

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2801/06

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to the Council

Subject: Rights of the Azeri population in Iran

Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states: 'All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; and colour, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege.' Numerous ethnic groups live in Iran - Azeris, Persians, Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Baluchis, Armenians, Assyrians, etc. Despite the provisions of the Iranian Constitution, these ethnic groups do not, in practice, have the same rights, an example being the way in which the Iranian judicial system has treated the Azeri writer, Abbas Lasani. He is charged with 'separatism' for having published his work in Azeri Turkish. Contrary to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Abbas Lasani is now under threat of the death penalty. What Mr Lasani has done is simply to defend his cultural rights and those of the Azeri population of Iran - to which they are entitled under the Iranian Constitution - not called the Iranian State into question. There are therefore no grounds for the charge of 'separatism'.

What initiatives will the Council take to persuade the regime to respect the cultural rights of the Azeri community in the Islamic Republic of Iran?