

WRITTEN QUESTION E-5142/08  
by Paulo Casaca (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject:           Death penalty for apostasy

According to Compass Direct and other sources, two Iranian Christians have officially been charged with 'apostasy', or leaving Islam. A draft law makes the death penalty mandatory for those convicted of 'apostasy'.

1. What actions have been taken by the European Commission to express concerns about the proposed draft prescribing the death penalty for apostasy?
2. What is the status of this draft legislation? Can the European Commission confirm reports that the draft law recently has been voted in by the Majlis, Iran's parliament? What is the next step in the legislative process before the draft will come into force?

Reportedly, Iranian citizens Mahmood Matin Azad (52) and Arash Basirat (44) have been in prison since 15 May 2008. They have officially been charged with 'apostasy'. In the light of the draft legislation mentioned above, both men could be sentenced to death. Under current Iranian law, "apostasy" is considered a capital offence, but punishment is left to the discretion of the judge.

3. Can the European Commission confirm the cases against the two Iranian citizens mentioned above?
4. If so, what actions have been taken by the European Commission to defend the fundamental human rights of these two Iranians accused of 'apostasy'?
5. What measures could be taken by the European Commission against the Iranian authorities to ensure full religious freedom for all Iranians, regardless of their religion or belief?