

Iran

European Parliament resolution on Iran

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Iran, notably those concerning human rights,
- having regard to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to all of which Iran is a party,
- having regard to the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue,
- having regard to the 8th EU Annual Report on Human Rights (2006), adopted by the Council on 17 October 2006,
- having regard to the EU Presidency statement of 20 December 2005 on the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue,
- having regard to the Council Conclusions of 10 to 11 April, 15 to 16 May and 17 July 2006, the Council statement of 26 July 2006 on Freedom of Expression, the Council statement of 5 May 2006 on Human Rights in Iran, the Council statement of 24 August 2006 on the death of Akbar Mohammadi and the imprisonment of Manouchehr Mohammadi and the Council statement of 5 October 2006 on Freedom of the Press,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

General situation

- A. whereas the situation in Iran regarding the exercise of civil rights and political freedoms has deteriorated in the last year, notably since the presidential elections of June 2005, despite several commitments by the Iranian authorities to promote universal values,
- B. whereas Iran has undertaken to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms under the various international instruments in this field,

Political prisoners

- C. whereas the Iranian authorities have announced that a report prepared by the judiciary had produced detailed evidence of human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees in prisons and detention centres, but also had confirmed that measures had been taken to address the problems identified,
- D. whereas nonetheless the practice of torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, solitary confinement, clandestine detention, cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment and impunity for State agents continue to be widespread,

- E. concerned that the Centre for Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), co-founded by the 2003 Nobel peace laureate Shirin Ebadi and provider of pro-bono legal defence to Zahra Kazemi, Akbar Ganji and Abdoulfatah Soltani, was declared an illegal organisation by President Ahmadinejad in August 2006 and that the Ministry of the Interior has threatened those who continued their activities with prosecution,

Prosecution of juvenile offenders

- F. deeply concerned about the increasing reports regarding the sentencing to death and execution of juvenile offenders, while noting that Iran accounts for the highest number of juvenile executions worldwide,

Minority rights

- G. whereas some minority rights are granted by the Iranian Constitution, such as the right of minorities to their own language, but to a large extent such rights cannot be exercised in practice; whereas in recent months minority groups have demonstrated, calling to be allowed to exercise such rights, which has led large-scale imprisonment of participants,
- H. whereas the Azeris, the largest ethnic minority in Iran, were openly offended by cartoons as an ethnic minority grouping by a State-owned daily newspaper in May 2006; whereas other minorities continue to be discriminated against and harassed due to their religious or ethnic background, such as the Kurds and the inhabitants of the area around Ahwaz city, the provincial capital of the ethnic Arab-dominated Khuzestan province, who are for example being displaced from their villages according to statements by Miloon Kothari, UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, while some of them remain in detention or have been sentenced to death,

Freedom of religion

- I. whereas, apart from Islam, only Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Judaism are recognised as religions by law, while those who practise unrecognised religions, such as Baha'is and Sufis, are discriminated against and violently repressed; whereas notably the Baha'is cannot exercise their religion and are moreover consequently deprived of all civil rights, such as their rights to property and access to higher education,
- J. whereas even members of the clergy opposing Iran's theocratic regime are at risk, as witnessed by the case of Ayatollah Sayed Bouroujerdi, who was arrested with his followers in October 2006, and whereas they are still detained,

Freedom of the press

- K. particularly concerned about the increasing reports of arbitrary arrests of and threats against journalists, cyber-journalists and bloggers; whereas at least 16 journalists have reportedly been arrested since the beginning of the year, ranking Iran among the very worst countries in the world for the prosecution of journalists and for its crackdown on press freedom by closing virtually all critical newspapers and online magazines, in which connection family members are being harassed, travel bans imposed on journalists and satellite dishes confiscated,
- L. whereas, according to reports, the Iranian authorities are increasingly filtering internet

sites and blocking access to several dozen online publications and political, social and cultural weblogs; whereas, by preventing free use of the internet, the Iranian authorities are cracking down on the Iranian public's only means of access to uncensored information,

Women's rights

- M. whereas Iran is still not a party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,
- N. whereas demonstrations for legal reforms to end discrimination against women have been broken up and participants have been arrested, although later released again,

