresses that fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and assembly must always be respected and calls on the Iranian authorities to live up to their international obligations, including under the ICCPR;
12. Underlines the destabilizing role of the Iranian regime across the region and denounced the fact that the Iranian regime is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of civilians in Syria, Yemen and Iraq;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the EEAS, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Members of the Iranian Majlis.