Violation of other rights

- O. whereas in September 2006 President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad openly called for a purge of liberal and secular academics in the universities, whereas the Iranian Government is increasingly barring university students from pursuing their higher education despite the fact that they have passed competitive entrance exams, and whereas the judiciary has prosecuted numerous students and sentenced them to imprisonment, fines or flogging during the past year,
- P. whereas people are still imprisoned and at times executed for sexual offences, inter alia for adult consensual sexual activity between unmarried persons and homosexuals,
- Q. whereas in 2005 Iran accounted for the second highest number of executions worldwide, 282 sentences of capital punishment being reported, of which 111 cases were executed between October 2005 and September 2006; highly concerned, moreover, that people are still being condemned to death by stoning despite the moratorium on stoning imposed in December 2002, and notably in this regard women for crimes of sexual misconduct,
- R. having regard to the announcement by the Head of the Judiciary of the Islamic Republic of Iran in April 2004 that torture would be banned and to the subsequent reform of legislation by the Iranian Parliament, approved by the Guardian Council in May 2004,
- S. whereas in December 2006 there will be elections to the Assembly of Experts, a pillar of the clerical establishment which chooses and supervises the work of the supreme leader, as well as Council elections; whereas for the Council elections it has been reported that in the electoral districts of Rey and Shemiranat nominees have been refused registration and for the Assembly elections the reformists have threatened an election boycott if all nominees are not admitted,
- T. deeply concerned at the failure to comply fully with international standards in the administration of justice, the absence of guarantees of due process of law and the absence of respect for internationally recognised legal safeguards,

Violation of international obligations

- U. whereas Iran has not agreed to a further round of the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue that was established in 2002 and whereas, after the fourth round held on 14 to 15 June 2004, Iran ceased participation, despite repeated efforts by the EU over the last year and

the current year to offer dates for a fifth round,

- V. whereas EU relations with Iran have been based on a threefold approach, characterised by negotiations on a trade and cooperation agreement, political dialogue and a human rights dialogue, and whereas the political dialogue has been suspended because of the current Iranian position on its nuclear programme,

General situation

1. Expresses its serious concern about the deterioration of the human rights situation in Iran since President Ahmadinejad took office in June 2005;
2. Calls upon Iran to grant all persons the right to exercise their civil rights and political freedoms and hopes that the Iranian authorities will fulfil their commitments to promote universal values, which Iran is also obliged to do by international conventions that it has ratified;

Political prisoners

3. Calls on the Iranian authorities to accelerate the process of investigation into the suspicious deaths and killings of intellectuals and political activists, to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice and to unconditionally provide adequate medical assistance to those prisoners who are in poor health;
4. Calls on the Iranian authorities to unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience, notably Keyvan Ansari, Keyvan Rafii, Kheirollah Derakhshandi, Abolfazl Jahandar and Koroush Zaim;
5. Welcomes in this context the recent release of former Member of the Iranian Parliament Sayed Ali Akbar Mousavi-Kho'ini, as well as the earlier releases of Ramin Jahanbegloo and Akbar Ganji; expects that Mr Ganji, who was invited to the European Parliament in October, will be able to return to Iran freely and without any obstacles;

Prosecution of juvenile offenders

6. Is appalled that there are still cases of executions of minors and sentences of stoning and that, despite government assurances, at least two sentences of stoning have been carried out;
7. Strongly condemns the death penalty as such, condemns in particular death sentences passed against and executions of juvenile offenders and minors, and calls upon the Iranian authorities to respect internationally recognised legal safeguards with regard to minors such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Minority rights

8. Calls upon the authorities to respect internationally recognised legal safeguards with regard to persons belonging to religious minorities, officially recognised or otherwise; condemns the current lack of respect for minority rights and demands that minorities be allowed to exercise all rights granted by the Iranian Constitution and international law; further calls upon the authorities to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religious or ethnic grounds or against persons belonging to minorities, such as Kurds,

Azeris, Arabs and Baluchis;

9. Remains concerned about the fate of the lawyer Saleh Kamrani, who defended Azeri Turks in a law suit and disappeared on 14 June 2006; calls on the Iranian authorities to immediately halt the imminent execution of the Arabs Abdullah Suleymani, Abdulreza Sanawati Zergani, Qasem Salamat, Mohammad Jaab Pour, Abdulamir Farjallah Jaab, Alireza Asakreh, Majed Alboghubaish, Khalaf Derhab Khudayrawi, Malek Banitamim, Sa'id Saki and Abdullah Al-Mansouri;

Freedom of the press

10. Reminds the Government of Iran of its obligations, as a signatory to the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to safeguard fundamental human rights, notably the freedom of opinion, and calls for the release of all imprisoned journalists and bloggers, including Motjaba Saminejad, Ahmad Raza Shiri, Arash Sigarchi and Masoud Bastani;
11. Condemns the arrests and imprisonment of cyber-journalists and bloggers and the parallel censorship of several online publications, weblogs and internet sites, as these are the most uncensored source of news to the Iranian people; also condemns the wave of arbitrary arrests of journalists as well as the severe restriction and, in particular, the closure of media in Iran;
12. Calls on the Iranian Parliament to amend the Iranian Press Law and the Penal Code to bring them into line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and notably to repeal all criminal provisions dealing with the peaceful expression of opinions, including in the press;

Freedom of religion

13. Calls on the Iranian authorities to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religious grounds; notably calls for the de facto ban on practising the Baha'i faith to be lifted;
14. Expresses its concern about the arrest of the two lawyers Farshid Yadollahi and Omid Behrouzi, who received prison sentences while defending Sufis in Qom; expresses equally its concern for the safety of Ayatollah Sayad Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi, who has been advocating for years the separation of religion from the political basis of the State and who has been rearrested, reportedly with more than 400 of his followers;

Women's rights

15. Expresses its concern about the continuous discrimination in law and in practice against women, despite some progress; condemns the use of violence and discrimination against women in Iran, which remains a serious problem; further condemns the use of violence by the Iranian security forces against women who had gathered earlier this year to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March 2006; condemns furthermore the Iranian security forces' violent disruption of a peaceful demonstration on 12 June 2006 by women and men advocating an end to legal discrimination against women in Iran;
16. Urges Iran to sign the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and moreover demands that the legal age of majority for women in Iran

be changed to 18 years;

Violation of other rights

17. Strongly condemns the open call by President Ahmadinejad for a purge of liberal and secular academics in the universities and calls for all those expelled to be allowed to return and to teach according to the elementary rights of academic freedom;
18. Deeply deplores the deaths of student activist Akbar Mahdavi Mohammadi and political prisoner Valiollah Feyz as a result of their hunger strikes and calls for the release of Manoucher Mohammadi; requests that students should not be barred from higher education due to their peaceful political activities;
19. Demands that adult consensual sexual activity by unmarried persons should not lead to prosecution; further demands that people should not be imprisoned or executed on grounds of their sexual orientation;
20. Calls on the Iranian authorities to give evidence that they are implementing their declared moratorium on stoning, and demands the immediate and strict implementation of the ban on torture as announced, passed by the Iranian Parliament and approved by the Guardian Council; moreover demands that the Islamic Penal Code of Iran be reformed in order to abolish stoning;
21. Is deeply concerned that for the upcoming elections nominees once again have not been able to register and that reformists will boycott the elections due to the undemocratic procedures for the listing of candidates for the elections;
22. Calls upon the Iranian authorities to make efforts to ensure the full application of due process of law and fair, transparent procedures by the judiciary, to ensure respect for the rights of the defence and the equity of verdicts in all types of court;

European initiatives

23. Calls on Iran to recommence the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue with the European Union and, further, calls upon the Council and the Commission to closely monitor developments in Iran and also to raise concrete cases of human rights abuses as the basic condition for progress in EU-Iran economic and trade relations;
24. Calls on the Commission, in close cooperation with the European Parliament, to make effective use of the new Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in order to ensure democracy and respect for human rights in Iran, for example by supporting uncensored media;
25. Calls on the Council to examine the way in which Parliament may become involved in the regular updating of Council Common Position 2001/931/CFSP of 27 December 2001 on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism¹, taking into account developments from 2001 onwards;
26. Welcomes the first visit by a Majlis delegation to the European Parliament in October and

¹ OJ L 344, 28.12.2001, p. 93.

expresses its hope that these fruitful exchanges, as well as this resolution, will form part of a continuous dialogue which will lead to a gradual rapprochement between Iran and the European Union on the basis of shared values as enshrined in the UN Charter and Conventions;

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27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for CFSP, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Head of the State Supreme Court of Iran and the Government and Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran.